



CANDLE LIGHTING 7:06 PM | 7 NISAN | APRIL 5, 2025 | HAVDALA 8:11 PM

שבת פרשת ויקרא
SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYIKRA

Haftorah is Isaiah 43:21-44:23. Final time for kiddish levanah of Nisan is all Thur. night, but if necessary through the first night of Pesach (Sat. night) until 2:08 AM. Don't say צדקתך צדק or אב הרחמים.

FRIDAY EVENING

MINCHA 7:10 PM

SHKIA 7:25 PM

TZAIT HAKOCHAVIM 8:05 PM

SHABBAT

HASHKAMA 7:45 AM

SHACHARIT - MAIN 9:00 AM

POST-HASHKAMA SHIUR HIATUS

LAST KRIAT SHEMA 9:46 AM

FUNDAMENTALS SHIUR 11:30 AM

PRE-MINCHA SHIUR 6:20 PM

MINCHA 7:00 PM

SHKIA 7:26 PM

MAARIV 8:11 PM

FROM THE RABBI

- (1) Shabbat Hagadol Drasha (One Week Early), ~11:00 AM, "Power, Pride & Purpose: Religious Zionism on Pesach".
- (2) The Haggadah Marathon will be hosted by Ahavat Achim this year, Tuesday, April 8, at 7:45 PM in the sanctuary.
- (3) Siyum Bechorim, Thursday, April 10, following each Shacharit minyon.
- (4) Bedikat Chametz is done Thursday night, April 10, after 8:11 PM.
- (5) Chometz burning at the Norton home, 20-11 Hunter Pl., Fair Lawn, will be Friday, April 11, 8:00 AM - Noon. No lulav, plastic, foil, paper, pasta, sauces or liquids. Bread, cereal, crackers and dry items only (plan accordingly). [KOL CHAMIRA IS NOT SAID].
- (6) Last time to eat Chometz is next Shabbat, April 12, at 10:45 AM.
- (7) Last time to possess Chometz is next Shabbat, April 12, 11:51 AM.
- (8) Kol Chamira must be said next Shabbat, April 12, before 11:51 AM.
- (9) Donate "wheat monies" for the poor before Pesach here: [Maot Chitmim](#). Funds will be distributed among: JFCSnnj - Jewish Family and Children's Services of Northern NJ, Tomchei Shabbos of Bergen County, Tachlit - To Give is to Receive (Israeli Organization), and Rabbi's Discretionary Fund.

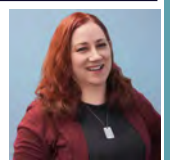
SHIR HASHIRUM PEREK-BY-PEREK ROUND-ROUND

Happening on Shabbat/7th day of Pesach. There are still chapters left to sign up for. Please sign up here: [Song of Songs](#).

JOURNAL DINNER HONOREES



Mazel tov to this year's honorees, Aliza & Richie Mayer, and to this year's Young Leadership Awardee Elizabeth Jacob! Get your ads in now by clicking here: [Online Ad Form](#).



SUNDAY
4/6

MONDAY
4/7

TUESDAY
4/8

WEDNESDAY
4/9

THURSDAY
4/10

FRIDAY
4/11

WEEKDAY MINYANIM AT AHAVAT ACHIM

SHACHARIT	8:00 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM	6:25 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM
2ND SHACHARIT MINYON - YISHTABACH AT 7:40 AM		7:25 AM	7:25 AM	7:25 AM	7:25 AM	7:25 AM
MINCHA/MAARIV	7:15 PM	7:16 PM	7:17 PM	7:18 PM	7:19 PM	7:20 PM

ZMANIM

Earliest Talit	5:35 AM	5:34 AM	5:32 AM	5:30 AM	5:28 AM	5:27 AM
Gedolah	1:31 PM	1:31 PM	1:31 PM	1:31 PM	1:31 PM	1:31 PM
Shkia	7:27 PM	7:28 PM	7:29 PM	7:30 PM	7:31 PM	
Tzait	8:07 PM	8:08 PM	8:09 PM	8:10 PM	8:11 PM	

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 6 - Hagolas Kelim/Pesach Kashering, 9:00 - 11:00 AM, at the shul.

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

Apr. 12 - Latest to eat Chometz: 10:45 AM

Apr. 12 - Latest to own Chometz: 11:51 AM

April 19 - Shir HaShirim Perek-By-Perek shiur between Mincha & Maariv. Please sign up to give a shiur here: [Song of Songs](#).

May 3 - Mizrahi Israel 360 Scholar-In-Residence Rabbanit Surale Rosen.

June 24 - Membership Meeting, 9:00 PM.

IN OUR FUTURE

May 31 - Seudah Shlishit sponsored by Eli Zezion in memory of שלמה בין אליהו.

June 14 - Seudah Shlishit sponsored by Eli Zezion in memory of ברוך מפציר בן שמואל.

BOARD MEETINGS

April 29 - 9:00 PM via Zoom.

May 27 - 9:00 PM via Zoom.

June 24 - 9:00 PM via Zoom.

ISRAEL ACTION INITIATIVE

Tzedakah Fund of the Month - Leket



Israel, Israel's national food bank. Give now by clicking here: [Leket Israel](#).

MAOT CHITIM

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



SHIURIM



• RAV SOLOVEITCHIK ON THE PARSHA, Tuesdays at 1:00 PM (<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 pre-mincha.

• FUNDAMENTALS OF JEWISH THOUGHT, after Kiddush, discussing our community's kashrut standards.

• MESORAH-IN-REVERSE lecture series at Seudah Shlishit.



• Tzurba M'Rabanan with Zack Doberman, Wednesdays at 8:30 PM. In-person at the shul and via Zoom.

• Mishna Chaburah, led by Jeff Safier, after 7:25 AM Shacharit minyon (≈10 minutes).

KIDDUSH & SEUDAH SHLISHIT



- Enjoy Scotch at Kiddush, please donate a bottle to the shul from time to time.
- To sponsor a Kiddush (prices start at \$318, plus a bottle of scotch) email dmgarfunkel@gmail.com.
- Want to know the menu for Kiddush? If so, please email dmgarfunkel@gmail.com so he can put you in the WhatsApp group.
- To sponsor Seudah Shlishit for \$136 (or in the case of multiple sponsors, \$100 per sponsor), email dmgarfunkel@gmail.com.

GITA COOPERWASSER ^{ה"ע} YOUTH EVENTS

April 19 - Shul Playground and Snacks

April 20 - Edison Playground and Snacks

GITA COOPERWASSER ^{ה"ע} SHABBAT YOUTH INFO



- **SHABBAT YOUTH LEADERS, 2ND - 5TH GRADE: NICOLE & LETIZIA; 4 YRS - 1ST GR.: PERRI, ABBY & ZOE**
- Youth group for in 2nd - 5th Graders starts at 9:00 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on left on entering the social hall.
- Youth group for children 4 years old through 1st Grade starts at 9:15 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on the right upon entering the social hall.
- Parent & Me, 9:00 AM in the Beit Midrash.
- Rabbi Meet & Greet, Friday night, kids can come over to the Rabbi after davening to receive a cup of grape juice and a ticket!
- 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.
- Children's corner at Seudah Shlishit, 1st to 5th graders will get 10 Torah questions in 10 minutes from Rabbi Shestack, with special snacks, tickets and more.

SHALOM BRAUSER, ADULT EDUCATOR/TEEN MENTOR

April 5 - Teen Mentor

18-25 Saddle River Road
Fair Lawn, NJ 07410
201.797.0502

<http://www.ahavatachim.org>

SHABBAT HAGADOL

(ADAPTED FROM AISH.COM)

The Shabbat prior to Passover is called Shabbat HaGadol. The source of the term is unclear as it is not found in the Tanach or Talmudic literature, though in the Middle Ages a number of authorities occupied themselves with explaining the origin of the term (see Machzor Vitri, § 259). One approach sees Shabbat HaGadol as originating with the special Haftarah, Malachi 3:23, which says "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the **great** and awesome day of the Lord."

Therefore the Talmud teaches: Rabbi Yehoshua says: "In Nissan the world was created ... the bondage of our ancestors ceased in Egypt; and in Nissan they will be redeemed in time to come." (Talmud Rosh HaShana 11a) The tradition, which accords Elijah a primary role in the Messianic age, calls upon us to read the portion of the prophet which alludes to that "great" day.

Other commentaries look back to the past for an explanation for the term. The Talmud teaches that the day the Jews left Egypt -- the 15th of the month of Nissan -- was a Thursday, and the 10th of the month was the previous Shabbat: "As to Nissan in which the Israelites departed from Egypt, on the fourteenth they killed their Passover sacrifices, on the fifteenth they went forth, and in the evening [of the 15th] the firstborn were smitten... and that day was a Thursday. (Shabbath 87b)."

The significance of the 10th is mentioned in the Torah: Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, "In the tenth day of this month they shall take every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a house." (Exodus 12:3) Tosfot point out that by taking the lamb, the Jews piqued the interest, and the ire, of the firstborn of Egypt. They pleaded with Pharaoh to release the Jews. When he refused, the firstborn rebelled and attacked their own parents. Therefore the day is considered great, due to the miracle of God which was manifest and the subsequent unraveling of Egyptian society. This explanation though points to the significance of the 10th of Nissan rather than to the Shabbat which precedes Passover. While that 10th of the month in Egypt happened to fall on Shabbat, its significance has apparently no intrinsic connection with Shabbat.

Another idea comes from the Sfat Emet who says that the term "Shabbat HaGadol" results from the Shabbat taking on new significance upon the Jews redemption from Egypt causing Shabbat to acquire an historical identity intertwined with theology. The Sfat Emet explains that Shabbat had now become "greater", with the second aspect of Shabbat, articulated in the repetition of the Ten Commandments, realized.

DAVID SCHWITZER ד"ר שוויצער SOCIAL HALL

Contact Lori at garfmom@gmail.com to book the David Schwitzer ד"ר שוויצער Social Hall for an event or occasion. \$250 (members), \$325 (Associates), or \$400 paid in advance for non-members, plus the cost of clean up (and a \$150 refundable security/cleaning deposit). Private caterers must be approved by the Rabbi.

CHESED TEAM

If you or someone you know needs assistance, email us at chesed@ahavatachim.org.

YAHARZEIT 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 yahrzeit@ahavatachim.org to arrange.

DONATE A SEFER, ETC.

Donate Siddurim & Machzorim (\$40), and Chumashim (\$60). Contact Jeff Safier at jeff.Safier@gmail.com for details.

MISHEBAYRACH

For a Mishebayrach pledge 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."

HONORARIA

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

SINGLES SHIDDUCH GROUP

Reach out to Rabbi Shestack or Sara Levine (saralevine06@gmail.com if interested).

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 Steve Plotnick for questions or clarifications.

MEN'S CLUB

Email MensClub@AhavatAchim.Org to join the Men's Club.

THURSDAY, APRIL 10

First born have a custom to fast, redeem themselves with money for Tzedakah, or participate in a Seudat Mitzvah such as a siyum. In the evening search for chometz everywhere we bring it during the year. Someone not participating in the search places ten pieces of chometz in random locations to which we bring chometz during the year (failure to do so does not invalidate the search, but be very careful to find all ten pieces). Before the search recite the Bracha "אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על ביעור" – on the removal of chometz (for the search is the beginning of the process). After the search, one declares "כל חמירא" (preferably in a language that he understands) nullifying all chometz and sourdough of which he is unaware.

FRIDAY, APRIL 11

The chometz you authorized Rabbi Shestack to sell must be placed in a reserved area by 11:30 AM, after which the sale will have taken place.

EREV PESACH - SHABBAT, APRIL 12

It is forbidden to eat Matzah on Erev Pesach, after the appearance of three stars (the Mishna in Pesachim refers to this as the "Light of the Fourteenth"). Chometz set aside for breakfast may be eaten until the end of the fourth proportionate hour after dawn (10:45 AM). One may not possess chometz after the fifth proportionate hour (11:51 AM), and after any chometz is properly disposed of say the formula of "כל חמירא" nullifying and making free all chometz of which we are both unaware and aware, but do not make any Bracha (one should have in mind that if the sale to the non-Jew is found invalid, such Chometz too is nullified and rendered free). One must not prepare for the Seder on Shabbat.

PESACH - SATURDAY/SUNDAY NIGHTS, APRIL 12 & 13 - SEDARIM

Upon the appearance of three small stars, most married men don Kittels and take their place at the table. The leader has someone else pour each of the Four Cups of wine for him (in the manner of a wealthy free man) and begin the Seder with Kiddush, including שהחיינו. We follow the order presented in the Haggadot. All four cups at the Seder must be full, containing at least a רביעית of preferably red wine (a רביעית is a little more than 3 ounces or 86.5 grams). One should drink the entire cup, but must finish at least the majority of a רביעית. The Four Cups, as well as the eating of the Matzah, Hillel's sandwich and Afikomen, must be done in a reclining position to one's left side (בהסיבת שמאל). Women and children are obligated to drink the Four Cups, although children can be given small cups relative to their age and size. Romaine lettuce must be thoroughly cleansed and then carefully inspected for bugs. The horseradish must be grated.

PRAYER FOR DEW - MUSSAF - APRIL 13

The Chazzan dons a Kittel. We say "משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם" during silent Shemonei Esrei at Mussaf. In his Repetition the Chazzan stops saying "...ומוריד הגשם". The congregation no longer says "...ומוריד הגשם" at Mincha. It is advisable to repeat 101 (or at least 90) times "אתה רב להושיע מכלכל חיים"; so that it becomes fluent and habitual, avoiding any future doubt as to whether one failed to omit "משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם".

SECOND NIGHT - COUNTING THE OMER - APRIL 13

Wait until Tzait before lighting candles or preparing for the 2nd day. Maariv begins after Tzait. Each night before counting the Omer we recite the Bracha "אשר קדשנו במצותיו... וצונו על ספירת העומר" and then proclaim the current day of the Omer. Both the Bracha and the count itself must be done while standing. It is best to count the Omer after Tzait. If one counted before then, it is proper to count again after Tzait without a Bracha. If one counted earlier than Plag HaMincha he must count again with a Bracha when the stars appear. If one forgot to count at night, he must count during the day without a Bracha. He may then continue to count again on all of the successive nights with a Bracha. If one failed to count an entire day, one continues to count the following nights without a Bracha.

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 for 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.

HOW TO DONATE TO THE SHUL USING PAYPAL

Please do not simply pay the shul using PayPal, as that incurs a 3% service charge that will get charged to the shul. Instead, please use our fee-free dedicated PayPal link <http://paypal.com/us/fundraiser/charity/1444321>. PayPal will email you a receipt for your charitable donation and the shul will receive 100% of your donation. [Make sure you click the "SHARE MY NAME" box so the shul will know who paid so that we can credit your account.]



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AHAVAT ACHIM

PRESENTS A SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE SHABBAT WITH

RABBANIT SURALE ROSEN

SAVE THE DATE

SHABBAT PARASHAT TAZRIA-METZORAH

MAY 2–3, 2025



Rabbanit Surale Rosen heads London School of Jewish Studies' Iyun Halakha programme. She headed Metivta – Matan Jlm Advanced Talmud Programme and founded Shayla – Matan's Halachic Online Responsa where she wrote and edited *Shutim*. Rabbanit Surale is also a certified Rabbinic Arbitrator and has a certificate in mediation for family conflict resolution from The Israeli Centre for Negotiation and Mediation. She holds degrees in Talmud and English Lit, teaches Gemarah in Migdal Oz and Halakha as well as Midrash in various communities and shuls. Rabbanit Surale is on the board of the Rabbinic organization "Beit Hillel" and is actively involved in various programmes for female Orthodox religious leadership, including one with the Ministry of Religious Affairs on creating female Rabbinic examinations authorized by the government. She lives in Jerusalem, Married to Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Dov Rosen, Rabbi of the Yakar community and is a grateful mother of girls and boys.

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Covenant & Conversation

Jonathan Sacks
THE RABBI SACKS LEGACY

VAYIKRA • ויקרא

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 were originally written and recorded by Rabbi Sacks ז"ל in 5772 (2011–2012). These timeless messages are accompanied by a new [Family Edition](#) created to inspire intergenerational learning on the Parsha and Haftara.

Why Do We Sacrifice?

The laws of sacrifices that dominate the early chapters of the Book of Leviticus are among the hardest in the Torah to relate to in the present. It has been almost two thousand years since the Temple was destroyed and the sacrificial system came to an end. But Jewish thinkers, especially the more mystical among them, strove to understand the inner significance of the sacrifices and the statement they made about the relationship between humanity and God. They were thus able to rescue their spirit even if their physical enactment was no longer possible. Among the simplest yet most profound was the comment made by Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the first Rebbe of Lubavitch. He noticed a grammatical oddity about the second line of this Parsha:

Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: "When one of you offers a sacrifice to the Lord, the sacrifice must be taken from the animal, cattle or flock."

Lev. 1:2

Or so the verse *would* read if it were constructed according to the normal rules of grammar. However, the word order of the sentence in Hebrew is strange and unexpected. We would expect to read: *adam*

mikem ki yakriv, "when one of you offers a sacrifice." Instead, what it says is *adam ki yakriv mikem*, "when one offers a sacrifice of you."

The essence of sacrifice, said Rabbi Shneur Zalman, is that we offer ourselves. We bring to God our faculties, our energies, our thoughts and emotions. The physical form of sacrifice – an animal offered on the altar – is only an external manifestation of an inner act. The real sacrifice is *mikem*, "of you." We give God something of ourselves.¹

What exactly is it that we give God when we offer a sacrifice? The Jewish mystics, among them Rabbi Shneur Zalman, spoke about two souls that each of us has within us – the animal soul (*nefesh habeheimit*) and the Godly soul (*neshama*). On the one hand we are physical beings. We are part of nature. We have physical needs: food, drink, shelter. We are born, we live, we die. As Ecclesiastes puts it:

Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: as one dies, so dies the other. Both have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is a mere fleeting breath.

Ecc. 3:19

¹ Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, *Likkutei Torah* (Brooklyn, NY: Kehot, 1984), Vayikra 2aff.

Yet we are not simply animals. We have within us immortal longings. We can think, speak, and communicate. We can, by acts of speaking and listening, reach out to others. We are the one life-form known to us in the universe that can ask the question “why?” We can formulate ideas and be moved by high ideals. We are not governed by biological drives alone. Psalm 8 is a hymn of wonder on this theme:

When I consider Your heavens,
the work of Your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which You have set in place,
what is man that You are mindful of him,
the son of man that You care for him?
Yet You made him a little lower than the angels
and crowned him with glory and honour.
You made him ruler over the works of Your
hands;
You put everything under his feet.

Ps. 8:4–7

Physically, we are almost nothing; spiritually, we are brushed by the wings of eternity. We have a Godly soul. The nature of sacrifice, understood psychologically, is thus clear. What we offer God is (not just an animal but) the *nefesh habeheimit*, the animal soul within us.

How does this work out in detail? A hint is given by the three types of animals mentioned in the verse in the second line of Parshat Vayikra (see Lev. 1:2): *beheimah* (animal), *bakar* (cattle), and *tzon* (flock). Each represents a separate animal-like feature of the human personality.

Beheimah represents the animal instinct itself. The word refers to domesticated animals. It does not imply the savage instincts of the predator. What it means is something more tame. Animals spend their time searching for food. Their lives are bounded by

the struggle to survive. To sacrifice the animal within us is to be moved by something more than mere survival.

Wittgenstein, when asked what the task of philosophy was, answered, “To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle.”² The fly, trapped in the bottle, bangs its head against the glass, trying to find a way out. The one thing it fails to do is to look up. The Godly soul within us is the force that makes us look up, beyond the physical world, beyond mere survival, in search of meaning, purpose, goal.

The Hebrew word *bakar*, cattle, reminds us of the word *boker*, dawn, literally to “break through,” as the first rays of sunlight break through the darkness of night. Cattle, stampeding, break through barriers. Unless constrained by fences, cattle are no respecters of boundaries. To sacrifice the *bakar* is to learn to recognise and respect boundaries – between holy and profane, pure and impure, permitted and forbidden. Barriers of the mind can sometimes be stronger than walls.

Finally, the word *tzon*, flock, represents the herd instinct – the powerful drive to move in a given direction because others are doing likewise.³ The great figures of Judaism – Abraham, Moses, the Prophets – were distinguished precisely by their ability to stand apart from the herd; to be different, to challenge the idols of the age, to refuse to capitulate to the intellectual fashions of the moment. That, ultimately, is the meaning of holiness in Judaism. *Kadosh*, the holy, is something set apart, different, separate, distinctive. Jews were the only minority in history consistently to refuse to assimilate to the dominant culture or convert to the dominant faith.

The noun *korban*, “sacrifice,” and the verb *lehakriv*, “to offer something as a sacrifice,” actually mean “that which is brought close” and “the act of bringing close.” The key element is not so much giving something up (the usual meaning of

² Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (New York: Macmillan, 1953), p. 309.

³ The classic works on crowd behaviour and the herd instinct are Charles Mackay, *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* (London: Richard Bentley, 1841); Gustave le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1897); Wilfred Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1916); and Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* (New York: Viking Press, 1962).

sacrifice) but rather bringing something close to God. *Lehakriv* is to bring the animal element within us to be transformed through the Divine fire that once burned on the altar and still burns at the heart of prayer if we truly seek closeness to God.

By one of the ironies of history, this ancient idea has become suddenly contemporary. Darwinism, the decoding of the human genome, and scientific materialism (the idea that the material is all there is) have led to the widespread conclusion that we are all animals, nothing more, nothing less. We share 98 per cent of our genes with the primates. We are, as Desmond Morris used to put it, “the naked ape.”⁴ On this view, *Homo sapiens* exist by mere accident. We are the result of a random series of genetic mutations and just happen to be more adapted to survival than other species. The *nefesh habeheimit*, the animal soul, is all there is.

The refutation of this idea – and it is surely among the most reductive ever to be held by intelligent minds – lies in the very act of sacrifice itself as the mystics understood it. We can redirect our animal instincts. We can rise above mere survival. We are

capable of honouring boundaries. We can step outside our environment. As Harvard neuroscientist Steven Pinker put it: “Nature does not dictate what we should accept or how we should live,” adding, “and if my genes don’t like it they can go jump in the lake.”⁵ Or, as Katharine Hepburn majestically said to Humphrey Bogart in *The African Queen*, “Nature, Mr Allnut, is what we were put on earth to rise above.”

We can transcend the *beheimah*, the *bakar*, and the *tzon*. No animal is capable of self-transformation, but we are. Poetry, music, love, wonder – the things that have no survival value but which speak to our deepest sense of being – all tell us that we are not mere animals, assemblages of selfish genes. By bringing that which is animal within us close to God, we allow the material to be suffused with the spiritual and we become something else: no longer slaves of nature but servants of the living God.



Around the Shabbat Table

1. Which of the three animal tendencies mentioned (base survival instinct, boundary-breaking, or herd mentality) do you find most challenging to overcome in your own life?
2. How does prayer serve as a form of sacrifice in contemporary Jewish practice?
3. How might viewing sacrifice as transformation rather than loss change your approach to observance?

● 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 <https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation-family-edition/vayikra/why-do-we-sacrifice/>



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⁴ Desmond Morris, *The Naked Ape* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1984).

⁵ Steven Pinker, *How the Mind Works* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), p. 54.