

THE PARSHA THIS WEEK

EMOR

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SHABBOS ENDS

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Motzaei Shabbos

SEFIRAS HAOMER

Day 30

Gevurah sheb'Hod

PIRKEI AVOS

Ch. 4

read this Shabbos

DVAR TORAH

Never a Lost Cause.

There is no such thing as a lost cause. In 1942, a Jewish family in Michalovce, Slovakia, facing deportation, hid what they could under the floorboards of their attic: a draft of their daughter's wedding invitation, embroidered linens, photographs, pots and honey — keepsakes and kitchen, what a family stows when it means to come back. They did not. Only one son survived, on a stowaway railcar to Switzerland. Eighty years passed. In 2019 the floorboards were pried up by new owners. Earlier this year the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum located the survivor's son, Michel Schwarz, in Belgium, and showed him the photographs. He had never seen any of them. He spoke of recovering "a part of my father's life that I thought had been lost forever."¹

There is no such thing as a lost cause — *es iz nita kein farfalen*. The Frierdiker Rebbe's famous teaching for Pesach Sheni² — the Torah's quiet day of second chances.

Pesach Sheni does not look like a Yom Tov. There is no fast, no Musaf, no public liturgy. It sits in the middle of Iyar between the redemption of Pesach and the Torah of Shavuot — a second chance written into the calendar for anyone who needs one.

Our parsha opens with a strict rule. A priest — a *Kohen* — who touches a corpse becomes ritually impure, *tamei*, and

cannot serve in the Temple. The priestly service he was consecrated for is, for that stretch of time, simply out of reach.

But the Torah, a few chapters later in Bamidbar, tells a second story. A small group of men approach Moshe: they had been defiled by a corpse — carrying Yosef's bones home to Eretz Yisrael, the Sages teach, or burying Nadav and Avihu, the sons of Aharon — and so, when the Passover offering was brought, they could not participate. לָמָּה נִגְרַע, they asked — *why should we lose out?*³ Moshe does not turn them away. He brings their case to Hashem, and what comes back is more than they even asked for: a mitzvah the Torah had not yet given. Pesach Sheni — a second Passover, exactly one month later, a second chance to come close to Hashem through the Korban Pesach.

Strict rule, second chance — the Torah does both at once. It sets the standard, and it leaves the door open.

Whatever you missed is still in reach.

the right floorboards at the right time. Pesach Sheni does not wait for coincidence. The door opens every year on this day. And today, it opens again.

What the Schwarz family had lost in the Holocaust returned to them eighty years later — through a museum, a stranger, and a renovation that pried up

¹ U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, "A Family's Treasures, Hidden Since the Holocaust," April 2026.

² Frierdiker Rebbe; *Hayom Yom*, 14 Iyar.

³ Bamidbar 9:7; cf. *Sukkah* 25a–b.

OUR MOMENT

I Am Their Portion.

the prophet Yechezkel, read this Shabbos, on a people planted everywhere

A report out of Tel Aviv University this spring put the global Jewish population and its diaspora communities under a long, careful microscope, and the picture it drew was complicated. UK aliyah has climbed to a forty-year high. A synagogue in Finchley was targeted by arson attempts this winter. Jewish life in New York, London, Paris, Melbourne, and Buenos Aires is under strain in ways that would have been unimaginable a decade ago. And still, Jewish life persists — visible, audible, growing in many places it is said to be shrinking.

Yechezkel, read this Shabbos, opens a grand vision of the promised Third Temple: the Kohanim restored to their service, every tribe of Israel back in its inheritance. But within that vision sits a striking detail — the Kohanim and Leviim alone receive no portion of their own. וְאֵין לָהֶם חֵלֶק — *and I am their portion*,¹ Hashem says of them. Why?

Hashem speaks here of the Kohanim. In the Torah's allotment of the Land, the priestly family receives no fields — *Hashem is their portion*, the Torah teaches. Where the other tribes inherit land, the Kohanim inherit Hashem. The family closest to the Mishkan, generation after generation, holds no fixed portion of its own. They are sustained by the priestly gifts the people bring — but their inheritance, in the truest sense, is the avodah itself.

“And I shall be to them for a portion; and you shall give them no possession in Israel — I am their possession.”

YECHZEKEL 44:28

The Rambam, codifying the halachah, gives the reason for the arrangement: the tribe of Levi was *huvdal* — set apart — to serve Hashem and to teach His ways to

Israel. The Kohanim and Leviim were lifted out of the ordinary work of the world so they could give themselves wholly to the work of lifting the world to Hashem. No

fields. No tending of soil. No share in the conquest. No inheritance of their own. Before the redemption, the avodah of Levi and the everyday work of the world could not be lived at once — to take up one was to release the other.² But that was then.

And this is now. In the imminent redemption, the Rebbe explains, the field will no longer pull a Jew away from his service; the field itself will be his service. The world will not compete with Hashem; it will reveal Him. And so, the Sages teach, the Land will at last be redivided into thirteen tribal portions, and the Kohanim and Leviim will receive a share alongside the rest of Israel.³ *One gate for Levi*, Yechezkel says of the future city — a piece of land, at last, for the family that has had none. Levi receives an inheritance in the geula because, in that hour, the land itself bears Hashem. The reason Levi was once kept apart from the land was the concern that the land would pull him away from his service. That concern is gone. The two halves of life — the work of the field and the work in the Mikdash — will at last be an unbroken expression of serving Hashem. The Rambam himself closes the chapter with one final, sweeping line. *Not the tribe of Levi alone — but every man and every woman whose spirit moves them — they too are sanctified as the holy of holies, and Hashem becomes their portion forever.*⁴ This, the Rebbe taught, is not a vision of the distant future. It is a description of every Yid in *galus*, already. Whoever turns themselves toward Torah and avodah has already entered the priestly mode — set apart, sanctified, with Hashem as their lot and portion. And the geula is no longer a distant horizon. The avodah of *galus* is complete. We are the generation that will live to see the promised world fulfilled — we are asked only to open our eyes to it, and to live as if Levi's inheritance were already ours. Because in our deepest selves, it already is.

¹ Yechezkel 44:28.

² Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, Hil. Shemittah v'Yovel 13:12.

³ Bava Basra 122a, on Yechezkel 48:31.

⁴ Rambam, Hil. Shemittah v'Yovel 13:13; cf. *Sefer HaSichos* 5751, vol. 2, Shelach.

ON THE HORIZON

FRIDAY, MAY 1

Pesach Sheni פסח שני

The Torah's second chance for those who could not bring the Korban Pesach in time.

TUESDAY, MAY 5

Lag BaOmer ל"ג בעומר

Day 33 of the Omer. Hilula of Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai.

MAY 22–23

Shavuot שבועות

Matan Torah. Many have the custom of reading the Book of Ruth.

PIRKEI AVOS · CHAPTER FOUR

Despise No One.

a teaching of Ben Azzai, read this Shabbos

AVOS 4:3

אַל תִּהְיֶה בּוֹ לְכֹל אָדָם · וְאַל תִּהְיֶה מִפְּלִיג לְכֹל דָּבָר · שֶׁאֵין לָּהּ שָׂעָה · וְאֵין לָּהּ דְּבַר שֶׁאֵין לוֹ מְקוֹם

Do not despise any person, and do not dismiss any thing. For there is no person who does not have his hour, and no thing that does not have its place.

Ben Azzai states two rules side by side. Do not look at a person and conclude he is beneath you. Do not look at a thing and conclude it is beyond use. Both rules lean on the same principle: the moment of significance has not yet come.

The Sfat Emet adds: every person carries an inner portion — a *chelek* in the work of the world that no other soul can fill — and with it comes an *hour*, the moment when that precise presence is what the world requires. You do not know whose hour is approaching and whose is past. The person you are tempted to dismiss may be the one on whom the next turn of history rests. Treat every person, therefore, as someone whose hour may be on the horizon.

FROM THE DAF · SOTAH 30

Three Songs by the Sea.

the daf of this Shabbos, and a window into our parsha

Picture the morning at the sea. The Jewish people have just crossed. Pharaoh's army is no more. Two million men, women, and children stand on the far shore alive — and they open their mouths to sing. The Torah tells us what they sang. It does not tell us how.

How does a nation that has never sung together suddenly sing together? No rehearsal. No music sheets. No conductor.

Centuries later, the Sages of the Talmud asked exactly that question — and they came back with three different answers.¹

Rabbi Akiva pictures Moshe leading the song alone — he sang each line, and the people answered with a single refrain, *I will sing to Hashem*, the way a congregation answers when one person leads them through Hallel. Rabbi Eliezer pictures it differently: not a refrain but a full repetition, Moshe singing a line and the people echoing it back word for word, the way children carefully echo a teacher. Rabbi Nechemia pictures it different again — Moshe started the song; the people picked it up. He gave them the opening, and they were trusted to continue.

At the sea, Moshe was not only singing. He was teaching a song no one had ever heard, to a people who had not yet sung as one. The three Sages aren't arguing about music. They're arguing about how knowledge passes from one generation to another. Our parsha asks the same question at its opening. *Speak — and speak again* — אָמַר... וְאָמַרָהּ — the Torah commands, which Rashi reads as the charge of elders to their children.² And those three answers from the sea apply directly. Sometimes you give them a chorus and they sing it back. Sometimes you give them the words and they repeat them carefully. Sometimes you give them only the opening, and trust them to finish. Different children, different generations, different moments — each needs the song handed over in a form they can carry forward.

The Torah teaches us that the song must keep going — and that the work of the older generation is the listening work first: to know whether the child before us needs a chorus to hold, a careful repetition to echo, or just an opening note to begin from. The voice in which we speak shapes whether the next generation answers at all.

¹ Sotah 30b, the daf for this week.² Rashi on Vayikra 21:1, drawing on Yevamos 114a.

THE QUESTION · FOR YOUR PEN THIS WEEK

Parshas Emor opens with a doubled verb — *say, and say again* — which Rashi reads as a charge to teach the next generation. Why does it appear at the very start of the priestly laws? Send us your answer.

TO ENTER

Email treeoflifebookinfo@gmail.com by Thursday night. Last week's winner will be printed in next Shabbos's issue.

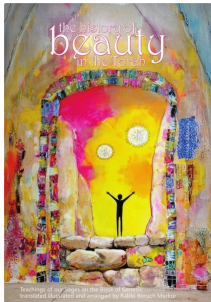
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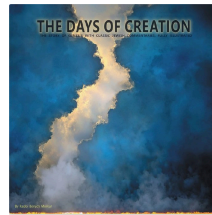
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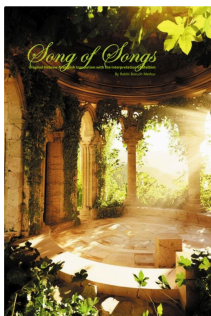


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