

Potomac Torah Study Center

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NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his untimely death.

Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah archives.

Mazel tov to Rachel Lieberman & Jaryn Horner on the birth their daughter, Michal Rivka (Mackenzie Rebecca). Proud grandparents Sharon & Steven Lieberman dedicate the Devrei Torah this week in their honor. Aunt Jessica; Uncle Ben; and great grandmothers Phyllis Silverman & Caryl Lieberman kvell with the family.

Shemini opens with the dedication of the Mishkan and of Aharon and his sons as the Kohenim, at the end of an eight day ceremony. Triumph, with God bringing His presence above the Altar, quickly turns to tragedy. Aharon's sons Nadav and Avihu, caught up in the overwhelming ceremony, bring their own fire pans, with incense, to the restricted area by the Mishkan. A fire from Hashem immediately comes down and consumes them. What should have been the greatest day for Aharon and his family becomes a day of mourning for his two oldest sons.

God speaks directly to Aharon and commands him and his sons to stay by the Mishkan and not to show any signs of mourning. Once dedicated as Kohenim, they must put aside their human and family obligations to complete the rituals of the Kohenim, to seek forgiveness for the sins of the people, and to perform the special dedication rituals as well as the daily korbanot. Moshe is angry at Aharon for burning the entire chatat korban rather than eating the portions reserved for the Kohenim. Aharon responds that not participating in the joyous meal on the day of the death of his two sons should be a permitted human response and that eating from the korban on that day seemed inappropriate. Hashem gives at least implicit approval to Aharon's reasoning.

Several of the Devrei Torah below discuss the significance of the numbers seven and eight. Rabbi Haim Ovadia summarizes many examples of seven and eight in the Torah as he invites us to ponder the significance of these two numbers. As Rabbi Marc Angel observes, seven represents completion, specifically the seven days of Creation – Hashem's role in our world. Another interpretation is that seven represents the physical world and eight represents the spiritual realm. God left elements in the world incomplete so humans could work with Him to bring out the Godliness in the world and make our world truly God's world. (We see this concept in action with the requirement for a bris on the eighth day of a baby boy's life.) Eight thus represents humans working with Hashem to make the world a better place.

Rabbi David Fohrman explores numerous connections between the dedication ceremony and numerous other aspects of our religion. For example, we are reading Shemini shortly after Purim. Rabbi Fohrman discusses many parallels in events and specific language between the dedication of the Mishkan and the Megillah. In another video, Rabbi Fohrman explores many close connections between the death of Nadav and Avihu and the first sin in the Torah, Adam and Chava eating from the Tree of Knowledge in Gan Eden. This connection, which Rabbi Fohrman attributes to my close friend Rabbi Jonathan Grossman, demonstrates that the Torah wants us to study these two stories and their connections, because each helps us understand the other story.

Both stories take place after seven days, including especially a seventh day of complete rest. In both cases, the language includes specific references to vayikchu and vayitru (taking and giving), and doing something asher lo tzivah otam – something that God does not command. In both cases the punishment is death (losing immortality for Adam and Chava;

immediate death for Aharon's sons). In both cases, the bodies must leave a special place of God (Gan Eden and the area around the Mishkan).

The sins of Nadav and Avihu, and of Adam and Chava, both involve attempts by humans to come closer to God's presence than God permits. Adam and Chava want Divine Knowledge – something that God places off limits for them. Nadav and Avihu want to have their presence (smoke from their fire pans) mingle with God's presence (smoke from Hashem's presence above the altar). God does not permit any human to attain this closeness, except for Moshe (when God invites him) and the Kohen Gadol (once a year, on Yom Kippur afternoon, but only with special preparations and wearing special clothes).

Since being forced to leave Gan Eden, humans have wanted to return to the closeness they had during those first few days. God only permits humans to approach His presence on God's terms, with special preparations, and only for specific individuals. When humans try to approach our Creator on our own terms, the result will always be fatal. We can only approach His presence on God's terms, if at all. The first such attempt was to use one of God's special trees, the Tree of Knowledge. God's other special tree was the Tree of Life. Our religion teaches us that we can approach God's presence through our eternal Tree of Life – the Etz Chaim, the Torah. (As usual, conversations with Rabbi Yehoshua Singer contributed substantially to my message this week.)

Many of my most precious memories of my beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, involve his Shabbat and Yom Tov morning Torah discussions. In these discussions, Rabbi Cahan made the Torah come alive and stimulated his congregation to learn more about the rich heritage of our Etz Chaim. On each Shabbat and Yom Tov, Rabbi Cahan helped us come closer to Our Creator. Many of the youth in his congregation went on to become Rabbis and to seek positions leading Jewish organizations. Many more became leaders in congregations in numerous communities. Rabbi Cahan showed through his example how we can come closer to Hashem in our lives – a goal of many of our people throughout history.

Shabbat Shalom,
Alan & Hannah

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Yehoshua Mayer HaLevi ben Nechama Zelda, Leib Dovid ben Etel, Mordechai ben Chaya, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Noa Shachar bat Avigael, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, who need our prayers. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom,
Hannah & Alan

Dvar Torah: Shemini: The Reward for Silence

by Rabbi Label Lam © 2018

And Aaron's sons, Nadav and Avihu, each took his pan, put fire in them, and placed incense upon it, and they brought before HASHEM foreign fire, which He had not commanded them. And fire went forth from before HASHEM and consumed them, and they died before HASHEM. Then Moshe said to Aaron, "This is what HASHEM spoke, [when He said], 'I will be sanctified through those near to Me, and before all the people I will be glorified.'" **And Aaron was silent.** (Vayikra 10:1-3)

And Aaron was silent: He was rewarded for his silence... (Rashi)

And Aaron was silent: [and did not complain. Consequently,] he was rewarded for his silence. And Aaron was silent: [and did not complain. Consequently,] he was rewarded for his silence.

Why was Aaron rewarded for his silence? Is silence always an acceptable response? The Malbim explains that the word used to describe Aaron's silence does not mean that he was passively silent and perfectly still. No! Aaron was a sensitive and real feeling person according to all accounts. How could quietly endure the loss of his sons? That is why in the beginning of the verse Moshe offers consoling words. Aaron accepted them and then Aaron was silent. He arrested himself from speaking and made himself silent. Initially he may have had what to say. "VayiDom" -- and he was silent is an action of silencing, silencing himself.

Years ago, I had the honor and privilege to hear the following story from Rabbi Shimshon Pincus zt"l. He told us about a fine young man who had earned a marvelous Shidduch with a prominent family. This young man was an only child born to his parents after 24 years of marriage. Rabbi Pincus had asked the father if he had any sense of why they merited having a child that year. Had there been any unusual incident?

After 23 years of childlessness, approaching the edge of despair the husband did what amounts to an act of desperation. He had heard that on the other side of Jerusalem there was a small Chassidic synagogue that held out a special promise.

Anyone who would attain for himself on Yom Kippur the honor of Maftir Yonah would most certainly have his request answered. With that hope he uprooted himself from his usual place in the yeshiva where he had a seat of honor, and traveled to unfamiliar territory where he would be a stranger on a backbench. He arrived early enough on the eve of Yom Kippur and pre-arranged for himself, for a handsome price the coveted honor of Maftir Yonah.

After Kol Nidre and all the evening prayers while exiting the synagogue he noticed another young man like himself also not dressed like a Hasid seeming slightly out of place. He approached and asked him why he was praying here in this particular Shteibl for Yom Kippur.

The young fellow told his tearful tale that he and his wife had been married for almost three years and they had not yet been blessed with children. He had heard that whoever would attain Maftir Yonah in this synagogue would be granted their heart's desire and he hoped to put in a modest bid for Maftir Yonah the next day.

The man just listened with astonishment. He could have shared with him the unfortunate news that he had already locked up the important honor for himself and made a good case why he was more desperate and deserving, but he said nothing. He just picked himself up and left, returning to the other side of Jerusalem.

Shortly after that his wife was finally expecting a child and she gave birth to their precious son. He felt that his deepest wish was granted that year not because he got Maftir Yonah but rather because he didn't say a word and he let someone else have it instead.

He had what to say but he held himself back. It could not have been easy. So, like Aaron, he earned **the reward for silence**.

<https://torah.org/torah-portion/dvartorah-5778-shemini/>

Shemini -- Divine Fingerprints

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine * © 2017

The holiday of Pesach, which we recently celebrated,* is a model for the Jewish belief system. At the Seder we transmit the story of the Exodus from one generation to another. And so it is with all of Judaism. The transmission, or Mesorah, is the foundation of our belief system of Jewish law and values.

There are, however, inspirational passages in the Torah which lead us to recognize that only G-d Himself, the Creator, could have made this law or provided that insight. For example, in this week's Parsha, the Torah describes the signs of a Kosher animal: That it chews its cud, and has split hooves. After giving these criteria, the Torah proceeds to tell us that there is an animal which has the sign of split hooves, but does not chew its cud. That is, the pig. The Talmud observes,

“Was Moshe a zoologist,” that he could say with certainty that only this animal met this description? Of course not. Yet, no animal has been found to have split hooves but not chew its cud, besides the pig. There is a treasured inspiration, not merely in the fact that Moshe was right, but that Moshe was so confident that he was right that he was willing to state it in the Torah with clarity. Such confidence could only come from the fact that he was getting his information directly from G-d Himself.

Another example in this week’s Parsha is from the kosher signs of a fish. The Torah states that to be kosher, a fish must have fins and scales. But our tradition- as recorded in the Talmud- maintains, that any fish that has scales, certainly has fins. One wonders: How could the Talmud know that information? There are tens of thousands of types of fish. And why would Jewish tradition put itself on the line with such a statement... unless the information was coming from G-d Himself, who knows what types of fish He created.

There is another example which is related to the holiday of Pesach. The Torah requires that, when the Beis Hamikdash is standing, all men go on a pilgrimage to Yerushalayim three times a year (Pesach, Shavuot, and Succot). The obvious danger this poses is that the neighboring nations would become aware of this Mitzvah and might be tempted to invade the land during the weeks when they knew that the men were away and would not defend their cities. Yet, the Mitzvah was given, and with it an assurance that no person or nation will covet the land during these weeks of vulnerability. Even more amazing than the fact that the Land was not invaded as a result of the pilgrimage, is the simple fact that such a mitzvah is included in the Torah. An intelligent person (as Moshe certainly was) would only mandate such a Mitzvah if he had the directive and the assurance from G-d Himself.

One more example, for now. In a few weeks, we will read about the Mitzvah of the sabbatical year called Shemita. The Torah requires that, every seventh year, we do not plant the fields of the land of Israel. Some people who hear about this Mitzvah say that it is very understandable. They suggest that Shemita is a way to allow the land to regain its energy by going fallow for one year. Yet, upon consideration we realize that such a Mitzvah leaves the followers of this faith at great risk of starvation. If the reason was as they suggest, it would have been far more sensible to require each field to lay fallow for one year, on some rotating basis, so that there would be some produce for the people in every year. Instead the Torah requires the entire country to lay fallow in the same year, and declares an assurance that the sixth year will produce so well that the Jewish People will not go hungry. More remarkable than the fact that the assurance worked, is the fact that Moshe was willing to make the assurance. This is a Mitzvah that an intelligent leader would never give, unless he was operating under orders of G-d Himself.

Our faith is not based on inspirational moments or insights. Our faith is based on the accurate transmission of events and values, from parent to child, since the time of the Exodus and the Revelation at Sinai. But it is meaningful to sometimes take note of the inspirational Fingerprints of the Divine that can be noticed in the Torah, in Mitzvos, and in our lives.

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<http://www.teach613.org/shemini-divine-fingerprints/>

Rabbi Mordechai Rhine is a certified mediator and coach with Rabbinic experience of over 20 years. Based in Maryland, he provides services internationally via Zoom. He is the Director of TEACH613: Building Torah Communities, One family at a Time, and the founder of CARE Mediation, focused on Marriage/ Shalom Bayis and personal coaching. To reach Rabbi Rhine, his websites are www.care-mediation.com and www.teach613.org; his email is RMRhine@gmail.com. **For information or to join any Torah613 classes, contact Rabbi Rhine.**

Computers, Holiness and the Power of Change: Thoughts on Parashat Shemini by Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

In 1980, our synagogue office became computerized. Each of our staff members was given a computer on which to do our work. My computer sat in my office in an unopened box for about a year. A member of the synagogue Board visited me one day and saw the box. He asked why I wasn't using the computer.

I answered: I don't need it. I have a secretary. I have an electric typewriter. Why should I get started with this newfangled contraption? He immediately asked to use my phone, and he called a friend who was a computer teacher. For the next two days, she came to my office and taught me how to use the computer. After those two days, I became "addicted" to the computer, and don't know how I could live without it.

This episode came to mind recently, when I had a discussion with a computer expert from Los Angeles who has many older clients who did not have computers during their childhoods. He told me that one of the biggest problems is getting these people to overcome their psychological resistance to entering the world of computers.

Why did I leave my computer box unopened for a year? Why do people resist learning new computer programs?

The problem does not stem from intellectual or physical inability. Once we learn to use computers, we do fine. The problem is different: it entails overcoming a psychological barrier. A new way of doing things tends to threaten the way we've always done things in the past; it threatens our comfort level, our feeling of being in control. We suddenly become dependent on technicians, who seem to speak in a language we can't fully understand. The world is changing rapidly, and we are becoming dinosaurs. Stop the world, I want to get off!

But once we overcome these psychological barriers, we can enter the new age and learn the necessary skills, and actually find satisfaction and joy in our progress. The determining factor is: do we have the right mindset? Do we have the will to change? Do we have the inner strength to start from scratch, as though we're back in first grade?

This dilemma, in a different form, is raised in this week's Torah reading. God tells us: "sanctify yourselves and be holy; for I am holy." Rashi points out that "sanctify yourselves" means we need to develop the right attitude; "be holy" can be fulfilled only after we want to sanctify ourselves.

Just as some people have psychological barriers about computers and other technology, some have psychological barriers about religion. They prefer to leave the "box of religion" unopened, because it may challenge their comfort level. They are nervous about religious faith, about commitment to mitzvot, about changing their lifestyles. Or, they may already be religiously observant, but they are uneasy about getting more deeply involved, more intensely learned; they don't know where this will lead. They don't want to upset the status quo.

The Torah is aware of these concerns; so it teaches us first to sanctify ourselves, to develop an open and receptive attitude, to reach a proper comfort level in our spiritual growth. Once we have made this internal shift in the way we approach life, we can then go to the next step: be holy. We can grow in our religious knowledge and commitment without being blocked by self-imposed psychological barriers.

People crave spirituality, but are afraid of spirituality. They don't know how to express it. Or they fear that it will lead them to change in new, untested directions. The Torah assures us: don't be afraid. We can overcome our resistances and our anxieties. We just need to start by sanctifying ourselves, by teaching ourselves to be receptive, by changing our attitudes. If we can overcome these internal psychological barriers, we can then move on in a more productive, more creative, and happier way.

People fail in life not because they don't have the power to change and to grow; but because they inwardly resist change and growth. People succeed in life because they have the strength to learn, to grow, to see life as an unfolding adventure which should be lived with courage and vitality.

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

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<https://www.jewishideas.org/computers-holiness-and-power-change-thoughts-parashat-shemini>

Millions, Billions, Trillions--That's Real Money!

A Blog by Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

The late Senator Everett Dirksen once quipped about the American budget: “A billion here, a billion there, and pretty soon you're talking real money.” And that was in the 1960's. These days, we're talking about trillions of dollars...not merely billions.

We are so accustomed to hearing of allocations and projects that entail millions, billions and trillions of dollars, we sometimes forget that these dollars are “real money.” They represent our tax payments, our government's growing debt levels. Money is allocated as though it has no human component to it.

The Torah refers to money as “damim” — blood! Money represents human labor, time, and investment. It is not neutral. Each dollar represents a bit of our lives, the time and energy it took us to generate that dollar.

We learn of the government's allocation of several hundred million dollars to this project, billions to another project, and more than a trillion for yet another massive endeavor. It has recently been suggested that all student debt — totaling over a trillion dollars — should be forgiven. But what about all the hardworking people who have conscientiously repaid their student loans? Should the government reimburse them? Apparently that isn't under consideration.

While vast public expenditures are inevitable — and often necessary — we are presented with huge dollar amounts as if the money simply comes from the air. The numbers become disconnected from the actual human beings who are providing the dollars for the budgets.

As governments and organizations deal with the public's money, they are responsible for spending the money as wisely and fairly as possible. They are duty-bound to prevent wasteful use of funds. They need to realize that each dollar has a human component, that public funds represent the “damim” of all who pay into the system.

Senator Dirksen pointed to the difficulty of dealing with large sums of money. When speaking of billions or trillions of dollars, it's easy to think of the money as anonymous numbers. It's easy to forget that these dollars are the product of real human beings.

When allocating public funds, decisions must be made as to what is best and most needed by constituents. There will obviously be different budgetary opinions and calculations. And not every constituent will agree with every decision. Nevertheless, the process of allocating funds must be conducted with a keen sense of responsibility to the stake-holders. This is true not only for government, but for all organizations that collect funds from the public.

Tax payers and contributors to organizations deserve to have their money spent responsibly and fairly. When allocating public funds, we're not just speaking of real money: we're speaking of real human beings who have generated that money.

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

Shemini – Kosher: Food For Thought

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer *

One of the most well-known aspects of Jewish life is the complex, unique laws of Kosher. In addition to the laws of milk and meat, there are restrictions as to which animals we may eat from. Land animals must have split hooves and chew their cud, and fish must have fins and scales. There is also a specific list of kosher birds and even a short list of specific bugs which are acceptable. The Torah does not give us any clear, explicit reason for these guidelines or what differentiates these animals from others.

The Ralba”g (Vayikra 11:8) offers a fascinating insight into some of the laws of kosher. He explains that when G-d chose us to be His people, He assigned us to be a nation of wise and understanding people. In line with this role, G-d commanded us to choose foods which would be in keeping with this purpose and to stay away from foods which could hamper this purpose. Specifically, G-d wanted us to avoid foods which would strengthen the physical, earthly characteristics of mankind and deaden the sharpness of the intellect. Just as when we eat a large meal we feel physically tired, so too, physical foods have a spiritual component which can make us spiritually tired. Some foods are denser and more earthen in their spiritual components. Eating those foods and incorporating them into our system can make us more focused on the earthly, physical aspects of life and less attuned to the finer nuances of intellectual pursuits and spirituality.

This, he explains, is the reason why we are enjoined to only eat animals who chew their cud. The fact that animals chew their cud is a sign that their life-force requires more refined food. These animals are made of a spiritual essence that is less earthen and physical. To properly sustain their life force, they therefore require food that is more refined and less dense or earthen in its makeup. For this reason, Hashem created them in a way that they do not absorb nutrients directly from physical matter as other animals might. They were given multiple stomachs for digestion to refine and loosen their food, weakening the physical bonds within their food and thereby making them less dense and more spiritual. To further increase this effect, these animals regurgitate their food and chew it again during the digestive process.

The Ralba”g later explains (ibid. 12) that the fins and scales on kosher fish are an expression of the same concept. The scales are a stronger layer of protection than regular fish skin. This is indicative that the fish itself is less dense and substantive and more prone to being damaged by external factors. (He notes, that this concept is unique to scales and should not be applied to a hard shell, where the thick shell is mystically symbolic of a particularly dense and earthen flesh underneath.) He notes that fins are also indicative of the refined makeup of the fish, as fins assist the fish to move more quickly and more easily through the water. As with all exercise, the increased movement of the fish wears away any excess physicality.

It is for these reasons that these signs were chosen for kosher food. The signs themselves hint at one of the purposes of eating kosher – that we be able to maintain ourselves as wise and understanding beings. This is so critical to who we are as Jews, that Hashem incorporated these laws into the very fabric of our daily lives, ensuring that we don’t allow for any unnecessary weakening of our capacity for thought and insight.

We live in a world which is driven by results and productivity. It is a very busy world, where we often struggle to find the time to stop and reflect and consider our lives, our environment, where we came from and where we are going in life. Wisdom and understanding do not come of their own accord. They can only be gained through taking time to stop and carefully consider the things we’ve learned in life, the experiences we’ve had and the environment and reality that we know. The Ralba”g teaches us that the laws of Kosher are a constant reminder of how precious thought and reflection are, and that we must make time to stop and think.

* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD.

Shemini – Parasha Pointers

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia *

1. The inauguration of the Mishkan took eight days [Lev. 9:1]. Consider the appearances of cycles of seven and eight in the biblical calendar and in events and rituals. Question to ponder: What do the numbers seven and eight represent in the Torah?
2. The number seven appears in the creation of the world, Shabbat, Pesah, seven weeks leading to Shavuot, Shavuot itself, Sukkot, the seven-year Shemita cycle, and seven times seven years leading to the jubilee year. It also appears in many sets of sacrifices, blood-sprinkling on the altar, and the seven branches of the Menorah.
3. The number eight appears in Berit Milah, the inauguration of the Mishkan, Shemini Atzeret, and the purification process of the leper.

4. Nadav and Avihu, the sons of Aharon, are struck and killed for bringing an alien fire [10:1-2]. The commentators debate the reason for their punishment. The following paragraph is a warning against entering the Mishkan while drunk [10:8-11]. It seems that Nadav and Avihu were drinking wine to achieve a joyous state of mind. Using external substances for such a purpose is detrimental and dangerous. The spiritual experience should be internal and not one which is achieved by substance abuse.

5. This also explains why the warning against serving in the Mishkan while drunk is followed by this description of the Kohen's role, which is to distinguish between the holy and unholy, the pure and impure, and teach the laws of God to the Israelites. The power of distinction evaporates when one is drunk, and the drunkard cannot be an educator or an inspirational guide, which is the principal purpose of the Kohanim.

6. Aharon and his surviving sons are instructed to carry on with the inauguration and let the rest of the nation mourn the death of Nadav and Avihu [10:6-7]. This seems very harsh, and there is no doubt that it required a tremendous sacrifice for Aharon and his sons to obey that order. This perhaps could be analogized to an extremely important mission in which some of the crew members lost their lives. The survivors must keep the momentum and bring the mission to fruition.

7. Moshe loses his temper and rebukes Aharon for not eating of the meat of a certain sacrifice. Aharon calmly responds that in light of the tragedy that befell him, eating of that sacrifice would be inappropriate. Moshe accepts Aharon's explanation [10:16-20]. We learn for this that even when the program is created by God, there is room for last-minute changes made by people on the ground.

8. In chapter 11 [1-47] we have an extensive list of kosher and non-kosher animals. Keeping the laws of Kashrut helps us in several ways. We are aware of what we eat and inquire about its origin. We learn to delay gratification [see *The Marshmallow Test*, by Walter Mischel]. Sparing some of the non-kosher animals is also important for the ecology since they are nature's sanitary corps.

Enjoy reading and learning. Shabbat Shalom.

[ed.: one of the Devrei Torah attachments for next Shabbat will discuss Rabbi Ovadia's question regarding the significance of the numbers seven and eight in the Torah.]

* Torah VeAhava (now SephardicU.com). Rabbi, Beth Sholom Sephardic Minyan (Potomac, MD) and faculty member, AJRCA non-denominational rabbinical school). **New: Many of Rabbi Ovadia's Devrei Torah are now available on Sefaria: <https://www.sefaria.org/profile/haim-ovadia?tab=sheets>**

Kosher Signs Lead to a Kosher Life

By Rabbi Dr. Eli Yoggev *

This week in Parshat Shmini, we learn the signs of a kosher animal. The Torah tells us that we may eat any land animal that has split hooves and chews their cud (Lev. 11:3). We do not know the deeper reasons behind the mitzvot, but there is a way to understand these laws of kashrut that really speaks to me. It is based on a commentary I read in the Mei HaShiloach (vol. 1, Shmini, s.v. simanei behemah), a little bit of my own interpretation, and a discussion with a 4th grade student of mine, Livi Zakheim, at Beth Tfiloh Dahan Community School.

The two signs may hint at the direction we should live in our lives if we want to be kosher Jews. On the one hand, we want to have our hands open all the time and give to other people. Split hooves allude to this. Instead of clenching our fists (i.e., "cloven hooves") and holding on to our blessings for ourselves, we must open our hands and share our goodness with others ("split hooves"). This is the kosher way, and this is why split hooves are a kosher sign!

However, when it comes to ourselves, we must shift our energy inwards. We must be happy and content with what we have, with what Hashem has given us. This is hinted at in the chewing of the cud. An animal that chews its cud enjoys its food. It then swallows it and regurgitates it once more and chews the food again. The cud-chewing animal is at peace with what it has and it is constantly benefiting from its food over and over again.

It is okay, even encouraged, to keep progressing and finding new areas of growth in life, but we should always remember to be happy with what we have! Notwithstanding, when it comes to others, we must not be content! We must constantly strive to give and give some more, extending our blessings, with an open hand, to those in need.

Shabbat shalom

* Associate Rabbi, of Beth Tfiloh Congregation, Baltimore, MD. Alumnus of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah; Ph.D. in Jewish Mysticism and Chasidism, Bar-Ilan University.

<https://library.yct Torah.org/2022/03/shmini22/>

Dom Dum Da Dumb

By Rabbi Moshe Rube *

This week, our KI family wishes farewell to the Elgavishes, a family that has been here for 40 years!

There are so many sentiments I could express that would cause our eyes to fill up with nostalgia, but I shall just mention one.

As we all know, Gabi has a desire to use words in consonance with their origins and has corrected me on many a time for expounding a word in a way that departs from its actual meaning. (Rabbis can never get too creative with wordplay.)

So I will do that now in their honor.

The word "Dum" in Hebrew usually refers to blood, hence the first plague. In our Torah portion though, it's used as a term for silence. When Aharon learns that two of his sons, Nadav and Avihu, had been burnt in the Tabernacle for bringing an uncommanded fire, the Torah says "VayiDom Aharon" – "and Aaron was silent."

So now we see the source for the English word "dumb" which refers to the inability to speak. Aaron in this case was dumbfounded. That's the origin of the English word and I'm sticking to it.

But why was Aaron struck dumb? Do people not express vocal sadness when they lose a loved one? When a Kohen is pricked does he not bleed?

Maybe Aaron wanted to cry out but there was something especially unnerving about this death. It happened at a time of great triumph. A time where Aaron and his family would be inaugurated forever into the priesthood. A time where we presume God would show special favor to him and his family.

But no favor came.

It was this shattered expectation that struck Aaron dumb and this expectation shattering was the entire point of the whole affair.

The Midrash, when zooming in to the sin of Nadav and Avihu, see their problem as shirking the authority of their teacher Moshe by offering a strange fire. If we just stayed with this focus, the story would teach us about our obligation to respect authority.

But if we zoom out, we see the opposite sentiment that authority is not infallible. No matter how holy the leader, no matter how distinguished their pedigree, no matter how great their connection to God, they are but humans. Humans like you and me and subject to the same dictates that we all are.

Not only that but according to the Talmud they are held to even higher standards. For good reason as well. As David Graeber and David Wengrow point out in their book *The Dawn of Everything*, some ancient Mexican cultures had the practice of dragging a newly elected politician through the streets as a way of reminding him whom he serves. To show that he is not above the people though he occupies a special position.

In the same way, this incident illustrated to Aaron and his descendants in a most graphic way that his spiritual responsibilities do not exalt him over the regular Jew. And no abuse of his power to do anything uncommanded could happen.

This idea that we should not see priests or leaders as gods not to be questioned but as humans in a position was a new and subversive idea in the Ancient Near East. To some degree, it still is in our modern world, because every day we must have respect for our authorities, rabbis, and teachers (both living and dead) while also pointing out gaps in their knowledge and know that they are and were human with all the beautiful frailties and imperfections that come with that. And that pleasure of being corrected for my knowledge gaps is just one reason why I will miss the Elgavishes. I suppose I will have to read more books on linguistics now.

Shabbat Shalom,

* Rabbi, Knesseth Israel Congregation, Birmingham, AL.

Rav Kook Torah Shemini: Immersion in Water

"If any of these dead [animals] falls on a vessel, it will become unclean.... That article must be immersed in a mikveh ..." (Lev. 11:32)

The topic of ritual impurity is a difficult one. This impurity is not a tangible quality that may be seen or felt. It is a spiritual contamination, the result of association with death. To purify ourselves from this contamination, we must immerse ourselves in a natural spring or a ritual bath (mikveh) filled with rainwater.

Why Immersion in Water?

The story is told of a wealthy American Jew who decided to visit one of the leading Torah scholars of his generation. Upon arriving at the rabbi's home, the visitor was shocked to discover that the renowned scholar lived in a simple house, with a dirt floor and shabby wood furnishings. Anxious to help the rabbi improve his living conditions, the guest suggested that it would be more becoming for such an eminent scholar to have more respectable furnishings, and he would be more than happy to pay for all expenses.

The rabbi turned to his guest. "And tell me, where is your furniture?"

"My furniture?" responded the American Jew, baffled. "Why, I am only a visitor here. I don't travel with all my belongings."

"So with me," the rabbi replied. "I am only a visitor here in this world..."

A Lesson in Estrangement

The very act of immersing ourselves in water contains a profound psychological lesson. All immoral deeds, flawed character traits, and erroneous opinions stem from the same fundamental mistake: not recognizing that life in this world is transitory. Here, we are only visitors. Whatever we find here should be utilized for its eternal value.

When we immerse ourselves in water, we are forced to recognize our existential estrangement from the physical universe. How long can we survive under water? The experience of submerging drives home the realization that our existence in this world is transient, and we should strive towards more lasting goals.

Tents and Natural Springs

The Sages (Berachot 16a) hinted to this insight when they compared the results of Torah study to that of a purifying spring:

“Why did Balaam [in Num. 24:6] compare the tents of Israel to streams? This teaches us that just as a spring raises one from impurity to purity, so too, the tents [of Torah learning] raise one from a state of culpability to a state of merit.”

In what way is learning Torah like submerging in a natural spring?

Torah study and immersion in water have a similar beneficial effect. Instead of focusing only on the material matters of this world, learning the wisdom of Torah raises our sights to eternal values and aspirations. For this reason, the Sages used the expression, “tents of Torah.” Why tents? A tent is the most transient of homes. This phrase emphasizes the quality of Torah that, like a purifying mikveh or a natural spring, makes us aware of the transitory nature of the physical world.

(Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 190-191. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 74.)

<http://www.ravkooktorah.org/SHMINI59.htm>

Limits (Shemini 5780)

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z”l, Former Chief Rabbi of the U.K.*

The story of Nadav and Avihu, Aharon’s two eldest sons who died on the day the Sanctuary was dedicated, is one of the most tragic in the Torah. It is referred to on no less than four separate occasions. It turned a day that should have been a national celebration into one of deep grief. Aharon, bereaved, could not speak. A sense of mourning fell over the camp and the people. God had told Moshe that it was dangerous to have the Divine Presence within the camp (Ex. 33:3), but even Moshe could not have guessed that something as serious as this could happen. What did Nadav and Avihu do wrong?

An exceptionally broad range of interpretations have been given by the Sages. Some say that they aspired to lead the people and were impatiently waiting for Moshe and Aharon to die. Others say that their sin was that they never married, considering all women to be unworthy of them. Others attribute their sin to intoxication. Others again say that they did not seek guidance as to what they should do and what they were not permitted to do on this day. Yet another explanation is that they entered the Holy of Holies, which only the High Priest was permitted to do.

The simplest explanation, though, is the one given explicitly in the text. They offered “strange fire that was not commanded.” Why should they have done such a thing? And why was it so serious an error?

The explanation that makes most sense psychologically is that they were carried away by the mood of the moment. They acted in a kind of ecstasy. They were caught up by the sheer excitement of the inauguration of the first collective house of worship in the history of Avraham’s children. Their behaviour was spontaneous. They wanted to do something extra, uncommanded, to express their religious fervour.

What was wrong with that? Moshe had acted spontaneously when he broke the tablets after the sin of the Golden Calf. Centuries later, David would act spontaneously when he danced as the Ark was brought into Jerusalem. Neither of them was punished for their behaviour, (although Michal did reprimand her husband David after his dance). But what made Nadav and Avihu deserve so severe a punishment?

The difference was that Moshe was a Prophet. David was a King. But Nadav and Avihu were Priests. Prophets and Kings sometimes act spontaneously, because they both inhabit the world of time. To fulfil their functions, they need a sense of history. They develop an intuitive grasp of time. They understand the mood of the moment, and what it calls for. For them, today is not yesterday, and tomorrow will be different again. That leads them, from time to time, to act spontaneously because that is what the moment requires.

Moshe knew that only something as dramatic as shattering the tablets would bring the people to their senses and convey to them how grave was their sin. David knew that dancing alongside the Ark would express to the people a sense of the significance of what was happening, that Jerusalem was about to become not just the political capital but also the spiritual centre of the nation. These acts of precisely judged spontaneity were essential in shaping the destiny of the people.

But Priests have a different role altogether. They inhabit a world that is timeless, ahistorical, in which nothing significant changes. The daily, weekly and yearly sacrifices were always the same. Every element of the service of the Tabernacle was bound by its own detailed rules, and nothing of significance was left to the discretion of the Priest.

The Priest was the guardian of order. It was his job to maintain boundaries, between sacred and secular, pure and impure, perfect and blemished, permitted and forbidden. His domain was that of the holy, the points at which the infinite and eternal enter the world of the finite and mortal. As God tells Aharon in our parsha: "You must distinguish between the sacred and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean; and you must teach the Israelites all the laws which the Lord has imparted to them through Moshe." The key verbs for the Kohen were *lehavdil*, to distinguish, and *lehorot*, to teach. The Kohen made distinctions and taught the people to do likewise.

The priestly vocation was to remind the people that there are limits. There is an order to the universe and we must respect it. Spontaneity has no place in the life of the Priest or the service of the Sanctuary. That is what Nadav and Avihu failed to honour. It might have seemed like a minor transgression but it was in fact a negation of everything the Tabernacle and the Priesthood stood for.

There are limits. That is what the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is about. Why would God go to the trouble of creating two trees, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge, from which human beings are forbidden to eat? Why tell the humans what the trees were and what their fruit could do? Why expose them to temptation? Who would not wish to have knowledge and eternal life if they could acquire them by merely eating a fruit? Why plant these trees in a garden where the humans could not but help see them? Why put Adam and Eve to a test they were unlikely to pass?

To teach them, and us, that even in Eden, Utopia, Paradise, there are limits. There are certain things we can do, and would like to do, that we must not do.

The classic example is the environment. As Jared Diamond has documented in his books, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, and *Collapse*, almost wherever human beings have set foot, they have left a trail of destruction in their wake. They have farmed lands to exhaustion and hunted animals to extinction. They have done so because they have not had, embedded in their minds and habits, the notion of limits. Hence the concept, key to environmental ethics, of sustainability, meaning limiting your exploitation of the Earth's resources to the point where they can renew themselves. A failure to observe those limits causes human beings to be exiled from their own garden of Eden.

We have been aware of threats to the environment and the dangers of climate change for a long time, certainly since the 1970s. Yet the measures humanity has taken to establish limits to consumption, pollution, the destruction of habitats and the like have, for the most part, been too little, too late. A 2019 BBC survey of moral attitudes in Britain showed that despite the fact that a majority of people felt responsibility for the future of the planet, this had not translated into action. 71 percent of people thought that it is acceptable to drive when it would be just as easy to walk. 65 percent of people thought it acceptable to use disposable cutlery and plates.[1]

In *The True and Only Heaven*, Christopher Lasch argued that the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment endowed us with the belief that there are no limits, that science and technology will solve every problem they create and the earth will continue indefinitely to yield its bounty. "Progressive optimism rests, at bottom, on a denial of the natural limits on human power and freedom, and it cannot survive for very long in a world in which an awareness of those limits has become inescapable." [2] Forget limits and eventually we lose paradise. That is what the story of Adam and Eve warns.

In a remarkable passage in his 1976 book on inflation, *The Reigning Error*, William Rees-Mogg waxed eloquent about the role of Jewish law in securing Jewish survival. It did so by containing the energies of the people – Jews are, he said, "a people of an electric energy, both of personality and of mind." Nuclear energy, he says, is immensely powerful but at the same time needs to be contained. He then says this:

In the same way, the energy of the Jewish people has been enclosed in a different type of container, the law. That has acted as a bottle inside which the spiritual and intellectual energy could be held; only because it could be held has it been possible to make use of it. It has not merely exploded or been dispersed; it has been harnessed as a continuous power ... Contained energy can be a driving force over an indefinite period; uncontrolled energy is merely a big and usually destructive bang. In human nature only disciplined energy is effective.[3]

That was the role of the Kohen, and it is the continuing role of halachah. Both are expressions of limits: rules, laws and distinctions. Without limits, civilisations can be as thrilling and short-lived as fireworks. To survive they need to find a way of containing energy so that it lasts, undiminished. That was the Priest's role and what Nadav and Avihu betrayed by introducing spontaneity where it does not belong. As Rees-Mogg said, "uncontrolled energy is merely a big and usually destructive bang."

I believe that we need to recover a sense of limits because, in our uncontrolled search for ever greater affluence, we are endangering the future of the planet and betraying our responsibility to generations not yet born. There are such things as fruit we should not eat and fire we should not bring.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2019/year-of-beliefs-morality-ethics-survey-2019>.

[2] Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and its Critics*, WW Norton, 1991, 530.

[3] William Rees-Mogg, *The Reigning Error: The Crisis of World Inflation*, Hamish Hamilton, 1974, 12.

<https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/shemini/limits/>

Can Kosher Make Sense?

By Adin Even-Israel (Steinsaltz)* © Chabad 2022

No explanation

In Parshat Shemini, following the account of Nadav and Avihu, the section dealing with dietary laws begins – “to distinguish between the pure and the impure, between the living creatures that may be eaten and the living creatures that may not be eaten.”¹

The distinction between the permitted animals and the forbidden animals raises a question that has occupied many commentators: What distinguishes the permitted animals from all the prohibited ones? Why is a hyrax worse than some other animal? What is wrong with camels and pigs? Why is sturgeon caviar worse than salmon roe caviar?

This question is not a new one, and similar questions can be asked regarding many other Torah laws. On this subject, however, the question is glaringly conspicuous. One of the reasons for this is the prominence of these laws in our daily lives and in halachah. Ever since we were exiled from our land and thus unable to fulfill most of the Torah's commandments, the dietary laws form a central part of Jewish life. Separating milk and meat, avoiding non-kosher foods, and using the appropriate silverware for each meal take up much of our time and attention.

There have been various attempts to resolve this question. Some have claimed that eating non-kosher animals is physically harmful, and from time to time claims arise regarding the danger of eating pork. It is true that pigs' meat is sometimes infected with worms, which can cause one who consumes the meat without sufficiently cooking it to contract a parasitic disease called trichinosis. But if that were the reason for the prohibition, instead of prohibiting pork the Torah could have given much better advice – that one must cook the meat thoroughly before eating it. Others have claimed that pigs are prohibited because they were used for idolatry, while still others have claimed the reverse, that pigs were not considered fit even for idolatry, so they are certainly unfit for our consumption as well.

There have been similar attempts to explain tzaraat, the leprosy-like condition described in the Torah. Maimonides, for example, explained that tzaraat is a type of disease. Ultimately, however, even he reached the conclusion that the tzaraat described in the Torah cannot be identified with any of the diseases known to him. On the contrary, especially in light of the fact that it can appear on houses as well as on flesh, tzaraat more closely resembles a miracle than a disease. In fact, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi writes that only supremely exalted individuals can be stricken with tzaraat, for only a spiritually exceptional person is worthy of experiencing such a miracle on his flesh.²

The same is true regarding tumah and taharah: no clear explanations exist. We do not know why hedgehogs, chameleons, lizards, and snails are tamei, while frogs are pure. There seems to be no reason why a frog, which is pure whether alive or dead, should be considered more exalted than a weasel or a mouse. However, the Torah distinguished between them, and we have no logical explanation for it.

Generally, attempting to justify mitzvot by portraying them as intended for physical or even spiritual benefit ultimately proves futile. This does not mean that such a justification is necessarily unfounded, nor does it mean that one should argue the reverse, namely, that pig meat is actually better than cow meat, only that G d, knowing how good it is, nevertheless prohibited it to us. What it means is that this type of justification can never be the central consideration. It is better simply to rely on G d and not attempt to give explanations.

Tamei and tahor

In the parshah, the words tamei and tahor appear in two completely different senses: in the list of animals that may or may not be eaten,³ and in the list of creatures that impart tuma when they are dead.⁴ These two lists are juxtaposed, even though there is no practical connection between them. Clearly, the statement, “it is impure for you,”⁵ regarding the camel and the hyrax has no relation – neither conceptually nor halachically – to the statement “it shall remain impure until evening; then it shall be pure”⁶ regarding the creeping things. The first statement denotes that the animal may not be eaten, while the second denotes that these creatures convey tumah.

Animals that may not be eaten are not, as a result, tamei. When they are alive, they certainly are not more liable to convey tumah; when they are dead, some are more liable to convey tumah, and some are less liable. For example, even though a snake may not be eaten, it is one of the creatures that do not convey tumah, neither when they are alive nor when they are dead.

Sometimes the two different senses of the terms tamei and tahor intermingle in the text, as in: “To distinguish between the impure and the pure, between the living creature that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten;”⁷ “Do not eat them, for they are things that must be avoided...and do not make yourselves impure through them, lest you become defiled through them.”⁸ Throughout the section, the laws of tumah and tahara and the dietary laws are intertwined.

This mixture demonstrates, first of all, that any attempt to explain these laws in a practical or rational way will prove extremely challenging.

But it is important to stress that this mixture is intentional, and signifies that although halachically and functionally the two concepts have nothing in common, they nevertheless belong to one common idea. The terms tamei and tahor refer neither to the cause of things nor to the way they work but to the distance that must be kept from them. There are things that we avoid, and there are things that we do not avoid, and the distancing of the tamei – in all of the various senses of the term – is the subject of this section.

Why was the Torah given?

In every generation and in every age, there are matters that a person simply accepts, without expressing any objections or casting any doubts. In Maimonides’ generation, for example, what was written in philosophy books was sacrosanct. In our generation, by contrast, philosophical literature causes no one to tremble, even philosophers themselves. To be considered a cultured individual, it is sufficient to pepper some of these ideas into one’s conversation, without needing to acknowledge them as the basis of the world’s existence.

Our generation is a generation of psychology rather than philosophy. Today, the study of the mind is what determines the essence of the human experience in the world. No one claims today that one should avoid pork because it causes intestinal worms, since all the mitzvot of the Torah can be explained as spiritual dimensions, relating to the human personality. According to this approach, the sole purpose of all mitzvot is to develop one’s personality, each mitzvah in its own way.

In this context it is worth quoting Yeshayahu Leibowitz, who said that the Torah was not given to mend the personality’s torn pants. There is an element of truth in this. Whoever thinks that the exalted Torah was given so that man could attain

peace of mind, lead a happy family life, love his fellow man, find favor in the eyes of society, or succeed in his affairs diminishes the Torah greatly.

It is true that one who is steeped in the world of Torah generally does not suffer corruption of character, but that is not the primary purpose of the mitzvot. On the other hand, the Torah would never command us to do something that clearly damages or destroys the body. The Midrash states, “Nothing that is evil descends from above.”⁹ In other words, no mitzvah would be given that causes damage, whether physically or spiritually. That said, it is still quite a stretch to then pin everything on this point and search for each mitzvah’s physical and personal benefit. G d did not descend on Mount Sinai to provide information that can be found in a cheap psychology textbook – to explain how to improve one’s life and how to behave better.

The psychological explanations for mitzvot are even worse than the medical explanations, which the Maharal criticized sharply, asking if it is conceivable that the Torah amounts to an article in a medical journal.¹⁰ In his time, at least, medical and psychological texts were expensive and difficult to access. Nowadays, most of this information can be found easily, for free, on the Internet. If this is the case, could it be that for that purpose alone G d Himself descended from the heavens?

A kernel of truth

To try to interpret the laws of tumah and taharah as expedients for personal development diminishes the Torah’s glory. Moreover, one must also remember something that is true of the Torah in its entirety, from “In the beginning” to “before the eyes of all Israel.” Although no individual can always uphold the truth, one must always remember that “the seal of The Holy One, Blessed Be He, is truth,”¹¹ and it can never be forged. One explanation for this, in the name of the Kotzker Rebbe, is that G d’s seal is truth because a seal must be something that cannot be forged, and truth is the only thing that cannot be forged: The moment it is forged, it ceases to be truth. It is possible to make forged peace, forged wisdom, or forged beauty, but there cannot be forged truth.

To be sure, there are times and situations in which it is impossible to appeal to truth. There are people who are not satisfied even when they are given a true explanation, because they are stubborn and short-sighted. Torah educators, from both earlier and later generations, have had to take this into consideration. Often the bald truth is not as exciting as a brilliant innovation, even if the latter idea may be faulty and questionable. Brilliant theories may appear to be the absolute truth, even when they are actually false. A person can live for twenty years on these falsehoods, satisfied with the lure of their cleverness, and never bothering to seek the actual truth.

When someone sinks to psychological or medical explanations, he need only peruse the section discussing the eight creeping things – for once, human psychology has little to say. What is the benefit of avoiding hedgehogs, chameleons, lizards, and snails? Why are the weasel and the mouse worse than the cat and dog? Why is it that earlier in the month of Nisan, this food is not harmful to one’s body or soul, whereas a few days later, when the 14th of Nisan arrives, if one eats it, one’s soul is cut off? Any attempt to impose artificial explanations on these laws – explanations relating to physical health or mental health – not only is problematic in itself but is a perversion of the truth, and that is truly unforgivable.

Four entered the Pardes

The Talmud relates that “four entered the orchard (pardes). They were Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, Acher [Elisha b. Avuya], and Rabbi Akiva...Ben Azzai gazed and died...Ben Zoma gazed and was stricken...Acher gazed and became a heretic...Rabbi Akiva left in peace.”¹²

Maimonides explains that this “orchard” refers to the study of other wisdoms and other disciplines,¹³ but the Vilna Gaon sharply criticizes this explanation. He argues that besides the fact that the explanation is fundamentally incorrect and constitutes an affront to the G d of truth, it reduces the Torah to a mere antechamber leading to a great hall, a preparatory stage leading to the study of the other branches of knowledge. This interpretation sets as the highest level, as the goal, something that is not worth pursuing.

Rav Hai Gaon says that “it is not our way to cover up [the true meaning of] a matter and interpret it in a way that is not in accordance with the intention of the one who said it, as others do.”¹⁴ When we set out to interpret words of Torah, we try to explain them strictly in keeping with the true intention of the one who spoke them.

This principle applies not only to methods of interpretation but also as a way of life. Sometimes, for various reasons, people build questionable, contrived explanations for the ideas in the Torah, reducing it to an antechamber that leads to a wretched hall. When, after several generations, a person finally understands that the glorious castle of his dreams is no more than a hovel, he asks himself: Was it all worth it?

Maimonides indicates that the lofty Pardes refers to Aristotle's metaphysics. However, several problems arise. First, this idea does not appear in the Torah at all. Second, it fails to explain the mysteries of the Torah. Finally, and most importantly, is it worth living and dying for this purpose? Is it for Aristotle's metaphysics that we sacrifice our entire lives?

And even if we argue that, in truth, whoever keeps the Torah and the mitzvot will succeed in his business dealings, in his marital life, and in his interpersonal relationships – still, is even this success worth living and dying for?

This idea can be seen, in the extreme, in the narrative sequence of the parshah. The parshah begins with the dedication of the Tabernacle, the fire that descends upon the Altar and the terrible tragedy of the sons of Aaron. On the day of the great revelation of the Shechina, Aaron's two sons died "when they drew near before God,"¹⁵ as it says, "I will be sanctified through those near to Me; thus I will be honored before the entire people."¹⁶ And what follows the revelation of G d's presence and the great tragedy that befell Aaron? What does the Torah offer as a reward? "These are the creatures that you may eat from among all the animals that are upon the earth."¹⁷ If the Torah commands all this simply for the sake of a diet – whether for the body or for the soul – then the dietary laws and their reward are truly not worth the cost.

When approaching the Torah, there is no point in considering the personal benefit to be gained, nor does one always find meaningful ideas. It is therefore good to recall the words of the Kotzker Rebbe to a man who came to him with questions about G d: "A G d who can be understood by anyone is not worth serving."

FOOTNOTES:

1. Lev. 11:47.
2. Likkutei Torah, Tazria 22b.
3. Lev. 11:2–23.
4. Lev. 11:24–46.
5. Lev. 11:4.
6. Lev. 11:32.
7. Lev. 11:46.
8. Lev. 11:42:43.
9. Genesis Rabbah 51:3.
10. Tiferet Yisrael 8.
11. Shabbat 55a.
12. Chagiga 14b.
13. Laws of the Foundations of the Torah 4:13; also see Rema, Yoreh De'ah 246:4.
14. Teshuvot HaGeonim 99.
15. Lev. 16:1.
16. Lev. 10:3.

17. See Rashi, Lev. 11:2.

* Rabbi Adin Even-Israel (Steinsaltz) (1937-2020), one of the leading rabbis of this century and author of many books, was best known for his monumental translation of and commentary on the Talmud. © Chabad 2022.

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/5099365/jewish/Can-Kosher-Make-Sense.htm

Shemini: Managing Ecstasy

By Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky * © Chabad 2022

Nadav and Avihu are Consumed

After Aaron's blessing and Moses' prayer, fire descended from heaven and consumed the parts of the sacrifices that had been placed on the Altar.

When the Jewish people saw this, they were ecstatic that G-d's presence appeared to them again openly. But then, two of Aaron's four sons, Nadav and Avihu, offered up some incense on their own initiative.

To everyone's horror, Divine fire again descended, but this time in the form of two pairs of flames that entered Nadav's and Avihu's nostrils, killing them instantly.

Managing Ecstasy

Nadav and Avihu were swept up in the ecstasy of the moment. In their intense desire to cleave to G-d, which they expressed through their unauthorized incense offering, they rose through spiritual heights even as they felt their souls leaving them. From this perspective, their death was not a punishment but a fulfillment of their wish to dissolve into G-d's essence.

Nevertheless, we are not intended to imitate their example; on the contrary, we are expressly forbidden to pursue such suicidal spiritual rapture. Although it is necessary to seek inspiration and renew it constantly, the purpose of reaching increasingly higher planes of Divine consciousness is to bring the consciousness that we acquire down into the world, thereby making the world increasingly more conscious of G-d, transforming it into His home.

* — from *Daily Wisdom* # 1

Gut Shabbos,

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman
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5782 B"H

Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

Limits

The story of Nadav and Avihu, Aharon's two eldest sons who died on the day the Sanctuary was dedicated, is one of the most tragic in the Torah. It is referred to on no less than four separate occasions. It turned a day that should have been a national celebration into one of deep grief. Aharon, bereaved, could not speak. A sense of mourning fell over the camp and the people. God had told Moshe that it was dangerous to have the Divine Presence within the camp (Ex. 33:3), but even Moshe could not have guessed that something as serious as this could happen. What did Nadav and Avihu do wrong?

An exceptionally broad range of interpretations have been given by the Sages. Some say that they aspired to lead the people and were impatiently waiting for Moshe and Aharon to die. Others say that their sin was that they never married, considering all women to be unworthy of them. Others attribute their sin to intoxication. Others again say that they did not seek guidance as to what they should do and what they were not permitted to do on this day. Yet another explanation is that they entered the Holy of Holies, which only the High Priest was permitted to do.

The simplest explanation, though, is the one given explicitly in the text. They offered "strange fire that was not commanded." Why should they have done such a thing? And why was it so serious an error?

The explanation that makes most sense psychologically is that they were carried away by the mood of the moment. They acted in a kind of ecstasy. They were caught up by the sheer excitement of the inauguration of the first collective house of worship in the history of Avraham's children. Their behaviour was spontaneous. They wanted to do something extra, uncommanded, to express their religious fervour.

What was wrong with that? Moshe had acted spontaneously when he broke the tablets after the sin of the Golden Calf. Centuries later, David would act spontaneously when he danced as the Ark was brought into Jerusalem. Neither of them was punished for their behaviour, (although Michal did reprimand her husband David after his dance). But what made Nadav and Avihu deserve so severe a punishment?

The difference was that Moshe was a Prophet. David was a King. But Nadav and Avihu were Priests. Prophets and Kings sometimes act

spontaneously, because they both inhabit the world of time. To fulfil their functions, they need a sense of history. They develop an intuitive grasp of time. They understand the mood of the moment, and what it calls for. For them, today is not yesterday, and tomorrow will be different again. That leads them, from time to time, to act spontaneously because that is what the moment requires.

Moshe knew that only something as dramatic as shattering the tablets would bring the people to their senses and convey to them how grave was their sin. David knew that dancing alongside the Ark would express to the people a sense of the significance of what was happening, that Jerusalem was about to become not just the political capital but also the spiritual centre of the nation. These acts of precisely judged spontaneity were essential in shaping the destiny of the people.

But Priests have a different role altogether. They inhabit a world that is timeless, ahistorical, in which nothing significant changes. The daily, weekly and yearly sacrifices were always the same. Every element of the service of the Tabernacle was bound by its own detailed rules, and nothing of significance was left to the discretion of the Priest.

The Priest was the guardian of order. It was his job to maintain boundaries, between sacred and secular, pure and impure, perfect and blemished, permitted and forbidden. His domain was that of the holy, the points at which the infinite and eternal enter the world of the finite and mortal. As God tells Aharon in our parsha: "You must distinguish between the sacred and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean; and you must teach the Israelites all the laws which the Lord has imparted to them through Moshe." The key verbs for the Kohen were lehavdil, to distinguish, and lehorot, to teach. The Kohen made distinctions and taught the people to do likewise.

The priestly vocation was to remind the people that there are limits. There is an order to the universe and we must respect it. Spontaneity has no place in the life of the Priest or the service of the Sanctuary. That is what Nadav and Avihu failed to honour. It might have seemed like a minor transgression but it was in fact a negation of everything the Tabernacle and the Priesthood stood for.

There are limits. That is what the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is about. Why would God go to the trouble of creating two trees, the Tree of Life and the Tree of

Knowledge, from which human beings are forbidden to eat? Why tell the humans what the trees were and what their fruit could do? Why expose them to temptation? Who would not wish to have knowledge and eternal life if they could acquire them by merely eating a fruit? Why plant these trees in a garden where the humans could not but help see them? Why put Adam and Eve to a test they were unlikely to pass?

To teach them, and us, that even in Eden, Utopia, Paradise, there are limits. There are certain things we can do, and would like to do, that we must not do.

The classic example is the environment. As Jared Diamond has documented in his books, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, and *Collapse*, almost wherever human beings have set foot, they have left a trail of destruction in their wake. They have farmed lands to exhaustion and hunted animals to extinction. They have done so because they have not had, embedded in their minds and habits, the notion of limits. Hence the concept, key to environmental ethics, of sustainability, meaning limiting your exploitation of the Earth's resources to the point where they can renew themselves. A failure to observe those limits causes human beings to be exiled from their own garden of Eden.

We have been aware of threats to the environment and the dangers of climate change for a long time, certainly since the 1970s. Yet the measures humanity has taken to establish limits to consumption, pollution, the destruction of habitats and the like have, for the most part, been too little, too late. A 2019 BBC survey of moral attitudes in Britain showed that despite the fact that a majority of people felt responsibility for the future of the planet, this had not translated into action. 71 percent of people thought that it is acceptable to drive when it would be just as easy to walk. 65 percent of people thought it acceptable to use disposable cutlery and plates.[1]

In *The True and Only Heaven*, Christopher Lasch argued that the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment endowed us with the belief that there are no limits, that science and technology will solve every problem they create and the earth will continue indefinitely to yield its bounty. "Progressive optimism rests, at bottom, on a denial of the natural limits on human power and freedom, and it

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cannot survive for very long in a world in which an awareness of those limits has become inescapable.”[2] Forget limits and eventually we lose paradise. That is what the story of Adam and Eve warns.

In a remarkable passage in his 1976 book on inflation, *The Reigning Error*, William Rees-Mogg waxed eloquent about the role of Jewish law in securing Jewish survival. It did so by containing the energies of the people – Jews are, he said, “a people of an electric energy, both of personality and of mind.” Nuclear energy, he says, is immensely powerful but at the same time needs to be contained. He then says this:

In the same way, the energy of the Jewish people has been enclosed in a different type of container, the law. That has acted as a bottle inside which the spiritual and intellectual energy could be held; only because it could be held has it been possible to make use of it. It has not merely exploded or been dispersed; it has been harnessed as a continuous power ... Contained energy can be a driving force over an indefinite period; uncontrolled energy is merely a big and usually destructive bang. In human nature only disciplined energy is effective.[3]

That was the role of the Kohen, and it is the continuing role of halachah. Both are expressions of limits: rules, laws and distinctions. Without limits, civilisations can be as thrilling and short-lived as fireworks. To survive they need to find a way of containing energy so that it lasts, undiminished. That was the Priest’s role and what Nadav and Avihu betrayed by introducing spontaneity where it does not belong. As Rees-Mogg said, “uncontrolled energy is merely a big and usually destructive bang.”

I believe that we need to recover a sense of limits because, in our uncontrolled search for ever greater affluence, we are endangering the future of the planet and betraying our responsibility to generations not yet born. There are such things as fruit we should not eat and fire we should not bring..

[1] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2019/year-of-beliefs-morality-ethics-survey-2019>.

[2] Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and its Critics*, WW Norton, 1991, 530.

[3] William Rees-Mogg, *The Reigning Error: The Crisis of World Inflation*, Hamish Hamilton, 1974, 12.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

“And Aaron was silent – “VaYidom Aharon” (Leviticus 10:3) In the midst of the joyous celebration dedicating the desert Sanctuary, fire came out from before the Lord and devoured Nadav and Avihu, the two sons of Aaron, the High Priest. “And Moses said to Aaron, ‘that is what the Lord has said, saying that through those closest to Me shall I be sanctified...”(Lev.10:3). Rashi quotes the

following words which the rabbis attribute to Moses:

“Moses said to Aaron, ‘Aaron my brother, I know that this Temple Sanctuary will have to be sanctified by beloved friends of the Divine, and I thought that it would be either through you or through me. Now I see that they (Nadav and Avihu) were greater than both me and you...””

According to this view, Nadav and Avihu were saintly individuals; worthy of being sacrificed on the altar of the desert Sanctuary, “VaYidom Aharon” – Aaron silently acquiesced to God’s will. But why did the desert Sanctuary, and by extension any great advance of the Jewish nation, have to be dedicated by the deaths of great Jewish personalities? Why must the pages of our glorious history be drenched in the blood of holy martyrs and soaked by the tears of mourners they leave behind?

The only answer I can give to this agonizing question of lamah – why? – is the one word answer that our Israeli children like to give to our questions about why they do what they do: “kakha” – that is just how it is. Why must sacrifice be a necessary condition for redemption?

The pattern may be discerned as far back as the Covenant between the Pieces, in which God guarantees Abram eternal seed (Gen 15:1-6) and the land of Israel (15:7). After this, a great fear descends upon Abram as he is told that his seed will be strangers in a strange land where they will be afflicted and enslaved until they leave, freed and enriched. God then commands Abram to circumcise himself and his entire male household. The blood of the covenant is thus built into the very male organ of propagation (Gen 17); the price of our nationhood is blood, sacrifice and affliction.

At our Passover Seder, the celebration of our national birth, we retell the tale of our initial march from servitude to freedom in the words of the fully liberated Jew bringing his first fruits to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem: “My father, (Jacob), was almost destroyed by the Aramean (Laban), and he went down to Egypt, and he became there a great mighty and populous (rav) nation” (Deut 26:5). The author of the Passover Haggadah then explicates the text with the description presented by the prophet Ezekiel (16:7):

“I caused you to be populous (revavah) even as the vegetation of the field, and you did increase and grow up and you came to excellent beauty. Your breasts were fashioned and your hair was grown – yet you were naked and bare”.

The Hebrews in Egypt were numerous and powerful, but empty and bare of merit, of true character and courage. To achieve this, they had to undergo the suffering of Egyptian enslavement, having their male babies cast into

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the Nile. They had to place their lives on the line by sacrificing the “god” of the Egyptians to the God of Israel and the world. They had to place the blood of this sacrifice on their doorposts and they had to undergo circumcision, to demonstrate their readiness to shed blood for freedom, for independence, and for their right to worship God in their own way.

With all of this in mind, the author of the Haggadah returns to Ezekiel (16:6):

“And I passed over you, and I saw that you were rooted in your blood, and I say to you by that blood shall you live (the blood of circumcision).”

It is your willingness to sacrifice for your ideals that make you worthy of emulation, that made you a special and “chosen” people! And so the author of the Haggadah then returns to Biblical description of Hebrew suffering in Egypt, a suffering which was meant to teach us to “love the other, the stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”

Rabbi Yisrael Prager tells how a Nazi guard in the Vilna ghetto interrupted a secret nocturnal matzoh baking, causing the blood of the Jewish victims to mix with the dough of the baking matzot. The Rabbi cried out, “Behold we are prepared and ready to perform the commandment of the blood of the paschal sacrifice, the blood of the matzot which symbolize the paschal sacrifice!” As he concluded his blessing, his blood too was mixed with the baking matzot.

Lamah? Why such necessary sacrifice? Kakha, because so it is, because such is the inscrutable will of the Almighty. And “ashreiha’am she kakhah lo”, happy is the nation that can say kakhah, happy is the nation which understands that its sacrifices are for the sake of the Almighty, for the purification of their nation, for the world message that freedom and the absolute value that every human being is created in God’s image. And that these are values worth fighting for, values worth committing blood for. May it be God’s will that we now begin our exit from enslavement and our entry into redemption, for us and the entire world.

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Reward And Punishment

Parshas Shemini begins with the pasuk “And it was on the eighth day, Moshe called to Aharon and his sons and to the Elders of Israel.” [Vayikra 9:1] In Parshas Tzav we learned about the Seven Days of Miluim. During these seven ceremonial days of the inauguration of the Mishkan, Moshe Rabbeinu acted as the Kohen Gadol. This was the only time in his life that Moshe acted as High Priest – during that week he had the status of a High Priest. Now it is the eighth day, following this seven day period. Moshe called to Aharon and his four sons to invest them and their descendants

with the status of Kehuna for the rest of eternity.

The Alshich writes a very interesting idea. He says that during the Seven Days of Miluim, Moshe saw that the Shechina (Divine Presence) did not rest upon his actions, and that fire did not descend from Heaven until the eighth day. In other words, the entire week that Moshe Rabbeinu was acting as a Kohen, the Presence of the Ribono shel Olam did not appear in the Mishkan. The miraculous descent of fire from Heaven and the appearance of the Shechina in the Mishkan only took place “B’yom haShemini.” Until then, in effect, the Mishkan was an Empty House, bereft of G-d’s Presence.

The Alshich wonders why that was so. He answers that the Almighty was getting back at Moshe Rabbeinu, so to speak, measure for measure for Moshe’s hesitancy to accept his mission to lead the Jews out of Egypt. This was “pay-back time” in which HaKadosh Baruch Hu was basically giving Moshe a little slap on the wrist.

For seven days, when the Ribono shel Olam asked Moshe to take the Jews out of Mitzrayim, Moshe refused. There was an ongoing conversation that lasted for seven days, until Moshe Rabbeinu finally accepted the job. Albeit, it was for noble reasons that Moshe hesitated. It was his humility and his fear of offending his older brother. But, nevertheless, he said “No” to the Almighty for seven days.

G-d told Moshe, “Don’t worry! I will be with you.” [Shemos 3:12] Yet, it was not until the eighth day that Moshe finally agreed. The Alshich says we are witness here to the exquisite Justice of the Almighty: Measure for Measure. “You didn’t want to come with Me for seven days; now I will not be in the Mishkan with you for seven days. Just like you refused to accept your mission until I acquiesced that Aharon would be your spokesman, so too, now the Shechina will not come to the Mishkan until Aharon takes over on the eighth day.” Midah k’neged Midah!

I saw this vort of the Alshich quoted in a sefer by a Rav Aharon Pessin, entitled Midah k’neged Midah, which catalogs every place in the entire Torah where we find examples of “Measure for Measure” justice.

What is ironic—actually perplexing—is that there is a Ba’al HaTurim on this week’s parsha that says something which seems to be the polar opposite of what the Alshich says.

The Ba’al HaTurim (in his trademark style) writes that “B’yom HaShemini Karah Moshe” is equal in Gematria to “Haya b’Yom Rosh Chodesh Nissan” (the words “On the eighth day Moshe called” are numerically equivalent to ‘It was on the first day of the month of Nissan’). He then goes on to say that because

Moshe Rabbeinu refused to listen (initially) to the Ribono shel Olam, and stalled for seven days by the Burning Bush before accepting his mission, he was now rewarded by being given the opportunity to serve as Kohen Gadol—but only for seven days. This implies that had Moshe Rabbeinu only refused for one day, he would have only served for one day. Had he refused for two weeks, he would have been the Kohen Gadol for two weeks. Since he refused for seven days, at least he got to serve as Kohen for seven days!

This apparently is the polar opposite of what the Alshich said. The Baal HaTurim implies that Moshe was rewarded for his refusal, while the Alshich explained that he was being punished for it!

Rav Simcha Zissel Brody doesn’t quote the Alshich, but he does comment on this Ba’al HaTurim. He says this is an example of the exquisite justice of the Ribono shel Olam. Mortal judges can dispense justice, but it is imperfect. If one puts someone in jail for twenty years for his crime, then his wife suffers, his children suffer, many innocent parties may suffer. The Ribono shel Olam doesn’t do it that way. HaTzur Tamim P’a’alo (The Rock, perfect are His actions) [Devorim 32:4] Rav Simcha Zissel says that in Moshe’s refusal to accept his mission from Hashem, we find something that was noble and something that was punishable. On the one hand (as Ramban explains) Moshe refused because he didn’t want to embarrass his older brother, Aharon. He refused also because of his humility. All this was noble. The Ribono shel Olam said “You have to be rewarded for that. You do something good—you are guaranteed reward.

But on the other hand, though Moshe may have been doing this for noble reasons, still, when the Ribono shel Olam tells you “Go” — you go. If you don’t go then: “You don’t want to come with Me? I am not going to come with you.” It cuts two ways.

There is only one Being in the entire cosmos that can do that. That is the Ribono shel Olam. Only He can administer precise Divine Justice such that the same act which was simultaneously both a good thing and something that was not right will be compensated by something which is at the same time both a reward and a punishment. Moshe was rewarded by being allowed to be a Kohen Gadol for seven days. His punishment was that there was no Shechina present while he served in the Mishkan. “You didn’t come with Me; I am not going to come with you.”

So much of what we do in life contains elements of both good and bad. People are conflicted. They do things which are at the same time both very good and not so good. The Ribono shel Olam will be able to discern and mete out the proper Justice, administering

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both the proper reward and proper punishment, because HaTzur Tamim P’a’alo.

A Homiletic Lesson From a Halachic Authority

I came across a homiletic insight on the parsha which I found attributed to a very unlikely source. I suspect no one will guess in a hundred years who said the following vort, which is a very beautiful homiletic thought but one which one would not expect to hear from this authority, who is known for halachic expertise rather than sermon material.

In this week’s parsha we have the signs of the kosher animals, the non-kosher birds, and the kosher fish. The two signs of a kosher fish are fins and scales. All fish have fins, but not all fish have scales. The Gemara [Kiddushin 29a] quotes a Tanaic source which states that a father has five obligations towards his son: To circumcise him, to redeem him (if he is a ‘peter rechem’), to teach him Torah, to marry him off, and to teach him a profession. The Talmud then quotes an alternate opinion that adds a sixth thing: A father must also teach his son how to swim.

Why on earth does a father have to teach his kid how to swim? The simple understanding is that in Talmudic times a very common way of travelling was by boat. Merchant commerce was all done by boat. Boats in those days were rickety. It was not all that uncommon that boats would sink. So, naturally, a father should teach his son how to swim so that he will survive any situation which necessitated that skill.

But, aren’t there other things that a child needs to know in order to protect himself from the dangers that lurk? Was there only danger on the water and not on the roads? Perhaps a father should teach his son how to fight? Why, of all the practical skills needed to function in this world, did the Braisa only mention swimming?

The answer is as follows: Why did the Torah say that a fish that is kosher has to have fins and scales? It is because fish swim. What is the difference between swimming and floating? Floating means you stay above water but you have to go with the current. With swimming, one can provide his own direction. One can swim upstream, one cannot float upstream. One floats only wherever the water takes him.

Swimming represents the ability to survive in an environment that may be against you. The reason the Torah says that a fish has to have fins and scales to be kosher is because scales protect the fish from its environment. Scales serve as armor. The fish does not absorb everything that is out there in the water, because it has the protection of this armor. The fish is able to survive and swim wherever it wants to, because of its fins. Salmon go from the Pacific Ocean all the way upstream to

where they are spawned – they provide their own direction. That is why they are kosher.

They are kosher because they don't absorb things from their environment which could prove toxic to them, and they are kosher because they can provide their own direction, even against the current of the environment in which they find themselves.

This, too, is how a Jew has to survive. We are in Galus for the last two thousand years. We have been in Galus for the majority of Jewish history. How does one survive in Galus? One survives like a fish survives. We have our protection. We don't absorb and assimilate from the culture that surrounds us. We have our fins and we swim and we don't have to go with the flow. We can go against the flow.

The sign of Snapir (fins) and Kaskeses (scales) is what makes a Jew kosher: He has protection from the environment, and he charts his own direction. This is what the Talmud teaches when it says a person is obligated to teach his son to swim in water. It doesn't only mean literally how to swim. It means a father must teach his son the art of swimming—the art of not going with the flow and not being swept up with the tide of the times, whatever that may be.

This is the message of the Snapir and Kaskeses, and the message of the father's obligation to teach his son to swim.

Who said this beautiful homiletic thought? Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, zecher Tzadik l'Vracha.

Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel
Encyclopedia of Jewish Values*

The Deeper Moral and Ethical Jewish Ideas In Kashrut

This week's Parsha dedicated forty-seven verses to the laws of Kosher food, far more than any other portion in the Torah. Although the basis of Kashrut observance, like any other commandment, is simply because of God commanded the Jewish people in the Torah, like all the other Mitzvot, the Rabbis have speculated about the reasons to add to the meaning of the performance. The desire to find meaning in the laws of Kashrut has particularly interested Jewish scholars for generations. Let us examine some of these explanations.

The one Jewish law that every non-Jew in the world seems to know is that a Jew is not allowed to eat ham, pork or anything that comes from a pig. Why is it this so? There is nothing in the Torah that makes this prohibition more stringent than others. In fact, there is no difference in Judaism between eating pork or camel meat or horsemeat or shellfish. Yet, the non-Jewish world has singled out the prohibition against pig. Why? Even in the Jewish world, there is no differentiation (in level of punishment) between the prohibition against eating pork and the prohibition against wearing a garment with wool

and linen in it. Yet, many Jews who keep the laws of Kosher do not keep or have never even learned about Shatnez, wool and linen in a garment. Why is it that even among Jews the distaste for pork has outweighed other commandments?

Based on the verses in our Parsha, there is only one unique aspect to the pig. The Torah's two signs for a Kosher animal are that the animal must both chew its cud and have split hooves (Leviticus 11:3). All animals in the world have either both symbols and are Kosher or neither of the symbols and are not Kosher. But the Torah says that there are only four exceptions that have one symbol, not the other (Leviticus 11:4-7) (until today, anthropologists have never found a fifth exception in the entire planet). Three of the exceptions, the camel, the rabbit, and the fox chew its cud but have no split hooves. Only the pig (of all the animals on earth) has split hooves but does not chew its cud. Why is that so detestable to the Jew (more than other animals)? It has been suggested that this symbol of the pig is the only animal in the world that has the outward symbol of Kosher and not the inward symbol. Thus, the pig symbolizes the animal (and person) which is kosher on the outside but not on the inside. Someone who appears righteous to the world but who is not righteous, is indeed detestable to the Jew. This type of hypocrisy, "saying one thing (positive) but thinking another (negative)" is one of the categories of people that God detests (Pesachim 113b). A student whose inside did not match his outside was not permitted into the Beit Midrash (study hall) (Berachot 28a). Therefore, the degree of reprehensibility of a person hypocritically acts differently than he thinks or speaks is reflected symbolically in the pig that looks Kosher on the outside but not on the inside. It is possible that it is for this moral reason that the pig is universally viewed as reprehensible to the Jew.

Most of the Mitzvot in the Torah are open for speculation because the Torah does not give reasons. By Kashrut, our Parsha clearly does state a purpose: to be holy and separate between pure and impure (Leviticus 11:46-47). Can eating make someone holy? Yes. Judaism believes that a person can become holy by doing an action that seems very mundane and physical, like eating, an action which is shared with every other creature in the world. To properly understand this, one must understand the Jewish definition of holiness, (which is a discussed in a separate Dvar Torah on Parshat Pikudei and the Jewish concept of food, discussed in Parshat Beshalach.

Numerous commentaries have gone beyond the simple meaning of the Biblical verse and have given other reasons to explain the meaning of Kashrut. Many people today still believe that Kashrut laws are designed as a health measure, but this would contradict the Torah itself that describes Kashrut as a path to holiness. It would also confute all the examples cited above, connecting food to a moral principle. Others say

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that Kashrut keeps the Jewish community intact and prevents assimilation. If one cannot eat in the homes of non-Jews, the chances of socializing with non-Jews and the possibility of marrying their children are vastly reduced. The Rabbis, in addition to the Torah's Kashrut laws, enacted specific prohibitions (such as not drinking any wine touched by a non-Jew) to further ensure that Jews and non-Jews would not mix socially. Still another opinion believes that Kashrut was instituted to help the Jew remind himself that God is above. Since eating is an activity that takes place many times daily, the Jew, by saying a blessing and understanding the origin of the food he is eating, will be reminded of God each time he eats.

The nineteenth century Rabbi, Samson Raphael Hirsch, put forth an interesting theory (Horeb, vol. 2, chap. 68. Trans. From the original German by Dayan Grunfeld). He believed in the saying "A person is what he eats." Since all the Kashrut laws train a Jew to be less violent, he or she will indeed become less violent. How does this work? Hirsch says the least violent food is vegetables. Therefore, all produce from the ground is Kosher. The animals that eat vegetables and no other animals will be less violent animals, and, thus, a person who eats these animals, will, in turn, be less violent. Similarly, animals that cannot run far and quickly will be domesticated animals and will be far less violent than wild animals. Therefore, only animals that chew their cud (all are herbivorous) and those that have split hooves that prevent them from running away, are Kosher. These domestic animals are less violent and are thus permitted to be eaten. Although there is no Biblical formula for Kosher and non-Kosher birds (the Torah simply lists which are Kosher and which are not in Leviticus 11:13-19 and Deuteronomy 14:11-20), the Mishna (Chullin 59a) discusses a case where someone is in the desert and does not have his kosher list with him. How can he know if a bird is Kosher? The Talmud answers that, although no rule is stated in the Torah by birds as by animals, all non-Kosher birds attack other birds. Therefore, if the birds "seize their prey," the person can know that it is not kosher. There is an argument what this signifies. One opinion (Rabbeinu Gershom commentary on Chullin 59a) says this means these birds grab them in their beaks and begin eating them, while still in flight. Kosher birds at least wait until the prey has hit the ground. Other opinions (Rashi commentary on Chullin 59a) say this means the birds hold down their prey in their claws while the prey is eaten. Still another opinion (Tosafot commentary on Chullin 59a) says that these birds eat their prey while the prey is still alive. Whichever opinion is followed, and this is codified in Shulchan Aruch (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 82:2), every one of these acts by birds is certainly quite violent. Thus, Kosher birds are less violent than non-Kosher birds. By eating less violent birds, Jews will be less violent.

Finally, the fish. According to Hirsch, the Kosher fish that must have both fins and scales give them the means to swim closer to the bottom of the ocean and eat from the ocean's vegetation, rather than eat other fish. Thus, Kosher fish are less violent than non-Kosher fish, and eating them will make a person less violent. While one may argue with the theory, one fact is true. Sociologists have shown that during most of history, although Jews have (unfortunately) been involved in many types of crime, they have exhibited conspicuously much less violent crime (rape, murder, armed robbery, etc.) than other sociological groups. It has not been proven whether the reason Jews have been less violent is because they observed Kashrut, but it is an interesting fact, in view of Hirsch's theory.

Keeping Kosher Can Also Symbolize A General Outlook On Life.- There is a very interesting comparison in Jewish tradition between certain nations or cultures, and specific animals, as mentioned by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks Z"L. Jacob or the Jewish people are compared to a lamb (Midrash, Vayikra Rabbah 4:6), Eisav is compared to a pig (Rashi commentary on Genesis 26:34), while Yishmael is compared to a camel (Midrash Aseret Melachim, Midrash Pitron Torah, Parshat Shmini.).

These three animals in the Torah may also represent three of the main cultures of the world today: the Jewish culture represented by Israel, the Western culture of today by Eisav (originated by Rome, also often compared to Eisav), and the Arab or Middle Eastern culture, symbolized by the camel. It is interesting to note that these animals also happen to be the staple meat foods of these respective cultures. Observant Jews eat lamb but not pig nor camel. The observant Muslim world does not eat pig but eats camel. The main meat food of the western world is pork (in addition to the cow). How, then are these animal symbols of each culture related to their outlooks in life?

As noted above, lambs and all kosher animals have both attributes of chewing their cud and a split hoof. Pigs have split hooves but do not chew their cud, while camels chew their cuds but do not have split hooves. The hooves of an animal symbolize its forward movement, its future. Chewing its cud symbolizes bringing back the action that already has taken place or returning to the past. The Western Culture of today is constantly looking to move forward. Innovative technology makes many of the advances of the past (even by a few years) already obsolete. Western culture seeks change and rarely has respect for the past, especially with the theory of evolution that newer is better. This is the symbol of the split hoof without chewing its cud.

Chewing the cud is a regurgitation of the past. The Middle Eastern world generally glorifies its past and looks back on the success of its history as the pinnacle of its accomplishments. The Arab world seeks to return the world to

the days of the past when Arab culture led the way and dominated. This is the symbol of chewing the cud but not having split hooves.

The sheep and other kosher animals both chew their cud and have split hooves. The Jewish culture is manifested by both aspects of lie and aspirations. There is a deep respect and reverence for the past: Jewish tradition believes that the closer the generation was to Sinai, the more holy it was. And yet, Judaism is always looking forward and moving forward at the same time. It wishes to use the rich culture of the past to change the present and bring the future. Thus, it is the kosher animals, with both the past and future, which are the symbols of the Jewish people.

***This column has been adapted from a series of volumes written by Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel "The Encyclopedia of Jewish Values" available from Urim and Amazon. For the full article or to review all the footnotes in the original, contact the author at nachum@jewishdestiny.com**

Dvar Torah Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

The surprising value of self-doubt

If you think that you're not good enough, perhaps that's the very reason why you're the best person for the job. We learn this from Parshat Shemini. Hashem had elected Aharon to become the Kohen Gadol, the High Priest of our nation. All future kohanim, priests, would be descended from him to this day.

Hesitation - The people gathered around the tabernacle in the wilderness for a ceremony with him which Aharon was to be inducted into high office. Everything was ready for the occasion, but there was hesitation. Moshe needed to say to his brother, "Krav el hamizbeach," - "Approach the altar," as if to suggest, "What are you waiting for?"

Rashi quotes the Torat Kohanim which explains that Aharon was hesitating because he was a man filled with fear of Hashem. He had deep humility and he feared that something might go wrong. He appreciated the enormous responsibility that he had. Moshe reassured him by stating, "Lechach nivcharta," - "It is for this reason that you've been chosen. Come forward."

The Sefer Panim Yafot explains that, "Lechach nivcharta," those words of Moshe to Aharon, should be translated as, "It's because of this that you've been chosen." It's because you have great emunah, faith in Hashem, such deep humility - because you're nervous that something might go wrong. That's why you're the best person for this task. Responsibility

In the mid-19th century, Reb Yosroel Salanter was the rabbi of the Vilna Jewish Community. A man from a neighbouring town came to see him to be tested to become the shochet of that

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town. He did wonderfully well throughout the test but before Reb Yisroel actually gave him the result the man stopped him and said, "You know, Reb Yisroel, I don't think I should become the shochet. I'll go home now."

Surprised, Reb Yisroel said, what do you mean?"

The man explained, "Well, you know, the responsibility is enormous! Every single member of the community will be relying on me for the kashrut of their kitchens, for every morsel of food that will be upon their plate! I'm nervous that I could make mistakes!"

Reb Yisroel smiled as he said, "You've just proved to me that there could be no shochet better than you for this task. We don't want shochemim who are filled with arrogance, who don't believe that anything can ever go wrong, to be responsible for our food. Rather we want those who appreciate that they need to prove to the communities that they deserve the faith that has been put in them."

That's exactly what Moshe said to Aharon. Your sense of responsibility proves that there could be no leader better than you. Let each and every one of us remember that lesson with regard to the jobs, the vocations and the professions that we have. Arrogance can, God forbid, drive us to failure but if we constantly go the extra mile filled with nervousness knowing that we need to show that we deserve the trust that has been placed in us, that will certainly contribute towards our success.

OU Dvar Torah Rabbi Dr. Norman J. Lamm

Moving Beyond Respect

In today's portion we read of the tragedy that struck Aaron, the High Priest of Israel, when his two sons were devoured by a fire from the Lord when they ministered in the Temple and changed part of the regulations. We read that Aaron was silent at the time of this tragedy. Probably the grief, the inner protest, was too overwhelming for him to say anything at all. At this moment Moses turns to his mourning brother and says to him, "Through those who are close to me will I be sanctified (ekadeish), and before the entire people will I be honored (ekaveid)" (Leviticus 10:3). What is it that Moses told his brother, and that he wished to impart to all posterity, at this time?

There are two concepts that are mentioned by Moses: kedusha, holiness, and kavod, honor or respect. Both of these are worthy Jewish goals deserving of our highest aspirations. Yet, they are not equal to each other - one is a higher level than the other. Kavod, honor, refers to an attitude that is external to the soul. I honor or respect somebody, but that does not necessarily mean that I subscribe to his opinions. I admire or give reverence to a great musician, although I may be absolutely flat and monotone. It is an external act of courtesy, a gesture that is sincere but does not involve my whole

personality. Kedusha, holiness, contrariwise, implies an inner transformation, a total commitment and dedication of the entire personality toward the transcendent goal for which it strives. One can give kavod without being changed within. One cannot achieve kedusha until one has undergone a complete spiritual metamorphosis.

Now, kavod is something that the masses are capable of. Kedusha is something which only the initiates are capable of and obligated to achieve. Isaiah (6:3) proclaims even as we do thrice daily, "Holy holy holy is the Lord of Hosts, the world is full of his kavod." The Lord of Hosts, He who is above and beyond the world, is in His essence kadosh, holy. That is the highest realm and the highest level. But insofar as kol ha'aretz, the entire world, ordinary people, are concerned, all they can perceive is kavod, honor or respect.

Respect is a noble, good virtue. But it is antiseptic, it does not require the involvement of one's inner self. Sanctity, on the other hand, is a higher, deeper, profounder commitment. Therefore Moses said, "Before the entire people will I be honored," will I receive kavod. For ordinary people it is sufficient that they come into the Temple and minister, that they pray, that they observe the decorousness that is so appropriate in a House of God. For ordinary Jews, an attitude of kavod is about all that one can require of them. But when it comes to kerovai, those who are close to God, then kavod is not by any means sufficient; then only the transcendent and lofty goal of kedusha, holiness, is worthwhile.

This, indeed, is what Moses told his brother Aaron. You may in your heart of hearts feel aggrieved – after all, your sons were ministering to God in the Temple, their heart was in the right place; so what if they changed a part of the service? The answer is: An attitude of kavod, honor for God, is sufficient for ordinary people. For priests, for the children of Aaron, however, kavod is never enough. From them I expect a total dedication, the uncompromising commitment to kedusha, to holiness. If your sons failed, it is because as kerovim, those close to God, they have failed to aspire to higher kedusha.

This is part of our problem in American Jewish life today. We suffer from what Prof. Abraham Joshua Heschel has called "a theology of respect." People come into the synagogue and they respect it – therefore they need not learn from it. They respect Torah, they respect Judaism, they respect religious people, they respect rabbis. And therefore the whole thing is externalized, it never penetrates within their hearts and souls. What is required is a sense of kerovai, of being close to God and therefore setting up as our ideal goal not only kavod but kedusha. In recent years, with the so-called return to religion that we have witnessed, it has often seemed to me that as religion has become respectable, it has tended to become unholy;

with its gain in prestige and external acceptance, it has lost some of its passion, its power of criticism, its totality, its involvement with mankind's most basic and fundamental destiny.

The haftara of this week indicates the same idea. We read of the Ark being taken captive by the Philistines and then being recaptured by David. David was overjoyed at the return of the Ark to the Camp of Israel: "and David danced with all his might" (II Samuel 6:14). His sense of joy and thrill was excited by this great event, and so he responded in a blazing passion of holiness, realizing in practice the words he was to write later in the Psalms, "All my bones say: 'Lord who is like unto thee?'" (Psalms 35:10). And then we read, in one verse "The Ark of the Lord was brought to the city of David" (II Samuel 6:16) – the great and wonderful moment when the holiness of the ages was stamped indelibly upon the city of Jerusalem – "and Michal the daughter of Saul watched from beyond the window." What a difference is revealed in the contrast between the attitude of David and that of his wife, the princess Michal! While David is involved with his people in the holy undertaking, she, the princess, heiress to the aristocratic traditions of her family, stands far and distant, remote and removed behind the pane of glass, watching her husband David involved with his people and with his joy and with his faith – "and she despised him in her heart" (ii Samuel 6:16). She could not abide the whole theme of David dancing about the Ark. And so when her husband comes home to bless his home, she releases a torrent of abuse and reproach at him. How can you, she cries, dance there as though you were one of the commoners, with the maids and the servants and all the ordinary people? The whole corruptness of her attitude is revealed in two words in her first sarcastic barb at her husband: "ma nikhbad, what kind of honor, of respect, is it for the King of Israel to act the way you have?!"

This was the undoing of Michal the daughter of Saul. She was limited in her horizons. She could not see beyond the level of kavod. She was forever sealed off from a vision of kedusha. And therefore she did not understand that her husband had transcended the limits of kavod and had risen to the level of kedusha. No wonder that she was doomed to wither away and die and not leave any memory behind her.

This, then, must be our understanding, our duty and our ambition. It is important, of course, that our synagogues possess the element of kavod – of courtesy, of respect, of honor, of decorum. But it is far more important that they attain, as well, the ideals of kedusha – true devoutness, piety, and love of Torah.

When people come into a synagogue and listen to a sermon and they "enjoy" it – that is the level of kavod. When they are disturbed by it

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to the point of feeling they want to do something – then they are on their way to kedusha.

The rabbi who strives to institute decorum, respectability, and honor in his congregation, has made the steps towards kavod – an absolute prerequisite for a decent service. But that is not enough. The next step must be holiness, the establishment of a kehilla kedusha, a holy community. To be "inspired" by a synagogue, the services, and the sermon – that is kavod. To be moved by them to obey the message, to follow their line of thinking, to live the life of Torah – that is the beginning of the beginning of a life of kedusha, a life of holiness.

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Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky A Life of Holiness and Purity

Sefer Vayikra begins with the halachos of korbanos, specifically Parshas Vayikra and the beginning of Tzav elaborate on the korbanos themselves. Tzav then concludes, and parshas Shemini begins, with the application of these laws as the dedication of the Mishkan is completed. Sefer Vayikra then continues with a seemingly different focus; the second half of Parshas Shemini discusses the halachos of tumah and taharah. The laws of kashrus are connected to this area of halacha and are therefore presented in the overall context of these laws as well. Ritual impurity of food, vessels, and the institution of the mikvah to purify people and vessels conclude Parshas Shemini. Continuing with this theme, Parshas Tazria and Metzora deal at great length with the intricacies of a person becoming impure in various ways. The relevance of the laws of tumah and taharah in Sefer Vayikra, which is primarily dedicated to laws governing the Mishkan and later the Beis HaMikdash, seems obvious, since from a halachic perspective that the laws of impurity are most significant in the context of the Mishkan and korbanos. Sacrifices that become impure are disqualified and individuals who are impure may not come to the Mishkan. Perhaps, however, there is another message that the Torah is hinting at by placing the laws of purity and impurity in the context of the korbanos.

The Rambam teaches us that the rules that govern korbanos as well as tumah and taharah are fundamentally part of the category of mitzvot known as chukim. The chukim have no apparent reason that is comprehensible to man. Even though the ultimate reason for the chukim are only known to Hashem, the Rambam suggests that there are lessons that we can derive from the symbolism of these otherwise incomprehensible mitzvot. Following this approach, perhaps the relationship between korbanos and tumah can teach a lesson that is relevant to us.

Kedusha is the defining feature of all korbanos. Korbanos are offered by a sanctified individual, a Kohen, in a holy place, the Beis HaMikdash. The eating of all korbanos is governed by kedushas z'man and kedushas Makom, sanctity of time and sanctity of place. The category of korbanos known as kodshim are even holier than kodshim kalim and are bound by stricter rules of holiness of time and place. Offering and partaking of a korban is an experience of kedusha, and all kedusha emanates from Hakadosh Baruch Hu Himself. We are commanded to be holy because Hashem is holy. Eating korbanos is described by Chazal as eating from the table of Hashem. It is precisely korbanos being so holy that requires them to be free of all impurity. Neither the Kohen who offers them, nor the Yisrael who eats them, can be impure. If the meat of a korban comes into contact with something impure, it must be burned. Experiencing Hashem as we involve ourselves in a holy activity cannot occur in a state of impurity.

This concept speaks to us even outside the realm of korbanos. We seek holiness as we connect to Hashem in many ways. The words of Torah study are holy and our mitzvah performance is referred to as "kidshanu b'mitzvosov", we are sanctified by His mitzvos. Our tefillos correspond to korbanos and our shuls are described by Chazal as miniature batei mikdash. Shabbos and yom tov are times of kedushas zman, and each such time begins with the recitation of Kiddush. All of these moments of spending time with Hashem, the ultimate source of kedusha, can only be experienced properly if they are devoid of tumah. Purity of thought, speech, and action are critical for a life of kedusha. Chazal teach us that one who wants to purify oneself will be assisted by Hashem in doing so. May we all merit that special assistance as we grow in our kedusha.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah
by Rabbi Label Lam

Self-Serving

And Aaron's sons, Nadav and Avihu, each took his pan, put fire in them, and placed incense upon it, and they brought before HASHEM a foreign fire, which He had not commanded them. And fire went forth from before HASHEM and consumed them, and they died before HASHEM. (Vayikra 10:1-2)

What went so very wrong here? Aaron's two sons were certainly great and holy men of enormous stature. Yet they were not immune to a sudden and swift death. There may be a few clues for us to zero in on and glean some practical lessons with relevance for us even today.

This phrase stays in my mind. "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread!" Someone asked me if I would be the Mesader Kiddushin – One who leads the marriage ceremony for him and

his bride. My answer was simple. "I will happily change a light bulb but I will not dare to change a fixture." I don't know what I am doing when it comes to electricity. One time I tried changing a light switch. Suddenly sparks came flying out of the wall and all the lights in the whole house went black.

My wife came running wondering what had happened and there I stood with black stuff all over my face and part of my beard singed. If it wasn't so close to being tragic it would have been comical. I learned then and there, "Fools rush in where angels dare to tread!" Nobody can see electricity. No one even has! Yet it is powerful and dangerous if someone does not know what he is doing.

The verse testifies that they brought an AISH ZARA – A foreign fire which HASHEM had not commanded them and a fire went forth that consumed them. The Ohr HaChaim asks, "What was this strange fire? What was strange about it? It was not what HASHEM had commanded them to do. That makes it strange. No matter how spiritual they felt they were or how noble their intentions, they were not grounded by or protected by a Commandment, a Mitzvah.

The Sefas Emes says that we can earn from this the main part of doing a Mitzvah is in the power of the Commandment even beyond the loftiest intentions. Certainly, Nadav and Avihu were great people; they knew all the deepest secrets and unifications connected with their actions and even still it lacked the most important element, a Commandment from HASHEM. Then the Sefas Emes says that how much so in the positive direction is one infused with life giving spirituality for the performance of a Mitzvah which has in it the power of a Commandment. The main thing even for the simplest person is the performance of a Mitzvah even unadorned by grand spiritual aspirations. Doing HASHEM's will simply surpasses feelings of sublime spiritual elevation void of the context of a Mitzvah.

I can remember this exchange from almost 38 years ago like it was yesterday. I was sitting on an old wooden bench, Shabbos morning in what is essentially the birthplace and heart beat of Monsey, the Beis Midrash Elyon Alumni Minyan. It was pesukei d'zimra time and the place was on fire with holiness and everyone was pouring their hearts out, everybody except one that is. I decided to sit back and watch like an anthropologist or a sociologist. I was no longer actively participating.

A little boy not much older than 7 was sitting across the table from me. His family is an exceptionally great family in Torah. He looked up at me and asked, "You don't know how to Daven?" I told him that I do but I'm just not in the mood of it right now. Then he said to me words that rocked my world, "Who says HASHEM likes it better if you do it only if you're in the mood of it. Maybe HASHEM

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likes it better if you do it when you're not in the mood of it!"

Wow! A seven year old kid landed such a powerful lesson on me! He's 100% right. That's what makes it a Mitzvah. If I'm doing what HASHEM wants me to do then it's a Mitzvah but if I'm only doing what I'm in the mood of then that's what we might call self-serving.

Weekly Parsha SHMINI 5782

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

All living creatures that exist in our world require nutrition to be able to survive. Human beings, being the most sophisticated of all creatures on this planet, are especially concerned with the food that they eat. Most human beings know that they eat to survive, but there are many, especially in Western society today, that survive to be able to eat.

The variety of foods, recipes and menus that are designed by human beings for their food consumption is almost endless. And medical science has shown us that what and how we eat affects our health, longevity, psychological mood and even our social standing. As such, it becomes almost logical and understandable that the Torah, which is the book of life and of human beings, would suggest and ordain for us a list of foods that somehow would prove harmful to our spiritual health and traditional growth, to prevent man from harm.

In this week's Torah reading, we are presented with such a list of forbidden and permissible foods available for the consumption by the Jewish people, for them to maintain their status as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The Torah, in effect, is telling us that the physical foods that we consume somehow affect our inner souls, psyches and patterns of behavior. We are what we eat!

One of the hallmarks of Jewish survival throughout the ages has been the observance of the laws pertaining to kosher food, which takes on not only a physical dimension but an overriding spiritual dimension as well. What Jews eat has become the standard to measure the level of piety and tradition that exists within the national entity of the people of Israel.

The Talmud is of the opinion that eating non-kosher food somehow affects our spiritual senses. Commentators thought that eventually generations of Jews who unfortunately consumed non-kosher food became less charitable with their wealth, talents, and time. I know of no survey or statistical study that relates to this issue. However, in my many years as a rabbi of a congregation and as a fundraiser as well, I have noticed that generations of Jews who have assimilated and are no longer observant tend to be less committed towards charitable Jewish causes that were helped by their kosher food-eating ancestors.

There is no question that the laws of kosher food have contributed immensely to the survival of the Jewish people and the strengthening of Jewish core values throughout the ages. Kosher food was and is the hallmark of the Jewish people and remains a bulwark against the ravages of intermarriage and the adoption of value systems that are antithetical to Torah values and traditional Jewish societal life.

Perhaps even more than having a mezuzah on the doorpost, having a kosher kitchen brought a feeling of spirituality and godliness into the home, no matter how modest its physical appearance and stature may have been. It is ironic in the extreme that in our current world, where kosher food is so readily and easily available, and with so many varieties of Kosher food, which can satisfy any gourmet pallet, tragically so many Jews have opted out from the observance of eating kosher in their daily lives. A renewed drive to promote the kosher home in all its aspects is certainly needed.

Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

COVENANT & CONVERSATION

Fire: Holy and Unholy

SHEMINI • 5773, 5775, 5782

Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l

fire nadav avihi holy spark bonfire wood flames

The shock is immense. For several weeks and many chapters – the longest prelude in the Torah – we have read of the preparations for the moment at which God would bring His Presence to rest in the midst of the people. Five parshiyot (Terumah, Tetzaveh, Ki Tissa, Vayakhel and Pekudei) describe the instructions for building the Sanctuary. Two further parshiyot (Vayikra, Tzav) detail the sacrificial offerings to be brought there. All is now ready. For seven days the Priests (Aaron and

his sons) have been consecrated into office. Now comes the eighth day when the service of the Mishkan will begin.

The entire people have played their part in constructing what will become the visible home of the Divine Presence on Earth. With a simple, moving verse the drama reaches its climax:

Moses and Aaron went into the Tent of Meeting and when they came out, they blessed the people. God's glory was then revealed to all the people. Lev. 9:23

Just as we think the narrative has reached closure, a terrifying scene takes place:

Aaron's sons, Nadav and Avihu, took their censers, put fire into them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before God, which He had not instructed them to offer. Fire came forth from before God, and it consumed them so that they died before God. Moses then said to Aaron: "This is what God spoke of when He said: Among those who approach Me, I will show Myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honoured." Lev. 10:1-3

Celebration turned to tragedy with the death of Aaron's two eldest sons. The Sages and commentators offer many explanations. Nadav and Avihu died because: they entered the Holy of Holies;[1] they were not wearing the requisite clothes;[2] they took fire from the kitchen, not the Altar;[3] they did not consult Moses and Aaron;[4] nor did they consult one another.[5] According to some they were guilty of hubris. They were impatient to assume leadership roles themselves;[6] and they did not marry, considering themselves above such things.[7] Yet others see their deaths as delayed punishment for an earlier sin, when, at Mount Sinai they "ate and drank" in the Presence of God (Ex. 24:9-11).

These interpretations represent close readings of the four places in the Torah which Nadav and Avihu's death is mentioned (Lev. 10:2, Lev. 16:1, Num. 3:4, Num. 26:61), as well as the reference to their presence on Mount Sinai. Each is a profound meditation on the dangers of over-enthusiasm in the religious life. However, the simplest explanation is the one explicit in the Torah itself. Nadav and Avihu died because they offered unauthorized, literally "strange," fire, meaning "that which was not commanded." To understand the significance of this, we must go back to first principles and remind ourselves of the meaning of kadosh, "holy", and thus of the Mikdash as the home of the holy.

The holy is that segment of time and space God has reserved for His Presence. Creation involves concealment. The word olam, "universe", is semantically linked to the word ne'elam, "hidden". To give humankind some of His own creative powers – the use of language to think, communicate, understand, imagine alternative futures and choose between them – God must do more than create Homo sapiens. He must efface Himself (what the Kabbalists called tzimtzum) to create space for human action. No single act more profoundly indicates the love and generosity implicit in creation. God as we encounter Him in the Torah is like a parent who knows they must hold back, let go, refrain from intervening, if their children are to become responsible and mature.

But there is a limit. To efface Himself entirely would be equivalent to abandoning the world, deserting His own children. That, God may not and will not do. How then does God leave a trace of His Presence on Earth?

The biblical answer is not philosophical. A philosophical answer (I am thinking here of the mainstream of Western philosophy, beginning in antiquity with Plato, in modernity with Descartes) would be one that applies universally – i.e., at all times, in all places. But there is no answer that applies to all times and places. That is why philosophy cannot and never will understand the apparent contradiction between Divine creation and human freewill, or between Divine Presence and the empirical world in which we reflect, choose and act.

Jewish thought is counter-philosophical. It insists that truths are embodied precisely in particular times and places. There are holy times (the seventh day, seventh month, seventh year, and the end of seven septennial cycles, the jubilee). There are holy people (the Children of Israel as a whole; within them, the Levi'im, and within them the

Kohanim). And there is holy space (eventually, Israel; within that, Jerusalem; within that the Temple; in the desert, they were the Mishkan, the Holy, and the Holy of Holies).

The holy is that point of time and space in which the Presence of God is encountered by tzimtzum – self-renunciation – on the part of mankind. Just as God makes space for man by an act of self-limitation, so man makes space for God by an act of self-limitation. The holy is where God is experienced as absolute Presence. Not accidentally but essentially, this can only take place through the total renunciation of human will and initiative. That is not because God does not value human will and initiative. To the contrary: God has empowered mankind to use them to become His “partners in the work of creation”.

However, to be true to God’s purposes, there must be times and places at which humanity experiences the reality of the Divine. Those times and places require absolute obedience. The most fundamental mistake – the mistake of Nadav and Avihu – is to take the powers that belong to man’s encounter with the world, and apply them to man’s encounter with the Divine. Had Nadav and Avihu used their own initiative to fight evil and injustice they would have been heroes. Because they used their own initiative in the arena of the holy, they erred. They asserted their own presence in the absolute Presence of God. That is a contradiction in terms. That is why they died.

We err if we think of God as capricious, jealous, angry: a myth spread by early Christianity in an attempt to define itself as the religion of love, superseding the cruel/harsh/retributive God of the “Old Testament”. When the Torah itself uses such language it “speaks in the language of humanity” (Brachot 31a) – that is to say, in terms people will understand.

In truth, Tanach is a love story through and through – the passionate love of the Creator for His creatures that survives all the disappointments and betrayals of human history. God needs us to encounter Him, not because He needs mankind but because we need Him. If civilisation is to be guided by love, justice, and respect for the integrity of creation, there must be moments in which we leave the “I” behind and encounter the fullness of being in all its glory.

That is the function of the holy – the point at which “I am” is silent in the overwhelming presence of “There is”. That is what Nadav and Avihu forgot – that to enter holy space or time requires ontological humility, the total renunciation of human initiative and desire.

The significance of this fact cannot be over-estimated. When we confuse God’s will with our will, we turn the holy – the source of life – into something unholy and a source of death. The classic example of this is “holy war,” jihad, crusade – investing imperialism (the desire to rule over other people) with the cloak of sanctity as if conquest and forced conversion were God’s will.

The story of Nadav and Avihu reminds us yet again of the warning first spelled out in the days of Cain and Abel. The first act of worship led to the first murder. Like nuclear fission, worship generates power, which can be benign but can also be profoundly dangerous.

The episode of Nadav and Avihu is written in three kinds of fire. First there is the fire from Heaven:

Fire came forth from before God and consumed the burnt offering. Lev. 9:24

This was the fire of favour, consummating the service of the Sanctuary. Then came the “unauthorised fire” offered by the two sons.

Aaron’s sons, Nadav and Avihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorised fire before God, which He had not instructed them [to offer]. Lev. 10:1

Then there was the counter-fire from Heaven:

Fire came forth from before God, and it consumed them so that they died before God. Lev. 10:2

The message is simple and intensely serious: Religion is not what the European Enlightenment thought it would become: mute, marginal and mild. It is fire – and like fire, it warms but it also burns. And we are the guardians of the flame.

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – “And Aaron was silent – “VaYidom Aharon” (Leviticus 10:3)

In the midst of the joyous celebration dedicating the desert Sanctuary, fire came out from before the Lord and devoured Nadav and Avihu, the two sons of Aaron, the High Priest. “And Moses said to Aaron, ‘that is what the Lord has said, saying that through those closest to Me shall I be sanctified...’”(Lev.10:3). Rashi quotes the following words which the rabbis attribute to Moses:

“Moses said to Aaron, ‘Aaron my brother, I know that this Temple Sanctuary will have to be sanctified by beloved friends of the Divine, and I thought that it would be either through you or through me. Now I see that they (Nadav and Avihu) were greater than both me and you...’”

According to this view, Nadav and Avihu were saintly individuals; worthy of being sacrificed on the altar of the desert Sanctuary, “VaYidom Aharon” – Aaron silently acquiesced to God’s will. But why did the desert Sanctuary, and by extension any great advance of the Jewish nation, have to be dedicated by the deaths of great Jewish personalities? Why must the pages of our glorious history be drenched in the blood of holy martyrs and soaked by the tears of mourners they leave behind?

The only answer I can give to this agonizing question of lamah – why? – is the one word answer that our Israeli children like to give to our questions about why they do what they do: “kakha” – that is just how it is. Why must sacrifice be a necessary condition for redemption?

The pattern may be discerned as far back as the Covenant between the Pieces, in which God guarantees Abram eternal seed (Gen 15:1-6) and the land of Israel (15:7). After this, a great fear descends upon Abram as he is told that his seed will be strangers in a strange land where they will be afflicted and enslaved until they leave, freed and enriched. God then commands Abram to circumcise himself and his entire male household. The blood of the covenant is thus built into the very male organ of propagation (Gen 17); the price of our nationhood is blood, sacrifice and affliction.

At our Passover Seder, the celebration of our national birth, we retell the tale of our initial march from servitude to freedom in the words of the fully liberated Jew bringing his first fruits to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem: “My father, (Jacob), was almost destroyed by the Aramean (Laban), and he went down to Egypt, and he became there a great mighty and populous (rav) nation” (Deut 26:5). The author of the Passover Haggadah then explicates the text with the description presented by the prophet Ezekiel (16:7):

“I caused you to be populous (revavah) even as the vegetation of the field, and you did increase and grow up and you came to excellent beauty. Your breasts were fashioned and your hair was grown – yet you were naked and bare”.

The Hebrews in Egypt were numerous and powerful, but empty and bare of merit, of true character and courage. To achieve this, they had to undergo the suffering of Egyptian enslavement, having their male babies cast into the Nile. They had to place their lives on the line by sacrificing the “god” of the Egyptians to the God of Israel and the world. They had to place the blood of this sacrifice on their doorposts and they had to undergo circumcision, to demonstrate their readiness to shed blood for freedom, for independence, and for their right to worship God in their own way.

With all of this in mind, the author of the Haggadah returns to Ezekiel (16:6):

“And I passed over you, and I saw that you were rooted in your blood, and I say to you by that blood shall you live (the blood of circumcision).”

It is your willingness to sacrifice for your ideals that make you worthy of emulation, that made you a special and “chosen” people! And so the author of the Haggadah then returns to Biblical description of Hebrew suffering in Egypt, a suffering which was meant to teach us to “love the other, the stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”

Rabbi Yisrael Prager tells how a Nazi guard in the Vilna ghetto interrupted a secret nocturnal matzoh baking, causing the blood of the

Jewish victims to mix with the dough of the baking matzot. The Rabbi cried out, "Behold we are prepared and ready to perform the commandment of the blood of the paschal sacrifice, the blood of the matzot which symbolize the paschal sacrifice!" As he concluded his blessing, his blood too was mixed with the baking matzot.

Lamah? Why such necessary sacrifice? Kakhah, because so it is, because such is the inscrutable will of the Almighty. And "ashreiha'am she kakhah lo", happy is the nation that can say kakhah, happy is the nation which understands that its sacrifices are for the sake of the Almighty, for the purification of their nation, for the world message that freedom and the absolute value that every human being is created in God's image. And that these are values worth fighting for, values worth committing blood for. May it be God's will that we now begin our exit from enslavement and our entry into redemption, for us and the entire world.

Shabbat Shalom!

Insights Parshas Shemini - Adar II 5782

Yeshiva Beis Moshe Chaim/Talmudic University

Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Devorah bas Yisroel Dovid. "May her Neshamas have an Aliya!"

You Are How You Eat

For I am Hashem that lifted you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God [...] (11:45).

The last forty seven verses in this week's parsha describe with intricate detail the laws of kashrus as it relates to the different animals, birds, and fish that may be eaten. The Torah also specifically prohibits certain animals and birds from being consumed. Additionally, the Torah excludes from consumption an entire group of animals that are disgusting to eat because they creep on the ground and consuming them would be "abominable" (11:43).

The Torah then gives the reason for all these laws of kashrus: "For I am Hashem that lifted you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God [...]" (11:45). Rashi on this possuk quotes the Talmud (Bava Metzia 61b), which explains why the Torah uses such unusual language here.

Rav Chanina asked Ravina, why is it that everywhere in the Torah it says, "I am Hashem that took you out of Egypt" but here it says, "For I am Hashem that lifted you out of the land of Egypt"? The Gemara answers that not eating these lowly animals elevates a person, thus the Torah uses the language that Hashem "lifted" the Jewish people out of Egypt because this very commitment elevates us.

In fact, this concept, that keeping the laws of kashrus raises us up, really applies to all the mitzvos. In other words, Hashem took us out of Egypt to give us the Torah and we should keep His mitzvos so that we can grow and be elevated. But why is this statement made specifically by the laws of kashrus?

The Talmud (Yoma 75b) relates a fascinating (and for some reason little known) fact: "Rav Acha Bar Yaakov said, 'In the beginning the Jewish people were like chickens pecking at the garbage continuously until Moshe Rabbeinu came along and established meal times for them.'"

This is quite remarkable on many levels; first of all what is this comparison to chickens eating garbage? Secondly, why is this so important that Moshe felt that he had to come along and change how people eat?

Maimonides, in his introduction to Pirkei Avos, discusses the issue of whether it is better to want to sin but refrain because Hashem commanded us not to, or rather to not even desire to sin to begin with. He concludes that there are two types of sins, those that are moral/ethical issues (e.g. stealing) and those that we don't really understand (e.g. kashrus). He continues, those that are moral issues we shouldn't even desire to sin by and those that are unknowable decrees from Hashem we should desire to transgress but exert an effort to control ourselves.

Controlling one's food intake is one of the hardest ongoing challenges in many people's lives. The drive to just consume whatever they desire stems from many parts of one's psyche; a person may desire as much pleasure as possible or a person may binge to drown out emotional

distress or other issues. One of the hardest parts of being on a diet is that one has to eat to live; it isn't like smoking or a drug addiction where the vice can be entirely eliminated.

Thus, every time we decide what and how much to eat we need to exercise restraint and self-control. This effort is what highlights the difference between man and the animal kingdom. Man becoming restrained and in control of his desires is what truly elevates mankind and puts him in touch with his elevated soul. It is no coincidence that the original sin of Adam Harishon came through eating and permanently lowered mankind into physical beings by introducing death to the world (see next article).

This is why Bnei Yisroel were compared to chickens eating garbage – a lower animal doesn't really care if it resorts to eating refuse, but people understand that it is beneath one's dignity as humans to behave that way. This is why it was so important that Moshe felt it necessary to teach the Jewish people how to eat; it was a lesson that we are elevated beings not merely rational animals and therefore we need to always be in control. This is also why the laws of kashrus highlight the entirety of the Torah's intent – to grow as humans and elevate ourselves to be God-like by exerting self-restraint.

Moshe's Ark

Hashem spoke to Moshe and Aharon saying: Speak to Bnei Yisroel and they shall take to you a perfectly red cow [...] (19:1-2).

This week we read one of the four "special" parshios – Parshas Parah – the description of the mitzvah of the Parah Adumah. The ashes of the Parah Adumah, an extremely rare perfectly red cow, would be used in the process of purifying those who had come into contact with the dead. This is read specifically at this time of year because everyone needed to be purified in order to partake in the Pascal Lamb.

In this possuk, Rashi (ad loc) is bothered by the term "to you," which is in the singular even though Hashem was addressing both Moshe and Aharon. He goes on to explain that the Parah Adumah was a mitzvah that would always be referred to as the cow that Moshe prepared in the desert. In other words, this mitzvah is permanently associated with Moshe Rabbeinu.

What exactly does this mean? While it is true that Moshe organized the procedure of the one that was done in the desert, why would a Parah Adumah done a thousand years later still be referred to as Moshe's? How did Moshe come to acquire the naming rights to the Parah Adumah and why this mitzvah more than any other?

Rashi, in his addendum to the end of the section describing the Parah Adumah, describes ten similarities between the processing of the Parah Adumah and the sin of the golden calf. In other words, the Parah Adumah is meant as an atonement for the sin of the golden calf. How does this dovetail with the main purpose of the Parah Adumah, that of purifying those that have come into contact with a dead person?

The Gemara (Shabbos 146a) informs us that death left the world when Hashem gave the Torah on Har Sinai to Bnei Yisroel. Death was introduced into the world when Adam sinned by eating from the Tree of Knowledge. In other words, Bnei Yisroel accepting the Torah was a rectification of Adam's sin and therefore death left the world. The Gemara continues; when Bnei Yisroel sinned by the golden calf death returned. In fact, Hashem had proclaimed a death sentence on the entire Jewish people.

Moshe was the only one not included in the death sentence of the golden calf. Actually, Hashem made an offer to Moshe that he would rebuild the Jewish people solely from Moshe, which he refused. Instead, Moshe pleaded on behalf of Bnei Yisroel that Hashem should spare them. Hashem relented and, in fact, taught Moshe the process of achieving forgiveness by reciting the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy that we have incorporated into the Yom Kippur davening.

The Parah Adumah, whose actual purpose is to remove the defilement that comes from being in contact with a dead person, is therefore an atonement on the sin of the golden calf, which was the cause of death returning to the world. This explains why Moshe is forevermore credited with the mitzvah of Parah Adumah; it was he who pleaded with Hashem not to destroy Bnei Yisroel after the sin of the golden calf. The Parah

Adumah, in effect, serves the exact function that Moshe accomplished when he prevailed upon Hashem to spare Bnei Yisroel. Having Moshe's name attached to the mitzvah is the very definition of the purpose of the Parah Adumah.

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Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Dvar Torah Shemini: The most important ingredient for great leadership

23 March 2022

A surprising ingredient for outstanding leadership – this is what we discover in Parshat Shemini.

Aaron had been appointed as the Kohen Gadol, the High Priest of the nation. And now, the moment came for him to offer his opening sacrifice, and yet Moshe needed to say to Aharon (Vayikra 9:7), “Krav el hamizbeach,” – “Approach the altar.”

Rashi on Vayikra 9:7 explains that Moshe was saying to Aaron, “Lama ata vosh? Lechach nivcharta,” – “Why are you withdrawing yourself? It is for this that you were chosen.”

The Baal Shem Tov gives a beautiful peirush here. He says that Aharon was filled with humility and that's why he would have preferred that somebody else would have taken on this role, in the same way as he loved the fact that his younger brother Moshe became the leader of the nation. Moshe therefore said to his brother Aaron, “Lechach nivcharta,” – “It's on account of your humility that you are becoming the Kohen Gadol.”

The Talmud Yerushalmi tells us a fascinating story about the people of Simonia in the northern Galilee. They approached Rebbe Yehuda HaNasi in the third century and they explained that they were an important community, and asked if he could please provide an outstanding rabbi for them. Rebbe Yehuda HaNasi said, “I've got just the right person for you. His name is Levi Bar Sisi.”

Levi bar Sisi arrived in Simonia. They created a large bimah, a platform, upon which they seated him on a throne. The people came and they fired questions at him – questions in halacha, questions in Tanach – and he was stunned. He didn't know how to answer a single question! The people went back to Rebbe Yehuda HaNasi and said, “The man you sent us – he's a fake! He's a dud! What happened?”

Rebbe Yehuda HaNasi said, “But at the very least, he's as great as I am!” Indeed, we know that Levi bar Sisi assisted Rebbe Yehuda HaNasi in compiling the Mishnah! So Rebbe Yehuda HaNasi turned to Levi bar Sisi and asked him what had happened.

“Well,” said Levi bar Sisi, “They made a king out of me, it went to my head and I forgot everything!”

The Talmud here wants us to know that sometimes arrogance can be an impediment to outstanding leadership. Rather we should have the qualities of Aaron the High Priest, who was filled with humility.

Indeed, sometimes we notice how a person who promotes himself or herself, somebody who's arrogant, can end up attaining a position of power, authority and leadership. Actually from the Torah we learn that the most outstanding ingredient for great leadership is the humility of Aharon the High Priest.

Shabbat shalom.

Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.

Drasha Parshas

Drasha Parshas Shemini - Consolation Reprise

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Tragedies happen. Unfortunately, we can't control them, and we have to learn to live with their consequences, as we try to continue our lives. Tragedy does not discriminate. It touches the lives of the wealthy and the poor, the wicked and the righteous. The Torah does not avoid telling us about the greatest of tragedies that happened to the most righteous of men. This week it describes the tragedy that occurred to one our greatest

leaders, Ahron the Kohen Gadol (High Priest). His two children, Nadav and Avihu, were tragically consumed by fire while bringing an undesignated offering to Hashem. Moshe is faced with the most difficult of challenges, consoling his bereaved brother who just lost two of his beloved children. The challenge is great and the words of consolation that Moshe used should serve as a precedent for all consolation for generations.

Moshe consoles Ahron by telling him, “This is what Hashem has previously said: By those who are close to me I shall be sanctified and thus I will be honored by the entire congregation” (Leviticus 10:3). Powerful words. Deep and mystical. We are in this world by G-d's command, and our mission is to maintain and promote His glory. Those are words that may not console simple folk, but they were enough for Ahron who after hearing the words went from weeping to silence. But Moshe did not just quote the Torah, he prefaced his remarks: “This is what Hashem has previously said.” Only after that premise does he continue with the words of consolation. Why was it necessary to preface those powerful words by saying that they were once stated? After all, the entire Torah was once stated. Could Moshe not just as easily have stated, “My dear brother Ahron. Hashem is glorified by judgment of his dear ones.”

It seems that the familiarity of the statements was part and parcel of its consoling theme. Why?

The sudden death of Reb Yosef could not have come at a more untimely time – a few days before Passover. A Holocaust survivor, he had rebuilt his life in Canada and left this world a successful businessman, with a wonderful wife, children, and grandchildren. It was difficult, however, for them all to leave their families for the first days of Passover to accompany his body, and thus his widow traveled with her son to bury her husband in Israel. After the funeral the two mourners sat in their apartment in the Shaarei Chesed section of Jerusalem. Passover was fast approaching, and they were planning to spend the Seder at the home of relatives. As they were about to end the brief Shiva period and leave their apartment, a soft knock interrupted their thoughts. At the door to her apartment stood none other than one of Israel's most revered Torah sages, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach.

“I live nearby,” he said, “and I heard that there was a funeral today. I came to offer my condolences.”

The sage then heard a brief history of Reb Yosef's difficult, yet remarkably triumphant life.

Then Reb Shlomo Zalman turned to the widow and asked a very strange question. “Did you say the blessing Boruch Dayan HaEmes? Blessed are You, Hashem, the true Judge.” (This blessing acknowledges the acceptance of Hashem as the Master Planner of all events acknowledging that all that happens is for the best.) “Why? Yes,” answered the elderly lady. “I said it right as the funeral ended. But it is very difficult to understand and accept.”

Reb Shlomo Zalman, a man who lived through dire poverty and illness, four wars, and the murder of a relative by Arab terrorists, nodded. “I understand your questions. That blessing is very difficult to understand and to accept. You must, however, say it again and again. As difficult as it may be, believe me, if you repeat it enough you will understand it.”

Moshe understood that as difficult as it may be, the words he used to console Ahron were the precise ones that encompassed the essence of the meaning of life and death. They would be understood by Ahron. But he had to preface it by saying that this not a new form of condolence. It has been said before. It was already taught. Now it must be repeated.

Difficult questions have no simple answers, but it is the faith of generations that must be constantly repeated and repeated. There are no new condolences; there are no fast answers. The only answers we can give are those that have been said for generations. Perhaps that is why we console our loved ones today with the same consolation that has been said for centuries. “May you be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.” And it shall be repeated – again and again — until there is no more mourning.

Good Shabbos!

Dedicated by the Tau Family in memory of Sam Tau

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Shemini

An Original Interpretation of "Through Those Near to Me I Will Be Sanctified"

This week's parsha contains the tragic story of the death of Nadav and Avihu, the two eldest sons of Aharon HaKohen: "The sons of Aharon, Nadav and Avihu, each took his fire pan, they put fire in them and placed incense upon it; and they brought before Hashem an alien fire that He had not commanded them. A fire came forth from before Hashem and consumed them, and they died before Hashem. Moshe said to Aharon, of this did Hashem speak, saying: 'I will be sanctified through those who are nearest Me, thus I will be honored before the entire people'; and Aharon was silent." (Vayikra 10:1-3).

In reaction to these events, Aharon did not express any of the natural grief that he certainly felt, but rather he remained silent. The Torah then records Moshe's command to Aharon and his remaining two sons: "Do not leave your heads unshorn and do not rend your garments, that you not die and He become wrathful with the entire assembly; and your brethren the entire House of Israel shall bewail the conflagration that Hashem ignited." (Vayikra 10:6)

I would like to quote an insight on this parsha that I saw in the sefer Zevech Mishpacha sent to me by my fifth grade Rebbe, Rabbi Chaim Zvi Hollander (1927-2021), containing some of his Chumash insights. Rav Hollander, zt"l, was active into his nineties as a Rebbe in Beis Yisrael in Neve Yaakov in Eretz Yisrael. I want to share his observation about this incident.

After the Holocaust, there were Jews who felt there was no reason to go on. They felt there was no point to live any longer and there was certainly no point to being a Jew any longer. Rabbi Hollander quotes a Rav who came to these people who lost all hope to live and certainly to maintain their Yiddishkeit. The Rav told them over a Rashbam from this week's parsha.

Moshe said, "This is what Hashem spoke when saying 'through those who are near to Me I will be sanctified' (B'Krovai E'Kadesh)" Rashi interprets the words to mean that Moshe told Aharon, "Aharon, I knew that the Mishkan was going to be sanctified by the death of those close to the Omnipresent (Kedoshim), but I thought it was going to be through you or me. I now see that your two sons were greater than either of us." Thus, according to Rashi, B'Krovai E'Kadesh was referring to Nadav and Avihu.

The Rashbam has a totally different interpretation of those words. According to the Rashbam, B'Krovai E'Kadesh is NOT referring to Nadav and Avihu.

It had been Aharon's inclination, as a result of this tragic incident, to abstain from doing the Avodah (Priestly Service). His reaction was, "I can't do the Avodah under these circumstances. I just lost my two sons!" Moshe thus instructed him otherwise: "I am telling you, Aharon, that the Ribono shel Olam wants you to continue doing the Avodah. B'Krovai E'Kadesh means through those High Priests who are close to Me I wish to be sanctified. "I want you to complete the Avodah because that will be a tremendous Kiddush Hashem. The mere fact that you are capable of putting away your own personal tragedy and continue engaging in the Divine Service of Hashem is itself the greatest sanctification of My Name. Through you and your remaining sons not letting your personal grief take over, and continuing to do the Avodah – that itself is the referenced manifestation of B'Krovai E'Kadesh (through those close to Me I will be sanctified)."

The Rashbam explains the next words of the pasuk "v'Al pnei kol ha'Am E'Kaved" that when someone, lo aleynu, sees his children die and nonetheless he submerges his mourning in his service of the Creator, it is the Glory of the Shechina (Divine Presence). It is the greatest Kiddush Hashem, the greatest Kavod Shechina that human beings are capable of putting aside their own personal grief and continuing to perform the Avodas Hashem.

This is what that Rav told those Holocaust survivors. He directed those Jews who did not want to go on, and who did not want to continue with

their Yiddishkeit, to this Rashbam. There is no greater Sanctification of G-d's Name than for people who have gone through what they had been through, and to continue to be Servants of Hashem.

It is easy to "talk the talk." It is another thing to "walk the walk." But there are thousands of Yidden, that despite what they went through – and the horrible things that they experienced – who nevertheless did not lose their Emunah and continued to be Ovdei Hashem. That is a replication of what Aharon haKohen and his remaining sons did. In spite of their terrible tragedy, they were able to go on with their Avodas Hashem. That was the classic example of B'Krovai E'Kadesh. The term Krovai (those near to Me) refers not to Nadav and Avihu, but rather to Aharon, Elazar, and Isamar, who continued on with their Avodas Hashem after the tragic loss of their sons and brothers.

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Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Bs"d Parashat Shemini 5782 - Praying? Put Your Ego Aside!

Parashat Shemini opens with the description of the great day when the Mishkan (Tabernacle) was dedicated following the seven days of investiture during which Moses did the work in the Mishkan. On the eighth day, Moses passed the "baton" to Aaron and his sons:

And Moses said to Aaron, "Approach the altar and perform your sin offering and your burnt offering, atoning for yourself and for the people, and perform the people's sacrifice, atoning for them, as the Lord has commanded. (Vayikra 9, 7)

Aaron did not approach the altar of his own accord but did so only after Moses instructed him to approach it. Why didn't Aaron approach on his own to begin the work?

Rashi brings us the sages' explanation:

...because Aaron was bashful and afraid to approach. So, Moses said to him: "Why are you ashamed? For this you have been chosen!"

The simple meaning is that Aaron was too bashful to approach and begin the sacred work, and Moses urged him on by saying – Don't be bashful. The Creator of the Universe chose you! Gather up your courage and start the work.

The ARIZaL (Rabbi Isaac Luria, of greatest kabbalists of Zefat, 1537 – 1572) reveals another layer of this issue and writes, "The meaning of this is that only you have this quality of humility and bashfulness, and therefore you were chosen from among the rest of your peers."

When Moses saw that Aaron was ashamed to enter the holy place, he told him that that humility of his is the reason he was chosen to serve in the House of G-d. Why? Because a person who would not be bashful is one who believes he is worthy and suitable for this role, and this itself would be a sign that he is not worthy to serve in this important job.

The Ba'al Shem Tov (Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, founder of the Hassidic movement) adds something to this explanation based on the verse in Psalms (51, 19), "The sacrifices of G-d are a broken spirit."

The Talmud states the following:

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: Come and see how great the lowly in spirit are before the Holy One, Blessed be He. For when the Temple was standing, a person would sacrifice a burnt-offering and the merit of a burnt-offering would be his; he would sacrifice a meal-offering and the merit of a meal-offering would be his. But with regard to one whose spirit is lowly, the verse ascribes him credit as if he had sacrificed all the sacrificial offerings, as it is stated: "The sacrifices of G-d are a broken spirit" (Psalms 51:19). And not only that, but his prayer is not despised, as it is stated: "A broken and contrite heart, O G-d, You will not despise." (Sota 5, 2)

What is the connection between humility, a broken spirit, and offering sacrifices?

The work of the sacrifices stood at the center of the holy work. As opposed to all the other jobs that symbolized the connection between life and holiness, the sacrifices symbolize the nullification of life in the face of holiness. A person with humility and bashfulness, who nullifies himself in the face of holiness, is like someone who sacrifices his spirit and soul before the sacred. Therefore, for Aaron the Kohen, whose job it

was to offer the sacrifices in the Temple, the trait he needed more than any other was that of humility and bashfulness.

Today, because of our many sins, we no longer have kohanim doing their work, but each and every one of us is a sort of “kohen” when standing in prayer before the Creator of the Universe. Then, our prayer is like a sacrifice on the altar, as the Prophet Hoshea (14, 3) said, “and let us render [for] bulls [the offering of] our lips.”

If we want our prayers to be heard, we must approach prayer with humility and humbleness. Only when we understand how small and inconsequential we are in comparison with the greatness of G-d can we “approach the altar” and pray.

The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.

Rav Kook Torah

Rav Kook on Mishpatim: An Eye for an Eye

Rabbi Chanan Morrison

Tehillim 24: Climbing and Standing

“Who may climb God’s mountain? Who may stand in His holy place?” (Psalms 24:3)

What is the significance of these two activities - climbing and standing - on God’s mountain?

Ascending in Knowledge

We use our legs to advance forward, to walk and climb. We also use them to stand in one place. Each of these two functions, climbing and standing, is a metaphor for a specific form of Divine service.

“Climbing God’s mountain” suggests a spiritual ascent, as we strive to gain greater enlightenment and refinement of character. Torah study in particular is associated with spiritual advance, by acquiring wisdom and ethical insight.

Therefore, the Sages called Torah study a *derech*. It is a path upon which we progress and advance. As Hillel taught, it is a never-ending journey of spiritual ascent: “One who does not add [to his Torah knowledge], ceases” (Avot 1:13).

Standing in Prayer

And which Divine service corresponds to “standing in His holy place”?

When we walk or climb, our legs are apart. We make progress, but our position is less secure and less stable.

When we stand, on the other hand, our legs are joined together. Standing indicates a state of stability and balance.

Spiritually, “to stand” is to absorb that which we have learned and grasped. This is a critical part of Divine service, when we reinforce our spiritual acquisitions. By ingraining these attainments in the soul, we ensure that we will retain them, despite life’s trials and vicissitudes.

If Torah study is the way we climb God’s mountain, then prayer is the way we stand in that holy place. In fact, the central prayer is called the Amidah - “the standing prayer.” The function of prayer is to internalize our spiritual accomplishments, as we examine ourselves and reflect on our true goals and desires.

For this reason, the Sages taught that we should pray standing, with our legs together. When praying, we are like angels, who are described as having a single, straight leg: “their leg was a straight leg” (Ezekiel 1:7). Angels do not progress in holiness. Their very essence is one of maintaining their level of spiritual perfection. When we pray, we emulate the angel’s stance of unity and harmony, of being at one with our spiritual state.

In Torah study, we aspire to attain higher levels, to ascend God’s mountain. This requires exertion and effort, like a climber scaling a high mountain. Standing, on the other hand, indicates a more relaxed, natural position. This is the state of the angels, effortless in their inherent holiness. Through prayer, we seek to internalize our spiritual attainments, until they become natural and ingrained traits in the soul.

(Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 61.)

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Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parashas Shemini

פרשת שמני תשפ"ב

Come near to the Altar, and perform the service of your sin-offering and your elevation-offering, and provide atonement for yourself. (9:7)

The *Chatas*, sin-offering, which Aharon *HaKohen* brought, was personal. It atoned for his participation in the *chet ha'eigal*, Golden Calf debacle. Why was it necessary for Aharon to offer up his *korban* prior to offering up the communal offering? *Horav Eliyahu Meir Bloch, zl*, derives from here that, prior to teaching others, one must first and foremost show that he himself is free of any such taint. When one seeks to convey his *hashkofos*, perspectives/outlook on life (based upon the Torah) to others, he must first be an exemplar of his teaching. *K'shot atzmecha v'achar kach k'shot acheirim*, “Beautify yourself first and (only) then attempt to beautify others.” Simply, this *Chazal* (*Sanhedrin* 18a) teaches that one should reflect on his own actions and self-evaluate prior to having the presumption to criticize others.

Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl, explains that the first time the word *k'shot* is used, it is related to the Aramaic word *kushta*, which means “truth.” In other words, *Chazal* are being frank with us. Be truthful with yourself – do not delude yourself that you are perfect – before you have the temerity to rebuke others. First of all, it is improper. Second, it will be ineffective. No one wants to be criticized by a chameleon who expediently changes to please others to further his own goals. Thus, Aharon publicly addressed his own “failing” before he sought forgiveness from the nation.

Horav Naftali Amsterdam, zl, was one of the primary students of *Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl*. His erudition and righteousness notwithstanding, he made every attempt to conceal his greatness and his role in his saintly *Rebbe's mussar* movement. Out of fear that his service to Hashem would become a source of false pride, he was self-effacing even in his private life. He obstinately refused to accept any service from others, and he vehemently demurred from entering the field of *rabbanus*. He earned his meager livelihood as a baker, whose products his wife sold in their little bakery. Sadly, his returns were less than satisfactory. When his daughter reached marriageable age, he was unable to provide for her dowry. In the end, he took a *rabbinic* position, followed by becoming a *dayan* in Petersburg – a position he held until he earned enough money to cover his payables. He then returned to full-time learning.

Rav Naftali neither had to teach his students *mussar*, ethical character development, from a book, nor lecture to them from a lectern, because he himself was a living volume of *mussar*. He embodied the highest ideals of *mussar*.

It is related that one week the holy *Chafetz Chaim* cancelled his weekly *shmuess*, ethical discourse. At the appointed time, he ascended to the lectern and said, “*Kinderlach*, my children, today I am unable to offer words of *mussar*. I can neither arouse your emotions nor inspire you, because this week I received copies of the *Mishnah Berurah* (his magnum opus), and I was compelled to spend long hours reviewing and editing each volume for errors. I would hate to sell a volume that had mistakes. This would be tantamount to stealing. I cannot demand diligence in Torah study when I myself have been lax in my commitment.”

The sons of Aharon, Nadav and Avihu, each took his firepan... and they brought before Hashem an alien fire that He had not commanded them. (10:1)

Nadav and Avihu’s action was clearly in violation of the norm. These two *tzaddikim*, righteous persons, did not plan on sinning against Hashem. They were of the opinion that their initiative was appropriate and even commendable. Wherein lay the difference between their position and that of Moshe *Rabbeinu*? While the commentators enumerate a number of areas in which they could have been lacking (clearly relative to their exalted spiritual status), the *Talmud* (*Eiruvin* 63a) underscores two: they entered the Sanctuary while intoxicated with wine; they rendered a *halachic* decision in the presence of their *Rebbe*, Moshe. Both of these seeming indiscretions require elucidation. First, in what area did they disagree with their *Rebbe*? Second, why would they

enter the Sanctuary while inebriated? What spiritual advantage would this afford them?

The *Sefas Emes* explains that Nadav and Avihu sought to achieve angel status, through which (like angels) they would perceive the *ratzon*, will, of Hashem without waiting for Him to command them. They hypothesized that when *Klal Yisrael* responded to the Giving of the Torah with a resounding *Naase v'nishma*, "We will do and we will listen," they were intimating that they were prepared to do/act without even receiving a prior command or authorization. We perceive what is Hashem's will, and we immediately act. Moshe *Rabbeinu* disagreed. He understood that Judaism is a discipline based on carrying out Hashem's command.

Why did they enter the Sanctuary while intoxicated? They felt that wine expands the mind, thus allowing for greater, more intense perception of the Divine. Wine would allow them to go beyond the normal scope of understanding.

Horav Moshe Pick, zl, expands upon the words of the *Sefas Emes*. He asserts that Nadav and Avihu's understanding of the *Rabbinic* maxim (*Kiddushin* 31a), *Gadol ha'metzuvah v'oseh mimi she'eino metzuvah v'oseh*; "Greater is the one who is commanded and does it than one who is not commanded – yet still does it," contrasts with Moshe's understanding of it. Nadav and Avihu felt that this maxim applied to one who has achieved extreme level of spirituality. On their spiritual plateau, perceiving what Hashem wants and acting upon it is yet greater than waiting for prior authorization. To act on one's own volition is, in their opinion, the hallmark of service to Hashem. Moshe (like Avraham *Avinu* who did not circumcise himself until Hashem commanded him to do so) disagreed. Their contrasting opinions went back to their divergent understanding of *Klal Yisrael's* declaration, *Naase v'nishma*. Were they advocating acting without prior command or rationale?

Why did they drink wine prior to performing the service? Wine makes one happy: *V'yayin y'samach levav enosh*, "And wine gladdens the heart of a man" (*Tehillim* 104:15). They waited to serve Hashem amid unbridled joy. Wine would enable them to do so. Moshe, however, taught that the only true joy can be derived from fulfilling Hashem's *mitzvah*. Carrying out the Almighty's command is our greatest joy. Wine is a substitute, but does not provide the real experience.

וישמע משה וייטב בעיניו

Moshe heard, and he approved. (10:20)

We do not find disputes between *Klal Yisrael's* leaders: Moshe *Rabbeinu* and his brother, Aharon *HaKohen* – except with regard to the *sa'ir Rosh Chodesh*, he-goat brought on *Rosh Chodesh*. They disagreed about whether an *onein*, mourner, was permitted to eat the *sa'ir Rosh Chodesh* on the day of the funeral. The question arose concerning *kodshei doros*, that which is sanctified for generations: a *korban* which will continually be offered; and *kodshei shaah*, a *korban* designated for that specific time. Three he-goats were offered that day – two of which were *kodshei shaah*, and one of which was *kodshei doros*. Aharon reasoned that Hashem's command that the *Kohanim* eat the meal-offerings, which were *kodshei shaah*, applied equally to the two sacrifices which were *kodshei shaah*. He felt that they should not eat the *sa'ir Rosh Chodesh*, as they were *kodshei doros*. Moshe disagreed with Aharon, to the point that he became "angry." Had he not become upset, he would have understood Aharon's logical rationale. Moshe ultimately agreed with Aharon, saying, "I heard (the decision), but I forgot."

Horav Chaim Shmulevitz, zl, was wont to comment concerning Moshe's ability to concede error – rather than cover up when it would be rationally acceptable. When Moshe said, *Shamaati v'shochachti*; "I heard but I forgot," he was opening himself to an accusation that some might level at him: "What else did you forget? Did you make any 'other' alterations in the Torah?" Indeed, the entire *mesorah*, tradition of transmission from *Sinai*, was in danger of being impugned. Nonetheless, Moshe did not allow this possible allegation to prevent him from stating the truth. Veracity trumps *l'shem Shomayim*, acting for the sake of Heaven. Some rabble rousers might have raised

questions, ultimately leading to a *chillul Hashem*, desecration of Hashem's Name. Moshe *Rabbeinu* understood the mandate of *Midvar sheker tirschak*, "Distance yourself from falsehood" (*Shemos* 23:7) to override all *cheshbonos*, justifications.

During the controversy surrounding the implementation of the study of *mussar* into the *yeshivah* curriculum (or for that matter, taking time ordinarily dedicated for Torah study and diverting part of it to *mussar* study or the study of the soul), *Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl*, the *Mussar* Movements founder and chief proponent, would upon occasion be harassed by the *misnagdim*, opposition, to the movement. This was no different from that which the early *chassidim* endured in their quest to imbue *avodas Hashem*, the service to the Almighty, with passion and joy. While today *mussar* study is an accepted, vital part of Torah study, a time existed in which a number of Lithuanian *gedolim*, Torah giants, were vehemently opposed to it. As usual, one could always find *rif raf* who live for controversy and dispute, who come out of their "holes" in order to disparage and malign anyone who does not agree with them.

Rav Yisrael was brilliant and erudite, but he did not call attention to his vast knowledge – focusing instead on the need to study *mussar*. He was a prolific speaker, who had the ability to captivate, as well as inspire, his audience. He was asked to give a *drashah*, lecture, in Vilna, which was a huge Torah center. His *misnagdim*, many of whom were quite learned, planned to attend for the purpose of refuting his words, thereby casting aspersion on him, his scholarship, and, above all, the *Mussar* Movement.

During the *shiur*, a member of the opposition asked a powerful question focused on the fundamental principle upon which the *shiur* was based. *Rav Yisrael* stood thinking for a few moments, then announced that based upon the question presented to him, his entire *shiur* was refuted. He then left the podium and returned to his seat. Afterwards, he explained that actually he had twelve answers to the question. They were so compelling that the questioner would be unable to unravel them to see that they did not ultimately answer the question. At the end of the day, however, truth must prevail. If these answers were not an absolute fit, they were false. He would rather have his *shiur* refuted, suffer the "possible" humiliation, than to agree to settle for anything that was not completely true.

Rav Yisrael confessed that a powerful battle raged within him. On the one hand, admitting defeat imperiled his life's work. On the other hand, how could he settle for something that lacked integrity? Finally, he cried out to himself, "Yisrael! Yisrael! You learn *mussar*, and *mussar* obligates you not to settle for anything that is not absolute truth. This is when I decided to end the *shiur*."

ולא תטמאו בהם ונשמתם בם

Do not contaminate yourselves through them lest you become contaminated through them. (11:43)

Noticeably, the *aleph* of *v'nitamtem* /*v'nitmeisem* is missing. We translate *v'nitmeisem* as, "and you have become contaminated through them." In contrast, we read *v'nitamtem* as "and you become dulled by them." Consuming forbidden foods will cause the mind to become dense (with regard to learning Torah, which he will have difficulty grasping) and ultimately blunt his spirituality. The following story is frightening and gives us all something to ponder. A devout family was blessed that all of their sons were accomplished *talmidei chachamim*, Torah scholars, except for their youngest child, who could not comprehend the simplest, most basic line of Torah. Regardless of the material and the proficiency of the *rebbe*, it did not enter his head. He could grasp nothing. With regard to secular studies, he was absolutely brilliant, nothing was difficult, as he was able to master the most difficult subjects with minimal effort. The parents had spoken to a number of Torah giants and received blessings, but nothing seemed to be effective.

One day, *Horav Akiva Eiger, zl*, visited their community. The mother of this boy made an appointment to speak with him concerning her son. The *gaon* listened and replied, "The great *halachic* arbiters (*Shach Yoreh Deah* 81) write that extreme care must be tendered in order that a child not consume any forbidden food. Failure to do this will

result in limiting the child's ability to understand and retain Torah. "Rebbe, what can we do now to help him?" the mother asked. "He should study amid deprivation. This will cleanse him of the contamination that he absorbed" was his response.

The parents struggled to discern when their son could have possibly come in contact with non-kosher/spiritually defective food. They reviewed every possible activity in which their son could have accidentally stumbled and eaten prohibited food. After scrutinizing every juncture and circumstance during which he might have eaten something questionable, they remembered! When the boy was five years old, he had walked home from *cheder*. It was *Chanukah*, and *cheder* was over early. The boy passed a wedding hall where a wedding was in full session. One of the *mechutanim*, in laws, gave the boy a piece of chicken to eat on his way home.

The father heard this and wondered. The caterer was a devout Jew. The *shochet*, ritual slaughterer, was a *Chabad chassid* who was equally devout. He visited the caterer and asked him straight, "Did anything unusual occur during a wedding ten years ago on *Chanukah*?" He looked in his calendar and read that a certain Jew had remarried on the second night of *Chanukah*. The father returned to the *shochet* and asked if possibly something had gone wrong that night. The *shochet* thought for a few moments, then his face turned ashen, "Yes, yes, at that wedding I had made a mistake in the slaughtering of a number of chickens." The father of the boy was shaking when he asked, "You allowed the guests to eat chicken that was not kosher?" "No, no," replied the *shochet*, "the chicken was kosher *l'mehadrin*, for the most meticulous standards. There was, however, another problem. Thirty years ago, the *chassan*, groom, at that wedding had divorced his first wife. Rumors went out that the *get*, divorce, was not up to par. A number of distinguished *Rabbanim* ruled that the *get* was invalid. Over time, people forgot about it, and this man, who had no respect for the ruling of the *Rabbanim*, went about his merry way. Ten years ago, he remarried in the hall in question. I was the *shochet*. A number of days after the wedding, one of my friends, also a *Chabad chassid*, rebuked me, "How could you have allowed the few ruble that you earned for slaughtering the chicken to blind you to the fact that our revered *Rebbe*, the *Baal HaTanya*, was one of the primary signatories invalidating that *get*! The *Rebbe* declared that anyone who slaughtered for the second wedding of that scoundrel – the *shechitah* is *treifah*!"

The father and *shochet* broke down in bitter weeping. The father had finally discovered where his son had obtained non-kosher chicken, – or rather, chicken that had been rendered unkosher by the holy *Baal HaTanya*.

להבדיל בין הטמא ובין הטהור ובין החיה הנאכלת ובין החיה אשר לא תאכל

To distinguish between the contaminated and the pure, and between the creature that may be eaten and the creature that may not be eaten. (11:47)

A Jew must know the Torah and its laws; otherwise, he is challenged to keep them. In order to carry out the will of Hashem, we must know what is His will and how to execute it properly. In most cases the distinction between "clean" and "unclean," "pure" and "not pure," what may be eaten and what may not be eaten, is evident and does not require a degree in higher Torah knowledge. It is, however, vital that we know how to distinguish between those categories that are similar to one another. For example, the slaughtering of an animal or fowl is an intricate procedure, in which a fraction of an inch determines its *kashrus* status. *Halachah* demands that the majority of the windpipe must be cut. This means that kosher versus *treifah* is determined by a millimeter. This concept applies in other areas as well, as *Horav Moshe Schwab*, *zl* (*Mashgiach Yeshivas Gateshead*) points out.

The *Mashgiach* observes how a moment can make a difference in *halachah*. *Shabbos* begins at sunset. One minute before sunset is Friday; one minute later is *Shabbos*. One minute before *Pesach* (the time declared when *chametz* is prohibited), bread may be eaten. A minute later, one who eats bread is guilty of *kares*, Heavenly excision. The same idea applies to a minute before *Yom Kippur*. Mere seconds distinguishes between life and death.

Likewise with regard to spiritual development. Every *mitzvah* that one performs elevates him. Indeed, he is no longer the same person as he was before he performed the *mitzvah*. He is now different; thus, more is expected of him. One *mitzvah*, and he is a new person. Responding *Amen* seems like a small, simple gesture, but it changes the very essence of an individual. Judaism deals with intricacies, whereby the slightest misstep can spell spiritual disaster. Likewise, the right word at the appropriate time can transform disaster into smash success.

The shortest *mussar shmues*, rebuke/ethical discourse, was delivered by Hashem to Adam *HaRishon*. He asked Adam, *Ayeca?* "Where are you?" or (as explained by the commentators), "Do you know where you are?" Do you realize how far you have fallen from the spiritual apex that you were on? Do you realize that you sinned in the holiest place in the universe? Do you know where you are going? All this (and more) is included in this one brief word of rebuke. One word that speaks volumes.

One well-placed word can transform a person's trajectory of life; it can imbue him with the self-confidence he needs to succeed, the courage to help him from falling deeper into the depth of morass. *Horav Yosef Yoizel Horvitz*, *zl*, revered as the *Alter* of Novoradok, was *Rosh Yeshiva* of the famed *yeshiva*, which had established eighty-five branches throughout Eastern Europe by the outbreak of World War II. His students were prepared to (and often did) risk their lives to disseminate Torah to the far reaches of the Jewish communities where they could make a difference. One man had initiated all this. That, however, is not the end of the story. It is how it happened, what motivated him, and who altered his spiritual trajectory that provides us with a valuable lesson concerning the little things, the one word, one phrase, that can transform a life.

Rav Yosef Yoizel was not always a *Rosh Yeshiva*. In fact, it was the farthest thing from his mind. He was, instead, a successful textile merchant who was supporting his immediate family of eleven. Anyone with deep insight could perceive that this young textile merchant had much more to offer the Torah world than fabric. Indeed, if he could put his entrepreneurial skills to use for Torah causes, he would alter the "fabric" of Jewish minds and fill them with Torah. At one point, *Rav Yosef Yoizel* met the saintly *Horav Yisrael Salanter*, *zl*, father of the *Mussar* Movement and primary expositor for placing greater focus on character trait refinement. *Rav Yisrael* felt that the young man who stood before him should be devoting more time to Torah study. Furthermore, he perceived greatness and leadership qualities in him.

During the course of their conversation, *Rav Yisrael* pointed out that *Rav Yosef Yoizel* was spending too much time engrossed in commerce. As a result, his Torah studies were suffering. The young merchant asked, "If I spend my time learning, how would I live? How would I feed my family?"

Rav Yisrael's retort blasted the young man out of his materialistic reverie, "More to the point – with what will you die?!" This short rejoinder changed the trajectory of the future *Alter* of Novoradok and catalyzed a Torah revolution that resulted in the founding of eighty five *yeshivos* that were home to thousands of *yeshiva* students.

Rav Yisrael did not say much, but the brief comeback pierced the protective wall that the future *Alter* had built around himself and opened his mind to the truth. It does not require long winded discourses. It requires a few well-placed words spoken with sincerity and love.

Va'ani Tefillah

ד' אל באפך תוכחני ואל בחמתך תיסרני – Hashem, Al b'apcha sochicheini, v'al bachamascha s'yasreini. Hashem, do not rebuke me in Your anger, nor chastise me in Your rage.

Simply interpreted, David *Hamelech* (*Tehillim* 6) pleads with Hashem for a moratorium/reprieve on rebuke and chastisement. Understandably, we warrant His anger and rage, but we ask that the Almighty put it aside, that He not punish us.

In an alternative exposition, *Horav Shimshon Pincus*, *zl*, explains that David is not asking for an end to the rebuke and chastisement. It is what keeps us in line. He pleads, however, that the

rebukenot be presented with anger, and that the chastisement not be accompanied by rage. Even during a moment of rebuke, if Hashem metes out a moment of rebuke without attending anger, it is much more palatable. Is it any different with parents/mentors, who, at times, must rebuke and chastise, but, if it is the product of love, it is so much easier for us to accept.

In memory of our Father and Grandfather

Martin Nisenbaum - ר' מרדכי בן ר' אפרים ז"ל - נפטר ל"ח ניסן תשל"ג

זוכה לראות דורות עוסקים בתורה ויראת שמים

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Carbon Fiber versus Titanium

Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Interruptions

When is it good to interrupt?

Question #2: Flying through Air

Is an entertainer swinging from a flying trapeze an ohel?

Question #3: Ohel Zaruk

Why would anyone throw a tent?

Question #4: Carbon Fiber versus Titanium

What difference does it make, halachically, whether an airplane is manufactured from aluminum, titanium or carbon fiber?

Foreword:

The laws of tumas ohel, defined below, are taught at the beginning of parshas Chukas, which we read this Shabbos as our maftir, parshas Parah. Technically, these laws are not germane exclusively to kohanim, but are a subset of the laws of tumas meis, the laws of tumah that result from contact with a dead person, which apply to all people. However, since we are all currently tamei meis, and without parah adumah we cannot become tahor again, the laws of tumas meis primarily affect kohanim. I say primarily because, in fact, everyone is required to make sure that a kohein not become tamei. So, for this reason, we should all be fully familiar with the laws of tumas meis. For our purposes, I will subdivide the laws of tumas meis into four general categories:

1. Maga -- touch

This is tumah spread through physical, tactile contact. This method of spreading tumah is not unique to tumas meis, but applies to virtually all tamei sources, including neveilah (dead animals), sheratzim (certain varieties of dead, small creatures) and people who contract tumah (see Keilim 1:1). However, there is no prohibition for a kohein to become tamei because of either neveilah or sheratzim, and, therefore, the laws of these tumas are, for the most part, not that applicable until we again have korbanos, the Beis Hamikdash and the ashes of parah adumah.

2. Masa -- lifting

Tumas masa is generated when a person lifts a tamei item. This is also not limited to tumas meis, but applies to most varieties of tumah (see Keilim 1:2). Perhaps the most common case today of becoming tamei through tumas neveilah is someone who lifts or moves a non-kosher piece of meat in a supermarket. Since the animal died without the benefit of shechitah, the meat is neveilah and therefore tamei. Someone who moves the neveilah becomes tamei, even if he did not touch the meat itself, but only lifted or moved the package.

3. Ohel -- "under cover"

Ohel literally means tent, but tumas ohel means tumah from a meis that spreads underneath an extended roofed area and thereby conveys tumah to any person or vessel that is also under the extended ohel area. This will be the main topic of this article.

4. Other related tumah considerations

There are various other categories of tumas meis, such as golek, dofek, kever, kever sasum, and cherev harei hu kechalal, each of which has its own, highly detailed laws that I will not be discussing in this article. Most of these -- golek, dofek, kever, and kever sasum -- concern either parts of a grave, or different methods of burial. Cherev harei hu kechalal is a type of tumas meis conveyed via items (according to many rishonim, only metal items) that, themselves, contracted tumah via a meis. Most rishonim rule that the prohibition of a kohein contracting tumas meis does not include coming in contact with cherev harei hu kechalal (see Tosafos, Nazir 54b).

Ohel

Although the word ohel translates as "tent," or "roof," tumas ohel has much broader connotations. Tumas ohel is conveyed via almost any item that covers at least a tefach (about three inches) cubed, regardless of how high it is above the meis or above the kohein. A ledge of a building, an umbrella, or a branch that is a tefach wide and overhangs a grave or corpse conveys tumah onto anyone or any vessel susceptible to tumah positioned directly beneath the ohel. Tumas ohel spreads from one ohel area to any other ohel that overlaps or connects, even if the

different ohel "roofs" are of very different heights. It also spreads from one area to another adjacent area through an open door, window or other break in a wall, even if it is as small as a tefach by a tefach. Thus, a series of overlapping or connecting roofs, ledges, caves, umbrellas, tree branches or even people, can create a continuous ohel that transfers tumah for great distances. Indeed, that which appears to be separate buildings or structures may be one large ohel connected by open doors and windows (under certain circumstances, even through closed ones), ledges or tunnels, and tumah in one building may spread across an entire complex of buildings. This is particularly common in hospitals, museums, shopping malls, university campuses, subway systems and airport terminals, where human remains in one building may spread tumah throughout the entire complex or airport -- notwithstanding that those complexes appear to be several separate buildings -- via interconnecting tunnels or other passageways.

An airplane that is partly over a grave or meis and partly over a branch, umbrella or person will also convey tumas ohel. We will soon discuss if this is true only if when the airplane is stationary or even if it is in flight.

In the modern world, numerous teshuvos have been published discussing whether tumas meis extends to an entire train or vehicle, when part of it passes through a cemetery or under a tree that overhangs a cemetery (see, for example, Shu't Maharam Schick, Yoreh Deah #353; Shu't Birkas Retzei #12; Shu't Melamed Leho'il 2:133 and in many more recent publications). Responsa concerning whether a kohein may fly in an airplane whose route takes it over graves or cemeteries appeared as early as the 1930's, in the very infancy of commercial air travel.

Many common situations can create a halachic problem for a kohein, because of the laws of tumas ohel. For example: carrying human remains into an airport terminal or medical facility that connects to a subway station could convey tumah throughout the entire subway system and prohibit any kohein from remaining anywhere in the subway, since the entire system qualifies as one large ohel. Therefore, someone dying in a Bronx subway station contaminates a kohein awaiting his commuter train in Penn Station! These more complicated ohel situations can be easily rectified during construction or refurbishing of the buildings -- however, they require input of a knowledgeable expert in these matters to explain how to avoid the problems. There are hospitals in Israel in which these tumah problems were rectified, because care was taken during renovation to consult rabbinic authorities how to remedy the problem.

This article will be discussing tumas ohel as spread through keilim, which I will translate loosely, but not that accurately, as "vessels," and an important concept of tumas ohel called chatzitzah, blocking or interrupting tumah.

Blocking tumah

Although tumas meis spreads throughout the building in which it exists, it usually does not spread through the ceiling of the room in which it is located. These halachos are derived from the posuk in parshas Chukas (19:14) that implies that, although tumah spreads under and throughout the roofed area in which it is currently found, it is blocked from spreading above, below, or outside that ohel area. A ceiling usually is a barrier blocking tumah from spreading (Ohalos, Chapter 9).

There are three ways to provide a barrier to block tumah:

1. An item situated directly above the tumah might block tumah from penetrating above and through it.
2. An item situated directly below the tumah might block the tumah from penetrating below and through it.
3. Closing an opening in a room or building, thus preventing tumah from moving laterally from one roofed area to an adjacent roofed area.

What blocks tumah

As a rule of thumb, anything that is not mekabel, susceptible to, tumah will be able to block tumah. What materials are mekabeil tumah? There are several categories of utensils (defined here as receptacles that can contain an item) depending on the type of material of which they are manufactured. For our purposes in this article, we will discuss three categories:

A. Never mekabeil tumah

Materials that do not become tamei. Indeed, there are many such materials. In the time of the Mishnah, these included most unfired vessels made of earth, and those made of stone. According to many authorities, today these would include vessels made of plastic materials and, potentially, might include materials made of carbon fiber or fiberglass.

B. Always mekabeil tumah

There are materials that become tamei when they are complete utensils, regardless of their size. In general, metal items, or at least those made of the six metals mentioned in the Torah as susceptible to tumah -- gold, silver, copper, iron, tin and lead (Bamidbar 31, 22) are always mekabeil tumah. Steel, the most common metal used today in manufacture, is predominantly iron, and the Mishnah implies that an alloy has the halachic status of its majority constituent (Keilim 11:4). Thus, although there are hundreds of steel alloys containing a wide variety of other components, for halachic purposes, steel is iron. Similarly, both bronze, an alloy of predominantly copper and tin, and brass, an alloy of

predominantly copper and zinc, are halachically treated as copper; pewter, an alloy of predominantly tin with either lead or antimony, is treated as tin. Therefore, items made of steel, bronze, brass or pewter all become tamei and do not block tumah.

C. Depends on size

This category consists of materials that become tamei when they are manufactured into small vessels, but do not become tamei when manufactured into large vessels, which are not meant to be moved when full. For these purposes, a “large vessel” is defined as one that can hold sixty se’ah, which, by my estimate, is between 150-250 gallons. (For comparison purposes, a standard wine barrel holds 31.5 gallons.) This category includes wood and most natural cloth.

Interruptions

At this point, we are in a position to appreciate our opening question: “When is it good to interrupt?”

The answer is when we are interrupting tumah, i.e., blocking tumah so that an adjacent area will not be forbidden for kohanim to enter. In this case, interrupting is definitely a welcome action. A vessel made from material in category A, or a large item in category C, can serve as a tumah blocker.

With the greatest of ease

Does the daring young entertainer swinging from a flying trapeze qualify as an ohel?

The Mishnah states: “The following items neither convey tumah nor block it... someone jumping from one spot to another, a bird flying overhead, a garment fluttering in the breeze, or a boat sailing on the water” (Ohalos 8:5). The reason why tumah does not spread underneath the person, bird, garment or boat is because it is not at rest, unlike an ohel (Sefer Hayashar #275). Thus, the daring young man on the flying trapeze does not qualify either as an ohel to convey tumah or as an interrupter to block it. (Of course, this is relevant only if he is flying outdoors on his trapeze, and the meis is not underneath any other ohel. Otherwise, the “big tent” conveys tumah ohel.)

However, this is only if the item is not at rest. Should you tie down the garment or chain the boat in place, it becomes an ohel and spreads tumah underneath itself and contaminates anything both above and below itself (see Ohalos, Chapter 9).

Ohel zaruk

Let us now explore the third of our opening questions: Why would anyone throw a tent?

Allow me to introduce a concept called ohel zaruk, which literally translates as a “thrown tent,” and is the subject of a dispute between the tana'im, Rabbi and Rabbi Yosi berabbi Yehudah. Rabbi asserts that an ohel zaruk, a moving ohel, such as a large cabinet being transported by animals, does not block tumah, whereas Rabbi Yosi berabbi Yehudah rules that it does (Eruvin 30b; Chagigah 25a; Nazir 55a; Gittin 8b). Their dispute applies in the case of a large vessel [category C above], which is not mekabeil tumah, and therefore can potentially block tumah. When such a vessel is stationary, all agree that it blocks tumah; the dispute between Rabbi and Rabbi Yosi berabbi Yehudah concerns whether it blocks tumah while moving.

According to several early acharonim, this dispute is only a rabbinic issue. In the opinion of these poskim (Shu't Shevus Yaakov, Yoreh Deah 1:85 and 2:88, Penei Yehoshua, Sukkah 21a s.v. Uve'ikar), all tana'im agree that, min haTorah, an ohel zaruk blocks tumah. The dispute between Rabbi and Rabbi Yosi berabbi Yehudah is whether Chazal made a takanah that ohel zaruk does not block tumah, Rabbi Yosi berabbi Yehudah contending that they did and Rabbi contending that they did not.

Aluminum, titanium, zinc and chrome

The entire discussion regarding whether airplanes can block tumah is only if we assume that they are not mekabeil tumah (see Ohalos 2:1). To clarify this topic, we need to analyze yet another major issue. What is the halachic status, in respect to the laws of tumah and taharah, of metals that have been discovered or rendered practically useful since the times of Chazal, including zinc, chrome, manganese, nickel, magnesium, platinum, aluminum, titanium and many others? The Tiferes Yisroel assumes that they have the same halachic status as the six metals mentioned in the Torah, and therefore they are mekabeil tumah min haTorah (Yevakeish Daas #44). As such, they could never block tumah, as explained above.

However, there are poskim who dispute this conclusion of the Tiferes Yisroel and contend that only the six types of metal that the Torah mentions are mekabeil tumah, and not any of the newly discovered ones (Shu't Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah 2:164; Sefer Tevilas Keilim page 243). We should also note that Rav Avraham Shaag, the rebbi of Rav Yosef Chayim Sonnenfeld, seems to hold that all these materials will be mekabeil tumah midrabbanan, which would preclude their blocking tumah (Shu't Ohel Avraham #24).

The primary metals used for airplane manufacture today are aluminum and titanium. Only small amounts of steel are used, since it is very heavy. Most of our readers are familiar somewhat with steel and aluminum, but not with titanium, which is almost as strong as steel, but much lighter, and is resistant to heat and

corrosion. The Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird, the world's fastest jet-propelled aircraft, is made of titanium. The Boeing 747 is made predominantly of aluminum. Newer aircraft are being made from composite materials, such as graphite-epoxy, also called carbon fiber, which are very strong, but much lighter than titanium or aluminum. More than half of the materials used to make the Boeing 787 Dreamliner are carbon fibers.

Carbon fiber versus titanium

At this point, it is appropriate to discuss the last of our opening questions: “What difference does it make, halachically, whether an airplane is manufactured from aluminum, titanium or carbon fiber?”

Assuming that we rule that the entire airplane is considered one item for kabalas tumah purposes, and that 51% of the component materials of an airplane determine whether it is mekabeil tumah or not (see Keilim 11:4, see also Keilim 13:6), a Dreamliner manufactured from carbon fiber might have more potential resolutions to our halachic issues of blocking tumah than a plane manufactured from titanium or aluminum. However, since I am aware that there are rabbonim who dispute my assumptions, I will simply instruct our kohein to ask the question of his posek.

Conclusion

Although it is beyond our ability to fathom the reasons for the mitzvos, we can and should attempt to glean a taste of Hashem's mitzvos, in order to grow from the experience of observing them. Thus, it behooves us to attempt to explain why, under normal circumstances, the Torah bans a kohein from having contact with a meis. Rav Hirsch, in his commentary on Vayikra 21:5, provides us with a beautiful insight into this mitzvah. In most religions, fear of death and what happens afterward are the major “selling points.” Thus, the role of the priest is most important when dealing with death. However, the Torah's focus is how to live like a Jew—to learn Torah and perform mitzvos, and devote our energies to developing ourselves in Hashem's image. To emphasize that the Torah is the blueprint of perfect living, the kohein, who is the nation's teacher, is excluded from anything to do with death. The kohein's role is to imbue us with the knowledge and enthusiasm to live!!

Ohr Somayach Insights into Halacha

For the week ending 30 March 2019 / 23 Adar II 5779

Buffalo Burgers and the Zebu Controversy

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

Parashas Shemini discusses and specifies the requirements and parameters for determining the kosher status of members of the animal kingdom. For example:

Fish need to have fins and scales;[1] while

Domestic land animals (beheimos) must chew their cud (ruminant) and have completely split hooves;[2]

Non-domestic land animals (chayos) share the same basic set of rules to be considered kosher, but have slightly differing halachos. Some of the more well-known ones include that they do not have the prohibition of eating forbidden fats (cheilev) that a domestic land animal does, but there is a requirement to cover its blood immediately after slaughtering (kisui hadam), similar to a fowl but unlike a beheimah.[3]

BuffaloBurgers

Our question is what a buffalo is considered. Can we partake of a nice juicy buffalo burger? Although the Shulchan Aruch himself rules that a buffalo is considered a kosher beheimah,[4] it is quite certain that he was not referring to our American Buffalo - which was unknown at the time and is truly a Bison - but rather the Asian Water Buffalo.[5]

Still, it is clear that the American Buffalo / Bison chews its cud and has split hooves, the signs of a kosher animal. Surely that should be enough to let us start grilling!

But, if so, why is its meat not more common? And, on an anecdotal level, this author has never seen Buffalo (Bison) Burgers advertised in Eretz Yisrael in any Mehadrin supermarket, butcher, or even fast food joint! So, as the expression goes, “Where's the beef?”

Cryptic Comments and Fowl Play

The reason for the lack of American Buffalo (Bison) meat is based on a cryptic comment of the Shach, where he compares the kashrus status of the chaya to that of fowl.

The Torah enumerates 24 various non-kosher “birds”.[6] Since so many thousands of avian species exist, Chazal specify four necessary anatomical indicative features (simanim) that identify a specific type of fowl as kosher: an extra toe, a crop, a peelable gizzard (meaning the gizzard's inner lining can be peeled from the outer muscle wall), and being non-predatory (‘doreis’).[7]

However, as the exact translation of the non-kosher birds listed in the Torah is unknown, as well as the fact that we cannot be assured of the absolute non-predatory nature of any given species of bird, many early authorities contend that we do not rely on our understanding of these simanim, but rather only eat fowl that we have a tradition (mesorah) that this specific species is indeed kosher. Indeed, Rashi cites precedent from the case of the ‘Swamp Chicken’ (Tarnegolta

D'Agma), with which even Chazal made a mistake, not realizing at first that it is truly predatory in nature (doreis) and therefore non-kosher.[8] He therefore maintains that since we are not experts, we additionally need a mesorah to allow fowl to be eaten. The Rema[9] in fact, and concurred by virtually all halachic authorities, definitively rules this way lemaaseh, that we may not eat any species of bird without a mesorah.

Concerning the laws of a kosher chaya, the Shulchan Aruch discusses the different types of horns which distinguish a chaya from abeheimah.[10] The Shach[11] enigmatically comments that "I did not elaborate, since nowadays we only use what we received as a mesorah, similar to the laws of kosher fowl". The basic understanding seems to be that the Shach is implying that just as for a bird to be considered kosher it needs to have a mesorah even if it fits all other requirements, so too a chaya would also need to have a mesorah to allow it to be eaten, even though it is technically kosher! This would imply that the American Bison would be on the verboten list, as if it was an unknown animal, by definition it could not have had a mesorah.

Mandating Mesorahs?

The Pri Megadim,[12] foremost commentary on the Shach, categorically rejects such a possibility, as it would run counter to the Gemara's ruling[13] that identifying features are sufficient to determine a chaya's kashrus status. Additionally, there is no mention of such a requirement in any of the early authorities. He concludes that the Shach must have meant something else entirely; namely regarding the differences between a beheimah and a chaya: Since the defining distinctions between a beheimah and a chaya are often unclear, one should not eat the cheilev of any species (permissible by a chaya, prohibited by a beheimah) unless we have an oral tradition that said species is indeed a kosher chaya. In other words, the Shach was referring to the need of a mesorah to allow a nuance in halacha, but not in actually identifying a kosher animal. The majority of later authorities agree with the Pri Megadim's understanding of the Shach's comment and rule likewise, that mesorah plays no factor in whether or not an animal (domestic or not) may be eaten; the only necessary requirements being that it chews its cud and has split hooves.[14] This would mean that buffalo burgers can be on the menu!

However, before you get that grill fired up, you might want to "Hold Your Horses (er... Buffalo)". Two major later authorities, the Chochmas Adam and the Aruch Hashulchan[15] both seem to accept the Shach's words at face value, and not like the Pri Megadim's interpretation, implying that an oral tradition is needed to allow any land animal to be eaten. In fact, the renowned Chazon Ish[16] ruled this way explicitly in 1950, regarding the importing of the Zebu ("The Indian Humpbacked Cow") to Israel, stating that the Chochmas Adam's interpretation of the Shach's comment is the correct one! He therefore maintained that any "new" land animal may not be eaten unless there is a mesorah. He added that since the sefer Chochmas Adam was considered in Lithuania (Lita) as the authoritative work on Yoreh Deah, we must follow his ruling relating to this.[17] The Chazon Ish concludes that the only known animals that we eat are "cows, sheep, and goats". This understanding would obviously not permit the Buffalo / Bison either. In fact when the "New Zebu Controversy" broke out in 2004, many wished to have Zebu meat banned (which would logically be extended to buffalo as well), based primarily on the Chazon Ish's strongly worded ruling from over 50 years prior.[18]

Grounds for Leniency

However, several contemporary authorities[19] pointed out many potential flaws with making such an argument, including:

If the Shach truly meant to qualify the permissibility of eating a chaya, he would have written it in the previous chapter (Y.D. 79), which discusses which animals are kosher, and not where he actually commented, where only identifying features were being discussed.

The Chochmas Adam and Aruch Hashulchan are not really any clearer in his ruling than the Shach himself; thus allowing their comments to be interpreted like the Pri Megadim's opinion as well.[20]

The Chazon Ish himself only restricted an animal that is considered a "new species"; it has since been proven that the Zebu has been eaten and considered kosher for a long time in many different countries.[21] In fact, due to this reasoning, the Chazon Ish himself ate turkey, the quintessential 'New World' fowl, based on a responsum of his father's, Rav Shemaryahu Yosef Karelitz.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky has been quoted as maintaining that the Pri Megadim was considered the authoritative work in Lita, and not necessarily the Chochmas Adam.[22]

Even if we would assume that the Chochmas Adam's ruling would be binding for those in Lita, it most definitely would not be obligatory to any other communities, who would be free to follow their own halachic authorities.

The Chochmas Adam himself writes that deer (venison) is permissible, and as mentioned previously, the Shulchan Aruch ruled that Water Buffalo is kosher, proving that the Chazon Ish's rule of only eating "cows, sheep, and goats", is not absolute.

The Chochmas Adam and the Aruch Hashulchan both wrote explicitly that only a chaya needs a mesorah, not a beheimah. The Zebu (being a humpbacked cow) however, is considered a beheimah, not a chaya, and therefore should not require an oral tradition.

The Chazon Ish himself, in a later letter,[23] accepts that the Zebu is technically a kosher animal, but reiterates that we need to have a proper mesorah to permit it to be eaten. Yet, he concludes that "in our times, with Reform making inroads into authentic Torah Judaism, it is impossible to allow new things to be considered permitted if in the past they were deemed prohibited... as one breach (of tradition) leads to subsequent breaches". Nowadays, it can be debated that this logic might no longer be applicable.[24]

Buffalo To Go?

Due to these rationales, as well as the facts that currently most milk cows in Israel are descended from Zebu, and that many Tefillin and Sifrei Torah are written on parchment (klaf) made from their hides, and although initially reported otherwise,[25] Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt"l, and other contemporary poskim, later concluded that these humpbacked cows are essentially permitted.[26]

Therefore, even if one wishes to be stringent with eating the Zebu or Buffalo itself (as Rav Elyashiv himself favored), nevertheless, regarding potential related offshoot issues, such as crossbred offspring and the halachic status of their milk, as well as Sifrei Torah and Mezuzos written on their hides, etc. the final psak is that these are certainly permitted.

Conclusively Kosher?

All this said, are we going to see Buffalo Burgers or 'Zebu Zurprize' in our local supermarket any time soon? In America, perhaps. In Israel, probably not.

As even though many contemporary authorities rule that there is no real kashrus issue with them and that they may be eaten by even those stringent on the highest levels of kashrus, on the other hand, authorities maintain that out of respect and in deference to the great Chazon Ish, and especially in Eretz Yisrael, "the land of the Chazon Ish", it is preferable to abstain from partaking of them.[27] For this reason Buffalo / Bison Burgers apparently won't be found in Israel with a Mehadrin hashgacha, although more easily obtainable in the land "where the buffalo roam".

[1] Vayikra (Parashas Shemini Ch. 11: 9 - 13). The specifics of defining and discerning which animals are considered kosher are also presented in Parashas Re'eh (Devarim Ch. 14: 9 - 10). This topic is discussed at length in a previous article titled "Fish With Legs?!"

[2] Vayikra (Parashas Shemini Ch. 11: 1 - 3) and Devarim (Parashas Re'eh Ch. 14: 6).

[3] See Vayikra (Parashas Acharei Mos Ch. 17: 13 and Mishnah and Gemara Chullin (83b and 89b).

[4] Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. 28: 4). The Rema (ad loc.) however, is unsure and classifies it as a possible chaya. The main difference between these two positions is whether one should cover its blood after slaughter without a bracha.

[5] The Ba'er HaGolah (ad loc. 9) traces this to the Agur (1099), citing Rav Yeshaya Ha'acharon of Italy. This buffalo is also mentioned by Tosafos (Zevachim 113b s.v. orzulaya), the Mordechai (Chullin 653), the Shach (Y.D. 80: 3), and Aruch Hashulchan (Y.D. 80: 12). In Italy "buffalo" is still used to refer to the Water Buffalo. It would be hard to imagine that these early authorities were referring to the American Bison which was completely unknown at the time of writing their sefarim. See Rabbi Dr. Ari Z. Zivotofsky's excellent article on www.kashrut.com titled "Kashrut of Exotic Animals: The Buffalo." Rav Shlomo Miller of Toronto, in his second teshuva on topic (titled "Zebu and Bison 2"; available on his Kollel's website - www.kollel.org), maintains that as we are uncertain whether Bison is abeheimah or chaya (or possibly the fabled koy or kviv), even if one holds that it is permitted to be eaten, it nonetheless requires kisui hadam and it may not be bred.

[6] Vayikra (Parashas Shemini Ch. 11: 13 - 24) and Devarim (Parashas Re'eh Ch. 14: 11 - 21).

[7] Mishnah and following Gemara (Chullin 59a - 61b). There is much debate among the Rishonim how to properly define these simanim, especially a 'non-doreis', as well as if the Gemara's intent was that all four features are necessary to render a bird kosher, or if the three physical characteristics are sufficient proof that the fowl is non-predatory and therefore kosher.

[8] Gemara Chullin (62b) and Rashi (ad loc. s.v. chazyuha).

[9] Rema (Y.D. 82: 3). The Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. 82: 2) actually rules this way as well, but allows several more leniencies (see ad loc. 82: 3) than the Rema's stronger language.

[10] Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. 80: 1). Speaking of horns, for a fascinating discussion of what a unicorn might be considered, see Pri Chodosh (Y.D. 80: 2) and Shu"t Beis Yaakov (41).

[11] Shach (Y.D. 80: 1). See also the Ibn Ezra's commentary to Parashas Re'eh (Devarim Ch. 14: 5) who likewise writes an ambiguous comment related to beheimos and chayos which can also possibly be interpreted in both of these different manners. It is noteworthy that Rav Yisroel Halevi Belsky (Shu"t Shulchan Halevi, Ch. 19: 1 s.v. u'mah) writes that it is abundantly clear that the Ibn Ezra did not intend to get involved in the practical halacha of defining said animals, but is rather simply stating that he is aware that there are other kosher animals extant, yet is uncertain how to properly identify them. In other words, he is merely pointing out that these other animals were not common in his time and place (1100s, Spain).

[12] Pri Megadim (Y.D. 80: S.D. 1).

[13] Gemara Chullin (59b).

[14] Including the Kreisi U'Pleisi (ad loc. 2), Pischei Teshuva (ad loc. end 1; he is arguing on the Beis Yaakov ibid. s.v. v'gam, who opines that a chaya must have another siman in order to be considered kosher: horns; the Beis Yaakov's opinion is rejected by many, if not all, halachic authorities), Beis Yitzchak (ad loc. Amudei Zahav 3), Mishmeres Shalom (ad loc. S.D. 1), Darchei Teshuva (ad loc. 3), and Kaf Hachaim (ad loc. 5).

[15] Chochmas Adam (36: 1) and Aruch Hashulchan (Y.D. 80: end 10).

[16] Chazon Ish (Y.D. 11: 4 and 5), Kovetz Igras Chazon Ish (vol. 1: 99; vol. 2: 83; and vol. 3: 113). These writings of the Chazon Ish were actually a series of correspondence between himself and the Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rav Yitzchak Isaac Halevi Herzog. Rav Herzog wrote a Kuntruss on the topic, titled "Kuntress Pnei Shor" (printed in his responsa as Shu"t Heichal Yitzchak Y.D. vol. 1: 20) concluding that the Zebu is permitted to be eaten. He also maintained that there was a mesorah in India and other countries going back centuries that the Zebu was considered a kosher cow. He suggests that anyone who argues that a mesorah is required is possibly violating the Biblical prohibition of 'Bal Tosif', adding on to the Torah's commandments (Devarim, Parashas Re'eh Ch. 13: 1; see Sefer Hachinuch ad loc. Mitza 454). See also Pe'er Hador (of the Chazon Ish; vol. 4, pg. 226 - 230), and Orchos Rabbeinu (new edition; vol. 4, pg. 9 - 16), which cite and summarize the correspondence. Rav Chaim Kanievsky was recently quoted (sefer Doleh U'Mashkeh pg. 253 - 256) regarding the 'Bor Hahodu Shehaya B'zman HaChazon Ish', as expressing very strongly that he considers it 100% non-kosher. The Beis Halevi is quoted as being of the same opinion as the Chazon Ish - see Contemporary Halachic Problems (vol. 5, pg. 255, footnote 15).

[17] The Chazon Ish's brother-in-law, the Steipler Gaon (see Orchos Rabbeinu; new edition, vol. 4, pg. 91: 20) also held this way, that Rav Avraham Danzig's classic halachic works, Chayei Adam on Orach Chaim

and Chochmas Adam on Yoreh Deah were 'sifrei yesod lehoraasav v'hanhagosav'. His son, Rav Chaim Kanievisky, follows this as well, telling people who were nichshal in a Bassar B'Chalav matter, to relearn and review the halachos with the Chochmas Adam. See sefer Doleh U'Mashkeh (pg. 258 - 259) and Rabbi Yaakov Skoczylas' *Ohel Yaakov* (on Issur V'Hetter, revised edition pg. 222, footnote s.v. v'shamaati).

[18] See *Orchos Rabbeinu* (new edition; vol. 4, pg. 9 - 16) at length. Likewise, Rav Shlomo Miller wrote a strongly worded teshuva on topic dated 8 Shevat 5766 (titled 'Zebu and Bison'; available on his Kollel's website - www.kollel.org) stating that although there are kashrus agencies who grant hashgacha to Zebu and / or Bison meat, nevertheless the psak of the Chazon Ish was already accepted, and based on this, Rav Elyashiv and other poskim of Eretz Yisrael prohibited this meat, and therefore it should not be eaten. However, in a later (albeit undated) teshuva on topic (titled 'Zebu and Bison 2'; also available on his Kollel's website) and possibly due to the arguments raised above, Rav Miller backtracks somewhat on his prohibitory psak, writing that his intention is simply to raise awareness for those who follow the Chazon Ish, that nowadays they should not eat Zebu and Bison, as the same issues should still apply.

[19] Including Rav Yitzchak Isaac Halevi Herzog (ibid.), Rav Meshulem Roth ('The Hordonka Iluy'; Shu"t Kol Mevasser vol. 1: 9), Rav Shalom Krauss (Shu"t Divrei Shalom vol. 7: 38), Rav Shmuel Halevi Vosner (Shu"t Shevet Halevi vol. 10: 114), Rav Yisroel Halevi Belsky (Shu"t Shulchan HaLevi, Chelek HaBiurim 19), Rav Yechezkel Roth (Shu"t Eimek HaTeshuva vol. 6: 305), and Rav Asher Weiss (Minchas Asher al HaTorah, Shemini, 14). Although not all bring the same arguments, nevertheless, each of these authorities cites at least one of these reasons. This was also the opinion of Rav Moshe Feinstein (see Mesores Moshe vol. 1, Y.D. 13, pg. 211 and footnote 22, and vol. 2, Y.D. 15, pg. 169), that the ikar is to follow the Pri Megadim's understanding and that buffalo is a kosher animal. See also Rabbi Dr. Ari Z. Zivotofsky's article on topic published in *Kovetz HaMe'ayen* (Teves 5768, vol. 48: 2, pg. 16 - 18).

[20] See for example, the Beis Yitzchak (ibid.) and Kaf Hachaim (ibid.), who cite their opinions this way as basic understanding.

[21] See Shu"t Meishiv Davar (Y.D. 22). Although referring to the turkey, the symbolic New World fowl which the vast majority of world Jewry eats, even though a mesorah pre-Columbus would be a seeming impossibility, nonetheless, the Netziv permits it to be eaten on this basis, that it has been eaten for a long time and is now considered having a mesorah. For more on the topic of the kashrus status of turkey, and its more kashrus-wise complicated companion fowl, the Muscovy Duck, Posen Hen, Guinea fowl, and / or Cochon, and how they are / were viewed from a halachic perspective through the ages, see Nachal Eshkol (on the Sefer HaEshkol, Hilchos Beheima, Chaya, v'Of 22: 10; he understands there to be an Indian mesorah on the turkey), Knesses HaGedolah (Y.D. 82: 31), Shu"t Shoel U'Meishiv (Mahadura Telita'ah vol. 1: 149 and Mahadura Chamisha'ah vol. 1: 69), Shu"t Chasam Sofer (Y.D. 74), Shu"t Divrei Chaim (O.C. 9 and Y.D. vol. 2, 45 - 48), Shu"t Maharam Schick (Y.D. 98 - 100), Shu"t Tuv Ta'am V'Daas (Mahadura Telita'ah 150 - 152), Shu"t HaElef Lecha Shlomo (Y.D. 111), Shu"t Beis Yitzchak (Y.D. vol. 1: 106), Shu"t Yehuda Yaaleh (vol. 1, Y.D. 92 - 94), Shu"t Tzelosa D'Avraham (7), Shu"t HaRim (Y.D. 8), Shu"t Tzemach Tzedek (Y.D. 60), Shu"t She'eilas Shalom (Y.D. 22), Arugas Habosem (Kuntress HaTeshuvos 16), Shu"t Ori V'Yishi (vol. 1: 11), Damesek Eliezer (51: 84 and Ch. 4, 12: 73), Shu"t Binyan Tzion (vol. 1: 42), Shu"t Dvar Halacha (53), Rav Yissachar Dov Illowy's Shu"t Milchemos Elokim (pg. 162 - 165; also citing teshuvos from Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch and Rav Nosson Adler, the first Chief Rabbi of England - regarding the Muscovy Duck), Shu"t Avnei Nezer (Y.D. 75), Shu"t Michtav Sofer (Y.D. 3), Shu"t Melamed L'hoye'el (vol. 2 - Y.D. 15), the Maharsham's Daas Torah (Y.D. 82: 3), Shu"t Mei Ba'er (19; who opines that the turkey actually came from India and even has a mesorah dating back to Moshe Rabbeinu!), Zivchei Tzedek (82: 17), Darchei Teshuva (82: 26), Rav Yehuda Leib Tzirelsohn's Ma'archei Lev (Chelek HaTeshuvos, Y.D. 30 - regarding the Posen Hen), Shu"t Divrei Malkiel (vol. 4: 56), Rav Yosef Aharon Tere' of Argentina's Zecher Yosef (pg. 1a - 6b; regarding the Muscovy Duck), Shu"t Nishmas Chaim (Y.D. 63), Kaf Hachaim (Y.D. 82: 21), Shu"t Igros Moshe (Y.D. vol. 1: 34; also citing the opinions of Rav Naftali Carlebach and Rav Yosef Eliyahu Henkin - regarding the Posen Hen), Shu"t Har Tzvi (Y.D. 75 - regarding the Muscovy Duck), Shu"t Minchas Yitzchak (vol. 5: 31), Kovetz Mesorah (vol. 3, pg. 60 - 65; in a maamar from the Beis Avi, Rav Yitzchak Isaac Liebes, regarding Rock Cornish Hens), Shu"t Shulchan Halevi (Ch. 19: 1), Rav Shmuel Salant's posthumously published Aderes Shmuel (222; pg. 225 - 228), Sichas Chullin (pg. 429, on Chullin 63a; who astoundingly posits that the turkey mesorah possibly came from the Ten Lost Tribes who might have been early American Natives, as per Rav Menashe ben Yisrael's unsubstantiated theory, who then contacted Indian and English Poskim!), and Rav Yaakov Yedidyah Adani's fascinating halachic history of the Muscovy Duck, published in *Kovetz Eitz Chaim* (vol. 26; Elul 5776, pg. 430 - 455). Additionally, and quite interestingly, we find that several Acharonim, including the Bach (O.C. 79, s.v. kasav B"Y), Magen Avraham (ad loc. 14), Ateres Zekeinim (ad loc.), Ba'er Heitiv (ad loc. 12), Aruch Hashulchan (ad loc. 16), and Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 26), understand the Yerushalmi's (Erubin Ch. 3, Halacha 5) 'Red

Chickens' (Tarnegolim Aduma), which we must distance ourselves from its excrement while davening (see Shulchan Aruch ad loc. 6; as opposed to the understanding of red excrement from a chicken), to be referring to a turkey; giving implicit consent that it is indeed a kosher bird (however, and quite interestingly, it remains unclear how an American New World fowl was seemingly extant in Eretz Yisrael at the time of the writing of the Yerushalmi). In fact, the Chazon Ish himself ate turkey, based on a teshuva of his father's, Rav Shemaryahu Yosef Karelitz [this teshuva was recently published in Shu"t V'Chiddushim Chazon Ish (132)]. See *Orchos Rabbeinu* (new edition; vol. 4, pg. 9: 1). The mainstream opinion that turkey is considered an acceptable fowl is also seen by the contemporary Poskim who allowed it being eaten on Thanksgiving. This issue was discussed at length in a recent article titled 'Thanksgiving: Harmless Holiday or Chukos HaGoyim?':

[22] Shu"t Shulchan Halevi (ibid., pg. 282, s.v. v'yosher).

[23] Printed in Pa'er Hador (ibid, pg. 228 - 230), and later reprinted in *Kovetz Igros Chazon Ish* (vol. 3: 113), and *Orchos Rabbeinu* (ibid, pg. 12 - 13).

[24] It is worthwhile to note that another of the issues the Chazon Ish prohibits for the same reason is slaughtering meat in another country and importing it to Eretz Yisrael. This author is not entirely sure why that proviso is widely ignored (as even the most Mehudar Badatzim perform shechitah in foreign countries), but the Zebu issue erupted in renewed controversy, even as both are part and parcel of the same letter the great Chazon Ish wrote.

[25] 'Hoda'ah L'Tzibbur', B'sheim Rav Elyashiv and Rav Nissim Karelitz, dated 21 Adar 5764 - interestingly signed by three 'Talmidim' - Rav Yitzchak Mordechai Rubin, Rav Dovid Aryeh Morgenstern, and Rav Moshe Mordechai Karp, and not Rav Elyashiv himself; originally published in the Israeli daily *Yated Ne'man* newspaper on March 19, 2004. See *Orchos Rabbeinu* (ibid.), *Kovetz Yeshurun* (vol. 22, pg. 934 s.v. uv'g), Rav Shlomo Miller's first teshuva on topic (ibid.), *Contemporary Halakhic Problems* (vol. 5, pg. 260), Rav Yirmiyohu Kaganoff's recent *From Buffalo Burgers to Monetary Mysteries* (pg. 217 - 218, "Anyone For a Buffalo Burger?"), and *Halachic World* (vol. 2, pg. 162, "Bison Blues").

[26] See Shu"t Shulchan Halevi (ibid, pg. 284: 2), *Minchas Asher* (ibid, pg. 82, s.v. hinet), Rav Shlomo Miller's second teshuva on topic (titled 'Zebu and Bison 2'), and Shu"t Videbarta Bam (vol. 2: 235 and 236 s.v. v'shamaati; citing Rav Dovid Feinstein). This is because although these animals may not have a true mesorah, and according to some, may therefore not be eaten, nonetheless, they still have simanei kashrus, and are therefore definitively considered kosher animals. As such, the potential problematic issues with their offspring regarding 'Zera HaAv' (Gemara Chullin 79a) should not apply in our case, as there is a Safek Derabbanan on a disputed prohibition that is clearly at worst, a minhag. [See *Gemara Bechoros* (7a), Rambam (Hilchos Maachalos Asuros Ch. 1: 13), *Lechem Mishnah* (ad loc.), Tosafos (Chullin 58a s.v. m'kaan), and Shu"t Avnei Nezer (Y.D. 75: 8).] See also *Orchos Rabbeinu* (ibid.) which details several fascinating conversations between its author, Rav Avrohom Halevi Hurvitz and Rav Ezeriel Auerbach, Rav Elyashiv's son-in-law, on this topic. He concludes that lemaaseh, Rav Elyashiv held that the Israeli hashgachos should not perform shechitah on Zebu to import it davka to Eretz Yisrael, as the ikar hanhagah should be according to "Rabban shel Yisrael" the Chazon Ish, but even so, notes that Rav Elyashiv held that the Chazon Ish's psak is not the "psak hakavua b'davar issur achilas beheimos bli mesores", and therefore was essentially meikil regarding other Zebu-related issues, such as chashashos of offspring, milk, Sifrei Torah and Tefillin, etc.

[27] See Shu"t Shevet Halevi (ibid.), *Orchos Rabbeinu* (ibid.), *Minchas Asher* (ibid.), and Shu"t Videbarta Bam (ibid., citing Rav Dovid Feinstein).

Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority.

For any questions, comments or for the full Mareh Mekomos / sources, please email the author: yspitz@ohr.edu.

This article was written L'Iluy Nishmas Yisrael Eliezer ben Zev a"h - my dear Great-Uncle Larry Spitz, who was niftar this month, L'Zechus for Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam v'chol yotzei chalatze'ha for a yeshua teikif umiyad, and l'Refuah Sheleimah for Shoshana Leah bas Dreiza Liba, Mordechai ben Sarah, and Shayna bas Fayga.

L'Iluy Nishmas the Rosh HaYeshiva - Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben R' Yechezkel Shraga, Rav Yaakov Yeshaya ben R' Boruch Yehuda Rabbi Yehuda Spitz, author of M'Shulchan Yehuda on Inyanei Halacha, serves as the Sho'el U'Meishiv and Rosh Chabura of the Ohr Lagolah Halacha Kollel at Yeshivas Ohr Somayach in Yerushalayim.

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לע"נ

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PARSHAT SHMINI

For some reason, the dedication of the Mishkan required two consecutive ceremonies:

- 1) The seven day "miluim" service - which was the final topic of Parshat Tzav (see Vayikra 8:1-36);
&
- 2) The special korbanot offered on "yom ha'shmini" - the 'eighth day' - i.e. at the conclusion of those seven days - the first topic in Parshat Shmini (see 9:1-24).

As the details of these two ceremonies are very different, it would only make sense to assume that each one served a different purpose.

In the following shiur, we attempt to uncover the purpose of each of these two ceremonies, while showing how their presentation in Sefer Vayikra can also help us arrive at a deeper understanding of how we celebrate the holidays of Yom Kippur and Shavuot.

INTRODUCTION

The Torah's description of these two ceremonies in Sefer Vayikra is certainly an anomaly, as this is the only section of narrative in the entire book - everything else in Sefer Vayikra is simply laws!

Therefore, in our shiur, we must explain not only what this narrative is about, but we must also explain why it is 'inserted' at this point in Sefer Vayikra. To do so, we begin our shiur with a quick review of the first half of the Sefer Vayikra, to identify the precise point where this story is told.

WHAT 'BELONGS' IN SEFER VAYIKRA

Vayikra began with the laws of korbanot that the individual **can** (chapters 1->3) or **must** bring (chapters 4->5); and continued with the laws for **how** the kohanim should offer these korbanot (chapters 6->7).

At this point (towards the end of Parshat Tzav /see 8:1), this continuous presentation of mitzvot is 'interrupted' by a set of stories in chapters 8 thru 10:

- Chapter 8 describes the seven day "miluim" inauguration ceremony of the kohanim and the mizbayach,
- Chapter 9 describes the Mishkan's inaugural ceremony on "Yom ha'Shmini" [the 'EIGHTH day'] when God's glory 'returns',
- Chapter 10 describes the story of the tragic death of Nadav and Avihu on that day.

Then, in chapter 11, Sefer Vayikra returns once again to its presentation of various laws pertaining primarily to the Mishkan. [This presentation of LAWS continues till the end of the Sefer!]

[Parshat Shmini concludes with the laws of "tumat ochlin" (see 11:1-47); then Tazria/Metzora continues with other laws relating to "tumah".]

This peculiarity becomes more acute when we consider that this entire narrative (i.e. in Vayikra chapters 8->10) may actually 'belong' in Sefer Shmot. Recall how Sefer Shmot concluded with the story of Mishkan's assembly and its dedication. [In case you forgot, review chapter 40, especially 40:12-14!]

Furthermore, the story of the seven-day "miluim" most definitely 'belongs' in Sefer Shmot. Recall that its original commandment was first recorded in Parshat Tezaveh (see Shmot chapter 29, compare with Vayikra chapter 8). Considering that Parshiot Vayakhel/Pkudei record the fulfillment of every other commandment recorded in Parshiot Trumah/Tzaveh, there is no apparent reason why the seven-day "miluim" ceremony should be the only exception!

In summary, we have shown that stories (in general) don't belong in Sefer Vayikra, while this specific one DOES belong in Sefer Shmot. Hence, our shiur must explain why the Torah prefers placing this story in Vayikra in what appears to be an 'interruption' to its presentation of the mitzvot.

To do so, we must first explain the difference between the details of the Mishkan found in Sefer Shmot in contrast to those found in Vayikra. Then will discuss what is special about each of the two dedication ceremonies to explain why they are recorded specifically in Sefer Vayikra (and not in Shmot).

BETWEEN SHMOT AND VAYIKRA

There is a very simple distinction that explains why we find the laws concerning the Mishkan in two different books. Sefer Shmot describes the details of its construction, while Sefer Vayikra explains how to use it. For example, recall how Shmot chapters 25-31 (Parshiot Terumah/Tezaveh) constituted a distinct unit describing the commandment to BUILD the Mishkan, while chapters 35-40 (Parshiot Vayakhel/Pekudei) detailed how it was actually built. In contrast, the first seven chapters of Sefer Vayikra explain the various korbanot the individual can (or must) bring and how the Kohanim are to offer them.

However, for some reason the details of the seven-day miluim ceremony are recorded in both Shmot and Vayikra! Parshat Tezaveh details its commandment, while Parshat Tzav tells the story of how it took place. To understand why, we must consider the purpose of this ceremony, and relate it to the above distinction.

THE SEVEN DAY "MILUIM" CEREMONY

Let's review the primary elements of this ceremony:

- 1) First, Moshe must anoint the Mishkan, its vessels, the kohanim, and the "bigdei kehuna", using the "shemen ha'mishcha" oil (see 8:5-13).
 - 2) Then, on each day three korbanot are offered:
- A CHATAT - one "par" (bull)- the blood is sprinkled on the upper section of the MIZBAYACH
 - An OLAH - one "ayil" (ram)- the blood is sprinkled on the bottom of the MIZBAYACH
 - The MILUIM offering (like a SHLAMIM) - one "ayil" (ram) - the blood is sprinkled on the KOHANIM.
(see Shmot 29:1-37 & Vayikra 8:14-24)

This anointing ceremony can easily be understood as the final stage of the Mishkan's construction. So too the korbanot, for the sprinkling of their blood also appears to be a type of anointing. From this perspective, this ceremony should be included in Sefer Shmot, at the conclusion of the set of laws to build the Mishkan. [And that is exactly where we find it (see Shmot chapter 29 and the TSC shiur on Parshat Tezaveh).]

On the other hand, the ceremony is also the FIRST time that korbanot are actually offered. Hence, it also serves as the first FUNCTION of the Mishkan, for this is the first time that it is being 'used'. Hence, the details of the ceremony are also recorded in Sefer Vayikra, together with the other laws how to use the Mishkan.

[The deeper meaning of this is discussed in Part Two.]

With this in mind, let's discuss the purpose of the additional ceremony that takes place on the 'eighth day'.

YOM HA'SHMINI

On "Yom Ha'shmini", the day following the completion of the seven day 'miluim', the Mishkan becomes fully functional. Furthermore, on this day, Aharon and his sons will officiate for the first time. Thus, a special inaugural ceremony is necessary (see 9:1-24), which will be quite different than the seven day 'miluim'.

On this day, we find a commandment to offer a special set of korbanot whose purpose is stated explicitly:

"This is what Hashem has commanded you to do IN ORDER THAT the PRESENCE of God ('kvod Hashem') may APPEAR to you" (9:6) [see also 9:5]

Recall that due to the sins of "chet ha'egel" God had taken away His "shchinah" from the camp of Bnei Yisrael, the very same "shchinah" that Bnei Yisrael had witnessed at Ma'amad Har Sinai: "Moshe took the tent and pitched it OUTSIDE the camp, FAR AWAY from the camp and called it the OHEL MOED. Anyone who sought God would have to go the Ohel Moed located OUTSIDE the camp." (See Shmot 33:7 and its context)

When Moshe ascended Har Sinai to receive the second luchot, God promised him that His "shchinah" would indeed return to the camp (see 34:8-10), however it was first necessary for Bnei Yisrael to build the Mishkan to facilitate its return. [Note Shmot 25:8 - "v'asu li mikdash v'shachanti B'TOCHAM" - in contrast to 33:7.]

Once the construction of the Mishkan was complete, the special korbanot of Yom ha'Shmini mark its climax - for they will facilitate the RETURN of the SHCHINA:

"For today God's glory (kvod Hashem) will appear to you" (9:5) [See also 9:23-24, compare with Shmot 24:16-18.]

Therefore, the special korbanot offered during this ceremony serve a double purpose, reflecting this background:

- (1) They must atone for the sins of "chet ha'egel".
- (2) They must recreate the experience of Ma'amad Har Sinai.

This is precisely what we find:

(1) Due to CHET HA'EGEL:

Aharon must bring a chatat and olah:

"He said to Aharon: Take an 'EGEL' for a CHATAT..." (9:2)

Bnei Yisrael must also bring a chatat and olah:

"Speak to Bnei Yisrael saying: Take a 'seir' for a chatat and a 'keves' for an olah..." (9:3)

(2) To 'recreate' MA'AMAD HAR SINAI:

Bnei Yisrael must also offer a Korban Shlamim together with their olot, just as they had offered when God appeared onto them during Ma'amad Har Sinai (see Shmot 24:4-11, read carefully!).

"[to Bnei Yisrael, cont'd,...] and a 'shor' and 'ayil' for a SHLAMIM to offer before God, and a mincha, FOR TODAY GOD WILL APPEAR TO YOU." (9:4)

[This parallel emphasizes, once again, the purpose of the Mishkan as a perpetuation of Har Sinai.]

YOM HA'SHMINI / YOM KIPPUR AND SHAVUOT

Although the special korbanot of Yom ha'Shmini were a 'one-time event', we find a very similar set of korbanot that are offered every year on Yom Kippur which reflect this very same purpose.

YOM KIPPUR

Recall from Vayikra chapter 16 that on Yom Kippur a special Chatat and Olah are offered by the Kohen Gadol and another set are offered by Bnei Yisrael. Recall as well that these korbanot are offered on the very same day that Bnei Yisrael received atonement for chet ha'egel!

The following table highlights this parallel:

	YOM HA'SHMINI	YOM KIPPUR (in Acharei Mot)
AHARON		
Chatat:	EGEL	PAR (an adult egel)
Olah:	AYIL	AYIL
BNEI YISRAEL		
Chatat:	SE'IR	SE'IR
Olah:	KEVES	AYIL (an adult keves)
	EGEL	- - (+ korbanot in Pinchas i.e. par ayil & k'vasim)

[The basic structure of korbanot is the same. The minute differences can be explained due to the special nature of Yom Ha'Shmini. See Further Iyun Section.]

Hence, Yom Kippur can be understood as an annual rededication of the Mishkan, especially from the perspective of its purpose as a site where Bnei Yisrael can receive atonement for their sins.

SHAVUOT

Even though the primary parallel to Yom ha'Shmini is clearly Yom Kippur, there was an additional korban SHLAMIM offered on Yom ha'Shmini that doesn't find a parallel on Yom Kippur. [This only stands to reason, as a korban Shlamim is eaten, and on Yom Kippur we are not allowed to eat.] However, we do find a parallel to this korban on Shavuot, which just so happens to be the only holiday when Bnei Yisrael offer a 'collective' Korban Shlamim:

"And with the 'shte ha'lechem' you shall offer an olah... a chatat... and two lambs for a ZEVACH SHLAMIM" (Vyk 23:19)

Recall as well that the first time Bnei Yisrael offered a shlamim was at Ma'amad Har Sinai (see Shmot 24:5). As the Mishkan was to perpetuate that experience, we find a korban Shlamim offered at the inaugural ceremony of the Mishkan on Yom ha'Shmini. To remember that event, we offer a special korban Shlamim (shel tzibur) every year on Shavuot, commemorating Ma'amad Har Sinai. It is not by chance that this korban, like the korbanot of Yom ha'Shmini, is offered at the completion of seven cycles of seven days.

NADAV AND AVIHU

At the conclusion of this ceremony, Nadav and Avihu are punished by death for offering "aish zarah" which God had NOT COMMANDED (see 10:1-2). Again we find a parallel to Har Sinai and chet ha'egel. At Har Sinai, Bnei Yisrael AND the Kohanim were forewarned:

"And God told Moshe: Go down and WARN the people that they must not break through [the barrier surrounding] Har Sinai, lest they gaze at Hashem and perish. The KOHANIM also, who COME NEAR HASHEM, must sanctify themselves ("yitkadashu" - compare "b'krovei akadesh"/10:3), lest God punish them." (Shmot 19:21) [See also Chizkuni on Vayikra 10:3-4.]

As this inaugural ceremony parallels the events of Har Sinai, the warning concerning approaching Har Sinai also applies to the Mishkan. Extra caution was necessary.

Similarly, just as Aharon, despite his good intentions, had sinned at Chet ha'Egel, in suggesting an action which GOD HAD NOT COMMANDED, so too his children Nadav and Avihu. Despite their good intention when offering this "aish zarah", God DID NOT COMMAND them to do so! [Recall the repetition of "ka'asher tzivah Hashem et Moshe in Parshiot Vayakhel/Pekudei.]

Because of these events, i.e. the improper entry of Nadav and Avihu into the Mishkan, Sefer Vayikra continues at this point with a discussion of the laws of "tumah v'tahara", which regulate who is permitted and who is forbidden to enter the Mishkan (chaps 11-16).

WHY IN SEFER VAYIKRA?

Now that we have explained the purpose of these two dedication ceremonies, we must explain why this lone lengthy narrative of Sefer Vayikra is recorded in this sefer instead of in Sefer Shmot.

One could suggest that this narrative, even though it may technically 'belong' in Sefer Shmot, is recorded specifically in Sefer Vayikra because of the special connection between this narrative and the laws of korbanot in Sefer Vayikra:

The special "ayil" offered during the 'seven day miluim' ceremony, we explained, serves as the 'prototype' for the korban SHLAMIM for it included the separation of the "chazeh v'shok" for the kohen offering the korban. Therefore, this narrative is recorded immediately after the laws of the korban SHLAMIM in Parshat Tzav (see 7:35-37 & last week's shiur).

Similarly, the special korbanot offered on Yom ha'Shmini can be understood as the 'prototype' for the yearly korbanot offered yearly on Yom Kippur as detailed later in chapter 16, and the special

korban Shlamim offered on Shavuot as explained later in chapter 23. Finally, the narrative describing Nadav & Avihu's forbidden entry in the Kodesh serves as the introduction to an entire set of laws concerning who CAN and who CANNOT enter the Mikdash, beginning in chapter 11 and continuing thru chapter 16.

Accordingly, we can continue to understand Sefer Vayikra as a 'book of laws' - "torat kohanim". However, it includes this narrative describing the dedication of the Mikdash for that story serves as the basis for various types of korbanot that are offered in the Mishkan.

In the shiurim to follow, we will continue to discuss this theme.

shabbat shalom,
menachem

PART TWO - "KEDUSHA" in the 'SEVEN DAY' MILUIM CEREMONY

Review once again the details in chapter 8, noting how there is something special about the MIZBAYACH and the KOHANIM. Even though the sprinkling of the "shemen hamishcha" was sufficient to sanctify the Mishkan and its vessels, the MIZBAYACH and the KOHANIM required an additional procedure. Furthermore, unlike the other vessels, the mizbayach was anointed SEVEN times (see Vayikra 8:11).

To understand why this additional procedure was necessary, we must note the use of the word "I'kadesh" in this 'parshia'. Note the Torah's use of the word "I'kadesh" in Vayikra 8:10-12, 8:15, 8:30,34-35 as well as Shmot 29:1,34-37! Clearly, the purpose of these seven days was to sanctify - "I'kadesh" - the Mishkan.

The Hebrew word "I'kadesh" means 'to set aside' or 'to designate'. For example, in Breishit 2:3, God sets aside the seventh day ["va'ykadesh oto"] to make it special, and in Shmot 13:1, God commands "kadesh li kol bchor" - set aside for Me every first born. Similarly, God is "kadosh", as He is set aside, divine, above all.

Hence, the purpose of these procedures of the "miluim" ceremony was to 'designate' (and hence sanctify) the Mishkan and its vessels for a Divine purpose. However, the MIZBAYACH and the KOHANIM required a little 'extra' sanctification.

To explain why, we must return to our conclusion from our shiur on Parshat Tezaveh that the Mishkan [= OHEL MOED, a tent of meeting] served as the place where Bnei Yisrael could 'meet' God. However, this 'meeting' was distanced, as each 'partner' had his special realm:

- The KODESH KEDOSHIM - where the ARON is placed represents God's presence in the Mishkan; and
- The MIZBAYACH - where the Bnei Yisrael's korbanot are offered, represents Am Yisrael, and their attempt to serve Him.

However, in light of the events of "chet ha'egel" [see TSC shiur on Parshat Ki-tisa] it became apparent how Bnei Yisrael were barely worthy of this encounter. It was only God's attributes of Mercy that allowed His "shechina" to dwell in the Mishkan. One could suggest that to emphasize this very point, an extra procedure is required specifically for the KOHANIM and for the MIZBAYACH, for they represent Bnei Yisrael in this encounter.

[Note that immediately after Matan Torah, the mizbayach is referred to as a "mizbach ADAMah" (see Shmot 20:21). This may relate to man's name - "adam" and his creation in Gan Eden "afar min ha'adamah". This is reflected in the Midrash that claims that this "afar" was taken from Har HaMoriah, the site of the mizbayach of the Akeydah, and later to become the site of the Temple.]

WHY SEVEN?

Why must this "hakedasha" be repeated for seven days?

Whenever we find the number 'seven' in Chumash, it invariably relates to perek aleph in Breishit, i.e. the story of God's creation of nature, in seven days.

God's very first act of "kedusha" was to 'set aside' the SEVENTH day, to mark His completion of the Creation process (see Br. 2:1-4). By 'resting' on this day, man is constantly reminded of the divine purpose of His creation. Thus, the "kedusha" of shabbat reflects this divine purpose of creation.

Similarly, any procedure that includes the number seven (be it seven items, seven times, seven days, seven weeks, seven years etc.) emphasizes man's requirement to recognize the purpose of his creation. By repeating this procedure of "kedushat ha'mizbayach v'hakohanim" for seven days, the purpose of the mizbayach to become a vehicle through which man can come closer to God is emphasized.

[Once again, we find a connection between the function of the Mishkan and the purpose of the creation. This was discussed in the shiur on Parshat Vayakhel. It is supported by numerous Midrashim which view the construction of the Mishkan as the completion of Creation. Compare carefully Shmot 39:32 to Br.2:1; and Shmot 39:43 to Br.1:31 & 2:3!]

With this background, we can suggest that the seven day miluim ceremony serves a double purpose, thus explaining why its details is found twice.

In Sefer Shmot, the "miluim" service infuses the Mishkan and its vessels with the necessary "kedusha", and hence becomes an integral stage of the Mishkan's CONSTRUCTION. Therefore, its commandment is included in Trumah/Tzaveh together with all the other commandments to build the Mishkan.

In Sefer Vayikra it initiates the use of the Mizbayach, the primary FUNCTION of the Mishkan. The korbanot offered during the miluim represent the basic categories of sacrifices that will be brought by man on the Mizbayach:

the Chatat - "the korban chova";
the Olah - the "korban n'dava";
the Ayl ha'miluim - the prototype of the "korban shlamim";
(see Further Iyun Section).

Therefore, this narrative that describes the offering of the korbanot during this ceremony is included in Sefer Vayikra, and juxtaposed to the laws of Korbanot (Parshiot Vayikra/Tzav).

[Note now 7:37 and the inclusion of "torat ha'miluim" in the summary pasuk of Parshat Tzav!]

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. During the seven day miluim, the "shemen ha'mishcha" oil was used to dedicate the Mishkan and its vessels. Relate this to the story of Yaakov's neder in Bet-tel as described in Breishit 28:18-22 and 35:9-14!).

B. In contrast to the korbanot of 'seven day miluim', the commandment to offer the special korbanot of "Yom ha'Shmini" are never mentioned beforehand, not even in Trumah/Tzaveh!

1. Relate this to their function as atonement for Chet ha'Egel.
2. Relate this to the machloket Rashi/Ramban concerning when Trumah/Tzaveh was given (before or after Chet ha'Egel)?
3. How does Aharon's korban on the seven day miluim relate to his korban on Yom Shmini?

See Rashi on 9:1-2, noting that he states that Aharon's "egel" on Yom ha'Shmini was to INFORM us that God had forgiven Aharon for chet ha'egel, in contrast to Ramban who explains the the "egel" itself was because Aharon still needed kapara for chet ha'egel. Explain this Rashi based on Rashi on Shmot 29:1-2 and his machloket with Ramban concerning WHEN the commandment to build the Mishkan was given.

C. The korbanot of the seven day miluim ceremony can be seen as the symbol of all korbanot which will be offered on the mizbayach.

The category of chatat could include the subcategory of asham ("k'chatat k'asham"...).

The category of olah could include all korbanot n'dava which are kodsehi kodshim, including mincha. The category of ayil ha'miluim includes all korbanot n'dava which are kodshim kalim.

1. Note the similarities between the ayl ha'miluim and the standard korban shlamim, especially in regard to the chazeh and shok.

8:25,29. See also 8:31. Relate this to 7:28-37, especially to the fact that in 7:37 miluim precedes zevach ha'shlamim!

2. Note that in Parshat Tzaveh, the laws of korban Tamid follow the commandment of the miluim (see Shmot 29:38-41).

Use this to explain the significance of the korban Tamid, and its function as the continuation of Har Sinai. Relate to Bamidbar 28:6!

Relate this to the other "avodot tamid" in the Mishkan.

3. Note also that during the seven day miluim ceremony, the "dam chatat" is sprinkled on the four corners on TOP of the mizbayach, while the "dam olah" is sprinkled on the BOTTOM. Explain the meaning of these two sections of the mizbayach.

D. The pattern of seven days followed by the 'eighth day' is also found in "brit milah", succot and shmini atzeret, shavuot after seven weeks, yovel after seven shmitot, korbanot machshirin of metzora and zav. [Find other examples.] Based on the above shiur, explain why.

E. To better understand the punishment of Nadav and Avihu, review Shmot 19:20-25, 24:1 & 8-9, and compare to Vayikra 10:1-3.

F. The parallel korbanot brought on Yom ha'Shmini and at Ma'amad Har Sinai are far from identical. Although both events include "korbanot olot & shlamim", there are several differences on 'Yom ha'Shmini'. The following table compares the korbanot of both events and notes the differences with a '*' followed by a letter:

HAR SINAI	YOM HA'SHMINI
AM YISRAEL:	
A Chatat - 'seir' (goat)	
Olah - par (bull)	*B* Olah -'egel' & keves
Shlamim - par (bull)	Shlamim -'shor' & 'ayil'

AHARON:	*C* Chatat - 'egel'
(no korban)	Olah - 'ayil'

*A) On 'Yom ha'Shmini' the Nation adds a korban 'chatat'.

*B) On 'Yom ha'Shmini' an 'egel' is offered instead of a 'par'.

*C) On 'Yom ha'Shmini' Aharon is required to bring an extra korban.

These differences can be understood in light of "chet ha'egel". We will now explain each letter.

A) As the Nation had sinned, they must now offer a 'chatat'.

B) This minor change from 'par' to an 'egel' reflects their sin.

C) As Aharon had sinned, he must bring a 'chatat & olah'.

The significance of this "egel l'chatat" is accented by comparing this korban to the 'chatat & olah' of the 'miluim':

'7 day miluim' - "PAR l'chatat v'ayil l'olah"

'Yom ha'Shmini' - "EGEL l'chatat v'ayil l'olah"

There is only one minor change - the 'egel' (a calf - baby bull) replaces the 'par' (adult bull). Whenever the kohen gadol is required to bring a chatat, it is always a 'par' (see 4:3). On this special day his standard korban is changed to an 'egel', reflecting his atonement for Chet ha'egel.

The nation was also commanded to bring a 'chatat'. If indeed this 'chatat' was in atonement for chet ha'egel, it too should have been an 'egel'. Why was this korban a 'seir'?

The reason is actually quite simple. Whenever the NATION brings a 'chatat' it can only be a 'seir' - a goat. (See parshat ha'musafim bamidbar chps.28->29/ each korban musaf is always a "seir izim l'chatat"). Therefore, the Nation must bring a chatat because of Chet ha'egel, however the animal must be a 'seir'.

The case of Aharon is different. The standard korban chatat of the Kohen Gadol is a 'par' (vayikra 4:3). Therefore, the change from a 'par' to an 'egel' is permitted, as an 'egel' is simply a baby 'par'.

A very similar change from 'par' to 'egel' does take place in the Nation's korban 'olah'. At Har Sinai the nation brought a 'par' as an 'olah'. Now, on 'Yom ha'Shmini' they bring an 'egel' instead of the standard 'par'. Recall that an olah can also be offered in atonement for a sin when one is not obligated to bring a chatat.

The second animal of the Nation's korban 'olah' is a lamb. It is the standard 'olah' of every "korban tzibur" offered in the Mishkan.

The korban 'shlamim' is a 'shor & ayil'. At Har Sinai, the shlamim were also 'parim'. ('par' and 'shor' are two names for the same animal - a bull). Due to the nature of the korban shlamim (a peace offering), it would not be proper to offer a 'reminder' of chet ha'egel. This korban relates only to the 'hitgalut' aspect of this ceremony.

The second animal of the korban shlamim is an 'ayil' (ram).

One could suggest that this korban is a reminder of 'akeidat yitchak', a cornerstone in the development of our covenantal relationship with Hashem.

PARSHAT TAZRIA / METZORA

Anyone who understands the opening pasuk of Parshat Acharei Mot immediately realizes that this entire Parsha belongs in Parshat Shmini! Why then do Parshiot Tazria/Metzora 'interrupt' this logical sequence?

In case this sounds a bit complicated, don't worry; we'll begin this week's shiur by first explaining this question. Then we'll use its answer to help us arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of the structure and theme of Sefer Vayikra.

INTRODUCTION

Recall that the first half of Parshat Shmini included the story of tragic death of Aharon's two sons - Nadav & Avihu (see 10:1-9). Recall as well that Parshat ACHAREI MOT (several chapters later) opens with God's commandment to Moshe & Aharon in the aftermath of that event:

"And God spoke to Moshe and Aharon AFTER THE DEATH of the two sons of Aharon..." (16:1)

Hence, it would have been more logical for the Torah to include this commandment in Parshat Shmini - immediately after the story of their death. [In other words, Vayikra chapter 16 should follow immediately after chapter 10!]

However, we find instead that chapters 11 thru 15, detailing numerous laws concerning various types of "tumah" [spiritual uncleanness], form an 'interruption' to this logical flow.

To explain why, Part One of our shiur will explore the thematic relationship between these laws of "tumah" and the story of Nadav & Avihu's death. In Part Two, we will build an outline that will summarize these laws of "tumah" that will help us appreciate their detail.

PART ONE - WHAT DID NADAV & AVIHU DO WRONG?

As you are probably aware, there are numerous opinions concerning what Nadav & Avihu did wrong. The reason for this difference of opinions is simple; the Torah only tells us WHAT they did, but does not explain WHY they were punished. Therefore, each commentator looks for a clue either within that pasuk (see 10:1) or in the 'neighboring' psukim in search of that reason.

[For example, the word "aish zarah" in 10:1 implies that Nadav & Avihu may have sinned by offering the wrong type of fire. Alternately, the 'parshia' that follows discusses laws that forbid the kohanim to become intoxicated (see 10:8-11), thus implying that they may have been drunk. (See Rashi, Ramban, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, Chizkuni, etc.) In fact, each commentary on this pasuk is so convincing that it is truly hard to choose between them.]

However, in contrast to that discussion concerning what specifically Nadav & Avihu did wrong (and why), our shiur will focus instead on the more general connection between this incident and the overall structure (and theme) of Sefer Vayikra.

FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS

Even though the Torah does not tell us specifically WHY Nadav & Avihu were punished, the pasuk that describes their sin does provide us with a very general explanation:

"va'yikrvu aish zara - ASHER LO TZIVAH otam" - and they offered a 'foreign fire' that GOD HAD NOT COMMANDED THEM (see 10:1)

However, finding this phrase "asher lo tzivah otam" should not surprise us. In relation to the construction of the Mishkan, we found this phrase repeated numerous times in our study of Parshat Vayakhel & Pekudei.

[To refresh your memory, just note how "ka'asher tzivah Hashem et Moshe" [As God has commanded Moshe] concludes just about every "parshia" in Parshat Pekudei. See not only 35:29; 36:1; & 36:5 but also 39:1,5,7,21,26,29,31,32,42,43 & 40:16,19,21,23,25,27,29,32!]

Furthermore, this phrase first appeared at the very introduction of the Mishkan unit that began in Parshat Vayakhel:

"And Moshe said to the entire congregation of Israel [EYDAH] ZEH HA'DAVAR - ASHER TZIVAH HASHEM - This is what GOD HAS COMMANDED saying..." (see 35:1,4, see also 35:1)

Finally, thus far in Sefer Vayikra we have found this same phrase when the Torah describes the story of the Mishkan's dedication. First of all, in the the seven day "milui" ceremony:

"And Moshe said to the entire EYDAH [gathered at the Ohel Moed/8:3] - ZEH HA'DAVAR - This is what GOD HAS COMMANDED to do..." (Vayikra 8:4-5, see also 8:9,13,17,21,36.)

And in Moshe Rabeinu's opening explanation of the special korbanot that were to be offered on Yom ha'Shmini:

"And Moshe said: ZEH HA'DAVAR - THIS is what GOD HAS COMMANDED that you do [in order] that His KAVOD [Glory] can appear upon you [once again]..." (9:6, see also 9:1-5)

Carefully note how Moshe declares this statement in front of the entire "eydah" [congregation] that has gathered to watch this ceremony. [See 9:5! Note also in 9:3-4 that Moshe explains to the people that these korbanot will 'bring back' the "shchinah".]

In fact, when you review chapter 9, note how the Torah concludes each stage of this special ceremony with this same phrase. [See 9:5,6,7,10,21.]

Therefore, when the Torah uses a very similar phrase to describe the sin of Nadav & Avihu on that day - "va'yikrvu aish zara - ASHER LO TZIVAH otam" (see 10:1), we should expect to find a thematic connection between that sin and this phrase.

To find that connection, we must consider the reason why the Torah uses this phrase so often in its details of the Mishkan's construction.

EMPHASIZING A CRITICAL POINT

Recall that Nadav & Avihu's sin took place on the 'eighth day'. Earlier on that day (as the ceremony was about to begin) Moshe had gathered the entire nation to explain the PRECISE details of how the korbanot would be offered on that day.

[Note again, the key phrase: "zeh ha'davar asher tzivah Hashem..." / see 9:4-6.] In fact, Moshe made two very similar remarks before the entire nation before the Mishkan's original construction (Shmot 35:1,4), and before the seven day MILUIM ceremony (see Vayikra 8:1).

Why must Moshe, prior to offering these special korbanot, first explain the details of these procedures to the entire congregation who have gathered to watch?

The Torah appears to be sending a very strong message in regard to the Mishkan. God demands that man must act precisely in accordance to His command - without changing even a minute detail.

NADAV & AVIHU's PUNISHMENT

With this background, we can better understand why Nadav & Avihu are punished. On the day of its public dedication - on Yom ha'Shmini - they decide (on their own) to offer KTORET. Note the Torah's description of their sin:

"And Nadav & Avi each took their firepan, put in it fire and added KTORET, and they brought an alien fire in front of God which He HAD NOT COMMANDED THEM [asher lo tzivah]"

Their fire is considered "aish zarah" [alien] simply because God 'did not command them' to offer it. [Note the special emphasis upon the word "lo" according to the "taamei mikra" (cantillation). See also commentary of Chizkuni on 10:1.

Nadav & Avihu may have had the purest intentions, but they made one critical mistake - they did not act according to the precise protocol that God had prescribed for that day. Considering that the entire EYDAH gathered at the Ohel Moed recognize that Nadav & Avihu have strayed from protocol, they must be punished; for the lesson of that day was exactly this point - that in the Mishkan man must meticulously follow every detail of God's command.

[Note, this interpretation does not negate any of the other opinions which suggest that Nadav & Avihu had done something else wrong [such as drinking or disrespect of Moshe, etc.]. It simply allows us to understand the severity their punishment EVEN if they had done nothing 'wrong' at all (other than doing something that God had not commanded). See also commentary of Rashbam on 10:1 in this regard.]

From a thematic perspective, their punishment under these circumstances is quite understandable. Recall the theological dilemma created by a MISHKAN - a physical representation (or symbol) of a transcendental God. Once a physical object is used to represent God, the danger exists that man may treat that object [and then possibly another object] as a god itself. On the other hand, without a physical representation of any sort, it becomes difficult for man to develop any sort of relationship with God. Therefore, God allows a Mishkan - a symbol of His Presence - but at the same time, He must emphasize that He can only be worshiped according to the precise manner "as God had commanded Moshe".

[See also Devarim 4:9-24 for the Torah's discussion of a similar fear that man may choose his own object to represent God [a "tavnit..." / compare Shmot 25:8-9 "v'akmal".]

THE PROBLEM OF 'GOOD INTENTIONS'

This specific problem of 'following God's command' in relation to the Mishkan takes on extra meaning on Yom ha'Shmini.

Recall our explanation of Aharon's sincere intentions at the incident of "chet ha'egel", i.e. he wanted to provide Bnei Yisrael with a physical symbol of God, which they could worship. [See previous shiur on Ki-tisa.] Despite Aharon's good intentions, his actions led to a disaster. The sin of "chet ha'egel" caused KAVOD HASHEM [God's Glory (= "shchina")], which had appeared to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai, to be taken away (see Shmot 33:1-7).

Due to Moshe's intervention, God finally allowed His SHCHINA to return to the MISHKAN that Bnei Yisrael had built. But when Nadav & Avihu make a mistake (similar to Aharon's sin at chet ha'egel) on the very day of the Mishkan's dedication, they must be punished immediately.

[Not only can this explain why they are so severely punished, it may also help us understand their father's reaction of: "va'YIDOM Aharon" [and Aharon stood silent] (see 10:3).]

Finally, this interpretation can help us understand Moshe's statement to Aharon: "This is what God had spoken -B'KROVEI E'KADESH..." (see 10:3). Recall the parallel that we have discussed many times between Har Sinai and the Mishkan. At Har Sinai, Bnei Yisrael AND the Kohanim were forewarned:

"And God told Moshe: Go down and WARN the people that they must not break through [the barrier surrounding] Har Sinai, lest they gaze at Hashem and perish. The KOHANIM also, who COME NEAR HASHEM, must sanctify themselves ("yitkadashu" - compare "b'krovei akadesh"/10:3), lest God punish them." (Shmot 19:21)

As this inaugural ceremony parallels the events of Har Sinai, God's original warning concerning approaching Har Sinai, even for the KOHANIM, now applies to the Mishkan as well. Therefore, extra caution is necessary, no matter how good one's intentions may be.

BACK TO SEFER VAYIKRA

Now we can return to our original question. In Sefer Vayikra, the story of the sin of Nadav & Avihu (chapter 10) introduces an entire set of laws that discuss improper entry into the Mishkan (chapters 11->15). Then, immediately after this tragic event, the Sefer discusses the various laws of "tumah v'tahara", which regulate who is permitted and who is forbidden to enter the Mishkan. Only after the completion of this section discussing who can enter the Mishkan, does Sefer Vayikra return (in chapter 16) to God's command to Aharon concerning how he himself can properly enter the holiest sanctum of the Mikdash (on Yom Kippur).

In Part Two, we discuss the content of this special unit of mitzvot from chapter 11->15.

PART II

WHO CAN ENTER THE MISHKAN / TUMAH & TAHARA

INTRODUCTION

We often find ourselves lost in the maze of complicated laws concerning "tumah" and "tahara" which the Torah details in Parshiot TAZRIA & METZORA. Even though it is not easy to understand the reasoning for these laws, the internal structure of these Parshiot is quite easy to follow.

In Part II, we outline the flow of parshiot from Parshat Shmini through Metzora and attempt to explain why they are located specifically in this section of Sefer Vayikra.

THE UNIT

As the following table shows, each of these five chapters deals with a topic related in one form or manner to "tumah" (spiritual uncleanness).

CHAPTER "TUMAH" CAUSED BY:

- | | |
|----|---|
| 11 | eating or touching dead animals |
| 12 | the birth of a child |
| 13 | a "tzaraat" on a person's skin or garment |
| 14 | a "tzaraat" in a house |
| 15 | various emissions from the human body |

Not only do these parshiot discuss how one contracts these various types of TUMAH, they also explain how one can cleanse himself from these TUMOT, i.e. how he becomes TAHOR. For the simplest type of TUMAH, one need only wash his clothing and wait until sundown (see 11:27-28,32,40). For more severe types of TUMAH, to become TAHOR one must first wait seven days and then bring a set of special korbanot.

This entire unit follows a very logical progression. It begins with the least severe type of TUMAH, known as "tumah erev" - one day TUMAH (lit. until the evening), and then continues with the more severe type of TUMAH, known as "tumah shiva", seven day TUMAH. Within each category, the Torah first explains how one contracts each type of TUMAH, then it explains the how he becomes TAHOR from it.

The following OUTLINE summarizes this structure. Note how each section of the outline concludes with a pasuk that begins with "zot torat...":

VAYIKRA - CHAPTERS 11 -> 15

I. ONE DAY TUMAH - 11:1-47 / "v'tamey ad ha'erev"

[known as "tumat erev" (or "tumah kala")]

Person is TAMEY until nightfall/ see 11:24,25,27,31,32,39] because he ate, touched, or carried the dead carcass of:

- (11:1-28) forbidden animals and fowl
- (29-38) one of the eight "shrutzim" (swarming creatures)
- (39-40) permitted animals that died without "shchita"

D. (41-43) other creeping or swarming creatures.

TAHARA for the above - washing one's clothes/ 11:28,32,40]

FINALE psukim (11:44-47)

[See similar expression in B'CHAYIM etc. 3!]

II. SEVEN DAY TUMAH - 12:1-15:33 ("tumah chamurah")

A. TUMAT YOLEDET - a mother who gave birth (12:1-8)

- for a boy : 7+33=40
- for a girl : 14+66=80

TAHARA - korban chatat & olah

...ZOT TORAT HA'YOLEDET etc.

B. TZARAAT HA'ADAM

TUMAH / based on inspection by the kohen

- on one's body / 13:1-46
- on one's "beged" (garment) /13:47-59

TAHARA / 14:1-32

- special sprinkling, then count 7 days
- special korban on eighth day

...ZOT TORAT ASHER BO NEGA TZARAAT etc.

C. TZARAAT HA'BAYIT / 14:33-53

TUMAH / based on inspection by kohen

- the stones of the house itself (14:33-45)
- secondary "tumah" (14:46-47) for one who:
 - enters the house
 - sleeps in the house
 - eats in the house

TAHARA - a special sprinkling on the house (14:48-53)

summary psukim for all types of TZARAAT (14:54-57)

...ZOT HA'TORAH L'CHOL NEGA HA'TZARAAT

... ZOT TORAT HA'TZARAAT.

D. EMISSIONS FROM THE BODY (chapter 15)

1. MALE - TUMAT ZAV - an abnormal emission of "zera"

- he himself (15:1-4) - 7 days
- secondary "tumah" / 1 day (15:5-12)

for one who either touches what the ZAV is sitting on, or sits on an item that the ZAV sits, and other misc. cases.

TAHARA (15:13-15)

waiting 7 days, then washing with "mayim chayim" on 8th day a special korban

2. MALE - TUMAT KERI - a normal emission (15:16-18)

one day "tumah" (until evening) requires washing clothing.

3. FEMALE - TUMAT NIDA - a normal flow (15:19-24)

- she herself - seven days
- secondary "tumah" - one day

for person or items that she touches

4. FEMALE - TUMAT ZAVA - an abnormal flow (15:25-30)

- she herself and what she sits on - 7 days
- secondary "tumah" for someone who touches her or something which she is sitting on.

TAHARA -

waiting seven days...

on 8th day a special korban

A FINALE and summary psukim (15:31-33)

...ZOT TORAT HA'ZAV etc.

ABOUT THE OUTLINE

I recommend that you review this outline as you study the Parsha. Note that even though the details are very complicated, the overall structure is actually quite simple.

Note also how the Torah summarizes each section with a phrase beginning with ZOT TORAT... - this is the procedure (or ritual) for... [See the previous shiur on Parshat Tzav/Parah in which we discussed the meaning of the word TORAH in Sefer Vayikra.] The repetition of key phrases such as these is often helpful towards identifying the internal structure of parshiot in Chumash.

Our division of the outline into TWO sections, ONE-DAY tumah and SEVEN-DAY tumah may at first appear to be a bit misleading

for we also find many cases of one day tumah in the second section. However, the cases of one-day TUMAH in the second section are quite different for they are CAUSED by a person who had first become TAMEY for seven days. Therefore, we have defined them as 'secondary' TUMAH in that section.

[TUMAT KERI (15:16-18) may be another exception since it is an independent one-day TUMAH, however it could be considered a sub-category within the overall framework of TUMAT ZAV.]

[See also further iyun section for a discussion why the one-day TUMAH section includes KASHRUT laws.]

WHY THE INTERRUPTION?

Now that we have established that chapters 11->15 form a distinct unit, which discusses the laws of TUMAH & TAHARA; we can return to our original question - Why does this unit interrupt the natural flow from Parshat Shmini (chapter 10) to Parshat Acharei Mot (chapter 16)?

The concluding psukim of this unit can provide us with a possible explanation.

As we have noted in our outline, this entire unit contains an important FINALE pasuk:

"V'HIZARTEM ET BNEI YISRAEL M'TUMATAM... And you shall put Bnei Yisrael on guard [JPS - see further iyun regarding translation of "vhizartem"] against their TUMAH, LEST THEY DIE through their TUMAH by defiling My MISHKAN which is among them." (see 15:31)

This pasuk connects the laws of TUMAH & TAHARA to the laws of the Mishkan. Bnei Yisrael must be careful that should they become TAMEY, they must not ENTER the Mishkan. In fact, the primary consequence for one who has become TAMEY is the prohibition that he cannot enter the MIKDASH complex. There is no prohibition against becoming TAMEY, rather only a prohibition against entering the Mishkan should he be TAMEY.

Hence, the entire TAHARA process as well is only necessary for one who wishes to enter the Mishkan. If there is no Mishkan, one can remain TAMEY his entire life with no other consequence (see further iyun section).

With this background, we can suggest a common theme for the first 16 chapters of Sefer Vayikra - the ability of Bnei Yisrael to enter the Mishkan, to come closer to God.

Let's explain:

The first section of Sefer Vayikra, chapters 1->7, explains HOW and WHEN the individual can bring a korban and HOW they are offered by the kohen. The next section, chapters 8->10, records the special Mishkan dedication ceremony, which prepared Bnei Yisrael and the Kohanim for using and working in the Mishkan. As this ceremony concluded with the death of Nadav & Avihu for improper entry into the Mishkan (when offering the "ktoret zara"), Sefer Vayikra continues with an entire set of commandments concerning TUMAH & TAHARA, chapters 11->15, which regulate who can and cannot ENTER THE MISHKAN. This unit ends with laws of Yom Kippur, which describe the procedure of how the "kohen gadol" (high priest) can enter the most sacred domain of the Mishkan - the Kodsh K'doshim.

Even though these laws of TUMAH & TAHARA may have been given to Moshe at an earlier or later time, once again, we find that Sefer Vayikra prefers thematic continuity over chronological order (see shiur on Parshat Tzav). First, the Sefer discusses who cannot enter the Mishkan. Then it explains who can enter its most sacred domain.

ZEHIRUT - BEING CAREFUL

Up until this point, we have discussed the technical aspects of the structure of this unit in Parshiot Shmini, Tazria & Metzora. Is there any significance to these laws of TUMAH & TAHARA today as well?

The simplest explanation is based on our parallel between the Mishkan and Har Sinai. Just as Bnei Yisrael's encounter with God at Har Sinai required special preparation, so too man's encounter with God in the Mishkan. It would not be proper for man just to 'hop on in'

whenever he feels like entering the Mishkan. Instead, each time an individual plans to offer a korban or enter the Mishkan for any other reason, he must prepare himself by making sure not to come in contact with anything which would make him TAMEY. Should for any reason he become TAMEY, he must wash his clothes and wait until the next day. Should he himself contract a major type of TUMAH such as TZARAAT or ZAV, then he must wait at least seven days and undergo a special ritual which will make him TAHOR.

All of these complicated laws cause the man who wishes to visit the Mishkan to be very careful and constantly aware of everything he touches, or carries, etc. during the entire week prior to his visit, thus enhancing his spiritual readiness for entering the Mishkan.

Today, even without a Mishkan, man must still make every effort to find God's Presence, even though it is hidden. Therefore, man's state of constant awareness and caution concerning everything that he says and does remains a primary means by which man can come closer to God, even though no Bet Ha'Mikdash exists.

An important though to keep in mind as we prepare ourselves during the seven weeks of Sefirat ha'Omer in preparation for our commemoration of Ma'amad Har Sinai on Shavuot.

shabbat shalom
menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. In relation to the translation of the word "vhizartem et Bnei Yisrael..." (15:31), see Ibn Ezra. He explains that the word does not stem from "azhara"=warning, but rather from the word "nazir", to separate oneself ["zarut"]. Then "nun" simply falls which is noted by the dagesh in the "zayin". See Ibn Ezra inside!

B. Since this section of chapters 11->15 discuss various laws of TUMAH & TAHARA, one would expect it to include the laws of TUMAT MEYT (caused by touching a dead person). Instead, the Torah records these laws in Parshat Chukat, Bamidbar chapter 19. It appears as though that parsha was 'spliced' from this unit and 'transferred' to Sefer Bamidbar. This parsha is one of many parshiot in Sefer Bamidbar which would appear to 'belong' in Sefer Vayikra instead. Iy"n, we will explain the reason for this in our shiurim on Sefer Bamidbar - "v'akmal".

C. At first glance, the section in our unit which discusses 'one-day' TUMAH (chapter 11) appears to be discussing "kashrut" (dietary laws) more than TUMAH, for it details which animals are permitted or forbidden to be eaten. However, the dietary laws which are mentioned here because one becomes TAMEY should he eat the meat of an animal which is TAMEY.

To prove this, simply compare this parsha to the dietary laws in Parshat Re'ay (see Dvarim 14:1-21). There we find only dietary laws and not laws of TUMAH & TAHARA. Therefore, laws such as "basar v'chalav" are mentioned in that parsha, while the laws of TUMAH are not!

D. These laws which discuss who can and cannot enter the Mikdash are sometimes referred to as HILCHOT BIYAT MIKDASH (see Rambam Sefer Avodah). Obviously, these laws apply only when a Mikdash exists, as there is no other consequence of 'becoming tamey' other than limited entry to areas containing shchinah.

Nonetheless, there are several circumstances when it is still necessary to know these laws. For example, entering HAR HA'BAYIT even when there is not Mikdash requires that one not be TAMEY. These laws also relate to eating TRUMOT & MAASROT.

E. See 11:44-45

"...v'hitkadishem, v'yehiytem KDOSHIM, ki KADOSH ani"
v'lo t'TAMU et nafshoteichem...."
"ki ani Hashem ha'maale etchem m'eretz mitzrayim,
l'hiyot l'chem l'Elokim, v'heyitem KDOSHIM ..."
"... l'havdil bein ha'tamey u'bein ha'tahor..."

This finale of the section explaining 'one-day' TUMAH connects the theme of Sefer Shmot, that Hashem took us out Egypt in order that we become His nation, to the laws of "tumah & tahara". To become God's nation, we must be like Him. Just as He is "kadosh" (set aside, different), we must also be "kadosh".

Man's spirituality begins with his recognition that he is different than animal. Although man and animal are similar in many ways, man must realize that he was set aside by God for a higher purpose. God blessed man with special qualities in order that he fulfill that purpose. [See Rambam in Moreh Nvuchim I.1 regarding the definition of tzelem elokim. It is not by coincidence that the Rambam begins Moreh Nvuchim with this concept.]

These laws of "tumat ochlim" teach Am Yisrael that they must differentiate between man and animal, and between different types of animals. By doing so, man will learn to differentiate between divine and mundane, between "tamey & tahor", and finally between good and bad, right and wrong etc.

D. In previous shiurim, we explained how the cycles of seven found in Chumash relate to our need to recognize the hand of God behind nature. Why do you think that we also find cycles of seven in the laws of TZARAAT, ZAV, and ZAVA that appear to be the exact opposite, that is abnormalities in nature?

Parshas Shemini: The Anonymous Sons of Aharon: An Analysis of Vayikra 10

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

I. TRAGEDY

Our Parasha contains one of the two narratives which break up the flow of legalistic/covenantal material which comprises Sefer Vayikra. Subsequent to being commanded regarding the various offerings to be brought in the Mishkan, God directed Mosheh as to the method of inauguration of the Kohanim into their positions as guardians of – and officiants in – the Mishkan. (Chapter 8 – this procedure, including the first seven-day Milu'im process, is known as Kiddush haKohanim).

On the eighth day of the Milu'im, the first day of the first month (Rosh Chodesh "Nisan"), the Mishkan was set to be dedicated and the Kohanim to be fully invested. Chapter 9 details the involvement of Mosheh, Aharon and Aharon's sons in that process. The many steps taken, including a sequence of personal and communal offerings brought by Aharon with the assistance of his sons, were intended to enshrine the Shekhinah in the Mishkan (hence the name Mishkan). At the end of Chapter 9, it seems as if that goal has been met:

And there came a fire out from before Hashem, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat; which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.

With this crescendo of excitement and spiritual ecstasy, we fully expect something akin to the great Revelation at Sinai; some more intense experience of God's Presence as felt among the people. It is at this crucial moment, as the nation is bowing, awaiting the full "Hashra'at haSh'khinah" that we are abruptly and tragically pulled from the world of supernal life to immediate and shocking death:

And Nadav and Avihu, the sons of Aharon, took each of them his censer, and put fire in it, and put incense on it, and offered strange fire before Hashem, which He commanded them not. And there went out fire from Hashem, and devoured them, and they died before Hashem.

What the Torah tells us is simple: Nadav and Avihu took fire-pans, put fire and incense in each and offered them before God. What the Torah does not tell us is what is wrong with this behavior – and why it carries with it such an immediate and terrifying (while awe-inspiring) death. In order to understand this, we need to see how the narrative unfolds; perhaps the context will be edifying and enlightening.

II. CONSOLATION

We are not sure about the first reaction of Aharon, the man whose greatest day had finally arrived as he began service as the Kohen of Hashem; did he weep? did he continue his worship? This is unclear from the text – but we do know Mosheh's first words to Aharon, the stricken father:

Then Mosheh said to Aharon, This is what Hashem spoke, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come near to Me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aharon held his peace.

What are we to make of these words of Mosheh? First of all, when did God ever state *biK'rovai Ekadesh* ("I will be sanctified in them that come near to Me" – this translation is as poor as any other available one)? In addition, we might ask what Mosheh's motivation was in uttering these words: Is he comforting Aharon? Is he, perhaps, chastising him?

Furthermore, the import of Mosheh's words is not at all clear (hence the problem with the translation). Does he mean that God's Presence can only become "enshrined" by the death of one of His chosen? Perhaps he means to say that God being exacting with His chosen ones is a method of generating a Kiddush Hashem; it is certainly not clear what these words mean.

It is plausible that the answers to these questions are mutually dependent – if we understand Mosheh's words as being motivated by a desire to comfort his brother, it is possible that he is "interpreting" previously stated words of God and applying them to this situation – and thereby enhancing the stature of Nadav and Avihu in their father's tear-filled eyes. If, on the other hand, Mosheh is "paraphrasing" an actual command of God (e.g. such as the boundaries established at Sinai – see Sh'mot 19:23), these words may be less "soothing" in tone and may mean that God became sanctified by virtue of

the death of those who tried to come close. Again, an easy resolution to these words is not on our horizon – but we must attempt to decipher them to the best of our abilities.

Finally, how are we to understand Aharon's silence? Again, there are several parts to this question: First of all, was he suddenly silent (in reaction to Mosheh's words), did he remain silent (in spite of Mosheh's words), or did this silence precede Mosheh's words?

Is Aharon's silence an act of nobility? Does it demonstrate an overpowering sense of place and time, not allowing the tragedy to mar the celebration of the day? Or, conversely, does it indicate an inability to answer – a silence in the face of death? Was there anything that Aharon could have said at all?

III. DELEGATION

Subsequent to his short speech to Aharon, Mosheh turns to his nephews, commanding them to remove the corpses from the Mishkan:

And Mosheh called Misha'el and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aharon, and said to them, Come near, carry your brothers from before the sanctuary out of the camp. So they went near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp; as Mosheh had said.

In other words, neither Aharon nor his two "remaining" sons are to become defiled by participating in what is normally their familial obligation (at least as regards the brothers): burying their own.

Is this delegation of responsibility a response to Aharon's silence? Where are Elazar and Itamar (the two "remaining" brothers) at this time? We soon hear:

And Mosheh said to Aharon, and to Elazar and to Itamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, nor tear your clothes; lest you die, and lest anger come upon all the people; but let your brothers, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which Hashem has kindled. And you shall not go out from the door of the Tent of Meeting, lest you die; for the anointing oil of Hashem is upon you. And they did according to the word of Mosheh.

We now see that Aharon, Elazar and Itamar are standing by, watching as their sons/brothers are carried out of the Mishkan – and they are not allowed to demonstrate their grief in the traditional manners. That is not to say that their brothers' deaths will go without the proper Avelut. Their Avelut belongs to the entire "House of Yisra'el" – but what does that mean? Does it mean that all of B'nei Yisra'el are to behave as mourners for the entire week (at least) after this tragedy? That would seem to be self-defeating, if the reason for all of this delegation is to maintain the festive air of the day.

In addition, why are the B'nei Yisra'el appointed/delegated as mourners for Nadav and Avihu? What sort of relationship exists between the mourners (*Kol Beit Yisra'el*) and the two deceased sons of Aharon?

One final question on this series of verses: Why does the text point out that they did "according to the words of Mosheh" – if the intent was simply to indicate that they fulfilled these commands, the text could have tersely stated: Vaya'asu Khen – ("and they did thus"); what is added with this longer formula?

IV. COMMAND

Within the realm of legalistic text in the Torah, the most popular and familiar introductory phrase is: vay'Daber Hashem el Mosheh leimor – ("and Hashem spoke to Mosheh, sayingÖ"). Occasionally, we encounter an expansion which includes Aharon (e.g. Sh'mot 12:1),. The formula presented in the middle of our narrative – and which "interrupts" the flow of the story – is unique: vay'Daber Hashem el Aharon leimor ("and Hashem spoke to Aharon, sayingÖ"). This hapax legomenon is striking for several reasons. It stands in stark contrast to Aharon's silence, mentioned earlier. In addition, it is the first time that we hear about the "second" role of the Kohen – as teacher and instructor of the laws of Hashem. The specific directive prohibits worship by Aharon or his sons (what a painful word that is at this juncture) while intoxicated:

And Hashem spoke to Aharon, saying, Do not drink wine nor strong drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the Tent of Meeting, lest you die; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations; And that you may differentiate between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; And that you may teach the people of Yisra'el all the statutes which Hashem has spoken to them by the hand of Mosheh.

Why is this particular prohibition (and its extension – instructing in Halakhah while intoxicated – see MT Bi'at Mikdash 1:3

and our discussion in last year's shiur on Parashat Shímini, accessible on our website at torah.org/advanced/mikra) presented here, amid the dedication festivities and attendant tragedy? Why is Aharon singled out to receive only this command (all other commands regarding the special status of Kohanim were given through the familiar formula)?

V. EXCEPTION

After Aharon is given this “new” prohibition, Mosheh turns to his brother and nephews, directing them to continue in their worship-acts associated with the offerings already brought:

And Mosheh spoke to Aharon, and to Elazar and to Itamar, his sons, who were left, Take the meal offering that remains of the offerings of Hashem made by fire, and eat it without leaven beside the altar; for it is most holy; And you shall eat it in the holy place, because it is your due, and your sons' due, of the sacrifices of Hashem made by fire; for so I am commanded. And the waved breast and offered shoulder shall you eat in a clean place; you, and your sons, and your daughters with you; for they are your due, and your sons' due, which are given from the sacrifices of peace offerings by the people of Yisra'el. The offered shoulder and the waved breast shall they bring with the offerings made by fire of the fat, to wave it for a wave offering before Hashem; and it shall be yours, and your sons' with you, by a statute forever; as Hashem has commanded.

Why does this directive need to be stated (or, perhaps, repeated) at this point? Don't Aharon and his sons already know the laws of the Kohanic consumption of the offerings (see Vayyikra 6:9)?

The simplest explanation of this interjection is that Aharon and his sons, being in a Halakhic state of mourning (*Aninut*) would have reasonably avoided partaking of any of the sacral foods (see BT Zevachim 101a for the source for this prohibition/disqualification). Hence, Mosheh must instruct them that that is not to be the case on this day. In spite of the death of their sons/brothers, Aharon and his two “remaining” sons are to continue the complete Avodah without interruption or deviation; this day of inauguration serves as an exception to the rule of the disqualification of Aninut.

If that is the sole reason for this exhortative directive, why does Mosheh add the information about the “wave offering” (*Shok haT'rumah v'Hazeh haT'nufah*)? Why add the information regarding the family's rights to the portions of the Sh'lamim (peace-offerings)?

VI. INQUIRY

Having commanded his brother and nephews regarding the completion of the “order of the day”, Mosheh finds that they have burned the S'ir haHatat (goat of the sin offering), which the Gemara identifies as the S'ir Rosh Chodesh (sin-offering brought on the first day of the month as part of the Musaf Rosh Chodesh) – instead of eating it:

And Mosheh diligently sought the goat of the sin offering, and, behold, it was burned; and he was angry with Elazar and Itamar, the sons of Aharon, who were left alive, saying, Why have you not eaten the sin offering in the holy place, seeing it is most holy, and God has given it to you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before Hashem? Behold, its blood was not brought inside the holy place; you should indeed have eaten it in the holy place, as I commanded.

Why does Mosheh engage in the presentation of an argument as to why they should have eaten it? Isn't it enough for him to remind them – as he does at the end of his “angry” chastisement – that they should have eaten it “as I commanded”? What are we to make of his explanation?

VII. RESPONSE

We again find a unique interaction here. Instead of admitting to fault, Aharon speaks up (in spite of the fact that Mosheh had addressed his sons), defending their action – and Mosheh accepts their defense:

And Aharon said to Mosheh, Behold, this day have they offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before Hashem; and such things have befallen me; and if I had eaten the sin offering to day, should it have been accepted in the sight of Hashem? And when Mosheh heard that, he was content.

Why didn't Aharon give this response earlier, when Mosheh had commanded him and his sons to partake of the Minchah and the Shok haT'rumah and Hazeh haT'nufah? In addition, how could this argument have succeeded, if Mosheh had

already commanded them to continue “as if nothing had happened” and to allow the rest of the B’nei Yisra’el to mourn for Nadav and Avihu? Either Aharon and his sons had the status of Onenim (mourners) or not – and, since Mosheh had already excepted them from that status, how could this argument succeed?

VIII. SUMMARY

In reading through Vayyikra Chapter 10, we have noted a significant number of difficulties. Here is a summary of the main questions, although some of them have ancillary inquiries which were raised above:

1) Did Nadav and Avihu err? If so, what was the nature of their error/sin? 2) How do we understand Mosheh’s words to Aharon – and Aharon’s silence? 3) Why are Aharon’s remaining sons not considered mourners – such that the burial of their brothers is delegated to their cousins? What is the role of Kol Beit Yisra’el here – are they all mourners in the strict and complete sense of the word? 4) How should we understand the interjection of the command regarding entering the Mishkan while intoxicated – and that given directly to Aharon? 5) Why does Mosheh have to remind his kin about their obligations regarding the consumption of the offerings? 6) Why does Mosheh present an argument to Elazar and Itamar as to why they shouldn’t have burnt the S’ir Rosh Chodesh? 7) How do we understand their successful defense – and why wasn’t it stated earlier?

Under ideal circumstances, we would present a survey of the many brilliant and insightful approaches suggested by the Rishonim (they were all sensitive to these difficulties with the text, of course). Due to space limitations, we will have to confine ourselves to using several of their observations as points of departure for a different approach; one which is, I believe, consistent with and reflective of some of the perspectives raised by the Rishonim in their analyses of this difficult chapter.

IX. KEDUSHAT KEHUNAH

Any analysis of this chapter has to begin with the offering brought by Nadav and Avihu. What did they do to merit instantaneous death at the hands of Heaven?

A scan of the two previous chapters – Chapter 8, which details the inauguration ritual (*Milu’im*) and Chapter 9 which describes the events of that day of dedication, we see that the role of Aharon’s sons is purely supportive in nature. Not once do we hear their names. They function solely as B’nei Aharon (Aharon’s sons) throughout the entire narrative. Until this point, we read “Take Aharon and his sons with him”; only after several verses devoted to the inauguration of Aharon do we hear: “And Mosheh brought the sons of Aharon”; throughout the rest of the Milu’im ceremony, we only hear about Aharon, “his sons” or “Aharon and his sons”.

On the day of dedication, we read “And the sons of Aaron brought the blood to him and the sons of Aharon presented to him the blood and they presented the burnt offering to him and the sons of Aharon presented to him the blood”. Throughout the ceremony, designed to inaugurate Aharon and his sons into their positions as Kohanim, his sons present Aharon with the various items he needs in order to perform the service – but it is clearly his service to perform.

Just before we read about Nadav and Avihu’s errant offering, we are told that:

And there came a fire out from before Hashem, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat; which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.

The ultimate was achieved; God’s heavenly fire consumed the offering, indicating His acceptance and readiness to enshrine the Shekhinah among the people.

Suddenly, we do not hear about the “anonymous” sons of Aharon; rather, we are introduced to Nadav and Avihu who are the (two of) the same B’nei Aharon who demonstrated a strong awareness of their position until this point:

And Nadav and Avihu, the sons of Aharon, took each of them his censer, and put fire in it, and put incense on it, and offered strange fire before Hashem, which He commanded them not. And there went out fire from Hashem, and devoured them, and they died before Hashem.

The emphasis on “each his own fire-pan” indicates that this offering was not only bereft of the communal aspect which

informed all of the offerings until this point – it was also a totally individualized and self-centered offering. Note the words of the Sifra at the beginning of Parashat Aharei-Mot:

B'nei Aharon – implying that they did not take counsel with Aharon; Nadav va'Avihu – implying that they did not take counsel from Mosheh [see BT Eruvin 63a]; Ish Mah'tato (each his own fire-pan) – implying that they did not take counsel from each other. (see also Vayyikra Rabbah 20:8)

The Torah uses two additional (and more explicit) terms to indicate their sin: strange fire and which He commanded them not.

Essentially, their sin was in considering that once they had been designated, inaugurated and sanctified, they had the latitude to present worship in their own manner – subverting their own roles as assistants to their father. Far beyond this sin, however, was the underlying perspective which motivated their behavior: We can dictate how to worship. When we approach God, we may do so on our own terms and with our own offering. The Midrash's reading of their refusal to take counsel with Mosheh and Aharon before bringing their offering is indicative of this errant perspective.

What Nadav and Avihu evidently failed to understand was the metamorphosis which was effected through the Milu'im process. Whereas, until now, Nadav and Avihu were two individuals, sons of Aharon and nephews of Mosheh; now they were accorded the lofty – but limiting – status of B'nei Aharon. Pursuant to their sanctification, Aharon and his sons became the representatives of the entire nation – this great privilege carried with it the awesome responsibility of maintaining constant humility in the face of the Mishkan where that representation is realized.

X. RESPONSES

We can now review our questions and answer each, following the explanation presented in the previous section:

1) Did Nadav and Avihu err? If so, what was the nature of their error/sin? They certainly sinned – in taking worship into their own hands. They not only overstepped their role as B'nei Aharon, they also, thereby, violated the trust of the B'nei Yisra'el.

2) How do we understand Mosheh's words to Aharon – and Aharon's silence? Mosheh told Aharon biK'rovai Ekadesh – meaning that I am only sanctified through the actions of those who I have brought close. In other words, Mosheh was telling Aharon that Nadav and Avihu erred in thinking that because they had been sanctified as B'nei Aharon, that they were now fit to effect the sanctification of the Mishkan on their own. Who can sanctify God? Who can bring His Shekhinah into the presence of the people? Only someone selected by God Himself. Aharon's silence is easily understood – what could he say? He certainly couldn't disagree, claiming that Nadav and Avihu had been sufficiently close to God. On the other hand, agreeing to that statement implied that he, Aharon, is sufficiently close. Humility prevented him from answering – so he was silent.

3) Why are Aharon's remaining sons not considered mourners – such that the burial of their brothers is delegated to their cousins? What is the role of Kol Beit Yisra'el here – are they all mourners in the strict and complete sense of the word? This is the lesson of the entire chapter: B'nei Aharon do not “belong to themselves”. They are both Sh'luchei Didan (our agents) as well as Sh'luchei d'Rach'mana (agents of God – see BT Kiddushin 23b) – with all of the privileges and responsibilities thereof. Although the Rishonim are divided as to whether Elazar and Itamar would have been obligated to bury their brothers if it were not for this special occasion, what is clear is that, at the very least, as the Mishkan is being dedicated, the Kohanim are getting the clear message that their role as communal representatives overrides their full participation in family life. The “upside” of that is that their family is much larger – all of B'nei Yisra'el are considered their family, such that the mourning for their brothers will be shared among the entire nation.

4) How should we understand the interjection of the command regarding entering the Mishkan while intoxicated – and that given directly to Aharon? Mosheh has just explained the death of Nadav and Avihu to Aharon – they miscalculated, thinking that anyone who is part of the designated family may sanctify. Mosheh's response – that only one whom God brings close may sanctify – could still leave Aharon wondering: “How do I know – or anyone else, for that matter – that I am sufficiently close to God? Perhaps my role in the sin of the golden calf has marred that closeness, if it ever existed?” To assuage that concern, God gave Aharon the greatest sign of closeness – by speaking directly to him (and only him). God “focusing” His command to Aharon is a sure sign of Aharon being worthy to sanctify the Mishkan. As far as the command itself, we may posit as follows: The sin of Nadav and Avihu was taking matters into their own hands (figuratively as well as literally). The zealotry which accompanies celebration and can, if unchecked, lead to such errant and dangerous behavior, is most easily exemplified by intoxication. A person is so carried away with the ecstasy of the nearness to God

that he desires to break down all boundaries – including those which are necessary to maintain an environment of Kedushah. The additional role of Kohanim mentioned at the end of this command serves to strengthen the message of the chapter – that Kohanim's role is not only representative but also instructive and, as such, have a great responsibility towards B'nei Yisra'el.

5) Why does Mosheh have to remind his kin about their obligations regarding the consumption of the offerings? Again, the basic message – these gifts are given to you not by dint of who you are – but rather because God has chosen you to represent His people in the Mishkan. These gifts are given to God – who grants them to the family of Aharon miShulhan Gavohah.

6) Why does Mosheh present an argument to Elazar and Itamar as to why they shouldn't have burnt the S'ir Rosh Chodesh? Mosheh is explaining their role to the sons of Aharon – it is your job to complete this service in order to repair the relationship between God and the people. You must rise above your personal tragedy in order to act for the people. 7) How do we understand their successful defense – and why wasn't it stated earlier?

As mentioned above, the Gemara identifies this offering as the Musaf Rosh Chodesh; unlike the other offerings (which Mosheh had addressed earlier), this was an ongoing offering, to be brought every month. Whereas the suspension of personal grief for the celebration of dedication would be in accord with Mosheh's command, this offering is of a different nature. Aharon's successful defense of his sons' behavior demonstrates the difference between the celebration of dedication and ongoing worship – but proper analysis of that topic is beyond the scope of this shiur.

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Parshat Shemini: What is Holiness?

By Rabbi Eitan Mayer

Note: Our parasha records the tragic deaths of Nadav and Avihu, sons of Aharon. We focused on that event in our discussion of Parashat Tetzaveh in Sefer Shemot, where we analyzed the proper role and orientation of the kohen (priest) toward his holy task, and in particular how Nadav's and Avihu's act violated that conception of priestly function. That shiur is available on the web at <http://victorian.fortunecity.com/brutalist/608>, the Parsha Themes archive.

TERMINOLOGY AND SEFER VAYIKRA:

Whenever we come across special terminology in the Torah, it is always our first job to re-examine our assumptions about its meaning. Are we just plugging in the understanding we've held since childhood, or are we willing to rethink our assumptions -- and perhaps reject ideas we have held for a long time? Take our discussion of the term "korban hattat," for example: last shiur discussed the word "hattat" and what it means in Sefer VaYikra in particular. We began with the popular assumption that "hattat" means "sin," and so a "korban hattat" would be a "sin-offering," a korban brought to expiate sin. But we emerged with a very different conclusion: "hattat" in this context means to "clean up" or "purge"; a korban hattat is therefore not a "sin-offering," but a "cleansing offering."

This helped us solve some basic problems:

1) If the korban hattat is indeed a "sin-offering," and its function is to expiate the sin of the person or people who offer it, why does the Torah demand a korban hattat from people who have committed no apparent sin (i.e., every woman who gives birth [yoledet], every healed metzora [sufferer of the biblical skin disease "tzara'at"], every healed zav and zava [people who have experienced irregular genital emissions], and several other cases)? In all of these cases, a serious form of tum'ah, ritual impurity, is present, but there is no sin to forgive -- so why an expiatory sacrifice? In addition, one who becomes tamei (impure) by contact with a human corpse must be sprinkled with the ashes of the para aduma, the red cow, as part of the purification process; but since there is no sin in becoming tamei in the first place, why does the Torah refer to the para aduma as a "hattat"?

If, however, we understand "hattat" to mean "cleaning up impurity," it is clear why a hattat is necessary in each of these impurity-inducing cases.

2) What is the actual mechanism of the korban hattat in the Mishkan and the Beit Ha-Mikdash? *How* does it "take care of" or expiate the averot (sins) we have committed? We began with the assumption that the korban hattat is something like a gift to appease Hashem so that He will forgive us for the avera, but we ended with the idea that the hattat is less a gift than it is a "mopping up" of the Mikdash. We examined indications later in Sefer VaYikra that our averot impact on ourselves and environment: if we behave immorally, we defile not only ourselves, but Eretz Yisrael itself, and since Eretz Yisrael cannot tolerate impurity, it will eventually "vomit us out" (as the Torah so graphically puts it). Sefer VaYikra teaches that our averot also destroy the spiritual environment in the Mikdash, making it tamei; this is why, once a year, Yom Kippur provides us with an opportunity to purge ("hattat") not only ourselves, but also the Mikdash, of all the accumulated impurities our averot have produced.

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

Terminology appears all over the Torah, but defining it is especially critical in Sefer VaYikra, where we constantly encounter terms for concepts and actions outside of the realm of everyday life. One term which comes up all the time, especially in Sefer VaYikra, is the word "k-d-sh," usually translated "holy."

"K-d-sh" takes many forms in Tanakh (the Bible). Some examples:

- 1) "Kedusha," "holiness" (noun)
- 2) "Kadosh," "holy" (adjective)
- 3) "Kidesh," "(he) sanctified" (third person singular past tense verb)
- 4) "Kiddush," "a sanctification" (e.g., "Kiddush Hashem," "kiddush" on Friday night)

"K-d-sh" appears in different forms almost 900 times in Tanakh, making it a fairly common word. Not only that, but it is particularly common in Sefer VaYikra, appearing about 150 times -- more than in any other Humash. Not only is "k-d-sh" very common in Sefer VaYikra, it is also very important.

One place where Sefer VaYikra highlights kedusha is Perek 11 (part of our parasha), which focuses on which creatures may be eaten and which can transmit tum'a (impurity) to people. After delivering instructions about which creatures are permitted to us and which transmit tum'a, the Torah calls on us to keep these mitzvot in order that we become "kadosh."

Many of us are probably familiar with many different contexts which invoke the idea of kedusha, although we may not normally make explicit connections between them. In order to properly understand the real meaning of all of the mitzvot which the Torah connects with "k-d-sh," and, moreover, to understand what the Torah is really asking of us when it calls us to become "kadosh" (as Sefer VaYikra does at several opportunities), we need to understand what "k-d-sh" really means. One way of doing this is to take a look at what the Torah tells us is kadosh, or can become kadosh, and also at how kedusha impacts on these contexts. First, we will move through the Torah, listing some major loci of kedusha. Once we have some idea of where to find kedusha, we will discuss what "kedusha" might mean.

Kedusha is to be found, according to the Torah, in what I have found convenient to split into five major categories:

- 1) Time
- 2) Space
- 3) Objects (animate and inanimate)
- 4) People
- 5) Hashem

KEDUSHA IN TIME:

1) The very first time kedusha appears in the Torah, it refers to time: Shabbat. Hashem completes the creation of the world after six days and then rests; He is "me-kadesh" the Shabbat. Later on, when Bnei Yisrael appear in the world, they are told that they must do the same thing: "Zakhor et yom ha-Shabbat le-kadsho" -- "Remember the Sabbath, to sanctify it."

2) Other examples of holy time are also well known: the Mo'adim (festivals), i.e., Pesah, Shavuot, Succot, Rosh Ha-Shana, and Yom Kippur are described by the Torah as "holy."

KEDUSHA IN SPACE:

1) The first space that the Torah describes as kadosh is Har Sinai: Moshe the shepherd sees the (non)-burning bush (situated at Sinai), approaches it, and is told to remove his shoes because "the ground you are standing on is 'kodesh' ground." This kedusha comes to full expression when the nation emerges from Egypt and arrives at Sinai to receive the Torah. At that time, Hashem commands the people to stay off of the mountain because it is so 'kadosh.' Even the kohanim (priests), who might consider themselves holy enough to be allowed on the mountain, are specifically prohibited from ascending because of the great kedusha of the mountain.

2) The space most often described by the Torah as kadosh is, of course, the "Mikdash" (Temple), which means "sanctum," after all. The essence of the Mikdash is kedusha.

3) One other space which the Torah describes as kadosh is the camp of Bnei Yisrael. Hashem commands that we keep the camp 'kadosh.' This is accomplished by making sure that high standards of dignified and moral behavior are upheld in the camp.

KEDUSHA IN OBJECTS (animate and inanimate):

A) Animals:

1) Bekhor: first-born animals are considered holy as a result of Hashem's killing the Egyptian firstborn and saving the firstborn of Bnei Yisrael.

2) Korbanot: in many places in the Torah, animals which are set aside and designated to become korbanot (sacrificial offerings) are called "kodashim." This term is used by Hazal as the name for one of the six major sections of the Mishnaic corpus, the section which deals with things designated to various kadosh purposes.

B) Inanimate objects:

1) Clothing of the kohanim: the "bigdei kehuna" are constantly referred to by the Torah as the "bigdei kodesh."

2) Klei ha-Mikdash: the "furniture" of the Mishkan/Mikdash is often referred to as kadosh; even today, we call the Aron in our shuls the "aron ha-kodesh." Also, during the inauguration ceremony for the Mishkan, Moshe is instructed to sanctify ("le-kadesh") all of the furniture through different rituals, including anointing the kelim with the special anointing oil and sprinkling blood on the kelim from special inaugural korbanot.

KEDUSHA IN PEOPLE:

1) Bekhor: Hashem tells Bnei Yisrael on several occasions that all firstborn sons are considered "kadosh" as a result of His having killed all of the firstborn of Egypt and saved the Jewish firstborn. In practice, this means that for all generations, each firstborn son has a special kedusha which remains with him and requires a pidyon ha-ben ("redemption of the son") to be done. The baby boy is brought to the kohen, since the kohen represents Hashem, and money is given to the kohen in order to 'redeem' the baby boy. The money is not to buy the baby, of course, it is to remove the kedusha of the baby and transfer it to the money, which the kohen can then use. (Note that halakha holds that the baby does not actually have kedushat ha-guf prior to the pidyon.)

Another aspect of the kedusha of the firstborn is their (short-lived) selection as priests. Originally, the firstborn son of each family was designated to serve Hashem as a priest. This function, however, was transferred to the Leviyim in a process described in Sefer BeMidbar. This process removed the kedusha from the firstborn and transferred it to the Leviyim.

2) Kohanim: In many places in the Torah, kohanim are identified as kadosh. In this week's parasha in particular, Moshe is commanded by Hashem to consecrate Aharon and his sons to be kohanim: "kadesh le-khahano li," "sanctify him to serve Me."

In addition, when the Torah tells us later in Sefer VaYikra that a kohen is forbidden to come into contact with a human corpse (with the exception of immediate relatives, for a non kohen-gadol), the Torah connects this prohibition with the fact that the kohen is kadosh. And when the Torah tells us that a kohen may not marry certain women (divorced women, women whose sexual relationships have been transitory and non-marital, and others), the Torah explains this restriction by repeating that the kohen is 'kadosh.' His kedusha apparently prevents his marrying certain women.

3) Bnei Yisrael: The Torah associates kedusha not only with particular members of Bnei Yisrael, but with the nation as a whole. Before the Torah is given, Hashem tells the people that His goal for them is that they become a "mamlechet kohanim ve-goy kadosh" -- we are to be a 'kadosh' nation to Hashem, a nation of kohanim to Hashem. A similar theme is picked up by Sefer Devarim, which repeats several times that Hashem chose us as His "am segula," treasured nation, His "am kadosh." (Shemot focuses more on the challenge to us to become holy, whilst Devarim focuses on our being dedicated by Hashem to His service).

In our parasha, the Torah gives us the rules about which animals we may eat and which not, and then explains this set of laws with the charge to us to become holy. Apparently, kashrut has something significant to do with holiness. Hashem's command to us to be holy appears again -- probably its most famous appearance in all of the Torah -- in Parashat Kedoshim. Shortly after this command, the Torah gives us the laws detailing which sexual unions are prohibited. This section ends with a charge to us to keep these laws and thereby be kadosh. Apparently, maintaining sexual boundaries, too, has something important to do with achieving kedusha.

HASHEM'S HOLINESS:

Hashem is described by the Torah several times as kadosh. These appearances split into two categories:

1) Places where the Torah describes Hashem Himself as kadosh. [Note that in almost all of the places where Hashem describes Himself as holy, this is connected to the holiness of Bnei Yisrael through imitatio Dei; in other words, Hashem is usually saying something like, "Be holy because I, your God, am holy."]

2) Places where Hashem demands that people sanctify Him. This should be familiar to us as the concept of "kiddush Hashem." This means somehow adding to the glory of Hashem's reputation among people. In our parasha, when Nadav and Avihu are killed when they bring an unbidden ketoret (incense) offering before Hashem, Moshe tells Aharon that Hashem has told him, "bi-krovai e-kadesh" -- "I am made kadosh through those closest to me," or "I will preserve the kedusha of my immediate surroundings." While this pasuk (verse) remains enigmatic, it does communicate clearly that in some sense, Hashem's kedusha has been reinforced, protected, or enhanced by the incident which has just occurred.

A similar use of "kedusha" appears when Moshe hits the rock to which Hashem has commanded him to speak. Hashem punishes Moshe for not sanctifying Him before all of the people; speaking to the rock would have been more impressive, but Moshe ruins this opportunity and is therefore denied the opportunity to enter Eretz Yisrael.

HOLINESS AS A "SUBSTANCE":

What does "k-d-sh" mean? One possibility is the English word "holy"; something "holy" has an inhering (but not necessarily *inherent*) quality of "holiness." Something "holy" is different than other things not just because the holy thing has been designated verbally or ceremonially for a particular purpose, and not just because there are different rules for how we are to behave with regard to the holy object, but is different in its very spiritual essence: it contains "kedusha," "holiness," a sort of spiritual-mystical-metaphysical substance or energy, so to speak, just as something which is "acidic" is full of acid and something which is "hot" is full of a certain type of energy.

Of course, this view of kedusha does not really provide us with a rationale for our pursuit of kedusha; instead, it posits the existence of an essence called "holiness" which can inhere in various objects, and toward which we are enjoined to aspire. It is not clear what relationship kedusha, in this conception, has with "goodness" or "rightness," or even "religiosity," for that matter. We are commanded to become holy, as we have seen, but according to this view, kedusha is not something of which we can make sense; it just exists -- in the spiritual universe -- as gravity and friction and radioactivity exist in the physical universe. We can certainly get a sense of the "mechanics" of kedusha, like where it exists, how it can be used, how we must relate to things which are "kadosh," etc., the same way we have a sense of the mechanics of gravity, like where it exists, how it can be used, and how we must behave given the fact that gravity is a reality. But we do not connect gravity with morality or goodness or religion; it is just a reality.

On the other hand, the Torah clearly connects kedusha with obedience to Hashem, the mitzvot, Hashem himself, and even makes the achievement of self-sanctification a primary goal. But it is hard to understand why. (Not being a mystic, I can't offer any kabbalistic conceptions of kedusha; I imagine kabbala has a lot to say about kedusha as an inhering essence.)

KEDUSHA AS A MEANS:

We now move to a second possible definition of kedusha: "Separated from other things to be dedicated to a higher purpose." In this perspective, kedusha is not the goal in itself, it is only a means; it is not an essence or spiritual "stuff" with which we are to fill ourselves, it is a way of behaving toward things that have been dedicated, formally or informally, to a higher purpose. Of course, that means that when the Torah tells us to be holy, it is not supplying us with an end which represents a significant goal in its own right, it is instead providing us with a strategy to achieve the real goals of our mission as Jews.

But what are the "real goals" of our mission, and how is kedusha a means to achieving them, instead of an essential goal in itself? In order to answer this question, we need to look at the manifestations of kedusha which we discussed above. In pointing to various significant loci of kedusha, we have given kedusha an address, so to speak. But who lives at each of these addresses -- in other words, what values or goals are communicated or achieved by these loci of kedusha? How does kedusha enhance these mitzvot and allow their core purpose to be achieved?

KEDUSHA IN TIME:

As we discussed above, Shabbat, Yom Kippur, Rosh Ha-Shana, Pesah, Shavuot, and Succot are described by the Torah as holy times. How does the kedusha of these days play out? Even a quick look at the descriptions of Shabbat and the Mo'adim in the Torah makes clear that kedusha is intimately connected with one very specific aspect of these days: the issur melakha (prohibition to do creative work):

SHABBAT:

Shemot 16:22-23 --

On the sixth day [Friday], they gathered double bread [of the "manna"], 2 'omers' per person; all the princes of the nation came and told Moshe. He said to them, "It is as Hashem said, 'A rest, a holy rest ["shabbat kodesh"] to Hashem tomorrow'; whatever you need to bake, bake [today], and whatever you need to cook, cook [today] . . .

Moshe connects the fact that Shabbat is "kodesh" with the need to cook everything today because of the issur melakha on Shabbat. The kedusha of Shabbat, in other words, is expressed in the issur melakha. This is expressed more explicitly by the Torah in several other places, some of them quite well known:

Shemot 20:7-9 [Part of the Decalogue]:

"Remember the day of Shabbat, to sanctify it ["le-kadsho"]. <<How do we sanctify Shabbat?>> Six days you shall work, and do all of your labor, but the seventh day is Shabbat to Hashem, your God -- DO NOT DO ANY WORK . . .

Of course, the opposite of "kodesh" is "hol," or "non-holy," sometimes translated as "profane," but misleadingly so, in my opinion, since "profane" has taken on negative connotations, while there is usually nothing wrong with a lack of kedusha; "hol" is a neutral state. "Hullin," for example, is Hazal's term for non-sacred food, i.e., all the food we eat nowadays, when there are no sacrifices. Having said that, it must be noted that there are circumstances where a lack of kedusha is not at all neutral, and is in fact a capital crime. For example, Shabbat carries the death penalty (!) for one who removes its kedusha, one who makes it "hol":

Shemot 31:14 --

Keep the Shabbat, for it is holy ["kadosh"] to you; its profaners ["me-HALeleha," from the word "hol"] shall be executed. <<And then the Torah once again connects the kedusha of Shabbat with the issur melakha:>> For all who do work on it, that soul shall be cut off from the midst of its nation.

[The same pattern of kedusha --> issur melakha is observable in Shemot 35:2 and Devarim 5:12.]

MO'ADIM:

As mentioned above, the Mo'adim are described by the Torah as holy times. Like Shabbat, this holiness is directly connected with a particular aspect which all of the Mo'adim share despite their differences in other matters: the issur melakha. The Torah's term for these days, other than "Mo'adim," is "Mikra'ei kodesh," "Declared times of holiness." Whenever the Torah uses this term, "Mikra'ei kodesh," to describe the Mo'adim, it is **always** followed by the explanation that the kedusha of the mo'ed is manifested in the issur melakha. One of the best places to note this pattern is in VaYikra 23 (see also Shemot 12:16 and BeMidbar 28-29), where Shabbat is also included among the Mo'adim:

VaYikra 23:3 --

Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day is a rest time, a "mikra kodesh": do not do any work . . .

VaYikra 23:7 --

On the first day [of Pesah] is a "mikra kodesh" for you: do not do any work.

VaYikra 23:8 --

. . . on the seventh day [of Pesah] is a "mikra kodesh": do not do any work.

VaYikra 23:21--

. . . [Shavuot is] a "mikra kodesh" for you: do not do any work.

VaYikra 23:24-25 --

[Rosh Ha-Shana is a] "mikra kodesh": do not do any work.

VaYikra 23:35-36 --

On the first day [of Succot] is a "mikra kodesh": do not do any work . . . on the eighth day is a "mikra kodesh" . . . do not do any work.

One exception to the rule that "mikra kodesh" leads right into "do not do any work" is Yom Kippur:

VaYikra 23:27-28 --

. . . The Day of Purification ["Yom Ha-Kippurim"] . . . is a "mikra kodesh" for you: Make yourselves suffer [i.e., fasting, etc.] . . . and do not do any work.

But the truth is that Yom Kippur fits right in: in all of these cases, kedusha means restriction of some sort. On Shabbat, it means an absolute prohibition of work; on Hagim (holidays), a prohibition of most types of work; and on Yom Kippur, a prohibition of work and of enjoyment.

KEDUSHA AND RESTRICTIONS:

What does kedusha have to do with restrictions? Why is it connected in the Torah with all of the restrictions mentioned in the examples above? The answer is that kedusha does not *produce* or *require* restrictions -- it *is* restrictions! "Kedusha" means setting something apart for a higher purpose. The way to set something apart is to prevent the normal from occurring with regard to that thing. The way we set Shabbat apart from the other days -- the way we make it "holy" -- is "six days you shall work . . . but on the seventh day you shall rest." It is not that Shabbat is infused with some mystical "kedusha" substance, it is that we are called to separate this day from the others, and this separation is accomplished by not doing work like we usually do.

But the act of kiddush -- the act of setting something apart for a higher purpose -- is obviously not an end in itself. The purpose of this setting apart is to allow special things to take place. Kedusha, to put it concretely, is a way of making space for important things to happen. It is a strategy to allow opportunities for important goals to be accomplished.

In describing many of the mitzvot, the Torah is quite clear about what these goals are. Let's take Shabbat as an example. First, the requirement to sanctify Shabbat: this "wipes the day clean" by erasing our normal work agenda. By doing this, we have created space for the Torah to direct us to do important things on this day: to remember that Hashem created the world (the theme of Shabbat according to the Decalogue in Sefer Shemot), and to remember that He took us out of Egypt (the theme of Shabbat according to the Decalogue in Sefer Devarim). Kedusha does not create the issur melakha; it *is* the issur melakha. The "end" of Shabbat is to contemplate Hashem's creation and His redemption; the means which makes this end possible is the imposition of kedusha, which, by demanding that we distinguish this day from other days, effectively clears our schedules of work and allows us the opportunity to engage in what Shabbat was created for.

The same is true of the Mo'adim as well. Kedusha clears a space of time by forbidding work; then the particular theme of that particular Mo'ed (not our topic here) can come in and get the attention it deserves. Kedusha is an opportunity-maker. For Yom Kippur in particular, the specific content of the day -- purification -- requires that more space, and more kinds of space, be cleared than usual. Not only is the work schedule cleared, the pleasure schedule is cleared as well. This is necessary for self-purification and Mikdash-purification to take place. So on Yom Kippur, since the day's theme calls for more setting apart than other holy days, kedusha has a bigger job than usual in clearing the necessary space.

KEDUSHA IN SPACE:

To put it briefly, sanctifying space also creates opportunities. Dedicating a space to a special purpose means that the normal things cannot be allowed to occur there -- otherwise, in what sense could we call such a space "dedicated"? So when Har Sinai is dedicated to be the place where the revelation of the Torah will occur, it becomes a place where Moshe cannot come with shoes, shod in the normal way; he must show respect for the dedicatedness of the place by removing his shoes. The same is true of the prohibition for anyone to ascend the mountain; its being dedicated means restriction: although people can usually walk wherever they want, they cannot walk here because this place has been chosen for Hashem to appear. Kedusha is not the point, it is a preparatory strategy. It makes space for Hashem to descend. The same is true of the Mishkan, certainly a place whose kedusha restricts access; and the greater the kedusha, the more restricted the access, not because one produces the other, but because they are one and the same.

KEDUSHA IN OBJECTS:

[I think the point is made. We need not belabor it by demonstrating it in every context in which we mentioned the presence of kedusha. If you are unsure how kedusha-restriction creates opportunities in objects, drop me a line and I will try to explain.]

KEDUSHA IN PEOPLE:

Along the same lines, kedusha in people does not mean that the people are spiritually different. It simply means that they are separated from others to be dedicated to a special purpose. This is what Hashem is telling us when He calls on us to be holy: not to fill ourselves with "holiness," but to be dedicated! "Kedoshim tihyu" and statements like it found all over the Torah are often connected with Hashem's informing us that He has chosen us from among the nations as His special nation. Now, this does not mean that He has chosen us to fill with "holiness," it means He has chosen us to fulfill the mission for which the entire human experiment was undertaken by Hashem: to mirror Him, to achieve our potential as "images of Hashem," "tzelem Elokim." Hashem frames humanity's mission quite specifically: we are to be creative ("peru u-revu," i.e., procreative) as He is creative, conquer the world and rule it as He rules the universe, and maintain the standards of morality (expressed by Sefer Bereshit as the prohibition to kill animals for food, an idea which is later compromised but which, as we have discussed, is echoed in Sefer VaYikra). This mission is originally commanded to all humans, but later, after humanity shows its fundamental corruption and must be destroyed in the Flood, Hashem focuses His "hopes" on the Avot (forefathers) as the seeds of His new plan. He chooses individuals to found a nation which will achieve the mission as is necessary and help guide the rest of humanity toward the mission as well. Later formulations in the Torah add another dimension: as that special nation, we are to be holy, as Hashem is holy: read, we are to be distinct, other, dedicated to higher standards, just as Hashem is all of these things. We are set aside by Hashem for this higher purpose: "Atem tihyu li mamlekhet kohanim ve-goy kadosh."

In similar fashion, the kohanim among Bnei Yisrael are more holy than other Jews: they are to be devoted to serving Hashem. They are not inherently, metaphysically, spiritually holier or better than other Jews; they are merely designated to divine service. [No sour grapes here; I am a kohen myself.] The fact that they are set apart for this higher purpose plays out not only in their ability to perform the avoda (Temple service), but also in their being unable to marry women whose status would impinge on the kohen's being dedicated to a higher function. In addition, being set apart to do the avoda means that kohanim cannot come into contact with corpses except under extreme circumstances: the kohen is at all times to be ready to drop everything and serve in the Mikdash. Contracting the severe impurity of a corpse negates the kohen's dedicatedness to Divine service by making this service impossible for him. The Kohen Gadol is even more kadosh -- more dedicated -- than the standard kohen, so he may never contract this impurity, which is fundamentally inimical to his kohen-gadol-hood.

KASHRUT:

Just to briefly mention two other examples of mitzvot closely connected with kedusha: in our parasha, the Torah, with great "fanfare," warns us that eating the prohibited animals is a problem because we are enjoined to be kadosh. Well, what do split hooves, chewing the cud, fins and scales, etc. have to do with holiness?

Perhaps nothing. The kedusha here is, as above, not the ultimate goal of this mitzvah, it is only a description of how the mitzvah functions. It is a set of restrictions: do not eat this, that, or the other thing. We do not refrain from eating these things in order to increase our holiness quotient; instead, the *act* of refraining is the kedusha itself. The Torah restricts these animals in order to make space for important values to be communicated and internalized. What are those values? This the Torah leaves largely unsaid, but the suggestion I find most compelling is that this perek brings together a number of disparate themes. Cloven hooves, chewing cud, fins, scales, are not inherent markers of virtue, they are ways of severely limiting the variety and number of living creatures we are able to kill for food (a value we have seen implicit in Sefer VaYikra and other places; and no, I am not a vegetarian). Many have noted that all of the forbidden birds are predators or carrion eaters; not eating them symbolizes our rejection of their cruel and bloody lifestyle.

SEXUAL CRIMES:

One last mitzvah: the "arayot," the cardinal sexual crimes listed in VaYikra 18 and 20, are repeatedly connected with kedusha. But once again, I would argue that the point is not kedusha, the *restrictions* are kedusha. The point of the restrictions is the protection of important things: the incest and adultery prohibitions protect the structure of the family, and the homosexuality, bestiality, and menstruating-woman prohibitions protect the core value of using sex as a way to create (procreate), not an outlet for just enjoyment (a menstruating woman is, for those who may be unaware, at the point of the cycle where conception is most unlikely).

As always, the perspective in this shiur is only mine (perhaps I should say only one of mine). While I have explored the more rational side of what kedusha might mean, I do not mean to imply that the other options are silly or untrue.
Shabbat Shalom