

Pulse OF Emunah

ANI
MAAMIN
Foundation

ISSUE # 218 | PARSHAS TZAV

FRIDAY MARCH 26TH, 2021 | 14 NISSAN, 5781

life

LESSONS

READY TO TRY

Adapted from Touched by a Story by Rabbi Spero, with the permission of the copyright holders, Artscroll/Mesorah Publications, Ltd. (Artscroll)

Tzvi had Asperger's Syndrome, a form of autism. His rebbi, Rabbi Levine, worked on building his students' self-esteem. Every week, they gave a two-minute *dvar Torah* for a scenario—sister's wedding, great-grandparent's *levayah*, atheist convention. After, they voted and the best speaker got pizza. Everyone had a chance to win. But Tzvi never tried to speak.

For the year finale, each boy prepared a talk on the Gemara they were learning, a real *chaburah*. Tzvi's mother called Rabbi Levine and asked if Tzvi could present. She assured him he had practiced. After recess, Rabbi Levine introduced Tzvi, who stood up—but could not say a word. For over a minute, the room was silent. Finally Rabbi Levine told Tzvi he could speak after the next boy. Tzvi nodded and sat down.

When the next boy finished, Rabbi Levine introduced Tzvi once more—but again he froze. Some of the other students had their eyes closed, some were wiping away tears, and some were praying. Rabbi Levine told the boys that sometimes the words of Torah in our souls are so holy they never materialize in This World but go straight to the heavens. Still, he felt terrible. He dismissed the class. But as he walked out, Tzvi said, "Rebbi? Can I try again tomorrow?"

Friday came and Tzvi refused. But Monday, he looked at the rebbi and said, "I'm ready." He went up front and gave a flawless *chaburah*. The class erupted in a standing ovation. Needless to say, Tzvi won the pizza.

We may fail, but we can't be afraid to look to Hashem one more time and say, "I'm ready." We do not know if we will succeed, but we must not be afraid to try.



gem

OF THE WEEK

UNDER HIS ROOF

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

Based on the commentary of Rabbi Shamshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.

From the start, the *korban Pesach* is stated to be slaughtered only in order to be eaten by those people who registered for it, who have symbolically nullified their existence and surrendered themselves to Hashem. In no other *korban* is *achila* as essential as it is in the *korban Pesach*, the *korban* of freedom. After all, what does it mean to be free and independent if one does not have the free use and enjoyment of one's own personality? To be able to use all of one's physical energy and mental ability for one's own purposes—this is the essence of independence.

This is why it is so important for this particular *korban* to be eaten by its registrants. The animal symbolizes their personalities even before its slaughter, and the act of offering represents the nullification of their existence and their total commitment to G-d. *Achilas haPesach* symbolizes the freedom and independence that the Jewish people attain by devoting themselves to Hashem. Through *achilas haPesach*, they regain a sense of

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powerful
PRAYER

HASHIVEINU II:
TRUE SERVICE



"*V'karveinu malkeinu la'avodasecha*" means "help us become aware that we are serving You in our *avodah*." This refers both to *tefillah* and the observance of *mitzvos*. When we daven, it is usually without the awareness that we are talking directly to Hashem. So here we ask Him for help elevating our *tefillah* to the level of *avodasecha*, in which we clearly know we are communicating with Him. The same applies to the *mitzvos*, which are often done perfunctorily, without realizing that these acts fulfill the will of Hashem. We ask Hashem for help in elevating our service to the level where it becomes *avodasecha*.

Adapted from The World of Prayer by Rabbi Elie Munk (Feldheim)

**From our
readers...**

Our family enjoys the weekly Pulse of Emunah very much.
The lessons are profound, and the stories well written.

- Mordechai P.

DAYS OF RENEWAL

by Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation


We will return to our history series after Pesach. For now, we will focus on the upcoming *chag*.

The Torah prescribed a special *korban* for the second day of Pesach, the *korban omer*. This was a public sacrifice, with just one *korban* brought for the entire Jewish people. Omer is actually the name of a measurement, the same amount that is taken as *challah* when we bake bread. Until the *korban omer* was brought, no one was allowed to eat, or even harvest, the new crop of grain, a prohibition called *chadash*. The Omer was not brought from wheat, as most meal offerings are, but from barley, which ripens first in the spring before other crops. After that, we may harvest and eat from all of them.

The Sefer Hachinuch shares an inspiring thought: we must not take for granted the renewal of the agricultural cycle, but rather recognize and be grateful to the Creator for once again giving us the crops that will maintain our health and our lives. Just as we dedicate the “firsts” of *bikkurim*, *challah*, and *pidyon haben*, so too do we offer the first of the new harvest as a *korban* to Hashem, giving thanks for His generosity.

Today, we still fulfill the command to count Sefiras HaOmer from the second night of Pesach until the night before Shavuos. Since the command was to count from the day of the *korban*, most poskim hold that the mitzvah is now *d'rabbanan*. The Chinuch explains that the counting connects Pesach to Shavuos; Hashem's purpose in taking us out of Mitzrayim was not just to relieve us from slavery, but to transform us into the *am haTorah* at Har Sinai. In that sense, Pesach is secondary in importance to Shavuos. So we count the days in anticipation of an even greater occurrence.


Sefirah connects the holidays, but what the Chinuch does not seem to explain is how this relates to the *korban omer*. Perhaps the reason is that on the day the Omer is brought, people remind themselves that there is a Creator Who controls every aspect of life, and in His kindness has once again renewed our crops.

In the very first *pasuk* of the Torah, Rashi tells us that the world was created for the Torah and for Yisrael: that there should be a people who accept the Torah and do the will of Hashem. On Pesach we became Yisrael, Hashem's nation, and on Shavuos we accepted the Torah. Hence, the *korban omer* is an excellent opportunity to connect Pesach to the even greater milestone of Shavuos. 

To be continued...

self after having been slaves, absorbed in the personality of their master.

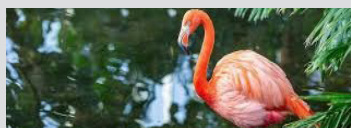
Hashem builds His nation not from free people, but free families, formed by birth or choice. Only within the framework of the family can an individual find gratification in his own personality. This is symbolized by putting the blood on the *mezuzos* and *mashkof* of the home. The idea of “home” comprises two elements: social insulation from society, and physical insulation from nature. The first is signified by doorposts (*mezuzos*, from *lazuz*, “to move”—to control who may enter and exit), representing walls, a social barrier. The second is signified by the lintel (*mashkof*, from *lehashkif*, “to look down from above”), representing the roof, which provides protection against nature.

When the slaves became men—fathers and sons in families of their own—they receive *mezuzos* and a *mashkof* from Hashem, protection from human and natural forces. But first they must devote themselves to Him, *shechitas haPesach* symbolizing the surrender of their former existence. Only then can they find gratification in their own personality, the *achilas haPesach*, in a home protected by Hashem. This is symbolized by the blood on the doorposts and lintel of the home. It is not walls that protect from hostile human elements, nor is it the roof that shelters from nature—rather, it is Hashem Who, between the walls and under the roof, protects those who devote themselves to Him. 




wonder WORLD

ONE BIG HAPPY FAMILY



What tools do flamingos have to find food?

The flamingo's body is well equipped for its environment. Its webbed feet help it wade through muddy water in search of food while its tall, thin legs enable it to keep its body dry. With its long neck, the flamingo can bend all the way downward so its head and bill reach the bottom of shallow waters. It can also hold its breath for several minutes there as it looks for food.

Flamingos are very social birds and like to congregate in large groups. It is not uncommon to see thousands or even tens of thousands of flamingos living together in one colony. In fact, East Africa is home to the largest known flamingo colony in the world, with over one million flamingos! 

Adapted from *Exploring the Wild World of Animals & Birds* (Israel Bookshop Publications)