



CIRCLE TIME

AT YOUR
Shabbos Table

... FOR A Meaningful and Entertaining SHABBOS WITH YOUR CHILDREN ...

DVAR TORAH IN A STORY >>

THE DYBBUK DESTROYER

כל זמן שבהמ"ק קיים מזבח מכפר על ישראל, ועכשיו
שלחנו של אדם מכפר

"As long as the Beis Hamikdash stood, the *Mizbe'ach* brought atonement for Yisrael. Now, a person's table brings atonement" (*Brachos 55a*)

There was a time when a dybbuk could enter a person. A dybbuk is a spiritual force, or even a *neshamah*, from the world of *tumah*. At times, a dybbuk could move into a person's body and control him. *Talmidei chachamim* were able to force the dybbuk out, but it was a long and often dangerous process. The last authentic dybbuk occurred in the days of the Chafetz Chaim. He chased it away with the help of his *talmid*, Rav Elchanan Wasserman, who later testified that the Chafetz Chaim had said there would be no more.

A series of dybbuks plagued the Jewish communities in the times of Rav Eliyahu Kramer, the Vilna Gaon. In one such incident, a child began acting strangely in the courtyard of the great Vilna shul. An odd, adult-sounding deep voice emanated from the child's throat, and he did not seem to be in control of himself. It seemed like a classic case of a dybbuk.

The child's parents were frantic, and they immediately consulted several famous *rabbanim* who were expert at chasing away dybbuks.

There were a few steps to the process: first, it had to be clear that this was a real dybbuk, because there were often fakes, or medical conditions with similar symptoms. Then, the *rabbanim* would set to work, using *kemiyos*, particular *tefillos*, specially recited Kabbalistic names of Hashem, and other powerful forces of *taharah*

to chase away the source of *tumah* from the "other side," or *sitra achra*.

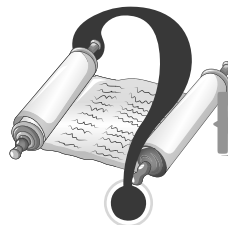


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פרשת ויקרא

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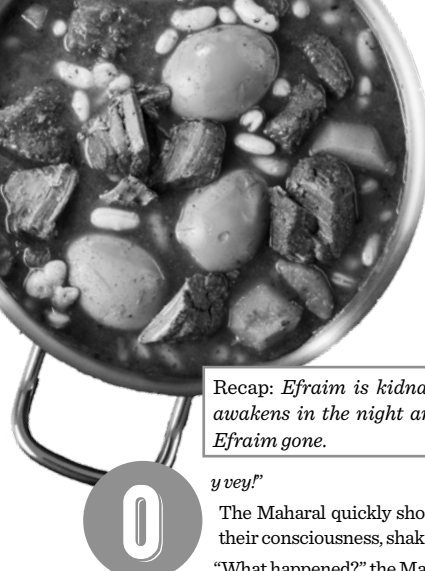
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PARSHAH RIDDLES

Answers to this week's riddles appear on page 3.

- 1 **Which *korban* had its blood placed on the "horns" of the *Mizbe'ach*?**
- 2 **Which *korban* was never eaten during daylight?**
- 3 **What went on every *korban*?**
- 4 **In what ways were a *Korban Olah* and *Chatas* exact opposites? In what ways were animal *korbanos* the exact opposite of bird *korbanos*?**
- 5 **Which *korbanos* came with breads that were baked, but not put on the *Mizbe'ach*? Which of them contained *chametz*?**



CHOLENT STORY

A story told in parts, designed to get children to come back to the table for the main dish!

Recap: Efraim is kidnapped by the poritz and the kishuf-macher. The Maharal awakens in the night and comes to the yeshiva, finding the bachurim asleep and Efraim gone.

yvey!"

The Maharal quickly shook the sleeping boys. Slowly, groggily, they rose to the surface of their consciousness, shaking off the deep, deep sleep the *kishuf-macher* had cast upon them. "What happened?" the Maharal asked.

"Rebbi, we're so sorry! We don't know what happened! Efraim kept trying to get out of the *beis midrash*, and we were holding him back, and all of a sudden you were waking us up. We must have fallen asleep, and we can't imagine how. And now Efraim is gone!" The *bachurim* began to weep in distress.

"It's okay, there is nothing you could have done about it. There are some *kochos hatumah* at play here, I was wrong to leave the responsibility to others. Come, we may still be able to save Efraim. Quickly, let us gather a minyan!"

The boys quickly roused some of their *chaveirim* and met the Maharal in the *beis midrash*. Together, the group fervently recited Tehillim, crying over the ancient words, begging Hashem to save the innocent child.

...

The dark black carriage, pulled by coal-black horses with red eyes, raced through the silent streets. The city of Prague was asleep at this late hour, and the carriage, with its precious load, was charging for the city gates. The *kishuf-macher* knew he would still have to battle the Maharal as long as he was within the gates.

The carriage charged up to the gates of the city, the horses sweating and steaming in the chilly air, their eyes rolling in their heads. But they pulled up short at the edge of the city.

The gates were locked!

The men in the carriage were thrown forward as it stopped short. "What's going on?" the *poritz* asked.

"The gates are locked. Can you get them open?"

The *poritz* jumped out of the carriage and approached the gates. They were big, thick iron gates, locked with heavy chains. A sign near the gates read: "Prague City Gates. Locked Dusk to Dawn." In frustration, the *poritz* grabbed the gates with both hands and rattled them.

"Can I help you, sir? Or would you like to spend the night in prison?" a voice called out. The *poritz* turned, and a big, burly police constable stepped out of the nearby guard hut and approached him.

"Officer, open these gates immediately! I must leave the city on important business!"

"Important business, eh?" The constable was in no mood for attitude from some rich guy in a fancy coach. He squinted in the dim light. "What business, eh? Criminal business, I wager!"

"Do you know who I am? I am the Governor of Lunchitz! I demand passage through these gates at once!"

The fat constable stuck a toothpick between his brown teeth and wagged it about impudently. "Governor, eh? Of what did you say? Lunch?"

The *poritz's* face turned red with anger. He was about to start shouting at the cop, when he realized that his important position in Poland meant nothing here in Prague. Dejected, he climbed back into the carriage. "Can't you do anything?" he asked the *kishuf-macher*. "Put him to sleep, or something?"

"No, that wouldn't do. We'll have to spend the night. We'll leave first thing at dawn."

The wagon turned and headed for an all-night inn in the city. The two men rented a room for the night, and led Efraim, now clutching his precious harp, still in a trance-like state, indoors to wait for dawn.

...

After saying Tehillim, the Maharal headed for the one place the *kochos of tumah* have no power—the *mikvah*. Concentrating fiercely, he descended under its purifying waters.

As the water closed over the Maharal's head, across town, where the kidnappers slept in the inn, the breath of the ancient *kishuf-macher* caught in his throat.

The Maharal rose from the water. The *kishuf-macher* snored and breathed easier.

Again, the Maharal descended into the water, and the *kishuf-macher* stopped breathing. Long seconds passed. The Maharal was under the water, and the *kishuf-macher* was in his bed. Neither could breathe.

The Maharal rose from the water again, inhaling deeply. Across town, the old sorcerer drew a weak, ragged breath.

The Maharal prepared to enter the water a third, and final time.

LITVAK, CHASSID, SEPHARDI

Three different angles on a dvar Torah, one each in classic Litvish, Chassidic, and Sephardic styles. Can your children guess which idea comes from which school of thought!

וַיִּקְרָא אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֵלָיו מֵאֵהָל מוֹעֵד לֵאמֹר

"And He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the *Ohel Moed*, saying" (*Vayikra*)

א' דוֹיִקְרָא זַעִירָא שְׁמִשָּׁה לֹא רַצָּה לִכְתּוּב אֲלָא וִיקַר כִּדְרָךְ שְׁנָא בְּבִלְעָם כְּאֵלוֹ לֹא נִרְאָה לּוֹ הַשֵּׁם אֲלָא בַמִּקְרָה

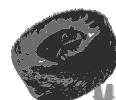
"The *aleph* in 'Vayikra' is small, because Moshe wanted to [leave it out and] write וִיקַר, like it says about Bilaam, meaning Hashem only 'happened' to meet him" (*Baal Haturim*)

How could Moshe consider writing וִיקַר if it wasn't true?! Hashem *did* call him! Does humility justify writing falsehood in the Torah?



CHASAM SOFER:

It is not entirely false. All other prophets, even Jewish ones, required extensive preparations to receive *nevuah*, but Moshe received *nevuah* without a moment's notice, almost as if Hashem "happened" to meet him. The truth is that it was a praise for Moshe—that his level was so close to Hashem as to be almost casual—but Moshe meant for it to be read as a coincidence.



MEGALEH AMUKOS:

וִיקַר would be read as "and it was precious," and would be referring to the small א, meaning that even the tiniest letter of Torah learning (*V'alef* means to study Torah) is more precious than all the *korbanos* the Torah is about to describe. The rest of the *pasuk* is read: וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֵלָיו—Hashem's speaking to Moshe (i.e., teaching Torah) is מֵאֵהָל מוֹעֵד—more important than the *avodah* done in the אֵהָל מוֹעֵד.



R. CHAIM TUITO:

וִיקַר would refer to *kavod*, and it would be read as א-וִיקַר; one who makes himself small like the א becomes וִיקַר, honored. As Chazal say, one who runs away from *kavod* is chased by it. Moshe here is the classic example of that.

TO BE CONTINUED...



PERSONAL GROWTH AVODAH OF THE WEEK

This section views the procession of parshiyos and Yamim Tovim as a ladder for personal growth. It identifies a theme in the parshah and a related area that needs growth, and assigns a weekly mission based upon it.

Parshah summary

Parshas Vayikra teaches a broad overview of the various categories of *korbanos* and their particular laws to all of Klal Yisrael, as opposed to future details of *korbanos*, which were said only to *kohanim*.

After introducing the general rules applying to all *korbanos*, the Torah discusses the four main categories of *korbanos* and their subcategories. 1) *Korban Olah*, including animals and birds; 2) *Korban Minchah*, including soles, oven-baked, pan-baked, and deep-pan; 3) *Shelamim*, including sheep or goats; 4) *Chatas*, including that of the *kohen gadol*, the majority of the community, the *nasi*, and several types for the individual; and 5) *Korban Asham*, including *vadai*, *talui*, and *gezeilos*.

The purpose of *korbanos* is discussed at length by the *Rishonim*. It is clear, though, that Hashem does not need our *korbanos*, for He is infinite and owns everything anyway. It is a giving of oneself, of one's most precious and valuable possession, a literal self-sacrifice, that draws us close to Hashem. And when *korbanos* became rote, and the connection was lost, they were quickly taken away.

AVODAH OF THE WEEK:



1. We don't have *korbanos* today, but we can still give of ourselves in the most meaningful way. Remember, it is all His anyway; it is the willingness to give that makes the connection. Find two very dear things you know you should be giving up, and do so this week—for Him.

2. Pesach is another exchange of gifts. The hard work we will put in this week is a gift we give Him (which, again, He does not need) and the free lift to higher levels is a gift we will receive in return. Pesach prep is still hard, but how much greater a gift it is, when we do it with *simchah*!

RIDDLE ANSWERS:

1. חטאת חיצונה

2. קרבן פסח

3. Salt

4. For an animal, the blood of an *Olah* went below the red line on the *Mizbe'ach*, while for *Chatas* it went above it. This was inverted for a bird—the blood of a bird *Olah* went above the line, while that of a *Chatas* went below.

5. The *Lechem Hapanim*, as well as the *Korban Tzibbur* of Shavuot, the *korban* of the Nazir, and a *Korban Todah* all have baked breads that did not go on the *Mizbe'ach*. The ones for Shavuot and some of the ones for a *Korban Todah* were *chametz*.

Did you notice that the story of the haftorah, besides relating to the depth of the parshah or day, usually sounds like it is right out of current events?

HAFTORAH FROM THE HEADLINES

HAFTORAH SUMMARY

The *navi* Yeshayahu reprimands Klal Yisrael for doing acts of service to Hashem with no heart. They are bringing *korbanos* while still keeping idols, and they have become bored with their *avodas Hashem*. The purpose of the *korbanos* is not being achieved.

The *navi* ridicules worship of sticks and stones. He reminds the people what their purpose is, and the purpose of their *avodah*. He also exhorts the people to *teshuvah* and promises abundant blessings and the ultimate redemption if they do.

CONNECTION TO PARSHAS VAYIKRA

Vayikra details the *korbanos* and their procedure but also notes that it must come from within you—for Hashem does not need your animals or food. *Korbanos* are an opportunity for building meaningful connections by sacrificing for each other, but it is all lost and meaningless if it is done by rote. The haftorah makes the same point. The *navi* even details things that Hashem has “sacrificed” for us—making the forms of service easier and not burdensome, for the connection is the most important point.

RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES

The problem of serving Hashem by rote—going through the motions and actions, mumbling the words, all without meaningful connection—is possibly the greatest challenge facing people accustomed to a *frum* lifestyle.

Pesach is an opportunity to escape that trap by celebrating our birth and purpose. The haftorah emphasizes the purpose of the Jewish People in the world, a central theme of Pesach. Many *pesukim* from the haftorah also appear in the prayers of the Yamim Nora'im, because this is a call to rebirth and refresh.

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

There was a commotion in the courtyard of the shul. People were frightened and alarmed, and some had gone to call the *rabbanim*. Suddenly, a window to the courtyard opened, and a hush immediately fell over the crowd. The window that had opened was one that was almost always closed—it was the window of the private study of the Vilna Gaon.

The Gaon learned almost non-stop throughout the day and night, sleeping less than two hours. It was rare for him to interrupt his learning, even for a moment. But now, his window had opened! Even the dybbuk was alarmed, and it immediately cried out.

“Oy, *rebbe!*” the deep adult male voice spoke from the child’s throat. “You are the one about whom it is said in *Shamayim*: ‘Beware of Rabbi Eliyahu and his Torah learning!’ Whatever you say, I am bound to follow. If you tell me to leave, I will go right away, without the need for *sheimos*, *kemiyos*, or anything!”

The crowd was stunned. Could the whole story end in a moment? It was like the Gemara in the end of *Maseches Pesachim*, in which *sheidim* tell Abaye that they are afraid of him!

But it was not to be. “I will have nothing to do with you!” the Gaon responded to the dybbuk. “I will have no interaction with you. I will tell you nothing. I have no connection with the *sitra achra!*” With that, the Gaon withdrew, and closed the window.

Shortly afterward, another dybbuk appeared in a Novaradok, a different city in Europe. The scene was very similar: a child began acting strangely, and expert *rabbanim* were called.

The first step was to check the authenticity of the dybbuk. The *rabbanim* now had a new tool to use: They knew any real dybbuk would be terrified of the Vilna Gaon! That was how they could test it.

One of the *rabbanim* approached the dybbuk. “We are taking you to Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna!” he declared to the force of *tumah*. “He will drive you away in a second!”

But the deep voice of the dybbuk laughed. “It is true, we dybbuks are terrified of the Gaon of Vilna. But we already heard the news—he won’t say anything to us! He won’t get involved with us. The whole *sitra achra* knows we don’t need to fear his involvement anymore.”

The *rav* wanted to understand more. “Why are you so terrified of him? He learns all day, but otherwise he is a regular person. It’s not like he fasts all day like a *mal-ach* or anything. He is still part of the physical world!”

The dybbuk laughed again. “How little you understand. When the Vilna Gaon eats, it is worse for us than any fast! His eating is like a *korban* being brought on the *Mizbe'ach*, as the Gemara says in *Brachos*: “As long as the Beis Hamikdash stood, the *Mizbe'ach* brought atonement for Yisrael. Now, a person’s table atones.” The food eaten by the Vilna Gaon is used only for Torah and mitzvos, and that is more powerful than any amount of fasting.”



SETUP FOR DISCUSSION

See this week's *Circle* magazine for the full comic story and halachic dilemma.

TO CLEAN OR NOT TO CLEAN

Generally a *shoel* obligated to pay for damages, even when they occur *b'oness*. However, when damage occurs in the normal course of usage there are authorities who maintain that the borrower is exempt (C.M. 340:3, see also *Shach* C.M. 340:5). However, since there are *Poskim* who question this ruling, it is proper for the borrower to pay for the cleaning. Clearly, if the owner stipulated that the garment should be cleaned before it is returned, that commitment must be honored.



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כְּרֹחַק מִזָּרְחַ מִמְעַרְבִּי הֶרְחִיק מִמֶּנּוּ אֶת פְּשָׁעֵינוּ

“As distant as east from west, distance our sins from us”

(*Tehillim* 103:12)

How far is east from west?

- 312 = מְעַרְבִּי
- 255 = מִזָּרְחַ
- 312–255 = 57 = חֲזָבַח

How will Hashem distance our sins from us? Through [*korbanos* brought on] the חֲזָבַח, which is the difference between east and west.

THIS DATE IN JEWISH HISTORY



On the 7th of Nissan, the 30-day mourning period for Moshe Rabbeinu ended. Yehoshua bin Nun took over leadership of Klal Yisrael and made his first speech. He relayed Hashem’s message to the people to prepare themselves to cross into Eretz Yisrael. As Hashem blessed and encouraged him, he told them to be strong. They wholeheartedly accepted him as leader.

On that day, or possibly two days earlier, he sent two spies, Kaleb and Pinchas, to get a sense of the morale of the Canaanim. The two traveled to Yericho but were spotted. They hid in the home of Rachav, who helped them escape while she misled the king’s soldiers into thinking they had gone in a different direction. In return, Klal Yisrael spared her and her family in the war, and she ended up marrying Yehoshua himself.

HALACHAH

Birchas Ilanos (Blessing on the Trees)



What is the purpose of *birchas ilanos*?

The *Shitah Mekubetzes* explains that *birchas ilanos* is a *brachah* of praise inspired by the sight of the revival and rejuvenation of the trees after the winter. It is meant to be said on a once-per-year natural occurrence. The *Aruch Hashulchan* adds that the *shevach* is for the fact that Hashem created for us more than is necessary for survival (we could do without fruits, but not without vegetables). The blossoms add an extra beauty to trees in the spring, and they announce the coming of the fruits.

When can the *brachah* be said?

The Gemara in *Brachos* says that one who sees a blossoming tree “in the days of Nissan” says the *brachah*. The *Birkei Yosef* understands this to mean that the *brachah* can only be said during Nissan, but the *Mishnah Berurah* and most *poskim* are clear that Nissan is merely the usual time in which a tree blossoms (in the northern hemisphere) but that the *brachah* can be said on a proper tree during any month. Unlike some other *birchos re'iyah*, the *brachah* does not have to be said the first time someone spots a blossoming fruit tree, although *zerizim* will not put it off.

During what stage of fruit development can the *brachah* be said?

The *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch* say the *brachah* has to be said on a tree with blossoms. The *Mordechai* says it can also be said on a tree with fruits that no longer has blossoms. The *Bach* understands that all agree that the *brachah* needs to be said at the first opportunity—if you saw a blossoming tree and did not say it, you can't say it later on a tree with fruits; but if the first time you see fruit trees they are in the fruity stage, you can say the *brachah*. The *Mishnah Berurah* allows one to say the *brachah* on a tree with fruits if he never saw any tree with blossoms. This is true even if the fruits are large. When they are fully ripe, or ripe enough to say *Shehecheyanu*, one can no longer say *birchas ilanos*.

Only one blossom is required, even if most have fallen off and there are fruits already in their place. One cannot say the *brachah* on a tree with only leaves.

On what kind of trees should one say the *brachah*?

It is best to travel outside the city to a field or orchard to say the *brachah* on a few trees growing together (not at the cost of *bitul Torah*). Because the *brachah* is phrased in the plural, it should preferably be said when there are at least two different types of fruit trees growing nearby, or at least two trees, even of the same species. One may not say

the *brachah* on fruitless trees, and the fruit should preferably be edible. If one says the *brachah* and later finds out that it was a fruitless tree, he does not say it again (the *brachah* does not specifically mention fruits).

Can the *brachah* be said on trees with halachic issues?

Trees that have a mixture of species grafted together are problematic; some allow the *brachah* to be said on them, while others say the *brachah*, which is blessing Hashem, should not be said on a tree of which He disapproves. The same applies to trees planted in a *kilayim* situation. There is a dispute among the *Acharonim* as to whether the *brachah* can be said on a tree within three years of planting, because the fruits are then forbidden as *orlah*. If the *orlah* status of the tree is unclear—because the time of planting is unknown, or if it was moved within three years with a root ball that may not be large enough to avoid *orlah*—it is permitted only outside of Eretz Yisrael.

Can the *brachah* be said on Shabbos or Yom Tov?

Some caution that saying the *brachah* on Shabbos or Yom Tov may lead one to pick a flower. Rav Ovadia permitted it. However, it is important to be careful not to carry a *siddur* with the text of the *brachah* (and keep in mind that growing fruits may not be smelled on Shabbos).

THE LAST WORD

A one-liner worth remembering

"IT'S NOT THE MOUNTAIN THAT WEARS YOU OUT—IT'S THE PEBBLE IN YOUR SHOE!"



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