

What Does a Sin Offering Do?

Parashat Vayikra at the DC Bet Midrash

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A. Leviticus 1:1-2, 4:1-2, 4:35

1 ¹And He called to Moses, and YHWH spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying, ²"Speak to the children of Israel. And you shall say to them: A human from you who will make an offering to YHWH—you shall make your offering from the domestic animals: from the herd and from the flock.

1 וַיִּקְרָא אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֵלָיו מֵאֵהֶל מוֹעֵד לֵאמֹר: 2 דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אָדָם כִּי־יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם קָרְבָן לַיהוָה מִן־הַבְּהֵמָה מִן־הַבָּקָר וּמִן־הַצֹּאן תִּקְרִיבוּ אֹתָם קָרְבָנִים:

4 ¹And YHWH spoke to Moses, saying, ²"Speak to the children of Israel, saying: A

4 וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: 2 דַּבֵּר אֶל־

person who sins by mistake—of any of YHWH's commandments that are not to be done—and does any one of them:

יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר נֶפֶשׁ כִּי־תַחַטָּא בְשִׁגְגָה מִכָּל־אֹתֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא תַעֲשִׂינָהּ וַעֲשָׂה מֵאֶחָת מֵהֵנָּה:

³⁵And he shall take away all of its fat as the sheep's fat was taken away from the peace-offering sacrifice, and the priest shall burn them to smoke at the altar with YHWH's offerings by fire, and the priest shall make atonement over him, over his sin that he committed, and it will be forgiven for him.

35 וְאֶת־כָּל־חֵלְבֵהּ יֹסִיר כַּאֲשֶׁר יוֹסֵר חֵלְבֵי־הַקֹּשֶׁב מִזֶּבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים וְהַקֹּטֵר הַכֹּתֵן אֹתָם הַמִּזְבֵּחַ עַל אֲשֵׁי יְהוָה וּכְפָר עָלָיו הַכֹּתֵן עַל־חַטָּאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר־תַּחַטָּא וְנִסְלַח לוֹ: פ

B. Rashi to 4:2

Our Rabbis - פֶּרֶשׁוֹ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ ² - FROM AMONG ALL THE COMMANDMENTS OF HASHEM. מִכָּל מִצְוֹת ה' ² have explained² that אין חטאת באה אלא - a sin-offering is not brought except על דבר שזדונו לאו ³ - for something whose intentional violation is prohibited by a negative commandment, and is punished by *kares*,³ {שגגתו חטאת} - and its unintentional violation must be atoned for by a sin-offering.⁴

C. Mishnah Keritot 1:1-2

MISHNAH. [2a] THERE ARE IN THE TORAH THIRTY-SIX [TRANSGRESSIONS WHICH ARE PUNISHABLE WITH] EXTINCTION:¹ WHEN ONE HAS INTERCOURSE WITH HIS MOTHER,² HIS FATHER'S WIFE OR HIS DAUGHTER-IN-LAW; WHEN A MAN HAS CONNECTION WITH A MALE, OR COVERS A BEAST, OR WHEN A WOMAN ALLOWS HERSELF TO BE COVERED BY A BEAST; WHEN ONE HAS INTERCOURSE WITH A WOMAN AND HER DAUGHTER,⁴ WITH A MARRIED WOMAN, WITH HIS SISTER, WITH HIS FATHER'S SISTER, HIS MOTHER'S SISTER, HIS WIFE'S SISTER,⁵ HIS BROTHER'S WIFE,⁶ THE WIFE OF HIS FATHER'S BROTHER,⁷ OR WITH A MENSTRUOUS WOMAN; WHEN ONE BLASPHEMES [THE LORD],⁸ SERVES IDOLS,⁹ DEDICATES OF HIS CHILDREN TO MOLECH¹⁰ OR HAS A FAMILIAR SPIRIT,¹¹ OR DESECRATES THE SABBATH;¹² WHEN AN UNCLEAN PERSON EATS OF SACRIFICIAL FOOD,¹³ OR WHEN ONE ENTERS THE PRECINCTS OF THE TEMPLE IN AN UNCLEAN STATE;¹⁴ WHEN

ONE EATS HELEB,¹ BLOOD,² NOTHAR³ OR PIGGUL;⁴ WHEN ONE SLAUGHTERS OR OFFERS UP⁵ [A CONSECRATED ANIMAL] OUTSIDE [THE TEMPLE PRECINCTS]; WHEN ONE EATS ANYTHING LEAVENED ON PASSOVER;⁶ WHEN ONE EATS OR WORKS ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT;⁷ WHEN ONE COMPOUNDS OIL [OF ANOINTING]⁸ OR COMPOUNDS INCENSE,⁹ OR USES [UNLAWFULLY] OIL OF ANOINTING;¹⁰ AND [WHEN ONE TRANSGRESSES THE LAWS OF] THE PASCHAL OFFERING¹¹ AND CIRCUMCISION¹²—FROM AMONG POSITIVE COMMANDMENTS. FOR THESE [TRANSGRESSIONS] ONE IS LIABLE TO EXTINCTION IF COMMITTED WILFULLY,¹³ AND IF IN ERROR TO A SIN-OFFERING,¹⁴

ולשים וְשֵׁשׁ כְּרִתוֹת בַּתּוֹרָה: הִבָּא עַל הָאֵם, וְעַל אִשֶּׁת הָאָב, א
עַל הַכֶּלֶה; הִבָּא עַל הַזְּכוּר, וְעַל הַבְּהֵמָה, וְהֵאֵשָׁה הַמְּבִיאָה
אֶת הַבְּהֵמָה עָלֶיהָ; הִבָּא עַל אִשָּׁה וּבִתָּהּ, וְעַל אִשֶּׁת אִישׁ;
הִבָּא עַל אַחֻתּוֹ, וְעַל אַחֻת אָבִיו, וְעַל אַחֻת אָמוֹ, וְעַל אַחֻת
אִשְׁתּוֹ, וְעַל אִשֶּׁת אַחִיו, וְעַל אִשֶּׁת אַחִי אָבִיו, וְעַל הַנְּדָה;
הַמְּנַדֵּף, וְהַעוֹבֵד עֲבוּדָה זָרָה, וְהַנּוֹתֵן מִזְרָעוֹ לַמֶּלֶךְ, וּבַעַל
אוֹב; הַמְחַלֵּל אֶת הַשֶּׁבֶת; וְטָמֵא שְׂאֵכַל אֶת הַקֹּדֶשׁ, וְהִבָּא
לַמִּקְדָּשׁ טָמֵא; הָאוֹכֵל חֶלֶב, וְדָם, נוֹתֵר, וּפְגוּל; הַשּׁוֹחֵט,
וְהַמְעַלָּה בַחוּץ; הָאוֹכֵל חֶמֶץ בַּפֶּסַח, וְהָאוֹכֵל, וְהַעוֹשֶׂה
מְלָאכָה בַיּוֹם הַכַּפּוּרִים; הַמְפַסֵּם אֶת הַשֶּׁמֶן, וְהַמְפַסֵּם אֶת
הַקְּטֹרֶת, וְהַסֹּד בְּשֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה; הַפֶּסַח, וְהַמִּילָה בַמִּצּוֹת עֲשֵׂה.
עַל אֵלוֹ חֲתִיבִים עַל זְדוּנָם כְּרִת, וְעַל שְׁנֵיתָם חֲטָאת, ז

D. Talmud B. Pesahim 118a

R. Hisda said:⁷ What is meant by the verse, *O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good?*⁸ Give thanks unto the Lord who exacts man's debts by means of His goodness:⁹ the wealthy man through his ox and the poor man through his sheep,¹⁰ the fatherless through his egg and the widow through her fowl.

אמר רב חסדא מאי דכתיב (תהלים קלו) הודו לה' טוב הודו לה' שגובה חובתו של אדם בטובתו עשיר בשורו ואת עני יו יתום בביצתו אלמנה בתרנגולתה.

E. Ibn Ezra to Leviticus 4:31, Numbers 14:19

ראביע (לא) וטעם ונסלח לו, כפרשת שלח לד⁴⁰

And now, let my Lord's power be big, as you spoke, saying, ¹⁸YHWH is slow to anger and abounding in kindness, bearing crime and offense; though not making one *innocent*: reckoning fathers' crime on children, on third generations and on fourth generations. ¹⁹Forgive this people's crime in proportion to the magnitude of our kindness and as you've borne this people from Egypt to here."

²⁰And YHWH said, "I've forgiven according to our word.

: וְעַתָּה יִגְדַל-נָא כַח אֲדָנָי
כְּאִשֶּׁר דִּבְרַתָּ לְאָמַר: ¹⁸יְהוָה אַרְךָ אַפַּיִם וְרַב-
חֶסֶד נִשְׂא עֵינָיו וּפְשָׁע וְנִקְהָ לֹא יִנְקָה פְלִקְד עֵינָיו
אָבוֹת עַל-בְּנִים עַל-שְׁלִשִׁים וְעַל-רַבְעִים: ¹⁹וְסִלַּח-
נָא לְעֵינָיו הָעַם הַזֶּה כְּגִדְל חֶסְדְּךָ וּכְאִשֶּׁר נִשְׂאָתָה
לְעַם הַזֶּה מִמִּצְרַיִם וְעַד-הַנְּהַ: ²⁰וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה
סְלַחְתִּי כְּדִבְרְךָ:

ואמר רבא עולה דורון היא היכי דמי אי דליכא תשובה (משלי כא) זבח רשעים תועבה ואי דאיכא תשובה התניא עבר על מצות עשה ושב לא זו משם עד שמוחלים לו אלא שמע מינה דורון הוא. <חטאת"ע"ל מ"י מכפ"ר"עול"ה לאח"ר דורון" סימ"ן > תניא נמי הכי אמר רבי שמעון חטאת למה באה למה באה לכפר אלא למה באה לפני עולה לפרקליט שנכנס [ריצה פרקליט נכנס] דורון אחריו:

Raba said further: A burnt-offering is a votive gift.² For how is it possible? If there is no repentance, then *the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination!*⁴ While if there is repentance, surely it was taught: If one violated an affirmative precept and repented, he does not stir thence until he is forgiven.⁵ Hence it follows that it is a votive gift.

(Mnemonic: For whom does a sin-offering atone? A burnt-offering after a votive gift.)⁶ It was taught likewise. R. Simeon said: For what purpose does a sin-offering come?—[You ask,] 'for what purpose does a sin-offering come?' Surely in order to make atonement!—Rather, [the question is:] Why does it come before the burnt-offering?⁷ [Because it is] like an intercessor who enters [to appease the King]: When the intercessor has appeased [him], the gift follows.⁸

H. Vayikra Rabbah (Seder Vayikra 5:8)

ת. את גי ר' שמעון: מה צרין הם ישראל, שהם יודעין לרצות את בוראם. אמר ר' יודן: כאלין כותאי - אלין כותאי חכימין למחסדא, חד מנהון הוה אזיל לגבי אתתא אמר לה: אית לך חד בצל תתנון לי? מן דיהבא לה אמר לה: אית בצל בלא פתא!! מן דיהבא לה אמר לה: אית מיכל בלא משתי!! מתיחא פך אכיל ושתי. אמר ר' אחא: אית אתתא דחכימא למשאל, ואית אתתא נא דלא חכימא למשאל; אית אתתא דחכימא למשאל - אתיא לגבי מגירתא, תרעא פתיחא מדפקא לה אמרה לה: שלמא עלך מגירתי, מה את עבידא? מה בעליך עביד? ומה בניכי עבידין? אמרה לה: טב געול? מתיבא לה: געול, מה את בעיא? אמרה לה: אית לך מקימה פלוגית תתנון לי? אמרה לה: אין; דלא חכימא למשאל - אזלא לגבי מגירתא, תרעא משקף פתחה לה. אמרה לה: אית לה מקימה פלוגית? אמרה לה: לאו.

8. R. Simeon taught: What consummate masters are Israel in knowing how to obtain the favour of their Creator! R. Judan said: They are like those Cutheans who are clever at obtaining alms. One of them goes to a woman, and says: 'Have you an onion that you can give me?' When she has given him an onion, he says to her: 'Can an onion be eaten without bread?' When she has given him [some bread], he says: 'Can one eat without drinking?' By means of this device he obtains both food and drink.

R. Aha said: There is a woman who is clever at borrowing, and there is a woman who is not clever at borrowing. There is a woman clever at borrowing: She goes to her neighbour, and though the door is open, she knocks at it, and says, 'Peace unto you. How do you do? How is your husband? How are your children? Is it convenient for me to come in?' The neighbour says: 'Come in, what do you require?' The visitor says, 'Have you such-and-such a utensil that you can give me?' The neighbour answers: 'Yes.'—The woman not clever at borrowing goes to a neighbour, and though the door is closed, she opens it, and says to her, 'Have you such-and-such

G. Mishnah Keritot 6:7

פריש חטאתו, ומת, לא יביאנה בנו אחריו. ולא יביאנה טא על חטא, אפלו על חלב שאכל אמש, לא יביאנה חלב שאכל היום, שנאמר: 'קרבנו... על חטאתו' - יקרא ה'.

MISHNAH. [27b] IF A MAN SET APART HIS SIN-OFFERING AND THEN DIED, HIS SON MAY NOT OFFER IT AFTER HIM. A MAN MAY NOT OFFER [WHAT WAS SET APART] FOR ONE SIN IN RESPECT OF ANOTHER SIN; MOREOVER, EVEN IF HE HAS SET APART [THE SIN-OFFERING] FOR FORBIDDEN FAT THAT HE HAD EATEN YESTERDAY, HE MAY NOT OFFER IT FOR FORBIDDEN FAT THAT HE HAS EATEN TO-DAY, FOR IT IS WRITTEN HIS OFFERING... FOR HIS SIN; THE OFFERING MUST BE FOR THAT PARTICULAR SIN [FOR WHICH IT WAS SET APART].

I. Talmud B. Sanhedrin 42b

והתם מנלן דתנו רבנן (ויקרא ד) והוציא את כל הפר אל מחוץ למחנה חוץ לשלש מחנות. אתה אומר חוץ לשלש מחנות או אינו אלא חוץ למחנה אחת כשהוא אומר (ויקרא ד) אל מחוץ למחנה בפר העדה שאין תלמוד לומר שהרי כבר נאמר (ויקרא ד) ושרף אותו כאשר שרף את הפר הראשון ליתן לו מחנה שניה. וכשהוא אומר (ויקרא ו) אל מחוץ למחנה בדשן שאין תלמוד לומר שהרי כבר נאמר (ויקרא ד) על שפר הדשן ישרף ליתן לו מחנה שלישית.

Whence is this inferred?⁴—From what our Rabbis taught: *Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp;*⁵ i.e., without the three camps. You say, 'without the three camps:' but may it not mean simply outside one camp?—It is here stated, *Without the camp;* and in reference to the bulls that were [wholly] burned,⁶ it is also said, *without the camp;*⁷ Just as there, [it means] without the three camps, so here too. And whence is that derived there?—From what our Rabbis taught: *The whole bullock shall he carry away without the camp*⁸—i.e., without the three camps.⁹

J. Esh Kodesh – on Vayikra, 5700 (1940)

פרשת ויקרא

ויקרא אל משה ופרש"י לכל דברות וכו' קדמה קריאה לשון חיבה. לשון שמלאה"ש משתמשים בו שנאמר וקרא זה אל זה. ע"ש. וצ"ל למה מפרש רש"י זאת בקריאה זו ולא בסנה שנאמר ויקרא אליו אלוקים. וכן בקבלת התורה שכתוב ויקרא ד' למשה.

אבל בעקידה כתיב ויקח את האיל ויעלהו לעולה תחת בנו. וכן הוא בכל הקרבנות. אדם כי יקריב מכם. וקרבנות הבהמות באים תחת האיש. ובתענית אומרים שמיעוס חלבי דמי יהא נחשב כקרבן. ואכן כל היסורים ממרקין עונותיו של אדם מפני שמתישין את כחו חלבו ודמו. וכל יסורי ישראל מיני קרבנות הם. לכן מרמז בזה רש"י שבכל עניני קרבנות אפילו באלו שאדם כי יקריב מכם. היינו קרבנות היסורים שמן עצמותו מקריב. נדע שג"כ קריאה של חבה של הקב"ה המה.

Esh Kodesh on Vayikra (from Warsaw Ghetto, 1940)

"And he called to Moshe". And according to Rashi, whenever it says "called", it means in the sense of affection, the language that the ministering angels use to each other, "vkara zeh el zeh." But we need to ask, why does Rashi say this in regard to this mention of the word "call" but not at the burning bush where it says "and God called to him" or at the receiving of the Torah where it says "God called to Moshe."

But at the Akeidah it is written, "and he took the ram and burned it as an offering in place of his son." And it is thus for all sacrifices (as in our parashah, "a human from you will make an offering to God"), that sacrifices of animals are in the place of a person. As in *ta'anit* (fasting) where it says that "a small piece of my flesh and my blood will be considered as a sacrifice." And likewise all suffering (or affliction) scours the sins of the individual because it saps his strength, his flesh, and his blood. And all the suffering of Israel is a kind of sacrifice, and therefore Rashi alludes to this, because the entire subject of sacrifices, even those that a person willingly brings, refer to sacrifices as afflictions that come from the bones of the person who offers them, and therefore we will know that they are the calling (or expression) of the affection of God.

Vayikra @ the DC Beit Midrash

Monday, March 10, 2003; 7 Adar II

Welcome to the DC Beit Midrash!

The *Chumash* (Five Books of Moses) is divided into 54 portions, which Jews read sequentially each week in services. This Shabbat, we will be reading Parshat *Vayikra* from the book of *Vayikra* (Leviticus). Tonight, a member of our community will lead us in a text-study of this portion. The voices of both past and contemporary interpreters will inform our discussion.

Below you will find a summary of this week's Torah portion, along with brief biographies of the commentators cited. The presentation will be followed by *chevruta* (paired) study on a subject of your choice.

This week's parsha (Torah portion): Vayikra, Vayikra (Leviticus) 1:1-5:26

Parshat Vayikra describes five different kinds of sacrifices to be offered in the sanctuary. They are the *olah*, or "burnt offering"; the *minchah*, or "meal offering"; the *zevach shelamim*, or "sacrifice of well-being"; the *chatat*, or "sin offering"; and the *asham*, or "guilt offering." The manner in which each offering is made is described in detail.

(Excerpted from Harvey Fields, *A Torah Commentary for Our Times*, p 97.)

This week's sources:

Pesachim, Sanhedrin, Keritot & Zevachim

The Babylonia Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*) is a compilation of discussions on the *Mishna*, discussions which had been going on some three hundred years already at the time they were written down. The Talmud's discussions are recorded in a consistent format; a law from the *Mishna* is cited, which is followed by rabbinic deliberations on its meaning (known as *Gemara*).

Masekhet Pesachim (Paschal lambs, "Passover") is a comprehensive treatment of the laws of *Pesach*: it deals with the laws of *matzah* and *maror* ("bitter herbs"), the prohibition of *hametz* ("leavened matter"), and with the detailed laws of the Paschal sacrifice. *Masekhet Sanhedrin* examines the laws of capital punishment. Considerable space is also devoted to the composition of the various courts and to judicial procedure. The Aggadic sections contain a broad discussion of the question of a person's place in the World to Come and other fundamental tenets of the faith. *Masekhet Keritot* (Excision) deals with sins which, if committed intentionally, incur the punishment of excision (*karet*), what sacrifices must be brought if one has committed such sins inadvertently, sin-offerings, guilt-offerings, or suspensive guilt-offerings. *Masekhet Zevachim* (Animal Sacrifices) deals with animal sacrifices. It also contains an exhaustive discussion of the methods used to establish Jewish law.

(Adapted from Steinsaltz, *Talmud Reference Guide*, p. 40, 42, 43).

Vayikra Rabbah (5th century)

Midrash comes from a Hebrew root which means "to search out, to investigate." Thus, this is a Jewish method of exegesis, which sought to discover deeper meanings in the text beyond the literal one. Since the rabbis greatly venerated each letter of the Hebrew Scriptures as of Divine origin, every detail was deemed significant. Sometimes *Midrash* is used with the legal portions of the Torah (*halacha*) and sometimes it is used with the non-legal portions (*aggadah*), such as stories about the main protagonists in the Bible. There are many different collections of *Midrash*, written down between 300 and 1200 CE. The compilers of the different collections of *Midrash* are generally unknown.

Vayikra Rabbah is the *Midrash* on *Vayikra*, the Book of Leviticus, contained in *Midrash Rabbah* (The Great *Midrash*), which is the largest collection of *Midrash*. It is among the oldest *midrashim*, probably composed in 5th century Palestine, since much of the book's *halacha* and customs reflect the specific practices of Palestinian Jewry from that period.

(Adapted from learn.jtsa.edu/topics/diduknow/sources/midrashim.shtml).

Rashi (1040-1105)

Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac, otherwise known by his initials, Rashi, is regarded as medieval Judaism's greatest teacher. Since his death almost nine hundred years ago, Jews who study either the Torah or the Talmud invariably do so with the help of his commentary. Born in Troyes, France, Rashi studied Talmud in Mayence (Mainz) and Worms. When he was about twenty-five, he returned to Troyes, France and opened his own Jewish school. However, Rashi refused to draw a salary for his work, earning his

Solomon ben Isaac

(over)

living instead from several vineyards that he owned. The last years of his life were marred by the anti-Semitic Crusades that swept over France and Germany starting in 1096.

In his Torah commentary, Rashi explains terms both on the basis of *peshat* (literal meaning) and *derash* (homiletic or sermonic meaning). He also made use of words in his vernacular, Old French, for clarification. Rashi's Torah commentary achieved such wide acceptance that it became mandatory for Jews to review the weekly Torah portion with his commentary. In 1475, Rash's commentary became the first book printed in Hebrew, even before the Torah itself was.

(Excerpted from Harvey J. Fields, *A Torah Commentary for Our Times*, and Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy*, p 180-183).

Abraham Ibn Ezra (1092-1167)

A poet, physician, philosopher, and astrologer, Ibn Ezra spent the first part of his life in native Spain. From about 1140, he resided for brief periods in France, England, Egypt, Ethiopia, Italy, and finally again in Spain, where he died. Many believe that his wandering began in the bewildered disappointment of his only surviving son's conversion to Islam. Ibn Ezra's interests in both science and grammar, along with his experiences as a traveler, are expressed within his commentary to the Torah. He often includes discussions on mathematics, astrology, and linguistics within his explanations.

(Excerpted from Harvey J. Fields, *A Torah Commentary for Our Times*, 10-11).

Aish Kodesh (1889-1943)

Aish Kodesh ("Holy Fire") refers to the Rebbe of Piazechna, Rabbi Kalonymous Kalman Shapiro, who wrote an inspirational manuscript, called "Aish Kodesh" (Holy Fire), during his tenure as rabbi of the Warsaw Ghetto. Shortly before the Ghetto was liquidated and he was murdered, the rabbi buried his writings beneath the rubble with the hopeful plea that, after the war, they be taken to the Land of Israel.

(Adapted from <http://www.aishkodesh.org>).

Rabbi Kalonymous Kalman Shapiro

This week's teacher:

Jonathan Levine

jlevine@wso.williams.edu

Jonathan Levine has lived in Washington for five years, except for a year spent studying at the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem. He is an active member of Adas Israel and davens at Adas Israel's Traditional Minyan on Saturdays and the Van Ness Minyan on Friday nights. When asked to label his Judaism, he would say, "Fundamentalist Conservative Jew with a little bit of Hasid mixed in." Others have called him the "Frummest heretic I know." In his other life, he is a Principal Consultant at IBM Business Consulting Services. He also cooks a mean Texas BBQ Brisket.

This week's food sponsor & shleppe:

Eric Gurevitz

Wanna teach, think about teaching, or suggest a teacher? jnovey@post.harvard.edu.

Wanna sponsor food? Ariellabock@hotmail.com

Questions, feedback, wanna join our email list? Anything else? Email DCBeitMidrash@hotmail.com

WWW.DCBEITMIDRASH.ORG