

PARSHAS VAYIKRA

CHASSIDIC INSIGHTS, HIGHLIGHTS AND HAPPENINGS

פרשת ויקרא

March 21, 2024 / י"א אדר ב' תשפ"ד



What's happening in Belz

SOME PURIM MINHAGIM (customs) IN BELZ

Machatzis Hashekel

The Purim rituals and celebrations start before reading the Megillah. The Belzer Rav shlita gives a half shekel in Israeli currency and a half American dollar for himself and his Rebbetzin. The "מחצית השקל" is placed in a copper bowl that the Rav shlita received from his holy predecessor, Reb Aharon of Belz zt"l. The money gets redeemed and is given to tzedakah.

Megillah

Thousands of Chassidim from various cities in Eretz Yisroel come to Yerushalayim to hear the Belzer Rav shlita reading the Megillah. Like all previous Belzer Rebbes, the Rebbe reads the megillah in the unique style known to Belz, which brings the Purim story to life.

Mishloach Manos

After Shacharis, the Ruv shlita gives Mishloach Manos to his gabbaim (personal assistants) and community activists who assist the Ruv shlita in his home and various chessed and charitable activities. The Mishloach Manos consists of food you can eat at the Purim Seudah.

Purim Tisch

Gedolei Yisroel from Eretz Yisroel send Mishloach Manos to the Belzer Rav shlita. The Mishloach Manos is placed on the 'tisch' – table for the Rav to see.

Following the fish appetizer course during the

seudah, it is customary in Belz, during the Rebbe's Purim Tisch, to place a big bowl of pure alcohol 96% on the tisch (table) and dip the challah in, taste it, and distribute it to all chassidim.

The Purim Tisch is unique as it's a spiritual ceremony full of Simcha - merriment. There is plenty of joyous singing, clapping, and dancing, yet no raucous or heavy drinking is present.

Purim Rav

The source of Purim Rav is an old Minhag – a custom that became a tradition in the Chassidish and Yeshivish courts. A simple Yid dons rabbinical attire and is crowned "Purim Rav" by acting his part and adding jest to the joyous day of Purim.

With time, the custom took on a spiritual realm. Tzaddikim imparted special powers to the 'Purim Rav,' who, with his spiritual powers, could nullify evil decrees in Heaven.

In Belz, the Purim Rav takes on the unique role of "וגילו ברעדה" – joy and tremor. The Purim Rav in Belz has a loftier position.

When Reb Aharon of Belz zt"l arrived to Eretz Yisroel, he incorporated the 'Purim Rav' minhag, saying, "Here in Eretz Yisroel there are lots of Hungarian Yidden who were used to the Purim Rav concept, and we will do it here too!"

The chassid R' Yom Tov Klein a"h initially served as Purim Rav. He donned a 'spodik' (tall shtreimel) and a long beard and sat to the left of Reb Aharon of Belz during the tisch. The Purim Rav used to heap brochos upon the Rebbe and chassidim. The chassid R' Yisroel Klein a"h, the father of the Belzer Rav's shlita gabbai, served as the next

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Purim Rav. His role started Shabbos before Purim, where he sat near the Rebbe during tisch. On Purim, he used to collect tzedakah and drank a 'l'chaim' while heaping brochos upon the Belzer Rebbe shlita and all present – with the Rebbe reciprocating his brochos.

R' Yisroel Klein's children related that during Purim when their father was high, he used to bentch (bless) his children with Birchah Kohanim, just like on Erev Yom Kippur. R' Yisroel explained the custom to his children saying that 'Purim is just like Yom Kippur!'

In 1996, following the death of R' Yisroel Klein a"h, the renowned chassid and Dayan from Bnei Brak, Harav Yehoshua Fink shlita was appointed as Purim Rav.

In a recent interview with Reb Yehoshua, he shared that the Belzer Rav shlita repeatedly tells him, "Purim day has special הימלישע כוחות – Heavenly strength!" He also said that he should prepare special 'grammen – poetic recitals' to sing during the Purim tisch.

Reb Yehoshua says that each year, he asks the Belzer Rebbe shlita what topics to include in his grammen and asks permission to say grammen. One year, he was told not to. The Belzer Rav told me: "Purim, you can say things you can't say during the year!"

Reb Yehoshua notes that throughout the year, he can deliver impromptu grammen, but for Purim, it's different. He meticulously prepares by penning words, so his deliverance should be clear and compelling. He alludes to the words in Megillas Esther, "ובבאה לפני מלך אמר עם הספר" – when you come before a 'King' to deliver grammen, then, "עם הספר" you recite from a paper and not spontaneously!



פרשת זכור

On Shabbos פרשת זכור – the Shabbos before Purim, there is a mitzvah of זכירת עמלק – to remember how עמלק attacked us and that the whole world was afraid of the hand of Hashem. The obligation is on men, and some opinions hold that the obligation is on women, too.

Reb Tzadok HaCohen zt"l writes in his Sefer Divrei Sofrim, "I learned from my teachers that Shabbos Zachor is mesugal (prone) for bearing children. Since we read in the Torah about destroying Amalek, which ultimately means that Amalek shouldn't have offspring, as kedusha (holiness) counteracts tumah (impurity), the offspring of Bnei Yisrael will multiply..."

Reb Aharon of Belz tz"l once told someone who didn't have children that Purim is a mesugal time for bearing children. He explained that Hashem also observes the mitzvah of mishloach manos. Hashem's mishloach manos are children.

Moshe Rabbeinu was born on the 7th of Adar, meaning his shalom zachor was on this Shabbos.

Chazal teaches us that on the 7th of Adar, all Jewish women gave birth to boys. This happened precisely nine months from the day after Mattan Torah, on the 7th of Sivan. In jest, in commemoration of all those shalom zachors celebrated on this Shabbos, we call this Shabbos Zachor.

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Everyone loves a good story, especially a Chassidishe story...

ונפש כי תחטא (ויקרא ה:א)
And if a person will sin

The chassidim of Rebbe Reb Eizikel Kaliver zt"l asked him, whom shall they travel to after his petirah (when he departs from this world) for guidance? The Rebbe of Kaliv replied: "When you find a Rebbe who can remove a neshamah (soul) from a person, cleanse it and return it to its place – to such a Rebbe you shall cleave."

After the Kaliver Rebbe's petirah, three of the holiest chassidim set out to find a Rebbe. They traveled around the many towns and hamlets in search of a mentor until they arrived in Ropshitz, where Rabbi Naftoli zt"l was teaching Chassidus. When they entered the Ropshitzer Rebbe's home, they encountered a Yid crying to the Rebbe for help, as he finds it challenging to find a way to do Teshuva for his grave aveira (sin). The Ropshitzer Rebbe told the Yid: "Tell me, how did a Yid even possess the idea of performing such a grave aveira?"

When this Yid heard the question/admonishment, he fainted and had to be revived. The Ropshitzer Rebbe continued, "Perhaps you can tell me what bad things Hashem did to you that you're paying Him back with such a grave aveira?" He fainted again and again had to be revived.

The Ropshitzer was not done yet. He said to the Yid: "Hashem gives you health, livelihood, and everything in life – and for all this, you dare to sin?!" The Yid fainted for the third time and, again,

was brought to. The Ropshitzer Rav then told him: "You can now go home."

The three Kaliver chassidim witnessing this incident smiled to themselves. The Ropshitzer Rav turned to them and complained: "You seem to be happy to see me torturing a hapless Yid. Am I such a murderer in your eyes?" The chassidim then relayed to their newfound Rebbe what their late Rebbe advised them, adding that they just witnessed how a Rebbe can remove a neshamah, cleanse it and then return it on the spot. Understandably, they became Ropshitzer chassidim.

אם לוא יגיד ונשא עונו (ויקרא ה:ב)
If he does not testify, he shall bear his iniquity.

The city of Slonim experienced a harsh winter. Snow covered the city's streets, making it difficult to leave the house. The poverty-stricken inhabitants suffered the most during that harsh winter since they could not go from house to house, collecting alms to feed their hungry children.

Their beloved Rabbi, the Gaon Reb Eizikel Charif zt"l, bundled up and braved the snowstorm to visit the rich people of the community to collect funds for the city's needy families. He went from one wealthy person's home to the next, and all gave graciously. However, there was one rich man known for his stinginess, whom the Rav knew in advance that he would need to be tactful to receive a donation from him.

The Rav knocked on his door, and when the wealthy person saw the Rav of the Kehilla at the front door, he quickly invited him inside. The Rav sat down and remained quiet. After a few minutes, he stood up and returned to the front door. The miser asked the Rav: "Why such a strange visit?"

The Rav replied: "In Parshas Vayikra, it says אם לוא

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EVERYONE LOVES A GOOD STORY, ESPECIALLY A CHASSIDISHE STORY

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יגיד; the word "לוא" is unusual as it has an additional letter "ו" in it. Chazal learned from this that כשם שמצוה על אדם לומר דבר הנשמע, כך מצוה על אדם שלא לומר דבר שאינו נשמע – just as a person is commanded to speak up when his words are heeded, so too it is a mitzvah for a person not to say something that will not be listened to”.

The Rav concluded: "I have already performed the Mitzvah of saying to those who listen to me. Now I want to grab the opportunity and fulfill the mitzvah of not saying to those who do not want to hear my request!”.

Understandably, the wealthy miser gave the Rav a generous donation.

ושחט אותו (א:יא)
He shall slaughter it.

The chassid Reb Shulem Shochet zt”l served as the shochet (ritual slaughterer) in Lizhensk and, later, as shochet for the elderly chassidim living in America.

There is a Belz minhag (custom) for the shochet to show his חלף (slaughtering knife) to their Rebbe so that they can inspect the blade that it is sharp and smooth, without any blemishes.

Reb Shulem once traveled to the old country and used the opportunity to visit his Rebbe, Maran Reb Yisrochor Dov of Belz zt”l. When allowed into the Rebbe’s inner sanctuary, he handed his Kvittel (written note with his requests for a blessing) and used the opportunity to show Maran his Chalaf (slaughtering knife). After finishing to inspect the knife, Maran asked him: דער בהמה זעהט אויך אמאהל דעם”

חלף?” – does the animal also see this knife?”

Maran Reb Yisrocher Dov had a deeper intention with this message. Unfortunately, in the first half of the 20th century, America was rife with lax shochtim (ritual slaughterers), who used to set aside one well-sharpened knife to show their Rav, and so make them believe that all their other knives were fit for purpose. In reality, they used a different knife to slaughter the animals, which was not compliant with the required stringencies of halachic ritual slaughter.



The Rebbe’s Torah

איש יהודי היה בשושן הבירה ושמו מרדכי בן יאיר בן שמעי בן קיש
(אסתר ב:ה)

Chazal translates “בן קיש” as “הקיש על שערי רחמים ונפתחו” – who knocked on the gates of mercy, and they were opened for him.”

The Medrash relates: During the times of Reb Tanchuma, there was a drought. Reb Tanchuma decreed a fast, but it didn’t help. He came to the Beis Medrash and announced: “Yidden, go and perform a chessed for one another, look for who needs help, and through your acts of kindness, Hashem will have mercy on us and send rain.”

Afterward, Reb Tanchuma inquired about the chessed acts that had been performed. He was told that a divorcee sent his ex-wife money as he heard she didn’t have what to eat. Reb Tanchuma exclaimed: “Hashem if a human being can have rachmanos (mercy) on his ex-wife, won’t you have mercy on your children?”

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THE REBBE'S TORAH

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And it started to rain.

This is what *means* שהקיש על שערי רחמים ונפתחו לו. Mordechai Hatzaddik told Hashem: "Ribbono Shel Olam, I had mercy on King Achashveirosh when Bigsan and Seresh wanted to kill him, and I saved him. If I had rachmanos on a rasha (wicked man) then Hashem, You have rachmanos on your children.

That is why our Chachamim established the mitzvah of sending Mishloach Manos (food gifts) and Matanos L'Evyonim (charity to the poor) on Purim – to evoke rachamim on the Yidden. When His children have rachmanos on one another, it awakens Hashem's mercy on us.



THIS WEEK'S VORT

פרשת ויקרא

ויקרא אל משה וידבר ה' אליו (ויקרא א:א)
He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him.

The meforshim (commentators) asked why the letter "א" of the word "ויקרא" is written in a smaller size. Also, why does it say first "ויקרא אל משה" and then separately "וידבר ה' אליו" why not combine the two as follows: "ויקרא ה' אל משה"?

One answer is given that the word "ויקרא" without an "א" reads "ויקר", which teaches us that whatever happened to Moshe Rabbenu, even though at times it seemed that Hashem's presence was not felt, Moshe understood that "וידבר ה' אליו" – Hashem is talking to him. We learn from this that Hashem

is watching over us and is sending us messages – even during a time of הסתרת פנים – when Hashem is, so to speak, hiding his face from us.

אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן לשם... (ויקרא א:ב)
When a man among you brings an offering to Hashem

The numerical value of the word "אדם" is 45, equivalent to the word "מה" which hints at the trait of ענוה – humbleness. Moshe and Aharon said – during one of their confrontations with the Jewish people: "ונחנו מה" – what is our value?

This is the korban (sacrifice) that a person needs to offer up to Hashem – to be an עניו – humble – this is the true "קרבן לשם" as it says in Psalms "זבחי אלקים רוח נשברה" (תהילים נא): – a broken spirit is considered a sacrifice to Hashem.

אדם כי יקריב מכם...תקריבו את קרבנכם, אם עולה קרבנו (ויקרא א:ב-ג)
When a man among you brings an offering...shall you bring your offerings, if one's offering is an elevation-offering...

The Passuk starts אדם כי יקריב in the singular form, continues in the plural form תקריבו את קרבנכם, and then switches back to the singular form: אם עולה קרבנו.

The reason for this sequencing is to teach us that "כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה" – all Yidden are responsible for one another. If a Yid commits an aveira (transgression), all Yidden should be punished for their sin. Therefore, when one does Teshuvah (repentance) and brings a korban to Hashem – the korban is for all the Yidden to save them from punishment.

