

CANDLE LIGHTING 7:00 PM | 20 ADAR II | MARCH 30, 2024 | HAVDALA 8:05 PM

שבת פרשת צו/פרשת פרה
SHABBAT PARSHAT TZAV
PARSHAT PARAH

Two Sifrei Torah. Maftir reads from Chukat (Numbers 19:1-22). Haftorah is Ezekiel 36:16-38. Don't say אב הרחמים. We do say צדקתך צדק at Mincha.

FRIDAY EVENING

MINCHA	7:05 PM
SHKIA	7:19 PM
TZAIT HAKOCHAVIM	7:59 PM

SHABBAT

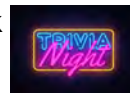
HASHKAMA	8:00 AM
MAIN	9:00 AM
LAST KRIAT SHEMA	9:52 AM
POST-HASHKAMA SHIUR	10:00 AM
FUNDAMENTALS SHIUR	11:30 AM
PRE-MINCHA SHIUR	6:15 PM
MINCHA	6:55 PM
MAARIV	8:05 PM

WELCOME BACK

Please welcome back Margo Greenstein who has returned from Israel.

TRIVIA NIGHT

Trivia Night is this Saturday night. Doors open at 9:30 PM. Thank you to Joanne and Stu Oppenheim for arranging the evening.



KIDDUSH

This week's kiddush is sponsored. Come and enjoy.

HANDMADE KERESTIR SHMURA MATZAH SALE

Order handmade Kerestir shmura matzah via Ahavat Achim by March 28 at \$37/Lb. Pick up at the shul before Pesach. RSVP by clicking here: [Matzah](#).

SHUL CLOSET CLEAN-OUT

Pesach clean-up time. Please reclaim your jackets, hats, books, diaper bags, etc. from the closet/coat room. Unclaimed items will be donated.

MAOT CHITIM

Donate "wheat monies" for the poor before Pesach here: [Maot Chitmim](#).

TODAH RABAH

Thank you to those who packed and delivered the shul'd mishloach manot!

SHIR HASHIRIM ROUND ROBIN PEREK-BY-PERK SHIUR

Click here to indicate the Perek you want to speak on during Seduah Shlishit of Shabbat Hagadol: [SHIR HASHIRIM](#). So far we have Chapter 1 (Steve Plotnick), Chapter 2 (Shamai Bernstein), Chapter 5 (Eli Greenbaum), and Chapter 6 (Ilana Schwitzer).

REFUAH SHELAYMA

Refuah Shelayma to Jewel Safren who is in the hospital.



SUNDAY
3/31

MONDAY
4/1

TUESDAY
4/2

WEDNESDAY
4/3

THURSDAY
4/4

FRIDAY
4/5

WEEKDAY MINYANIM AT AHAVAT ACHIM

SHACHARIT	8:00 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM	6:25 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM
MINCHA/MAARIV	7:09 PM	7:10 PM	7:11 PM	7:12 PM	7:13 PM	7:10 PM

ZMANIM

Earliest Talit	5:45 AM	5:44 AM	5:42 AM	5:40 AM	5:38 AM	5:37 AM
Gedolah	1:32 PM	1:32 PM	1:32 PM	1:32 PM	1:32 PM	1:32 PM
Shkia	7:21 PM	7:22 PM	7:23 PM	7:24 PM	7:25 PM	
Tzait	8:01 PM	8:02 PM	8:03 PM	8:04 PM	8:05 PM	

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 30 - Trivia Night.

April 6 - Scholar-in-Residence Rivka Herzfeld, speaking on "Bad boys, bad boys: Nadav and Avihu", "In the Midnight Hour (BaChatzot Halayla) I Will Feel Your Power" - Accessibility in the Torah", and "Accessibility in the Torah". See flyer for times.

April 14 - Hagolas Kelim/Pesach Kashering, 9:00 - 11:00 AM, at the shul.

April 20 - Pre-Pesach Luncheon

April 20 - Shir Hashirim Round Robin

April 22 - Latest to eat Chometz: 10:39 AM

April 22 - Seraifat (Burning) Chometz, 8:00 AM to 11:47 AM (latest), at Norton residence, 20-11 Hunter Pl. No foil, plastic, paper, cardboard, pasta, sauces or liquids. Bread, cereal, crackers and dry items only.

May 11 - Prospective Family Shabbaton

May 18 - Mental Health Awareness Discussion at Seudah Shlishit.

May 26 - Lag B'Omer Community Event. Doors Open at Noon. BBQ at 12:30 PM, with special activities for youth.

IN OUR FUTURE

April 27 - Seudah Shlishit is sponsored by the Sonnenblicks to commemorate the yearzeit of Marty's father, Moshe Yehuda ben Yosef Dov Halevi^{נ"י}.



May 25 - Kiddush is sponsored by Aliza & Richie Mayer in honor of Sophie's Bat Mitzvah.

KIDDUSH & SEUDAH SHLISHIT

- **THIS WEEK'S KIDDUSH IS DAIRY.**
- To sponsor a Kiddush (prices start at \$318, plus a bottle of scotch) email dmgarfunkel@gmail.com to coordinate details and budget.
- To sponsor for \$136 Seudah Shlishit (or in the case of multiple sponsors, \$100 per sponsor), email David at dmgarfunkel@gmail.com.

SHIURIM



- SAMSON RAFAEL HIRSCH ON THE PARSHA, Tuesdays at 1:00 PM, in person and on zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/7291311899> (PW: 112233).
- TORAH FOR YOUR COMMUTE, via a  Whatsapp group, with 3-minute daily halacha insights. To join email Rabbi Shestack at rabbishestack@gmail.com.
- SHABBAT SHIUR, 40 minutes before mincha.
- FUNDAMENTALS OF JEWISH THOUGHT, after Kiddush.
- MESORAH-IN-REVERSE lecture series at Seudah Shlishit. 
- Tzurba M'Rabanan on Shabbat, Wednesdays at 7:30 PM (to be adjusted as Maariv time changes), on Zoom with Shalom Brauser.

SHALOM BRAUSER, TEEN MENTOR/ADULT EDUCATOR

Middle school Chabura takes place every third shabbat:

April 5/6



RABBI'S OFFICE HOURS



The Rabbi is always available for halachic and/or pastoral matters. For less exigent discussions, text, call, or drop by during the Rabbi's office hour, Tuesdays, 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM, or feel free to reach out to the Rabbi to make other meeting arrangements.

UPCOMING BOARD MEETINGS

May 28 - 9:00 PM, **June 25** - 9:00 PM, **July 30** - 9:00 PM, **August 27** - 9:00 PM, **Sept. 24** - 9:00 PM, **Oct. 29** - 8:30 PM, **Nov. 26** - 8:30 PM, and **Dec. 24** - 8:30 PM.

GITA COOPERWASSER^{נ"י} YOUTH EVENTS

March 30 - Playdate in the Park! 3:30 PM, Edison Park. All ages welcome! Bring Your Own Snacks (and water!)

GITA COOPERWASSER^{נ"י} YOUTH PROGRAM



- **SHABBAT YOUTH LEADERS, 1ST - 4TH GRADE: NICOLE & BROOKE; 3 YRS - K: LYLA & PERRI**
- Youth group for children in 1st to 4th Grades starts at 9:00 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on the left upon entering the social hall.
- Youth group for children 3 years old through Kindergarten starts at 9:30 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on the right upon entering the social hall.
- Parent & Me room opens at 9:30 AM in the Beit Midrash.
- 5th through 9th graders will meet for Torah and games at 10:00 AM in the David Schwitzer^{נ"י} Social Hall. 
- Rabbi Meet & Greet, every Friday night, kids can come over to the Rabbi after davening to receive a cup of grape juice and a ticket!
- Children's corner at Seudah Shlishit, 1st to 4th graders will get 10 Torah questions in 10 minutes from Rabbi Shestack, with special snacks, tickets and more.
- Children earn tickets for coming to minyan (Friday night and/or Shabbat day), asking the rabbi questions or attending parent-child learning programs! Tickets can be redeemed for prizes.

18-25 Saddle River Road
Fair Lawn, NJ 07410
201.797.0502
<http://www.ahavatachim.org>

FROM THE JOURNAL DINNER COMMITTEE

Don't wait on the formal invitation to the dinner (IY"Y, coming after Pesach). With all due haste, submit and solicit ads showing gratitude to Shirley & Avi Vann for all that they have done, and continue to do, for our shul and community, and to Kira and Andrew Wigod for all of the work they have done to reinvigorate our shul.

To upload an ad, click here: [ShirleyAviKiraAndrew](#)

Within the ad form, you can also honor our Rabbi, honor your children or grandchildren, memorialize a loved one and submit a memory, or message, to memorialize one of our founders, Norman Greenstein, and our longtime member Cary Reichardt, each of whom passed away this past year.



Ahavat Achim Journal Dinner

*Honoring
Shirley & Avrom Vann*

May 19, 2024

*With a special
Young Leadership Award
to*

*Kira & Andrew
Wigod*



DAVID SCHWITZERד"ר SOCIAL HALL

Please contact Lori Garfunkel at garfmom@gmail.com to book the David Schwitzerד"ר Social Hall for an event or special occasion. \$250 per simcha (members)/\$325 for Associates/\$400 paid in advance for non-members, plus the cost of additional clean up (and a \$150 security/cleaning deposit refunded when the social hall is returned in its original condition). Private caterers must be approved in by the Rabbi.

DONATE A SEFER, ETC.

Siddurim & Machzorim (\$40), and Chumashim (\$60), are available for donation. Please contact Jeff Safier at jeff.Safier@gmail.com for details.

SCRIP

Men's Club scrip is available. Email dmgarfunkel@gmail.com for details.

HONORARIA

The available Honoraria list will be provided upon request by contacting Steven Plotnick at seplotnick@gmail.com.

MISHEBAYRACH

With a Mishebayrach you've pledged to give Tzedakah on behalf of those for whom you asked Hashem's blessing. Contributions to the shul can be made using Paypal's Giving Fund (with 100% of the proceeds going to the Shul), by clicking here: [Ahavat Achim Donations](#). If by check, please indicate on its face "Aliyah Donation."

Yahrzeit Plaques

Memorialize a loved one with a plaque, \$300 for members/\$450 for nonmembers. We will strive to send you written notice of upcoming yahrzeit and announce name during public Yizkor. Email Amy at aagress@gmail.com to arrange.

MEN'S CLUB

Please contact Elliot Greene at MensClub@AhavatAchim.Org to join the Men's Club.

SPONSORSHIPS

Sponsorships opportunities for Yahrzeits, Refuahs, and Hodahs (thanks), are available for regular shiurim, youth events and similar activities (but not for established honorariums or sponsorship funded events). Cost of sponsorship (shiur or youth event) is \$100 per sponsor. Multiple sponsors for an event will be accepted. Sponsorships will be listed in the bulletin and announced at the event (and, if possible, a placard with the sponsorship will be prepared and displayed at the event).

Sponsorships do not include any extra amenities (such as food). Please contact either Stephen Agress or Steve Plotnick for questions or clarifications.

From The OU.ORG Four Shabbatot, adapted from The Book of Our Heritage by Rabbi Elyahu Kitov, and other sources.

PARSHAT PARAH

"This is the decree of the Torah, which Hashem has commanded, saying: Speak to the Children of Israel, and they shall take to you a completely red cow, which is without blemish, and upon which a yoke has not come." (BaMidbar 19:2) This is an example of Law of the Torah which is considered completely above human comprehension. The paradox is that those who are involved in the preparation of the ashes of the cow become ritually impure, while the sprinkling of water with those ashes is used to remove contamination! It is an example of a Law which must be accepted on faith alone.

On the Shabbat after Purim (most years), two Torah Scrolls are removed from the Ark. The weekly Sidrah is read from the first, and from the second, the chapter of Parah Adumah, the Red Cow (or Red Heifer). It gives the procedure through which people can purify themselves from the contamination caused by a human corpse.

The reading of this chapter was instituted for this time of the year because Jews were required to purify themselves before coming to Jerusalem for the pilgrimage festival of Passover. The Haftarah read on Shabbat of Parashat Parah contains the verse, "And I shall sprinkle pure water upon you, that you be cleansed. From all your contamination and from all your filth I will cleanse you" (Ezekiel 36:25). Another parallel in the Haftarah are the concepts of sin represented by contamination and atonement represented by purity.

This is discussed the ArtScroll Ezekiel commentary (pp. 534-5), as follows: Freedom of will in moral matters is the first and irreplaceable condition for living one's life on the higher plane demanded by the Torah. Belief in man's freedom of action, however, is endangered by the fact that man cannot avoid death and that he is subject to the superficial limitations imposed by the forces of nature. This belief is particularly shaken by the sight of a dead human being. If the whole human being has succumbed to death, been overpowered by physical forces - If man, like all other organic beings, cannot escape the spell of an overpowering force - then there is no room for the moral "you shall" next to the physical "you must." Moral freedom of will would then be an illusion, and the Divine law of morality with its demand for total free-willed devotion to the illuminating, purifying fire of its sanctuary would be incomprehensible. (R'Hirsch, Numbers 19:22).

Thus, sin is related not only to death, but also to contamination, which is closely associated with death. Because the sinner is shackled by his desires, he loses spiritual control of actions. He is swept along by the physical lusts that have overpowered his spiritual self. Thus, the most meaningful part of life, the spiritual, has been killed. For this reason, when G-d forgives man's sin and grants him a new heart and a new spirit, He is imbuing him with purity, the state of mind in which man is the sole master of his actions.

A living (and therefore a pure) person uses his body as he wills; it is his tool to use as he sees fit. The regenerate sinner, upon returning to the state of purity, joins once more the state of the living - and the free. (Chazon HaMikra) As with the other of the Four Parshiyot, a boy who is not yet of Bar-Mitzvah age should not be called to the Torah for Maftir on Shabbat Parshat Parah, nor should he read the Parshah for others. For since he is free of the obligation of Mitzvot, he cannot enable others to fulfill their obligation through him.

AHAVAT ACHIM MEMBERSHIP/ HOSPITALITY

Email Sara at membership@ahavatachim.org for membership details or Shabbat hospitality.

PERSONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Various life cycle events related to members are announced in the bulletin (e.g., births and weddings of children/grandchildren, bar/bat mitzvahs of children, deaths requiring shiva observance, as well as travel to/from Israel to study). Other personal announcements are not appropriate except as part of the bulletin's dedication (\$36 cost - \$54 with photo).

NUMBERS & INFO

ERUV: To subscribe for updates, email fairlawneruv@groups.io. Check status at <https://groups.io/g/fairlawneruv> or call 201-254-9190.

MIKVAH: 201-796-0350. At Shomrei Torah. Go to <http://www.fairlawnmikvah.org/> for online booking.

TWITTER: [AhavatAchimFL](#)

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100091322384429

INSTAGRAM: www.instagram.com/ahavatachim/

FLICKR: flickr.com/photos/ahavatachim/albums

BULLETIN DEDICATIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND SHUL CALENDAR

Email seplotnick@gmail.com to request an announcement of a simcha, refuah or life cycle event in the bulletin or to dedicate a bulletin for \$36 (\$54 w/ Photo).

COMMUNITY SECURITY

To volunteer and become part of our community security service, email Margo at security@ahavatachim.org.





בס"ד

Dear Friends and Members,

It is with great pleasure that we announce that Ahavat Achim Orthodox Congregation of Fair Lawn will hold its Annual Journal Dinner on May 19, 2024 at 6PM at Rinat Yisroel. This year, our shul is proud to honor Shirley E. and Avrom R. Vann, a couple that has supported Ahavat Achim and the Fair Lawn Jewish community for more than 43 years. Shirley and Avi joined Ahavat Achim immediately upon moving into Fair Lawn in 1980. They are the proud parents of Yitzchak, Yosef, Bluma, and Yaakov and they are blessed with beautiful grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Shirley and Avi have never shied away from facing a challenge, stepping up year after year wherever there was a need. In addition to being a repeated member on the shul board, Avi has served as shul President, Gabbai, and Baal Shacharit on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur since 1981. Shirley has served on the shul board as well as on the Sisterhood board. Shirley oversaw one set of renovations on the Rabbi's house and maintenance in the shul. She has served as editor for our shul bulletin, the Bronx House News in Pelham Parkway and of the Friends of Lubavitch of Bergen County Newsletter. Outside of our shul, Shirley has been a certified hospice volunteer, a Reach to Recovery Coordinator and a Counsellor for Breast Cancer patients for the American Cancer Society. She is currently the manager of the Fair Lawn Gown Gemach and she partners with Bella Grinberg in the Fair Lawn Clothing and Furniture Gemach.

Together, Shirley and Avi have been Master Builders within Ahavat Achim, they dedicated the Yeshivat Bet Hillel campus in Passaic, and they funded DNA testing for bone marrow matches through Ezer Mitzion which resulted in saving 3 lives, to date.

Ahavat Achim's first annual Young Leadership Award will be honoring Kira and Andrew Wigod. Shortly after Kira and Andrew moved to Fair Lawn, 7 years ago, they had their first child, Cayleb. They have since welcomed Charley and Cooper to their beautiful family. The Wigods have thoroughly enjoyed co-chairing the Youth Committee for the past 6 years. They initiated the Child Protection & Policy Committee and put in place our shul's first policy.

Andrew is a member of the programming and the playground committees, as well as an active CSS member. Kira has also served on the playground committee and has run successful diaper, school supply, and Chanukah toy drives. Kira has also headed programming that highlighted the importance of mental health.

One of the most special aspects of Ahavat Achim is that we are a very hands-on community, where every member is truly invested in our success. As important as it is to honor and thank our dedicated members, please remember that our Annual Dinner is our largest single fundraising event. This event is critical to our budget.

To attend the dinner, you can either solicit ads from your local merchants and family members, or you can place your personal ads totaling \$200 per person. This evening should be a celebration with 100% participation. It will be a fun night with laughter, good food and drink, where we celebrate our community and honorees. Attached is an ad blank for your solicitations and personal use. Printed ad blanks are available in the shul lobby or by emailing AhavatAchimDinner@gmail.com. Alternatively, you can also place an ad or download the ad blank from the shul website by [clicking here](#). The dinner is less than 2 months away, so we need to start soliciting immediately.

Robert Safren, President

Please check appropriate box:

- PLATINUM PAGE.....\$1800
- GOLD PAGE.....\$1000
- SILVER PAGE.....\$800
- FULL PAGE.....\$400**
- HALF PAGE.....\$300
- QUARTER PAGE.....\$150
- EIGHTH PAGE (business card).....\$75
- LISTING\$50

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE () _____

SOLICITED BY: _____

****\$400 donation entitles you to 2 reservations for the dinner****
YOUR CONTRIBUTION IS TAX DEDUCTIBLE TO THE EXTENT ALLOWED BY LAW

Payment Options:

Check:

PAYPAL:

Visa or Mastercard:

Payable to Ahavat Achim

paypal.com/us/fundraiser/charity/1444321

Please fill in below

Name on Card: _____

Amount: \$ _____; Card #: _____; Exp. Date: _____ Sec Code: _____

Billing Address: _____; Phone #: _____

Authorized Signature: _____

Please return this ad blank with your payment to:

AHAVAT ACHIM, 18-25 SADDLE RIVER ROAD, FAIR LAWN, NJ 07410 AhavatAchimDinner@gmail.com

THE FINAL AD DEADLINE IS MAY 5, 2024

Ad copy (JPG, PDF, Word, etc...) can be emailed to AhavatAchimDinner@gmail.com
 For hard-copy submissions, please print ad clearly or attach business card (use a separate ad blank for each ad)

Special Recognition Pages:

Rabbi's page (\$18 per family)

Memorial pages for Cary Reichardt & Norman Greenstein (\$18)- Provide text and images for your listings to be added to the pages.

Memorial Listing (\$10 per name)

Children's Listing (\$10 per child)

Grandchildren's Listing (\$10 per grandchild)

בס"ד



2024 Journal Dinner Honoring

Shirley & Avrom Vann

Youth Award Honoring

Kira & Andrew Wigod

Sunday, May 19, 2024

11 Iyar 5784



AHAVAT ACHIM

קהלת אהבת אחים

THE FAMILY SHUL

TRIVIA NIGHT

for Adults

RSVP by 3/25!

SATURDAY, MARCH 30

DOORS OPEN AT 9:30 PM

BRING YOUR COMPETITIVE SPIRIT FOR
A NIGHT OF GAMING AND LAUGHTER

SNACKS WILL BE PROVIDED!

\$10 PER PERSON

EVENTS@AHAVATACHIM.COM





AHAVAT ACHIM
— קהלת אהבת אחים —
THE FAMILY SHUL

Ahavat Achim Journal Dinner

*Honoring
Shirley & Avrom Vann*

May 19, 2024

*With a special
Young Leadership Award
to*

*Kira & Andrew
Wigod*





AHAVAT ACHIM
קהלת אהבת אחים
THE FAMILY SHUL

Join us for a PLAYDATE IN THE PARK



Shabbat Afternoon
March 30 at 3:30 PM
Edison Park



BYOS: Bring Your Own Snacks!





Scholar in Residence

Rivka Herzfeld



5-6
April

Parshat
Shemini



Shabbat morning before kiddish:
"Bad Boys, Bad Boys": Nadav & Avihu

Pre-mincha shiur: "In the Midnight Hour (BaChatzot Halayla)
I Will Feel Your Power"

Seudah Shlishit: Accessibility in the Torah

Rivka has always loved learning Torah culminating in her earning a M.A. in Tanach from Yeshiva University's Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies. She enjoys teaching all sifrei Tanach, both formally and informally, to all age groups and levels of Judaic studies background. She is the founder and CEO of PASHUT solutions, a nonprofit that focuses on making Jewish communal spaces accessible. Rivka is personable, easygoing, has a terrific sense of humor, and never misses an opportunity to share a pun. She enjoys engaging in conversations of any kind, (never during davening, of course), especially on Torah topics.

Ahavat Achim Matzah Sale

Order handmade Kerestir shmura matzah through Ahavat Achim. Pick up at the shul before Pesach

Get fantastic handmade Matzah and support your shul at the same time!

\$37
PER 1LB REG.
(OTHER PRICES ON FORM)

with the Amazing Rabbi Sender



order by Thursday, March 28th

<https://forms.gle/rGHwczDwouBzFfv87>



AHAVAT ACHIM
עֲהָבַת אַחִים
THE PUBLIC SHUL



Covenant & Conversation

Jonathan Sacks
THE RABBI SACKS LEGACY

TZAV • יצ

FROM THE TEACHINGS AND WRITINGS OF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ז"ל

With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship of Covenant & Conversation, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel.

"I have loved the Torah of R' Chaim Schimmel ever since I first encountered it. It strives to be not just about truth on the surface but also its connection to a deeper truth beneath. Together with Anna, his remarkable wife of 60 years, they built a life dedicated to love of family, community, and Torah.

An extraordinary couple who have moved me beyond measure by the example of their lives." — Rabbi Sacks

This year's series of essays and videos were originally written and recorded by Rabbi Sacks ז"ל in 5771 (2010–2011).

These timeless messages are accompanied by a new [Family Edition](#) (2023–2024), created to inspire intergenerational learning on the parsha.

Why Civilisations Die

In *The Watchman's Rattle*, subtitled *Thinking Our Way Out of Extinction*, Rebecca Costa delivers a fascinating account of how civilisations die. When their problems become too complex, societies reach what she calls a cognitive threshold. They simply can't chart a path from the present to the future.

The example she gives is the Mayans. For a period of three and a half thousand years, between 2,600 BCE and 900 CE, they developed an extraordinary civilisation, spreading over what is today Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Belize, with an estimated population of 15 million people.

Not only were they expert potters, weavers, architects, and farmers, they also developed an intricate cylindrical calendar system, with celestial charts to track the movements of the stars and predict weather patterns. They had their own unique form of writing as well as an advanced mathematical system. Most impressively they developed a water-supply infrastructure involving a complex network of reservoirs, canals, dams, and levees.

Then suddenly, for reasons we still don't fully understand, the entire system collapsed.

Sometime between the middle of the eighth and ninth century the majority of the Mayan people simply disappeared. There have been many theories as to why it happened. It may have been a prolonged drought, overpopulation, internecine wars, a devastating epidemic, food shortages, or a combination of these and other factors. One way or another, having survived for 35 centuries, Mayan civilisation failed and became extinct.

Rebecca Costa's argument is that whatever the causes, the Mayan collapse, like the fall of the Roman Empire, and the Khmer Empire of thirteenth century Cambodia, occurred because problems became too many and complicated for the people of that time and place to solve. There was cognitive overload, and systems broke down.

It can happen to any civilisation. It may, she says, be happening to ours. The first sign of breakdown is gridlock. Instead of dealing with what everyone can see are major problems, people continue as usual and simply pass their problems on to the next generation. The second sign is a retreat into irrationality. Since people can no longer cope with the facts, they take refuge in religious consolations. The Mayans took to offering

sacrifices. Archaeologists have uncovered gruesome evidence of human sacrifice on a vast scale. It seems that, unable to solve their problems rationally, the Mayans focused on placating the gods by manically making offerings to them. So apparently did the Khmer.

Which makes the case of Jews and Judaism fascinating. They faced two centuries of crisis under Roman rule between Pompey's conquest in 63 BCE and the collapse of the Bar Kochba rebellion in 135 CE. They were hopelessly factionalised. Long before the Great Rebellion against Rome and the destruction of the Second Temple, Jews were expecting some major cataclysm.

What is remarkable is that they did not focus obsessively on sacrifices, like the Mayans and the Khmer. With their Temple destroyed, they instead focused on finding substitutes for sacrifice. One was *gemillat chassadim*, acts of kindness. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai comforted Rabbi Joshua, who wondered how Israel would atone for its sins without sacrifices, with the words:

“My son, we have another atonement as effective as this: acts of kindness, as it is written (Hosea 6:6), ‘I desire kindness and not sacrifice.’”

Avot deRabbi Natan 8

Another was Torah study. The Sages interpreted Malachi's words, “In every place offerings are presented to My name,” (Malachi 1:11) to refer to scholars who study the laws of sacrifice (Menachot 110a). Also:

“One who recites the order of sacrifices is as if he had brought them.”

Taanit 27b

Another was prayer. Hosea said, “Take words with you and return to the Lord . . . We will offer our lips

as sacrifices of bulls” (Hos. 14:2-3), implying that words could take the place of sacrifice.

He who prays in the house of prayer is as if he brought a pure oblation.

Yerushlami, Perek 5 Halachah 1

Yet another was *teshuvah*. The Psalm (51:19) says “the sacrifices of God are a contrite spirit.” From this the Sages inferred that “if a person repents it is accounted to him as if he had gone up to Jerusalem and built the Temple and the altar and offered on it all the sacrifices ordained in the Torah” (Vayikra Rabbah 7:2).

A fifth approach was fasting. Since going without food diminished a person's fat and blood, it counted as a substitute for the fat and blood of a sacrifice (Brachot 17a). A sixth was hospitality. “As long as the Temple stood, the altar atoned for Israel, but now a person's table atones for him” (Brachot 55a). And so on.

What is striking in hindsight is how, rather than clinging obsessively to the past, leaders like Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai thought forward to a worst-case-scenario future. The great question raised by parshat Tzav, which is all about different kinds of sacrifice, is not “Why were sacrifices commanded in the first place?” but rather, “Given how central they were to the religious life of Israel in Temple times, how did Judaism survive without them?”

The short answer is that overwhelmingly the Prophets, the Sages, and the Jewish thinkers of the Middle Ages realised that sacrifices were symbolic enactments of processes of mind, heart, and deed, that could be expressed in other ways as well. We can encounter the will of God by Torah study, engaging in the service of God by prayer, making financial sacrifice by charity, creating sacred fellowship by hospitality, and so on.

Jews did not abandon the past. We still refer constantly to the sacrifices in our prayers. But they did not cling to the past. Nor did they take refuge in irrationality. They thought through the future and created institutions like the synagogue, house of study, and school. These could be built anywhere, and would sustain Jewish identity even in the most adverse conditions.

That is no small achievement. The world's greatest civilisations have all, in time, become extinct while Judaism has always survived. In one sense that was surely Divine Providence. But in another it was the foresight of people like Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai who resisted cognitive breakdown, created solutions today for the problems of tomorrow, who did not seek refuge in the irrational, and who quietly built the Jewish future.

Surely there is a lesson here for the Jewish people today: Plan generations ahead. Think at least 25 years into the future. Contemplate worst-case scenarios. Ask “What we would do, if...” What saved the Jewish people was their ability, despite their deep and abiding faith, never to let go of rational thought, and despite their loyalty to the past, to keep planning for the future.



Around the Shabbat Table

1. Do you think society has now evolved to the point where it could survive indefinitely?
2. Why do you think finding alternatives to korbanot was key to the survival of the Jewish people?
3. What is something in your life that motivates you to continue striving for a great future?

● These questions come from this week's **Family Edition** to Rabbi Sacks' Covenant & Conversation. For an interactive, multi-generational study, check out the full edition at RabbiSacks.org/covenant-conversation-family-edition/tzav/why-civilisations-die/