BS"D
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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 more than 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.

Thank you to the Beth Sholom members who responded to my request to donate no more than $36 per year to sponsor a parsha and help cover the costs of making copies for shul members. Sponsorship checks payable to Beth Sholom should indicate that they are for the Potomac Torah Study Center copy fund.

During a non-leap year, we read Tzav very close to the beginning of Pesach. During a leap year, we read Tzav very close to Purim, as we do this year. Tzav is an excellent transition connecting Purim and Pesach, because most of the parsha gives the instructions for the kohanim to perform the various types of korbanot (sacrifices). The parsha concludes with a description of how Aharon and his sons performed the first korbanot at the Mishkan. Moreover, every korban must include matzah – the Torah does not permit bringing chametz to the alter. Since much of the original Pesach ritual involves the korban Pesach (offering on the first night), and Jews may not own chametz during Pesach, the subjects of Pesach and Tzav are closely related.

The official start of spring was a week ago, and spring (especially the period between Pesach and Shavuot) has long been "rush hour" for anti-Semites to attack and murder Jews all over the world. The worst recent attacks started nearly six months ago, when Hamas invaded Israel to murder as many Jews as possible, take hundreds of hostages, burn buildings and crops, and rape many of our people. The IDF and numerous volunteers have been fighting back under extremely difficult conditions – with Hamas hiding in thousands of miles of underground tunnels and roads. Meanwhile, several Arab countries, especially with the support of Iran, have joined the battle by sending rockets and drones into Israel. On March 28, Palestinian terrorists shot at three different Israeli school buses in the Jordan valley. In one of the buses, a few miles north of Jericho, the shooting wounded two victims, aged 30 and 21 (school staff), and a 13-year-old boy suffered shrapnel wounds. Since the Hamas attack, anti-Semitic attacks have exploded all over the world. Jews at many universities in our country are afraid to identify openly as Jewish, and Jews in many other countries are afraid to wear kipot or other Jewish signs in public.

Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander movingly remembers Daniel Perez, z"l, the son of Rabbi Doron and Shelley Perez, confirmed last week as having been killed on October 7 while defending our people against Hamas. Our enemies have slaughtered hundreds of our young people since Simchat Torah to prove to the world something that many people do not understand. The Arab fanatics will not permit Jews to live in peace anywhere in the Middle East. Their goal is to rid the Middle East of Jews and then to go on killing our people in the rest of the world. Anti-Semites understand the plans of Arab fanatics, but far too many politicians and even Jews believe that negotiations can lead to a solution where Israel and Arabs can live in peace side by side in what is now Israel. While this dream may eventually come to be, it is difficult to believe that such a peaceful solution can come during the lifetime of anyone alive today.

Rabbi Marc Angel of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals has reprinted a speech by Senator Joseph Lieberman, z"l, who passed away on March 27. The Democratic party nominated Senator Lieberman for vice president only twenty-four years ago. Would any political party in the U.S. nominate an Orthodox Jew for national office today? While President Biden started last October as very pro Israel after the Hamas attack, the recent actions of his administration have been to pressure Israel to pause or stop its efforts to rid Gaza of Hamas murderers, rely on negotiations rather than military pressure to free the hostages, and provide substantially more aid to Hamas. Many leaders of his political party are pressuring Israelis to change their government leaders and to stop the efforts to eliminate Hamas.

Pesach comes in little more than three weeks, and then we start Sefirah. I am not up to the challenge this week of writing my normal introduction to the parsha. For more of my insights on the parsha, interested readers may look at the first couple of pages of my archives for Tzav for 2020-23. I like to believe that my beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, would have agreed with the sentiments that I expressed this week.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah and Alan

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 and since the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Hersh ben Perel Chana (Hersh Polin, hostage to terrorists in Gaza); Moshe Aaron ben Leah Beilah (wounded in battle in Gaza), Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Reuven ben Basha Chaya Zlata Lana, Yoram Ben Shoshana, Leib Dovid ben Etel, Asher Shlomo ben Ettie, Avraham ben Gavriela, Mordechai ben Chaya, 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; Rena bat Ilsa, Riva Golda bat Leah, Sarah Feige bat Chaya, Sharon bat Sarah, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, and all our fellow Jews in danger in and near Israel. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom

Hannah & Alan

Parshat Tzav: Daniel Perez – The Living Bridge Between Purim and Pesach

By Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander

President and Rosh HaYeshiva, Ohr Torah Stone © 5784 (2024)

We find ourselves between the two holidays, Purim and Pesach, which differ greatly in their storylines. The opening story of the Jewish people puts God front and center. Nature defying miracles, from the river turning to blood to the splitting of the sea, reflect the wondrous character of that moment in history. God is front and center, the prime mover of the story. It is no surprise that the name of Moshe does not appear in the Haggadah)except for once in a later addition to the Haggadah text(. In our annual recounting of the story of the Exodus, it is God who took the people of Israel out of Egypt and any intermediaries are not recognized.

Yet the opposite is true of the Purim story, among the final events recorded in Tanach, described by the Gemara)Yoma 29a(as '*sof kol hanisim*,' 'the last of all the miracles.' In Megillat Esther, it is God who is absent; not a single explicit

mention of the Divine can be found in the entire text of the megilla, with the focus and even the megilla's name fully featuring human actors. At face value, the story is merely one of political machinations, in which the human actors successfully orchestrate a plan to save the Jewish people.

These two models of redemption, that of Pesach and that of Purim, are described in kabbalistic writing as *it'aruta de-l'eila,* 'awakening from above' and *it'aruta de-le-tatta*, 'awakening from below.' On Pesach, it is God in the heavens who dramatically acts on our behalf, to bring redemption. But there are moments in our history, like Purim, which are marked by the awakening from below -what we might call bottom up, grassroots redemption. These are moments when it is we the Jewish people who, inspired by the Divine, take matters into our own hands to bring redemption for our people.

These two holiday episodes in our history share common elements of observance which join the experiences together. Both are celebrated through the shared quality of giving. For Purim, which we just celebrated, it was Matanot L'evyonim, giving gifts to the needy, not to mention Mishloach Manot, spreading goodwill within the community through the exchange of food baskets.

Likewise, even before Pesach arrives, we have the mandate of *Kimcha d'Pischa*, the supplemental collection of charitable funds to assist those facing financial difficulties preparing for Pesach. What's more,the Seder opens with an invitation addressed to all those who are hungry, and the Korban Pesach itself, the Paschal sacrifice, was meant to be eaten only in a *chabura*, a gathering of people who partake together in the sacrifice and its accompanying festivities.

It would seem that both forms of redemption, *it'aruta de-l'eila* and *it'aruta de-le-tatta,* take as a prerequisite our own willingness to look out for those around us. Only solidarity can direct us towards achieving our own redemption, and only unity can win over God's favor and divine intervention. Whenever we celebrate our redemption, our first and primary step must be to join together in community, creating a culture of unity and cooperation within Klal Yisrael.

A guiding *halakhic* principle emphasizes "*zirizim makdimim,*" we hurry to perform *mitzvot*)Pesachim 4a(. This should dictate that during a leap year in which there are two months of Adar, Purim should be celebrated in the first one. Yet we purposely delay the celebration of Purim until Adar II, juxtaposing the celebration of Purim to Pesach. This is done to highlight that the holidays of Purim and Pesach have a common spiritual core: the redemption of our people, celebrated through a *halakhic* mandate of concern for the other.

At the shiva for Daniel Perez z"l, the son of Rabbi Doron and Shelley Perez, whose murder on October 7th, while defending the communities under attack, was recently confirmed and who was laid to rest last week, I remarked that the prayers on behalf of Daniel's sacrifice reflect the solidarity and sense of responsibility for Klal Yisrael which is the prerequisite for our redemption. We can feel in these times the *it'aruta de-le-tatta*, redemption driven by the stirrings of our own hearts and our resolve as a people to act, which has led to unbelievable demonstrations of heroism by men and women, on the frontlines in Gaza and in the North. It has also led to tremendous generosity of purpose and spirit in Jewish communities throughout Israel and the diaspora.

Daniel z"l embodied these ideals of *gevurah* and *it'aruta de-le-tatta* in his commitment to serve his country and protect the people of Israel by proudly donning the priestly vestments of the IDF as he saved hundreds.

In our commitment to help bring all the hostages home and the remains of loved ones, a goal which has not yet been actualized, we have all been engaged in acts of prayer and *chesed* in their names, and we must continue to do so. As we recited Shema Yisroel together with Jews across the world this past Thursday, it remains our fervent hope that as we make our way to Pesach, the Jewish people's spirit of solidarity and the bravery of soldiers like Daniel z"l should inspire the will of God, *it'aruta de-l'eila,* to swiftly bestow upon us the return of those who have been kidnapped and for the final blow of destruction to be delivered upon our enemies.

May Daniel ben haRav Doron and Shelley, and all those who have given their lives in acts of ultimate courage and sacrifice, be a blessing for all of us and serve as the living bridge that helps to bring the final redemption.

* Ohr Torah Stone is a modern Orthodox group of 32 institutions and programs. Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin is the Founding Director, and Rabbi Dr. Brander is President and Rosh HaYeshiva. For more information or to support Ohr Torah Stone, contact ohrtorahstone@otsyny.org or 212-935-8672. Donations to 49 West 45th Street #701, New York, NY 10036.

On a recent Shabbat)March 16(, thugs used a firebomb to set the Chabad center of Las Olas)Ft. Lauderdale(in Southern Florida on fire. The Chabad centers in the area have sent an appeal for support so the Las Olas Chabad can rebuild and continue to serve Jews in its region. For more information, https://jewishfl.org/

Tzav: Financial Advice

By Rabbi Dovid Green © 5760 (2000)

"And G-d spoke to Moshe saying: 'Command Aharon and his children as follows, This is the law of the)completely(burnt offering…'")Leviticus 6:1-2(. The medieval commentator, Rashi, explains that the expression *"command"* used here is intended to exhort the Kohanim)dedicated servants of G-d(to act. Why do they need encouragement here? It is because there is a loss of money in the fulfillment of this commandment, and in that case there is an extra need for encouragement.

What loss of money is there in this particular commandment? One explanation is that since this is a completely burnt offering, the Kohanim receive no share of it, and they will prefer to involve themselves in bringing the offerings in which they do receive a share.

Others explain that the fact that there was an obligation to keep a fire going all night on the altar regardless of the need, involved seeming unnecessary use of the wood, and a *"waste"* of money.

The overall point is that there is a level of human nature which needs to be addressed when doing the right thing involves divesting oneself of, or losing anticipated funds.

The Sfas Emes, a 19th century Chassidic leader and luminary, explained as follows. These words are said regarding the generations of Jews living through the Diaspora. So many were up against anti-Semites who held the Jews back from making a living and made it extremely difficult for them to observe the commandments, due to poverty and preoccupation with eking out a living. The Torah is strongly encouraging them to persevere.

I'm no sage, but I think the same can be said about the generation we are living in as well. So many of us in the Western world are living in such relative comfort that we have become preoccupied with our *"toys,"* and maintaining our financial security, to the exclusion of pursuit of spiritual growth – Torah learning, and Mitzvah observance. We all feel disappointed by the failure of our material and physical pleasures to provide us with a sustained contentment, but we delude ourselves into just taking a larger dose. We are barking up the wrong tree. By and large, the people who the Sfas Emes was speaking to understood that Torah, and service of G-d, was their source of strength and spirituality. We, who live in the generations of relative luxury, are now challenged to recognize the same. Let us remember the words of Rabbi Yossi Ben Kisma *)Chapters of the Fathers* 6:9(*"for when a person leaves this world, nothing accompanies him – not silver and gold, or priceless stones and pearls, – but Torah)learning(and good deeds alone."* Let us not look to the "new gods" which society has created for itself, but let us rediscover the true source of happiness and lasting worth – Torah learning, and observance of its commandments.

Good Shabbos!

https://torah.org/torah-portion/dvartorah-5760-tzav/

Tzav --The Rosh Yeshiva Responds:
Using Pet Food on Pesach that is Less Than 50% Chametz

by Rabbi Dov Linzer
President and Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah

> *If your offering is a meal offering on a griddle, it shall be of choice flour with oil mixed in, unleavened.* Vayikra 2:5

QUESTION — Denver, CO

Rabbi Linzer, what is your view on using pet food on Pesach that is ta'arovet chametz — less than 50% percent grain — instead of trying to find grain-free pet food? This is important to dog owners who find it difficult to switch foods. I understand that the hesitancy on this is whether or not dog food can be classified as nifsal mei'achilat adam (not fit for human consumption). It seems to me that even though it may be made tolerable to humans by adding things to it, cooking it etc., that the standard should be how it is meant to be eaten and batla da'ato etzel kol bnei adam (his unique/odd tastes don't have halakhic implications).

ANSWER

A question we need to consider is whether the fact that "humans won't stomach it," because it's made out of parts of the animal we are repulsed by, is enough to make it eino ra'uy (not deemed edible), since in terms of the actual taste, texture, etc., it might very much be ra'uy. If it was packaged as ground beef, and no one was the wiser, would people eat it and say "this is disgusting"? Or would it taste good/acceptable?

This reminds me of a scene from *Around the World in 80 Days* where the traveler says to a boat captain — this food is delicious. What is it? And the captain responds (I think): "Cat." Suddenly the person eating it finds it disgusting and repulsive and spits it out.

This issue comes up in the discussion of ta'am lifgam (a flavor that spoils food) — see *Shulchan Aruch* Yoreh De'ah 107:2:

Flies and similar disgusting things that repulse people and which are found cooked food — one may pick them out and the food remains permitted because the emission of disgusting items does not render food forbidden.

The need for this ruling is exactly because the principle of ta'am lifgam wouldn't tell you the halakha of the taste of flies (maybe they taste good), and yet it is considered ta'am lifgam because we are disgusted by it. So — does that mean the same would apply to dog food? Maybe. But there is quite likely a big difference between ta'am (taste) and be'eyn (actual). If you were to eat the fly itself, you would be chayav (liable) even though you are disgusted by it. So unless you say that is a gazeirat ha'katuv (biblical decree) it could be an indication to the opposite meaning that this disgust does not suffice when dealing with be'eyn. So, in order to give a ruling I would like to find out how dog food really tastes.

To that end, here's an exchange I found on the web:

> *Person A: My dog's food is basically meat + some soy + some other grains. What do they do to dog food that makes it taste so bad? Lower quality meat? Cooking it to death (canning)? The constitutive ingredients are all pretty good.*
>
> *Person B: they're probably pretty indiscriminate about the cut of meat that goes in there. Likely parts we wouldn't ordinarily eat — that wouldn't even go into salami or hot dogs because of off flavors. Plus some of the binders are no doubt unpleasant. Some are amino acids which contain sulfur. Good thing dogs have fewer taste buds than we do -- they won't detect the bitter and sour notes.*

So it sounds like it would only be eaten besh'at ha'dechak (in exigent situations), which would make it unfit for human consumption, but I think some more investigation would be worthwhile.

Bottom line is that I think there are rationales that permit the use of this dog food if there is no other viable option, or the kosher for Pesach option is unduly expensive. However, le'chatchila (from the outset), all things being equal, I would advise searching out grain-free dog food.

* President and Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, Bronx, NY.

YCT invites readers to a Pre-Pesach Learning on Zoom, Free & Open to the Public, Sunday, April 7th, 8-10 p.m., Eastern Time. For information, yctorah.org.

https://library.yctorah.org/2024/03/ryrpekudei/

Jews are Like Onions: The Importance of a Layered Identity

By Rabbi Haggai Resnikoff *

If I wasn't a rabbi, what would I be? If I were to lose my rabbinic learning, training, experience and practice, what would be left? My identity as a father? A husband? A friend? What if those were lost as well? The question is not academic in these days of dementia and strokes. Would I still be me? Or something else? A different person?

The Rogachover Gaon, Rabbi Yosef Rosen (1858-1936, Latvia), provides perspective on this question in an involved analysis that begins in Parashat Tzav. The Torah tells us (Vayikra 7:18):

> *If any of the flesh of the shlamim sacrifice is eaten on the third day, it shall not be acceptable; it shall not count for the one who offered it. It is an offensive thing, and the person who eats of it shall bear the guilt.*

The simple read: if a person eats their shelamim (celebratory-offering) after the time designated for consumption, the sacrifice is invalid. Our sages, however, present a different interpretation (Bavli, Zevachim 29a). The sacrifice becomes invalid, they argue, only if someone intends from the outset to eat it outside of its designated time. This is the principle of pigul.

Based on this, the Talmud asks (Zevachim 7a), what happens if you mistakenly slaughter a todah (thanksgiving-offering) thinking that it is a shlamim? A standard shlamim is eaten for two days and one night (Vayikra 7:16). A todah, however, can only be eaten for one day and one night (Vayikra 7:15). Prima facie, this should constitute pigul since we intend to eat it outside of the designated time. On the other hand, the Torah categorizes the todah as a type of shlamim (Vayikra 7:11-12). Perhaps, therefore, the sacrifice hasn't been totally misconstrued.

The Rogachover (Tzafnath Paane'ach Tinyana, 68b) notes that in one place (Zevachim 7a), the Gemara says that a todah slaughtered as a shlamim is kosher. Elsewhere (Menachot 49a), however, it says that a chatat (sin-offering) that is slaughtered as a shlamim is pigul. Rashi explains that this is because you intended to eat it outside the designated time. This should be true of a todah/shlamim mix-up as well.

The solution, writes the Rogachover, is a third source. He writes,

> *In Menachot 46b it explains that if the bread is broken after the todah is slaughtered, then it loses the name todah and reverts to being a shlamim. Therefore, it can be eaten for two days…Thus it is possible to slaughter a todah as a shlamim and it may revert to being a shlamim.*

In other words, the todah has layers of identity. If it loses the identity of thanksgiving, it reverts to its more general identity: shlamim (celebration). Thus to slaughter a todah as a shlamim is not pigul because at least once the two are identical.

The Rogachover applies this idea of layered identity to argue that a priest who has invalidated their priesthood reverts to Levitical status and a high-priest who loses his identity reverts to the identity of a standard priest.

This returns us to our original question, if I was to lose the layer of my identity that I have built over my adult life, what will be left of me? This principle of layered identity gives me hope that even if my adult contributions are negated, the spiritual, moral, and intellectual molding of my parents will remain. This echoes the principle of memory loss cited by geriatricians: first in, last out. Our earliest memories, skills, and education remain longest when everything else has fallen away.

There are twenty-three days until Pesach. In these three weeks, let's work to establish a layer of Jewish identity beneath the veneer of intellectualism and orthopraxis that so often take center stage at this time. Let's ask ourselves how we can make Pesach a fundamental identity building experience for our children. If we don't have children, for whom can we create an identity affirming experience? Friends? Strangers? Ourselves? We've seen that Jewish identity is multi-layered. This Pesach, let's build from the bottom.

***** Dean and Rebbe at YCT. Semicha at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah 2014.

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https://library.yctorah.org/2024/03/tzav5784/

Why antisemitism and anti-Zionism are so deeply intertwined

By Rabbi Avi Weiss *****

Approaching my 80th birthday, I realize that as a Jew, I've lived a honeymoon life. Born at the tail end of World War II, I grew up with antisemitism by and large under control, as even vicious Jew haters were reticent to attack Jews. To some extent, I believe, the world's guilt over either its complicity or inactivity as 6 million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust silenced the enemies of our people.

This doesn't mean anti-Semitism was not a serious problem, especially in recent decades. There were vicious antisemites and horrific antisemitic incidents that had to be condemned. The likes of Louis Farrakhan and David Duke needed to be confronted head on. Events like the 1991 murder of Yankel Rosenbaum, a Hasidic Lubavitch scholar stabbed to death by a Jew-hating mob, brought fear into the hearts and souls of the Jewish community. Still, antisemitism was not endemic.

Eight decades after the Holocaust, however, the Shoah is in the rearview mirror. For much of the world, it is a footnote in history. Its memory no longer stymies antisemites, who were always hiding in the shadows and have now surfaced with fury.

The holiday of Purim, celebrated by Jews around the world this weekend, commemorates a story in the Bible's Book of Esther when the whole of the Jewish community in ancient Persia was threatened with extinction by the King's adviser Haman and his cohorts.

The story touches upon dimensions of antisemitism that were pungent back then, and have remained powerful and threatening across thousands of years. These forms of hatred of Jews past and present fall into three categories shaping the foundations of a nation: people, ideology and land. We have seen all of them in modern times.

During the Holocaust the goal of the Third Reich was the genocide of the Jewish people; that is, murdering Jews because they were Jews. It was the same agenda that motivated Haman two millennia ago.

During the Cold War, Soviet antisemitism came to the fore with a vengeance after the Second World War. It was based on loathing Jewish faith and ideology. Like Haman, the USSR's leaders saw our Jewish culture and religious practices as

alien to their state. Believing Judaism contrary to their Marxist view of the world, the Soviets didn't allow Jews to live a Jewish life. Those who wished to emigrate were held as quasi-hostages behind the Iron Curtain.

Today, antisemitism is often expressed by denying that Jews have the right to be sovereign in their own land. Yet, without sovereignty, there can be no security. Jews will forever be vulnerable to the next Haman to come along. Throughout the millennia, as a stateless people, Jews were subject to persecution, discrimination and expulsion. This is a historical reality that anti-Zionists conveniently ignore when they say they are not against Jews, just against Jews having their own state.

They, and the world at large, also have no problem with having Muslim states, several of them explicitly defined as Islamic or Arab. However, the concept of one tiny Jewish state, the only Western-style democracy in the Middle East, is constantly rejected and attacked.

Statehood is built into Jewish consciousness. Israel is more than just a place where Jews can be free and safe. As Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the first Ashkenazic chief rabbi of pre-state Israel said: Israel is not external to Judaism but inherently part of Jewish consciousness. To wit: Jews across the religious denominations pray for the return to Zion in their daily liturgy. And religious or not, the vast majority of Jews feel inextricably, soulfully bound to Israel and describe themselves as Zionists.

***** Founding rabbi of the Hebrew institute of Riverdale-the Bayit and founder and co-founder, respectively, of the Yeshivat Chovevei Torah and Yeshivat Maharat rabbinical schools..

https://yctorah.org/2024/03/rabbi-avi-weiss-antisemitism-and-anti-zionism/ The complete article is at https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/23/opinions/israel-gaza-antisemitism-anti-zionism-purim-weiss/

One People: Thoughts for Parashat Tsav

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

This week's Parasha opens with rules pertaining to a daily burnt-offering in the Mishkan, and later also in the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem. Rabbi Joseph Hertz pointed out that this offering was regarded as an atoning sacrifice for the community. The whole Jewish People, not just a few wealthy donors, shared in the cost.

The underlying theme of this practice stresses the wholeness of the Jewish People. The daily atonement offerings were a national expression of commitment. We come before God as one People; we seek atonement as one People; we each share responsibility for the wellbeing of the whole People.

Although we may have different views on many topics, we are one People. Even if we have strong competing factions on various issues, this ultimate oneness must not come into question. When any one of us is attacked, all of us are attacked. When the Jewish People is in peril, we set aside all differences in order to stand in defense of our People.

The Passover Haggada includes a passage about a rasha, the wicked child. What is the essence of this person's wickedness? The rasha is so designated in the Haggada not for sins of violence or ritual infractions but for separating from the community. The rasha, although a Jew, does not identify with the destiny of the Jewish People. "What is this service of yours? It belongs to you, not to me. I cut myself off from the unity of the People." The Haggada offers a reply to the rasha: if you had been a slave in ancient Egypt you would not have been redeemed. You would not have proven worthy to be part of our People because you chose not to feel part of our destiny.

The message applies to all generations including our own. Those of Jewish ancestry who betray their People, especially at times of crisis, prove themselves unworthy of the future redemption of our People.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, in his "On Repentance," offers a description of what it means for a Jew to identify with Kenesset Israel, the eternal Congregation of Israel:

"The Jew who believes in Kenesset Israel is the Jew who lives with Kenesset Israel where she may be and is prepared to die for her, who hurts with her pain and rejoices in her joy, who fights her wars, suffers in her defeats, and celebrates her victories. The Jew who believes in Kenesset Israel is the Jew who joins himself as an indestructible link not only to the Jewish people of this generation but to Kenesset Israel of all generations. How? Through Torah, which is and creates the continuity of all the generations of Israel for all time."

This Shabbat is known as Shabbat Parah. Along with the regular Shabbat Torah reading, we read the passages relating to the red heifer. In ancient times, the ashes of the red heifer were used in a purification rite so that all Israelites would be ritually pure in time to celebrate Passover. Shabbat Parah is a reminder for all of us to purify ourselves so that we may be ready and worthy to celebrate the redemption that Passover represents. As we reaffirm our participation in the redemption of Kenesset Israel in olden days, we also reaffirm our commitment to Kenesset Israel today, tomorrow, and for all time.

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

The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals has experienced a significant drop in donations during the pandemic. The Institute needs our help to maintain and strengthen our Institute. Each gift, large or small, is a vote for an intellectually vibrant, compassionate, inclusive Orthodox Judaism. You may contribute on our website jewishideas.org or you may send your check to Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, 2 West 70th Street, New York, NY 10023. Ed.: Please join me in helping the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals during its winter fund raising period. Thank you.

https://www.jewishideas.org/node/3211

Religion and Politics in America

by Senator Joseph Lieberman z"l *

I confess I also like a good introduction, so I thank you, President Samuelson, for such a generous one, and for inviting me to be with you this morning. I have the greatest admiration for this university's work in educating minds, ennobling spirits, and inspiring in your students a commitment to the words etched in stone at the entrance to this great campus: "Enter to learn, go forth to serve." There is a warm ecumenical spirit that flows through this campus, and I feel a strong connection to BYU because of the core principles it stands for, which are at once rooted in the tradition of the Mormon faith, but also in the fundamental values that are shared by all Americans and all people of faith.

In this vein, I am reminded of something that happened to me almost exactly three years ago, during the last presidential election. As many of you know, I made the decision back in 2008 to support my friend John McCain for president, even though he was a Republican and I am a Democrat. The most intense and stressful period in any presidential campaign is the final stretch — and I was traveling around the country, trying to rally support for John and his running mate, Governor Sarah Palin of Alaska. It was the eve of the vice presidential debate that would pit Governor Palin against Barack Obama's running mate, Joe Biden, and the McCain team was increasingly nervous. I had been the Democratic vice presidential nominee in 2000, when Al Gore was running for President against George W. Bush, and so the McCain team asked me to go to Philadelphia, where Governor Palin was practicing for the debate, to see if I could help her prepare. When I arrived at the Westin Hotel in downtown Philadelphia for the debate prep session, Governor Palin seemed tired and frustrated, and the McCain team was fast approaching a full-blown panic.

One advisor turned to me and said: "Senator, we need your help. Please go in there and talk to her. You have something in common with Governor Palin that none of the rest of us has. You are both religious people."

Now, this was a wonderful moment, I thought, because although Sarah Palin is Christian and I am Jewish, this advisor sensed there might be a special bond between us based on our religious beliefs and observance. And I discovered that

there was. I began our conversation by asking her if she was familiar with the biblical story of Queen Esther, in which the young queen is called upon to consider her destiny and, with tremendous courage and faith, stand up to the genocidal Haman and save the Jewish people. Governor Palin was indeed very familiar with the story — and I suspect many of you may be as well — so, I reminded her that, as people of faith, we share a belief that we are not here by accident — that we are here on earth for a reason and a purpose. Like Queen Esther, Governor Palin was at a moment of personal destiny. "You have been given a big opportunity," I said, "and you have a choice to make about whether or not you will seize it and your destiny. So be yourself and have faith, and God will see you through this."

Governor Palin told me that my words meant a lot to her. The conversation meant a lot to me too because it reminded me that irrespective of theological or political differences, there is a common bond between people of faith. Indeed, people of faith have a shared gratitude for what we have been given — beginning first and foremost with our lives. We also believe what both the Bible and the Declaration of Independence tell us: that each and every one of us is a child of God, and that as such, every person enjoys certain basic rights, liberties, capabilities, and responsibilities. We believe that each of us has his or her own destiny, and that this great nation that we are all part of has a destiny too.

In this spirit, the subject I would like to discuss with you this morning is the relationship between religion and politics in America, a subject that is very personal to me. You see, my Jewish faith is central to my life, including my career in politics. My faith has provided me with a foundation, an order, and indeed a purpose, and has so much to do with the way I navigate through each day, both personally and professionally, in ways both large and small. It also means that, like you, I observe the Sabbath, or Shabbat, as it is called in Hebrew. This means that, for me and other observant Jews, from before sunset on Friday until after sunset on Saturday, I turn off my Blackberry. I do not drive or ride in a car. If there is a vote in the Senate, I will walk there from my home a few miles away.

My observance of the Sabbath is also the subject of the book I recently wrote. Now, I know some people may wonder why a United States Senator would write a book about a religious subject like the Sabbath. The reason is simple: I love the Sabbath and believe that it is at once a commandment we must keep, but also a gift from God that "keeps" and nurtures those of us who observe it. That has certainly been true for me, and I wrote this book because I want to share the Sabbath with everyone, in the hope that they will grow to love it as much as I do.

Before I talk about my own spiritual path and career in politics, however, I think it is important to put all of this in a broader context. Of course, we are at the start of another presidential campaign, one in which discussions and debates about the relationship between politics and religion have already played a prominent role. But in fact, these are questions that are very old — going all the way back to the Founders of our country, who wrote the Declaration of Independence and later the Constitution. The vision of our Founders is relevant because it reminds us that, from the beginning, America has been a nation that has been defined not by our borders, but by our values. One of those founding values was a belief in a higher power — a belief in God. The United States was formed, as the Declaration of Independence says, to secure for the people of this country the "inalienable rights" of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" that were endowed by our Creator. In that way, the United States of America was and is a faith-based initiative. What is equally striking and remarkable is that although our Founders were overwhelmingly men of the same Christian faith, the founding documents they bequeathed us guarantee religious freedom, including the right of every American to hold elective office regardless of his or her religion.

It is Article VI of our great Constitution that explicitly bans religious tests for elective officials, allowing Americans to hold office irrespective of their faith. And it is the First Amendment of our Constitution that prohibits the "establishment" of an official religion, ensuring for every American the right to worship — or not to worship — as he or she so chooses. Succeeding generations have been inspired by this founding vision and endeavored to make real its full promise, which I have always believed is a promise of freedom of religion, not freedom from religion. America's religious freedom has created a unique public square in which there is no establishment of one religion but freedom for all religions. And that means there is tolerance for different religions throughout our country and in our public life. Perhaps that is why from 1776 to today, America has been a uniquely religious country.

Alexis de Tocqueville, the famous French student of America, noted the remarkable religiosity of Americans in his definitive account of the United States in the nineteenth century. He wrote that there is no country in which religion “retains greater influence over the souls of men than in America,” and added that “there can be no greater proof of its utility and its conformity to human nature than that its influence is powerfully felt over the most enlightened and free nation on earth.” This observation is still true today: Over 90 percent of Americans say they believe in God, and the majority of Americans regularly attend a house of worship. Tocqueville also observed that although Americans were divided by religious sects, “they all look upon their religion in the same light,” as he put it. He recognized that though characterized by different and diverse belief systems, there are universal values that unite all Americans, which is a second consequence of our country’s commitment to religious freedom. Indeed, religious freedom in America has given birth to the development of a set of shared religious values that constitute what President Abraham Lincoln called America’s “political religion” and Walt Whitman praised as “a sublime and serious Religious Democracy” in this nation.

In American history, the sublime and serious combination of religion and democracy has been a force for good in our public life. Some of the great movements of conscience in America emerged from the convictions of religious people and used the language and liturgy of faith to build support. It was this spirit that animated the abolitionist movement, which fought to end the evil of slavery in the mid-nineteenth century. It was this spirit that also animated the suffragist activists of the twentieth century who fought for the right of women to vote and participate in our civic life as equals. And it was this spirit that I was personally privileged to witness when I was in college at Yale in the early 1960s during the civil rights movement in America, which aimed to end racial discrimination and empower African Americans to reclaim their voting rights in southern states. I was inspired to join the civil rights movement because of the values it represented, which were deeply rooted in my faith: the values of equality, inclusiveness, tolerance, and service to others. The purpose of the movement was best expressed by the words of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in his soaring “I Have Dream” speech. This speech — which was a call for freedom, for justice, and for a return to America’s founding values — represented the culmination of the historic March on Washington, a movement I took part in, in which thousands of us, of all religions, races, and nationalities, joined together peacefully and powerfully to petition our government to right the wrong of racial bigotry.

For me, the March on Washington was America at its best. It was America as my family and faith had encouraged me to believe it could be.

During the early 1960s, I felt a boundless sense of hope and possibility about the future that lay ahead for our nation. It was also while I was at college that another important barrier was broken. It was in the fall of my freshman year that a Roman Catholic, John F. Kennedy, was elected to the presidency for the first time in American history. At the time, I felt a sense of possibility that because of President Kennedy's election, doors were going to open for me too and for others who were part of minority faiths, races, and ethnicities. President Kennedy’s historic election embodies the tolerance and respect Americans generally have for religions different from their own — religions whose adherents are a minority in our country.

In 2000, when Al Gore gave me the privilege of being the first Jewish American to be nominated for national office, I personally experienced the American people’s generosity of spirit, fairness, and acceptance of religious diversity. One African American minister said to me on the day I was nominated, “In America, when a barrier is broken for one group, the doors of opportunity open wider for every American.” I felt that warm sense of shared progress throughout the campaign. I also felt free — indeed I was encouraged — to talk about my religion and the central role observance plays in my life. I have some wonderful memories that make this clear in living anecdotes, several of which I write about in my book on the Sabbath. A veteran Secret Service agent who had worked several national campaigns told me he had never heard so many people say “God bless you” to a candidate. It was a reflection, I think, of how Americans embrace the faith that we share, even though we may be of different religions.

On another occasion, I remember once speaking to a rally of Latino Americans and seeing in the front row a woman who had created a poster which perhaps best expressed the sense of shared values and shared aspirations that I am speaking about now in two powerful words that I don't think ever appeared together before: "Viva Chutzpah!" These Americans, like so many others across the country, were moved by the fundamental American principle of equal opportunity and respect

for diversity of religious belief that has been at the heart of our American story from the beginning. In the end, the Gore-Lieberman ticket received over a half-million more votes than the Bush-Cheney ticket. I do not cite these matters to relitigate the nettlesome matter of Florida's electoral votes, but rather as unambiguous proof that our ticket was judged on our qualifications and policies, not on the basis of my religion. That's the way our Founders wanted it to be and the way it should be.

As we begin the 2012 presidential election cycle, faith and politics have once again become a source of some interest, controversy and perhaps apprehension. For instance, some have expressed anxiety about open professions of faith by a few of the candidates in the Republican primary. I do not share these anxieties. First, a candidate does not give up his or her freedom to exercise freedom of speech during a presidential campaign. If a candidate wants to discuss his or her faith that is their right, just as it is everyone else's right to decide how they feel about those expressions of faith. I welcome the opportunity to hear about a candidate's faith; I find it helpful, in fact, because it tells me more about the kind of leader he or she would be. Now we also have two Mormon candidates running for president in 2012, and one of them, Governor Mitt Romney, a distinguished graduate of this university, may well end up as the Republican nominee. If that happens, a new barrier will be broken — and the door of opportunity in our country will once again be wider for all of us. I also hope that no candidate will be judged solely on the basis of his or her faith. Our national candidates should be judged in the best American way — that is, on the basis of their capabilities and policies, their experience, and their vision.

In 1960, when John F. Kennedy was running for president, it was at a time when there was still significant anti-Catholic prejudice in the country. On the eve of the vote, he spoke about this challenge, and his words remain as true today as they did then. He said, "If this election is decided on the basis that 40 million Americans lost their chance of being president on the day they were baptized then it is the whole nation that will be the loser — in the eyes of Catholics and non-Catholics around the world, in the eyes of history, and in the eyes of our own people."

The same will be true if Americans judge Governor Romney and Governor Huntsman based on their Mormon faith alone. In America, there cannot be a religious test for serving in elective office and I hope and believe that Americans of all faiths — and of no faith — will not base their votes on the fact that Governor Romney's Mormon faith is different from their own. Just as Americans rose above differences when John F. Kennedy's Roman Catholic faith was "different" in 1960, and 16 years later when Jimmy Carter's Christian evangelical faith was "different," and again in 2000 when my Jewish faith was "different," Governor Romney must be judged on his personal qualities, his leadership, his experience, and his ideas for America's future. My experience in 2000 gives me great confidence that the American people will again reject any sectarian religious tests for office and show their strong character, instinctive fairness and steadfast belief in our Declaration of Independence and in our Constitution. That truly is the American way.

Let me conclude by saying that there is one more way in which I believe that the religion of the American people is profoundly important to the current time of American life: a time when millions of Americans can't find work; when millions of Americans are worried about whether they will have their jobs next year; when millions of Americans are pessimistic about America's future; and when people all over the world worry or, in the case of our opponents and enemies, hope that America has begun an irreversible decline. I don't buy into this pessimism about America's future at all. I believe that this twenty-first century will be another great century for America. One of the big reasons for my optimism is those numbers I cited earlier — that more than 90 percent of the American people believe in God and more than half of Americans regularly attend a house of worship. Now why is that important? It is important because faith in God, love of Country, a sense of unity, and confidence in the power of every individual have carried America through crises greater than the one we face today and will, I am sure, propel us forward again.

People of faith are also strengthened by their faith in God to make clear and proper distinctions and choices. This view is antithetical to moral relativism — it is a positive, affirmative worldview that is not only deeply American, but that is a crucial ingredient to any culture that aspires to be free and prosperous. After all, the greatest source of America's strength and hope is not in the divisive politics of Washington. It is in the broadly shared values of the American people and the unity of action so many of us derive from the strength we find in the varied houses of worship we attend. My time here with you at BYU has also made me optimistic about the future and the great American century that lies ahead. You inspire optimism in

me because I am confident that when you go forth from these gates, guided by your faith, your service will help to make America the more perfect union it has always aspired to be.

* Joseph I. Lieberman was Senior United States Senator from Connecticut and was the first Jewish Vice Presidential candidate of a major party, running on the Democratic ticket in the 2000 election. An Orthodox Jew, his most recent book is *The Gift of Rest: Rediscovering the Beauty of the Sabbath.* This is the text of address delivered by Senator Joseph I. Lieberman to students at Brigham Young University, October 26, 2011. This article appears in issue 14 of *Conversations,* the journal of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, and was also reprinted in issue 28. Senator Lieberman was the Honored Guest Speaker at the 10th Anniversary Dinner of our Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, held on May 8, 2017. Senator Lieberman passed away March 27, 2024.

https://www.jewishideas.org/article/religion-and-politics-america-joseph-lieberman

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Tzav -- Terumas HaDeshen – A Penny for Your Thoughts

By Rabbi Mordechai Rhine *

The Mizbeiach was a focal point of the Beis Hamikdash. On it countless Korbanos (offerings) were burned. The ash that remained was neatened up daily into a pile at the center of the Mizbeiach. Periodically the Kohanim would remove the ash to an area outside the Beis HaMikdash.

In addition to the periodic cleaning, there is an interesting daily Mitzvah to take a small amount of ash of yesterday's offerings as a Teruma, a tithe. This tithe was placed next to the Mizbeiach. It would be absorbed into the ground of the Beis Hamikdash to become a permanent part of the Beis HaMikdash. We wonder: What was the significance of this daily tithe?

Rav Hirsch explains that our attitudes to yesterday's events color the way we live our lives. There are people who literally live in the past. They get bogged down by the ups and downs of yesterday and expend precious energy dealing with events that have passed. Others simply move to the future without gaining from their experiences. I once heard of a teacher who asked for a raise because she had 15 years of experience. The principal is said to have replied, "You have only one year of experience, but it was repeated 14 times."
Says Rav Hirsch: the way that the ash of yesterday was removed is the way we should live our lives. The small portion of ash that the Kohein removed and saved symbolizes how we must treasure the lessons of yesterday. But the remainder of the ash was dealt with differently. The remaining ash was moved to the pile and removed periodically. Because a new day needs a clear playing field. *"Leave behind yesterday's baggage,"* the mitzvah declares, *"but take with you its lessons in the form of life experience."*

In the high school classes where I teach writing skills, I require that the students save all their work throughout the year. In this way we can refer back to their writing and to the corrections of previous assignments. Periodically, however, we do a "Purge" in which we spend a class period to discard most of the older assignments and choose just a few to keep. I consider this style of choosing what to save and what to discard a wonderful application of this lesson.

Similarly, my family has had the opportunity to move a number of times, finding each house to be a bit unique. For example, one house had a large garage, the other was large but had no garage. Each time, invariably, we had to downsize. In doing so we got to choose what we felt we should save because it sparked joy, and what we should discard. Those choices in life require us to pay attention.

A number of years ago I was in the office of a great Jew, and I saw that he had a jar full of pennies. Thinking that he collected pennies, I good naturedly offered to add a few of my own to his collection. "Not so simple, my friend," he told me. "You see, I only add one penny a day. At the end of the day, if I feel that it was a day well spent, then I add a penny."

Although over time we became friendly, I never asked the man where he got the idea for this interesting exercise. I suspect that he got the idea from this mitzvah. Like the Kohanim, he would reflect on the day, and symbolically deposit a penny in recognition of a day well spent. Most of yesterday's ups and downs must be discarded. But a precious amount is saved. We call it life experience.

Soon Jews throughout the world will sit down to recite the Haggadah. You may wonder: What exactly is the Haggadah? Besides being a record of the Redemption and our becoming a nation, the Haggadah is symbolic of the collective Jewish experience. Whether in Jerusalem when the Beis HaMikdash stood or just after its destruction, in Spain at the time of the expulsion, or more recently in Germany and in Russia during difficult times, the Haggadah has seen it all.

When you sit down to the seder, make sure to focus your attention on that precious book. If you were to allocate just one penny for every year that the Haggadah has been around, you would be able to fill many large containers. Pay attention to its precious teachings. Then you too, will be able to add pennies to your "jar" — a penny a day for lives well lived.

As the expression goes, "A penny for your thoughts."

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos!

* Rabbi Mordechai Rhine is a certified mediator and coach with Rabbinic experience of more than 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.**

Parshas Tzav – Matzah's Untold Holiness

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer * © 2021

When we think of matzoh, we immediately think of Pesach. Yet, there is another place where chometz is forbidden and only matzoh is allowed – on the altar in the Temple. In fact, in this week's parsha we are taught that this prohibition goes beyond the altar. When a meal offering was brought to the Temple, only a portion of it was burnt on the altar. The rest of the meal offering was given to the Kohanim, the priests serving in the Temple. The Torah tells us that this portion was considered as though G-d were sharing His meal with the servants of His household, the workers in the Temple. This meal offering in its entirety is considered holy of holies like a sin offering and a guilt offering must therefore be eaten as matzoh and not allowed to become chometz.)Vayikra 6:7-11(What is the reason for this prohibition and can this help us to understand our Pesach observance?

The Kli Yakar)ibid.(explains that the key to understanding this prohibition is the specific offerings which are mentioned. A sin offering and a guilt offering are both brought by one who is repenting for a sin. Repentance is extremely precious to G-d, as it displays that even after indulging in the pleasures of life one has decided that G-d is more important to him than those pleasures. He has therefore abandoned those pleasures and repented in order to reconnect with G-d. When one reaches this level of recognition and commitment to G-d, it is said that they have reached levels which even a perfectly righteous person could never attain. Since the act of repentance forges a deep bond with G-d, the sacrifices which are brought as part of repentance are considered holy of holies. The Torah is telling us, says the Kli Yakar, that Matzoh is compared to these two sacrifices. By carefully avoiding leaven and thereby creating matzoh, one has created something akin to repentance, something holier than a perfectly righteous person.

The Kli Yakar offers two reasons for this vast holiness in avoiding leaven and eating matzoh, both of which can add great meaning and significance to our Pesach. His first explanation is based on the fact that the leavening of the bread represents the draw of the evil inclination and our passions and desires. These forces lead us to imagine pleasures as

leavened – fluffed up and bigger than they truly are. Hashem created each and every one of us with a clear understanding of right and wrong and a deeply seated desire to connect with Him and lead a G-dly and noble life. Yet, we are also created with an evil inclination and with passions and desires which cloud our vision and confuse us, making it hard to live up to who we truly want to be. When one recognizes this great gift within themselves and seeks to push aside their passions and desires and to find what is truly good and meaningful in life, one is doing an act similar to repentance. One is actively seeking to choose G-d over earthly joys and pleasures. This concept of pushing aside the passions is represented by the matzoh. Choosing a relationship with G-d over our passions is so great that even its representation is holy of holies.

His second explanation is based on that fact that the leavening represents haughtiness. The greatest impediment to any relationship, and certainly to a relationship with G-d is haughtiness. When one's mind is focused on one's own achievements and one's own significance, they cannot truly focus on appreciating another. Without appreciating the value and the good of another, there can be no relationship. When one works to change one's mindset and to learn to focus on and appreciate relationships over outward achievements, one is working to pave the way for a true and deep relationship with G-d. This effort is also so significant that the matzoh which represents it becomes holy of holies. Our matzoh on Pesach can springboard us to great holiness. Whether we learn to choose G-d over passions or working to develop humility, we are seeking a relationship with G-d. This makes us holy of holies.

* Savannah Kollel; Congregation B'nai Brith Jacob, Savannah, GA. Until recently, Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD. Rabbi Singer will become Rosh Kollel next year.

Tzav

by Rabbi Herzl Hefter *****

]Rabbi Hefter did not send a new Dvar Torah for Tzav. Watch this space for further insights from Rabbi Hefter in future weeks.[

* Founder and dean of the Har'el Beit Midrash in Jerusalem. Rabbi Hefter is a graduate of Yeshiva University and was ordained at Yeshivat Har Etzion. For more of his writings, see www.har-el.org. To support the Beit Midrash, as we do, send donations to America Friends of Beit Midrash Har'el, 66 Cherry Lane, Teaneck, NJ 07666.

Tzav -- Sacrifices: Same Old Story?

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia * © 2024

The sages of the Midrash argue that there is a deep relationship between sacrifices and prayers:

> *Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi said: Prayers were established as a substitute for the daily sacrifices)Berakhot 26:2(.*
>
> *Rabbi Avho said: What replaces the oxen we used to sacrifice to You? Our lips, through the prayers we pray to You)Pesikta DeRav Kahana, 24(.*

This argument is a result of the deep void caused by the destruction of the Second Temple. Tradition attributes the texts of certain prayers to Ezra the Scribe and the Great Assembly, starting in the 6th century BCE, but it is quite obvious that the prayers were formed and established after the destruction. While it is true that people offered prayers already at the time of the Temple, there were no set times or a fixed formula for those prayers.

What was the role of prayers in daily life in antiquity? The main difference between sacrifices and prayers was that sacrifices were offered by a small group of cohanim representing the whole nation, while prayers were recited individually.

Why Are There No More Sacrifices?

Both temples were destroyed because their purpose was distorted. People saw the sacrifices as a payment for their sins, a payment which allowed them to start a new round. The idea that a sacrifice is a payment or negotiation with God can be found in the Torah in Balaam's attempt to convince God to allow him to curse the Israelites by offering dozens of sacrifices. In later biblical books there is harsh criticism of those who saw sacrifices and prayers as a tool for forgiveness but never changed their behavior:
In the first chapter of Isaiah we read)1:10-17(:

> *Do not bring vain offerings… I cannot tolerate your new month, Shabbat, and holidays… your assemblies have no positive purpose… I am burdened by your celebration… when you raise your hands in prayer I will look away, and though you utter many prayers I will not hear, your hands are stained with blood and corruption… Wash and purify yourselves… cease your evil deeds… learn well, seek justice, rectify injustice, and protect orphans and widows…*

This passage is particularly significant because the prophet mentions not only sacrifices, but prayers as well. It is very strongly worded, suggesting that God rejects the offerings of the people, whether physical or spiritual, and does not want them to visit His temple. The prophet insists that God's service is not about serving or worshipping Him, but rather about working in His name to bring justice and comfort to the less fortunate.

This theme continues in Isaiah 58 and 59: The prophet describes those the people who wonder why their prayers are rejected:

> *They seek Me daily! They want to understand My ways! As if they were a just nation, one who follows God's commandments. They demand justice, they ask to be close to God. They say, why have we fasted and You have not seen, why have we afflicted our soul and You did not pay heed?*
>
> *It is because you dedicate your fast day to your personal affairs and to oppressing the poor! As you fast, you fight and quarrel, striking others with a wicked fist…*
>
> *This is the fast day I want: release prisoners of injustice and remove the yoke of oppression… share your bread with the hungry, bring the poor into your home, and dress those in need, for all humans are your own flesh and blood…*

And what about us? Can we claim that Isaiah's criticism does not apply to us? Are we transformed by the experience of prayers?

Isaiah speaks of those who hit others with the fist of evil. During my first Rosh HaShana in the US, a dispute erupted over the tune for the opening Piyyut for Arvit. I was a young visiting Hazzan and before I had a chance to start services, one of the congregants started chanting his version. He apparently had a history of hijacking prayers, and another man yelled him to keep quiet and stop disturbing. The first man fell silent, we chanted the Piyyut, the rabbi delivered an uplifting sermon, and we prayed the first Arvit of the new Hebrew year of 5749. When Arvit was over, the chanting man got up, turned around, and punched his critic in the face. How inspiring!
Let us to go back to Tanakh now and read the words of Yirmeyhau, delivered shortly before the destruction of the First Temple)chapter 7(:

Hear the word of God, oh people of Yehudah… the Temple… will not help you unless you correct your ways and your evil actions! You must serve justice in the disputes between one man and another…

Do you think that you can steal, murder, commit adultery, and make false oaths… and still come and stand in front of Me, in this house which bears My name, and say: "we are now cleared of sin, so we can go back to commit all those crimes"?

These words remind us of the practices of the Catholic church in Medieval times. For a considerable donation, the sinning faithful could buy a ticket to heaven. I would like to think that there is no room for such practices in Judaism, and that one cannot expect to buy his little patch of heaven by reciting routine prayers or by giving money to spiritual leaders.

Another prophet who expresses similar sentiments is Malachi, who was active in the early years of the Second Temple)at around 510 BCE(. He rebukes the priests who turned the Temple into a business and also addresses the people who see sacrifices as a cure-all.

You have covered God's altar with tears and screams,]so how can I[pay heed to your offering or receive your sacrifices?

You ask: "what have we done?"

God will testify between you and the wife of your youth whom you have betrayed, the one who was for you a friend and an ally…

The husband's betrayal of his wife is both a metaphor for idolatry and a reference to adultery. More than that, it is a symbol for relationships based on self-interest. Spouses often drift apart when their common goals, such as raising a family or buying a house, are achieved. Those who serve God by rote, without being inspired by the prayers, are there only as long as the relationship serves their narrow interests.

These prophets have painted gloomy biblical landscape, an arid desert devoid of spiritual water, speckled with the whitening skeletons of rejected sacrifices. Let us conclude our journey by returning to the days of the First Temple and to the Book of Psalms)chapter 50(:

Listen, my nation, as I speak! Israel, as I testify! I am your God!
I will not rebuke you for lack of sacrifices, as I constantly see your offerings…

Even if I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the whole world is mine;

Do you think that I consume the flesh of oxen and the blood of rams?

In these verses the author ridicules those who think that God needs our sacrifices, following the primitive notion of an angry and hungry god who must be appeased.

…Elohim says: "how dare you speak of My laws, mention My covenant?
The true sacrifice is showing gratitude for God's blessings, and the way to redemption is to embark on the pathway of God…

Just like the sacrifices of the past, our current system of prayers has fallen into the dangerous pattern described by our prophets millennia ago. While it is true that there are many instances in which we feel uplifted and inspired by prayers, those are few and far between.

It is true that prayers give us a sense of community and togetherness, especially when we are experiencing hardships. There is also something comforting and reassuring in reading the same texts, day after day, in a ritualistic manner. But there are many problems with our prayers: incessant talking, a feeling of boredom, hard- to-understand texts, and a sense of endless repetition. Let us contemplate ways to make our prayers count for us, so they could be a worthwhile substitute for the sacrifices of the past.

Shabbat Shalom.

* Torah VeAhava. 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.** The Sefaria articles include Hebrew text, which I must delete because of issues changing software formats.

Dvar Torah from Rabbi Ovadia this year come from an unpublished draft of his forthcoming book on Tanach, which Rabbi Ovadia, who has generously shared with our readers. Rabbi Ovadia reserves all copyright rights to this material.

We Remember. . .

By Rabbi Moshe Rube *

]Ed. note: The Jewish community in Auckland has been coping with the shock of the death of a special young man in the community, as Rabbi Rube's words indicate. The sorrow in New Zealand mirrors sorrow throughout the Jewish community as Klal Yisrael mourn losses from the brutal attacks and war against Hamas during the past six months.[

A teacher of mine once described a synagogue as a place of multiple portals. Whatever experience we have in life from the highs to the lows, the celebratory to the distressing, the enlightening to the darkness, the synagogue provides a communal home for us to share these experiences together.

And this Adar has been an example of this teaching. As a congregation we have navigated together the celebrations of Purim followed by the shock and grief of losing Zachary Lerner.

Our portion continues to talk about the centrality of the Temple and its service in our lives. How a temple binds us together as a nation no matter what we go through. It is a privilege for us to have this in our community as a place where we can lift each other up during times of joy and sorrow.

We wish the Lerner and extended family long life for Zachary.

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Rav Kook Torah
Tzav: Appreciating Boundaries

One type of offering brought in the Temple was the korban Todah, the Thanksgiving offering:

> *"This is the law of the Peace offering)Shelamim(... If offered as a thanksgiving offering, then it is presented along with unleavened loaves."*)Lev. 7:11-12(

Who brought this offering? The Talmud mentions several examples:

> *"Four need to give thanks: those who sail the seas, those who travel through deserts, the sick who are cured, and prisoners who are freed."*)Berachot 54b(

Why did the Sages choose these four situations as examples of individuals who need to publicly thank God?

Testing Limits

Appreciation does not come naturally to us. The human soul is programmed to constantly strive for more, as it says, *"The soul is never satisfied"*)Ecc. 6:7(. We look ahead, not behind. We are always trying to improve our lot, to experiment and discover new horizons. Thus it is more natural for us to take for granted than to take stock. Often we feel gratitude for what we have by way of contrast: only when we no longer have it, or hear of others who lack, do we begin to truly appreciate it.

Another consequence of the human characteristic to constantly strive for more is our tendency to challenge accepted rules. The testing of limits is particularly pronounced in transitional periods)two-year-olds in their passage from infancy to childhood, and teenagers in their passage from adolescence to adulthood(. While this is necessary for personal growth, certain restrictions may only be ignored at great risk. Generally speaking, there are four types of boundaries that people, in their quest for independence, attempt to ignore. They suffer the results of rebelling against natural or moral limits, and their experiences provide a lesson to others.

The first group consists of those who attempt to defy the basic laws of nature that govern humanity. One example of this are those who abandon the land, risking their lives by sailing the seas. Outside of their natural habitat, they will come to appreciate the safety and normalcy of life on land.

The second group includes those who rebel against the laws of the state. Governmental rules help regulate communal life. Those who abandon the rule of law by escaping to the desert)or the frontier(will quickly learn to appreciate the necessity for law and order.

The third group is comprised those who ignore guidelines for personal health care. Their interests and desires override the need to attend to their physical needs. Only when they suffer from illness do they come to appreciate the importance of heeding the rules of health and hygiene.

The final group is made up those who, in their greed for unfettered freedom, reject the ethical laws of society. Their actions pose a threat to others in the community. They must be imprisoned to prevent them from harming others. Hopefully, they will come to the realization that it is better to settle for a limited freedom outside the walls of prison than no freedom at all.

These four types publicly give thanks — if they survive their folly! — and serve as an example to others to appreciate the natural, societal, physical, and moral boundaries that make life livable.

)Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from *Ein Eyah* vol. II, p. 252.(

https://ravkooktorah.org/TZAV59.htm

Tzav: Giving Thanks (5778)

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

The first words we are taught to say each morning, immediately on waking, are Modeh Ani, "I give thanks." We thank before we think. Note that the normal word order is inverted: Modeh Ani, not Ani Modeh, so that in Hebrew the "thanks"

comes before the "I." Judaism is "gratitude with attitude." And this, according to recent scientific research, really is a life-enhancing idea.

The source of the command to give thanks is to be found in this week's parsha. Among the sacrifices it itemises is the korban todah, the thanksgiving offering: "*If he offers it]the sacrifice[as a thanksgiving offering, then along with this thanksgiving offering he is to offer unleavened loaves mixed with oil, unleavened wafers spread with oil, and loaves of fine flour well-kneaded and mixed with oil"*)Lev. 7:12(.

Though we have been without sacrifices for almost two thousand years, a trace of the thanksgiving offering survives to this day, in the form of the blessing Hagomel: *"Who bestows good things on the unworthy,"* said in the synagogue, at the time of reading of the Torah, by one who has survived a hazardous situation. This is defined by the Sages)on the basis of Psalm 107(, as one who has survived a sea-crossing, or travelled across a desert, or recovered from serious illness, or been released from captivity.]1[

For me, the almost universal instinct to give thanks is one of the signals of transcendence]2[in the human condition. It is not just the pilot we want to thank when we land safely after a hazardous flight; not just the surgeon when we survive an operation; not just the judge or politician when we are released from prison or captivity. It is as if some larger force was operative, as if the hand that moves the pieces on the human chessboard were thinking of us; as if Heaven itself had reached down and come to our aid.

Insurance companies sometimes describe natural catastrophes as "acts of God." Human emotion tends to do the opposite.]3[God is in the good news, the miraculous deliverance, the escape from catastrophe. That instinct – to offer thanks to a force, a presence, over and above natural circumstances and human intervention – is itself a signal of transcendence. Though not a proof of the existence of God, it is nonetheless an intimation of something deeply spiritual in the human heart. It tells us that we are not random concatenations of selfish genes, blindly reproducing themselves. Our bodies may be products of nature *)"dust you are, and to dust you will return"(,* but there is something within us that reaches out to Someone beyond us: the soul of the universe, the Divine *"You"* to whom we offer our thanks. That is what was once expressed in the thanksgiving offering, and still is, in the Hagomel prayer.

Not until the early 1990s did a major piece of medical research reveal the dramatic physical effects of thanksgiving. It became known as the Nun Study. Some 700 American nuns, all members of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in the United States, agreed to allow their records to be accessed by a research team investigating the process of ageing and Alzheimer's Disease. At the start of the study the participants were aged between 75 and 102.]4[

What gave this study its unusual longitudinal scope is that in 1930 the nuns, then in their twenties, had been asked by the Mother Superior to write a brief autobiographical account of their life and their reasons for entering the convent. These documents were analysed by the researchers using a specially devised coding system to register, among other things, positive and negative emotions. By annually assessing the nuns' current state of health, the researchers were able to test whether their emotional state in 1930 had an effect on their health some sixty years later. Because they had all lived a very similar lifestyle during these six decades, they formed an ideal group for testing hypotheses about the relationship between emotional attitudes and health.

The results, published in 2001, were startling.]5[The more positive emotions – contentment, gratitude, happiness, love and hope – the nuns expressed in their autobiographical notes, the more likely they were to be alive and well sixty years later. The difference was as much as seven years in life expectancy. So remarkable was this finding that it has led, since then, to a new field of gratitude research, as well as a deepening understanding of the impact of emotions on physical health.

Since the publication of the Nun Study and the flurry of further research it inspired, we now know of the multiple effects of developing an attitude of gratitude. It improves physical health and immunity against disease. Grateful people are more likely to take regular exercise and go for regular medical check-ups. Thankfulness reduces toxic emotions such as resentment, frustration and regret and makes depression less likely. It helps people avoid over reacting to negative

experiences by seeking revenge. It even tends to make people sleep better. It enhances self-respect, making it less likely that you will envy others for their achievements or success. Grateful people tend to have better relationships. Saying "thank you" enhances friendships and elicits better performance from employees. It is also a major factor in strengthening resilience. One study of Vietnam War Veterans found that those with higher levels of gratitude suffered lower incidence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Remembering the many things we have to be thankful for helps us survive painful experiences, from losing a job to bereavement.]6[

Jewish prayer is an ongoing seminar in gratitude. Birkot ha-Shachar, 'the Dawn Blessings' said at the start of morning prayers each day, are a litany of thanksgiving for life itself: the human body, the physical world, land to stand on and eyes to see with.]emphasis added[

Gratitude also lies behind a fascinating feature of the Amidah. When the leader of prayer repeats the Amidah aloud, we are silent other than for the responses of Kedushah, and saying Amen after each blessing, with one exception. When the leader says the words Modim anachnu lakh, "We give thanks to You," the congregation says a parallel passage known as Modim de-Rabbanan. For every other blessing of the Amidah, it is sufficient to assent to the words of the leader by saying Amen. The one exception is Modim, "We give thanks." Rabbi Elijah Spira)1660–1712(in his work Eliyahu Rabbah,]7[explains that when it comes to saying thank you, we cannot delegate this away to someone else to do it on our behalf. Thanks has to come directly from us.

Hence the transformative idea: giving thanks is beneficial to the body and the soul. It contributes to both happiness and health. It is also a self-fulfilling attitude: the more we celebrate the good, the more good we discover that is worthy of celebration.

This is neither easy nor natural. We are genetically predisposed to pay more attention to the bad than the good.]8[For sound biological reasons, we are hyper-alert to potential threats and dangers. It takes focussed attention to become aware of how much we have to be grateful for. That, in different ways, is the logic of prayer, of making blessings, of Shabbat, and many other elements of Jewish life.

It is also embedded in our collective name. The word Modeh, *"I give thanks,"* comes from the same root as Yehudi, meaning *"Jew."* We acquired this name from Jacob's fourth son, named by his mother Leah who, at his birth said, *"This time I will thank God"*)Gen. 29:35(. **Jewishness is thankfulness: not the most obvious definition of Jewish identity, but by far the most life-enhancing.**]emphasis added[

FOOTNOTES:

]1[Brachot 54b.

]2[On this idea, see Peter Berger, *A Rumor of Angels,* New York, Doubleday, 1990.

]3[Not always, of course. There was a memorable episode of The Simpsons in which Bart Simpson, before beginning his Thanksgiving meal, turns to heaven and says in place of grace, "We paid for all this stuff ourselves, so thanks for nothing."

]4[See Robert Emmons, *Thanks!: How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier,* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007.

]5[Danner, Deborah D., David A. Snowdon, and Wallace V. Friesen. "Positive Emotions in Early Life and Longevity: Findings from the Nun Study."Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 80.5)2001(: 804-13.

]6[Much of the material in this paragraph is to be found in articles published in *Greater Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life* @ http://greatergood.berkeley.edu. See also Sonja Lyubomirsky, *The How of Happiness,* Sphere, 2007, 87-124.

]7[Eliyahu Rabbah, *Orach Chayyim* 127:1.

]8[The classic study of this is Roy Baumeister and others, "Bad is stronger than good," *Review of General Psychology,* vol. 5, no. 4, 2001, pp. 323–370.

LIFE-CHANGING IDEA #24

The more you celebrate the good, the more good you discover that is worthy of celebration.

https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/tzav/giving-thanks/ Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail or saved in my archives at PotomacTorah.org, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar.

Last Shabbat)March 16(, thugs used a firebomb to set the Chabad center of Las Olas)Ft. Lauderdale(in Southern Florida on fire. The Chabad centers in the area have sent an appeal for support so the Las Olas Chabad can rebuild and continue to serve Jews in its region. For more information, https://jewishfl.org/

The Need for Passion
Life Lessons From the Parshah -- Tzav

By Yehoshua B. Gordon, z"l * © Chabad 2024

The Torah portion of Tzav opens with G d's instruction to Moses to command the people regarding the sacrifices.

The Torah typically introduces a mitzvah using one of three terms: daber – "speak," emor – "say," or tzav – "command." Among these, tzav is the least common.

Why is it used here?

Rashi explains that tzav always denotes urging, encouraging both the present generation and future ones to promptly and meticulously fulfill a particular commandment.1 In our case, this pertains to the Daily Offering – the Korban Tamid. As its name suggests, the Daily Offering was a sacrifice that was brought each day — one lamb in the morning and another in the afternoon — day after day, year after year, century after century, throughout all the years of the Tabernacle, the First Temple, and the Second Temple.

Given that this had to be done daily, there was a need for tzav — extra encouragement. It wasn't a one-time obligation, or applicable to a specific era; it was a continuous practice day in and day out for many years.

The Value of Consistency

A profound teaching rooted in the Midrash,2 further developed3 by the renowned 16th-century Talmudic scholar and Jewish leader Rabbi Judah Loew, known as the Maharal of Prague, sheds light on a fascinating discussion among several prominent sages regarding which verse in the Torah is the most significant.

Rabbi Akiva suggested his favorite verse, *"Love your fellow as yourself."*4 He famously taught that this verse is *"a great principle in Torah."*

Ben Azai chose a verse from the very beginning of Genesis, *"This is the book of the generations of Adam — on the day that G d created man, He made him in His Image,"*5 emphasizing the inherent dignity of all human beings.

Ben Zoma regarded the verse, "*Hear O Israel, the L rd is our G d, the L rd is one*"6 as the most central, underscoring the importance of the Shema.

Finally, Ben Pazi selected the verse*, "The first lamb you shall sacrifice in the morning and the second lamb you shall sacrifice in the evening."*7

The first three verses make perfect sense, while Ben Pazi's choice seems rather perplexing. How does his statement about the Daily Offering compare with the seemingly all-encompassing statements of the previous three sages?

Ben Pazi emphasizes—as Rashi notes at the beginning of our Parshah—that a Jew should serve G d with absolute consistency on a perpetual basis, like the twice-daily Tamid Offering, which had to happen again and again.

Some people are very good at performing new and exciting commandments. Wow, a special commandment! It's Purim? I'm going to do the special Purim mitzvahs. It's Passover? I'm going to do the special Passover mitzvahs.

Maintaining enthusiasm for repetitive, daily obligations, however, can prove challenging. The repetition can become monotonous, even tedious. Ben Pazi taught that transforming our lives in a sustainable way requires daily commitment without exception. There is no missing a day. There is no skipping. Living as a Jew entails a constant, unwavering dedication — 24 hours a day, 7 days a week — devoid of fluctuations or excuses.

This is why the Torah employed the unique word tzav — signifying the necessity for special strength, encouragement, and alacrity, both immediately and for all generations. But Rashi does not suffice with that and offers a second explanation: Rabbi Simeon taught that special urging is warranted for commandments involving monetary loss.8

When someone brings a Guilt Offering, the priest gets to eat its meat. When someone brings a Thanksgiving or Peace Offering, they themselves can eat the meat. And when someone brings a Sin Offering, they gain atonement.

The Daily Offering, however, about which we are instructed*, "This is the burnt offering, which burns on the altar all night until morning, and the fire of the altar shall burn with it,"*9 seemingly offers no tangible benefit to anyone, yet costs a lot of money. Therefore, Rashi explains, there needs to be special encouragement to fulfill this commandment.

Over the years — more than 1,000 years in total — the Jewish people spent a tremendous amount of money to provide a lamb for the daily Burnt Offering, every morning and every afternoon, even in the most challenging times.

This is the connection that the Jew has to G d; it's OK if it costs us — it connects us to our Creator.

Divine Connection

There is a classic insight from the teachings of Chassidism into the concept of a mitzvah. The word mitzvah is linked to the word tzavta, meaning *"attachment."* A mitzvah creates a bond between G d, who commands, and human, who performs. It serves as a conduit connecting us to G d, as there is no greater connection than doing His will.

To illustrate this: consider a scenario where a famous person asks a simple guy for a glass of water. For the rest of his life, this simple fellow will recall with awe and pride the connection that he made with that great person.

This connection is exemplified by the mitzvah of the daily Burnt Offering, because here, the connection is expressed in a manner that may lack any apparent logic, symbolism, or significance, other than the fact that G d commanded it. But once G d commands it, and we fulfill that command, we become connected.

That is the miracle of a mitzvah.10

Flames of Passion

Another aspect of the Daily Offering pertains to the fire. The verse states, *"This is the burnt offering, which burns on the altar all night until morning, and the fire of the altar shall burn with it."*11

Fire symbolizes passion. The vibrancy of the connection and bond between the Jew and G d is sustained through passion, excitement, and vitality. If we lose the fire, then, in a sense, we have lost our Judaism.

Eradicating Doubt
This concept also intersects with Parshat Zachor — the supplemental portion that is read on the Shabbat before Purim — which recalls the commandment to destroy Amalek:

> *You shall remember what Amalek did to you on the way, when you went out of Egypt; how he happened upon you on the way and cut off all the stragglers at your rear, when you were faint and weary, and he did not fear G d … you shall obliterate the remembrance of Amalek beneath the heavens. You shall not forget*!12

The word for *"he happened upon you"*)karcha(also implies *"cooled you off."* What did Amalek do? He cooled off the people; he made them cold and apathetic. When the people were excited and passionate about G d, Torah, and mitzvot, Amalek got them to cool off and calm down, to move away from Torah study and mitzvah observance.

Amalek must be erased because he throws cold water on our enthusiasm.

Furthermore, Amalek embodies doubt. Amalek has the same numeric value as the Hebrew word for doubt – **"safek."** When a person finds themselves wondering if their life means anything, such doubts stem from Amalek.

The Talmud teaches, *"There is no joy greater than the resolution of doubts."*13 Doubt is a killer. Destroying Amalek means removing doubt and restoring passion and excitement to our relationship with G d.

Extinguishing Negativity
The verse in our parshah states, *"A constant fire shall be kept burning on the altar; it shall not be extinguished."*

In Hayom Yom,14 the Rebbe recounts a teaching from Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of Chabad, also known as the Alter Rebbe, who shared insights from his teacher, the Maggid of Mezritch:

Although with the offerings, the flame came down from heaven onto the altar — a spiritual awakening from above to below, nevertheless we have to light our own flame. We must create an awakening from below. Because when we cultivate a passion for G d in our hearts, it elicits a heavenly response — the awakening from above — creating a virtuous circle.

Furthermore, the Hebrew phrase in the verse, lo tichbeh, literally translates to *"it)the fire(shall not be extinguished."* In a play on words, the Maggid explained that this fire should extinguish)tichbeh(the lo, the "no," i.e., the negativity. A Jew must not be consumed by negativity, because negativity is destructive.

The Alter Rebbe recalled that the Maggid imparted this teaching to him 10 different times, aiming to engrave it in each of his 10 soul powers)sefirot(—i.e., in every part of his soul.

The Maggid emphasized the need for a constant flame*, "because you have to extinguish the 'no,' the negativity of the opposition."* The Alter Rebbe operated in an environment where many were strongly opposed to the teachings of Chassidism, and he was charged with the mission to transform negativity into positivity.

This approach, rooted in optimism and certainty, stands in stark contrast to Amalek, which epitomizes doubt and negativity.

The takeaway?

Be positive. Be certain. Be passionate.

Prayer's Dividends

The teachings of Chassidism regarding Amalek always bring to mind a beautiful story I heard countless times during my upbringing. It is about my maternal grandfather, Rabbi Eliyahu Simpson, of blessed memory, and my paternal grandfather, Reb Yochanan Gordon, of blessed memory. Decades before their children married each other, they were roommates. These two Chassidic giants were among the pioneers of the Chabad movement in America in the 20th century, but in their youth they both studied in the city of Lubavitch, attending the yeshiva of the Fifth Rebbe, Rabbi Shalom DovBer, known as the Rebbe Rashab. It was there that they shared a room.

Reb Eliyahu was known for spending many hours in prayer, often concluding long after most other students. This practice persisted even during his tenure as rabbi of a congregation in New York. Every Shabbat morning, he would lead the services, and then, once the prayers were completed, he would embark on his own prayers, which continued for many hours.

Late one Shabbat afternoon, a young Reb Eliyahu walked into the room he shared with Reb Yochanan, having just finished his prayers. The latter inquired, *"What concept did you focus on during your prayer service today? Which teachings of Chassidism did you contemplate?"*

Reb Eliyahu responded, *"It was a discourse of the Rebbe Rashab on the words, 'Remember what Amalek did to you …'"* This discourse delved into the notion that we must shield ourselves from the influence of Amalek, avoiding doubt and apathy.

"You devoted many hours to contemplating that idea," Reb Yochanan remarked. *"What is your conclusion?"*

"My conclusion," Reb Eliyahu replied, *"is that a person can pray until four o'clock in the afternoon and still remain an Amalek!"*

That is, despite spending many hours in prayer and reflection, one may still not fully cultivate a fervent passion for G dliness, and remain plagued by doubt and apathy.

May we all be ignited with fervent passion in our service of G d. Let us be consistent in our dedication to fulfilling mitzvahs, forging an unbreakable bond between us and the Divine. As we strive to eradicate doubt and negativity, may our hearts burn with the fire of enthusiasm and certainty, casting aside any inclination towards apathy or hesitation. May we truly manifest the blessings that we read in Megillat Esther and say weekly at Havdalah, *"'For the Jews there was light and joy, gladness and honor'15 — so let it be with us."* May we experience all these blessings, culminating with the greatest blessing of all, the arrival of our righteous Moshiach, may it be speedily in our days. Amen.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Rashi, Leviticus 6:1.

2. *Torat Kohanim* 4:12

3. *Netivot Olam*)Netiv Ahavat Ha-Re'a(.

4. Leviticus 19:18.

5. Genesis 5:1.

6. Deuteronomy 6:4.

7. Exodus 29:39.

8. Rashi, Leviticus 6:1.

9. Leviticus 6:2.

10. *Likkutei Sichot*, vol 7 pg 30.

11. Leviticus 6:2.
12. Deuteronomy 25:17-19.

13. *Jerusalem Talmud,* Sanhedrin 4b.

14. *Hayom Yom,* entry for the 20th of Adar II.

15. Esther 8:16.

* Rabbi Yehoshua Gordon directed Chabad of the Valley in Tarzana, CA until his passing in 2016. Adapted by Rabbi Mottel Friedman from classes and sermons that Rabbi Gordon presented in Encino, CA and broadcast on Chabad.org. "Life Lessons from the Parshah" is a project of the Rabbi Joshua B. Gordon Living Legacy Fund, benefiting the 32 centers of Chabad of the Valley, published by Chabad of the Valley and Chabad.org.

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/6369103/jewish/The-Need-for-Passion.htm

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Tzav: Keep That Fire Blazing!

by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky *

Keep That Fame Burning!

The fire that will burn upon the Altar regularly must not go out.)Lev. 6:6(

We may sometimes feel so distant from the Torah's expectations of us or encumbered by negative spiritual baggage that it is hard for us to imagine how we could even begin to live in accordance with our ideals.

In times of such pessimism, this verse empowers us to keep our Divine fire burning even when we feel unqualified or otherwise unable to enter realms of holiness.

By keeping our enthusiasm fired even in such times, the Divine flame within us will eventually burn away all impediments to joyful, holy living. As the Maggid of Mezeritch interpreted this verse, "If the]inner[fire]of the heart[is kept burning continuously, it will extinguish all negativity."

But the fire can only be effective if it is kept burning continuously; any lapse in enthusiasm is an opportunity for pessimism to creep in. An intermittent fire or the memory of recent flames is therefore not enough; we must become adept at keeping our inner fires burning no matter how our moods may vary.

— from *Daily Wisdom 3*

May G-d grant a decisive victory over our enemies.

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman
Kehot Publication Society

* Insights from the Rebbe.

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Volume 30, Issue 25 **Shabbat Parashat Tzav - Parah** **5784 B"H**

Covenant and Conversation
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

Understanding Sacrifice

One of the most difficult elements of the Torah and the way of life it prescribes is the phenomenon of animal sacrifices – for obvious reasons. First, Jews and Judaism have survived without them for almost two thousand years. Second, virtually all the prophets were critical of them, not least Jeremiah in this week's haftarah.[1] None of the prophets sought to abolish sacrifices, but they were severely critical of those who offered them while at the same time oppressing or exploiting their fellow human beings. What disturbed them – what disturbed God in whose name they spoke – was that evidently some people thought of sacrifices as a kind of bribe: if we make a generous enough gift to God then He may overlook our crimes and misdemeanours. This is an idea radically incompatible with Judaism.

Then again, along with monarchy, sacrifices were among the least distinctive features of Judaism in ancient times. Every ancient religion in those days, every cult and sect, had its altars and sacrifices. Finally, it remains remarkable how simply and smoothly the Sages were able to construct substitutes for sacrifice, three in particular: prayer, study, and tzedakah. Prayer, particularly Shacharit, Minchah, and Musaf, took the place of the regular offerings. One who studies the laws of sacrifice is as if he had brought a sacrifice. And one who gives to charity brings, as it were, a financial sacrifice, acknowledging that all we have we owe to God.

So, though we pray daily for the rebuilding of the Temple and the restoration of sacrifices, the principle of sacrifice itself remains hard to understand. Many theories have been advanced by anthropologists, psychologists and Bible scholars as to what the sacrifices represented, but most are based on the questionable assumption that sacrifice is essentially the same act across cultures. This is poor scholarship. Always seek to understand a practice in terms of the distinctive beliefs of the culture in which it takes place. What could sacrifice possibly mean in a religion in which God is the creator and owner of all?

What, then, was sacrifice in Judaism and why does it remain important, at least as an idea, even today? The simplest answer – though it does not explain the details of the different kinds of offering – is this: We love what we are willing to make sacrifices for. That is why, when they were a nation of farmers and shepherds, the Israelites demonstrated their love of God by bringing Him a symbolic gift of their flocks and herds, their grain and fruit; that is, their livelihood. To love is to thank. To love is to want to bring an offering to the Beloved. To love is to give.[2] Sacrifice is the choreography of love.

This is true in many aspects of life. A happily married couple is constantly making sacrifices for one another. Parents make huge sacrifices for their children. People drawn to a calling – to heal the sick, or care for the poor, or fight for justice for the weak against the strong – often sacrifice remunerative careers for the sake of their ideals. In ages of patriotism, people make sacrifices for their country. In strong communities people make sacrifices for one another when someone is in distress or needs help. Sacrifice is the superglue of relationship. It bonds us to one another.

That is why, in the biblical age, sacrifices were so important – not as they were in other faiths but precisely because at the beating heart of Judaism is love: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." In other faiths the driving motive behind sacrifice was fear: fear of the anger and power of the gods. In Judaism it was love.

We see this in the Hebrew word for sacrifice itself: the noun korban, and the verb lehakriv, which mean, "to come, or bring close". The name of God invariably used in connection with the sacrifices is Hashem, God in his aspect of love and compassion, never Elokim, God as justice and distance. The word Elokim occurs only five times in the whole of the book of Vayikra, and always in the context of other nations. The word Hashem appears 209 times. And as we saw last week, the very name of the book, Vayikra, means to summon in love. Where there is love, there is sacrifice.

Once we realise this we begin to understand how deeply relevant the concept of sacrifice is in the twenty-first century. The major institutions of the modern world – the liberal democratic state and the free-market economy – were predicated on the model of the rational actor, that is, one who acts to maximise the benefits to him- or herself.

Hobbes' account of the social contract was that it is in the interests of each of us to hand over some of our rights to a central power charged with ensuring the rule of law and the defence of the realm. Adam Smith's insight into the market economy was that if we each act to maximise our own advantage, the result is the growth of the common-wealth. Modern politics and economics were built on the foundation of the rational pursuit of self-interest.

There was nothing wrong with this. It was done for the highest of motives. It was an attempt to create peace in a Europe that had for centuries been ravaged by war. The democratic state and the market economy were serious attempts to harness the power of self-interest to combat the destructive passions that led to violence.[3] The fact that politics and economics were based on self-interest did not negate the possibility that families and communities were sustained by altruism. It was a good system, not a bad one.

Now, however, after several centuries, the idea of love-as-sacrifice has grown thin in many areas of life. We see this specifically in relationships. Throughout the West, fewer people are getting married, they are getting married later, and almost half of marriages end in divorce. Throughout Europe, indigenous populations are in decline. To have a stable population, a country must have an average birth rate of 2.1 children per female. In 2015 the average birth-rate throughout the European Union was 1.55. In Spain it was 1.27. Germany has the lowest birth-rate of any country in the world.[4] That is why the population of Europe is today rendered stable only on the basis of unprecedented rates of immigration.

Lose the concept of sacrifice within a society, and sooner or later marriage falters, parenthood declines, and the society slowly ages and dies. My late predecessor, Lord Jakobovits, had a lovely way of putting this. The Talmud says that when a man divorces his

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first wife, "the altar sheds tears" (Gittin 90b). What is the connection between the altar and a marriage? Both, he said, are about sacrifices. Marriages fail when the partners are unwilling to make sacrifices for one another.

Jews and Judaism survived despite the many sacrifices people had to make for it. In the eleventh century Judah Halevi expressed something closer to awe at the fact that Jews stayed Jewish despite the fact that "with a word lightly spoken" they could have converted to the majority faith and lived a life of relative ease (Kuzari 4:23) Equally possible though is that Judaism survived because of those sacrifices. Where people make sacrifices for their ideals, the ideals stay strong. Sacrifice is an expression of love.

Not all sacrifice is holy. Today's suicide bombers sacrifice their lives and those of their victims in a way I have argued (in Not In God's Name) is sacrilege. Indeed the very existence of animal sacrifice in the Torah may have been a way of preventing people from offering human sacrifice in the form of violence and war. But the principle of sacrifice remains. It is the gift we bring to what and whom we love.

[1] Jeremiah 7:22, "When I freed your fathers from the land of Egypt, I did not speak with them or command them concerning burnt offerings or sacrifice" – a remarkable statement. See Rashi and Radak ad loc., and especially Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed, III: 32.

[2] The verb "to love" – a-h-v – is related to the verbs h-v-h, h-v-v and y-h-v, all of which have the sense of giving, bringing, or offering.

[3] The classic text is A. O. Hirschman, The Passions and the Interests, Princeton University Press, 1977.

[4] The Observer, 23 August 2015.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Maimonides on Sacrifices, Revisited

And the Lord spoke to Moses saying:" 'Command Aaron and his sons, saying, this is the law of the burnt offering…'" (Leviticus 6:1-2)

When we first encountered the concept of animal sacrifices in the book of Leviticus, we explored in depth the views of Maimonides and Nahmanides. Maimonides, in his classic work, Guide for the Perplexed, explained that the purpose of these sacrifices was in order to .distance the Jewish people from idolatry

After all, having just emerged from Egypt, it was natural that their spirits remained chained to an idolatrous system of sacrificial worship. Hence, Maimonides argues that the Israelites were so accustomed to the practice of animal sacrifices and the burning of incense that when the time arrived to create a new model of worship, out of necessity God based it on the .Egyptian system which they had known

Because it is impossible to move suddenly" from one extreme to the other… divine wisdom… could not command that [the Israelites] leave all of those ways of worship, depart from them and nullify them. For such [a demand] would have been something that no human mind could expect, given the nature of the human being who is always drawn to that to which he is accustomed. Therefore God retained the sacrificial acts, but transformed them into means rather than ends, declaring that they must become the implements for directing all such energies and activities into the worship of the one true God of the Universe." (Guide for the Perplexed, Part iii, Chap. 32)

Perhaps another way of interpreting the Maimonidean position can be extracted from a striking Talmudic passage in Tractate Yoma. There we are told how the Jewish people complain to the Almighty that the inclination of idolatry has destroyed the Temple, burned down the Sanctuary, killed all the righteous, exiled the Israelites from their land, and – to add insult to injury – "…it is still dancing amongst us." They request that it be vanquished. The Almighty accedes to their desire, and after a fast of three days and three nights, God allows them to destroy the evil inclination towards idolatry. And what is the ?object they destroyed

He came forth in the image of a lion of fire" emerging from the Holy of Holies." (Yoma 69b)

What a strange description for the evil inclination of idolatry, "a lion of fire emerging from the Holy of Holies!" The famous interpreter of Aggadot (Talmudic legends) Rabbi Shmuel Eidels (1555–1631), known as the Maharsha, apparently troubled by what appears to be such a positive image of evil idolatry, explains that this refers to the zodiac sign Leo (the lion), which rules the heavens during the Hebrew month of Av, when the holy Temple was destroyed. And indeed, the first Temple was destroyed largely because of the .idolatrous practices of the Israelites

The Hassidic master Rabbi Zadok Hakohen of Lublin is likewise surprised by the Talmudic description. After all, the lion is a most respected Jewish symbol, representing the majesty of Judah who is thrice identified with :a lion in Jacob's blessings

Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my" son, thou art gone up. He stooped down, he crouched as a lion, and as a lioness; who shall raise him?" (Genesis 49:9)

The lion is also an aspect of the divine merkava (chariot) in the vision of Ezekiel, and is generally depicted on the ark curtains (parokhet) guarding the Torah. Moreover, the Holy of Holies would hardly be a proper home .for the evil inclination of idolatry

And so he suggests that the message of the Talmudic passage is that every aspect of creation – including idolatry – has its roots in sanctity. When we reflect upon the various gods of the ancient world – the Sun and the Moon, Herculean strength, Zeusian power and Aphroditian beauty – they are all aspects of the physical world and the instinctive drives which are fundamental to the world around us even .today

One response to these physical and human drives is the ascetic option, denigrating and attempting to root out all physicality because of the dangers which can follow from uncontrolled addiction to their urges. This, .however, has never been the Jewish response

After all, the Almighty did not create us as disembodied spirits or ethereal intellects. The physical side of our beings must have value if it was created by God. The challenge is to direct – or sublimate – our instinctive drives properly, to see them as means and not ends, not to deny them but to ennoble them, and to .utilize them in the service of the divine

This may well be the true meaning of .Maimonides' words

When the Jews left Egypt, they still carried with them the imprint of Egyptian idolatries, the myriad of gods including manifestations of nature (the sun) and beasts, which they held up as ideals. According to Maimonides, Leviticus is the history of how God redirected these idolatrous energies, teaching the Jews to build a Sanctuary as a means toward divine service, to sanctify sexual energy within the context of marriage and family, to utilize strength and power in order to recreate society in the divine .kingship

The fact of the matter is that what was true at the time when the Jews left Egypt has not necessarily changed to this day, and quite likely may never change. And therefore the Maimonidean position regarding the animal sacrifices – to wean the Israelites away from their previous Egyptian passions – is not a temporary solution for a particular generation; we are still in need of the directed discipline which will enable us to direct and ennoble our drives and passions to the service of the God .of compassion and justice

Textual evidence for this can be found at the end of the Talmudic passage we quoted earlier. The prophet cleverly warns the Israelites, after the evil instinct was given over into their hands: "Remember, if you kill him, the world will be destroyed" (Ibid). And so we read how they imprisoned the evil desire, and after three days not one egg could be found in the Land of Israel; apparently, without the sexual attraction between male and female, creation cannot exist. Indeed, the evil instinct is a "lion of fire" which can destroy or purify, depending upon .how this natural force is utilized

It may very well be that what Maimonides understood about the generation which left Egypt may turn out to be an eternal law of human nature: Our passions are not to be

destroyed but are to be directed, are not to be .consumed but are to be consecrated

Yeshivat Har Etzion: Virtual Bet Midrash

Priest and Prophet
Harav Aharon Lichtenstein

The second half of this week's parasha (chapter 8) describes the seven day Milu'im (consecration) process throughout which Moshe performed the Avoda, the priestly service. At the end of the parasha, Rashi (8:28 s.v. Va-yakter) quotes an intriguing gemara (Avoda Zara 34a) which says that Moshe did not perform this Avoda while wearing the regular priestly vestments, but rather in a plain white robe. Tosafot there (s.v. Ba-meh) explain that Moshe had the status of a Kohen (priest) when he performed the Avoda, but did not wear the priestly vestments because they were not yet consecrated. According to Tosafot's understanding, Moshe in fact was considered one of the priests, in addition to Aharon and his sons. However, Aharon and his sons, as well as the priestly vestments, needed the seven day Milu'im before they could begin to serve. Thus, only Moshe was able to perform the Avoda during these seven days, as he was the one Kohen who was already prepared for the task (presumably due to the time he spent upon Har Sinai).

On the eighth day of that period, described in chapter 9, the transfer of Kehuna (priestly duty) was made to Aharon and his sons. After that transfer, the roles of Moshe and Aharon diverged. Moshe was primarily the prophet, and Aharon was primarily the Kohen. While Moshe did serve as a Kohen, and Aharon was also a prophet, their primary roles were clearly set. As their traditional names indicate, "Moshe Rabbenu" - Moshe was the prophet and teacher, and "Aharon Ha-kohen" - Aharon served as the priest. Moshe was the one who both received Divine messages and relayed them to the people. Aharon was charged with conducting the Avoda in the Mishkan, according to the guidelines which God had commanded Moshe.

This split between the roles of prophet and Kohen, and the conflict between them, comes up often throughout Tanakh. One issue which the prophets often reprimand is the lack of religious sincerity in the Avoda, the Divine ritual. One example is the story in Shemuel I (chapter 15), where King Shaul spared Amalek's animals, against God's command to totally destroy them. Shaul then explained to Shemuel that he left the animals of Amalek alive so they could be offered as sacrifices. Shemuel responded (15:22): "Does God want offerings as much as He wants you to heed His command?! Obeying is better than an offering!" God desires that you fulfill His command, even at the expense of losing the opportunity to offer sacrifices. In other words, the prophet often has to remind people that the sacrificial ritual must be put into perspective with other forms of Divine service. The prophecies of Yeshayahu (see 1:10-17) and Yirmiyahu (see chapter 7) also reflect a constant strife between the prophet and the Kohanim, those who perform the ritual service in the Temple.

This conflict stems from a fundamental difference in their roles. The Kohen's role is to guard the rituals fastidiously, to perform the Avoda according to a given rule-book. The guiding principle of his service is routine and regularity, loyalty to the system and its proper functioning. In contrast, the prophet's primary role is to bring down fiery new messages from Above. His goal is to induce change. He is a vibrant character, infusing spiritual meaning into people's lives and new vitality into their Divine service. Due to the differences between these roles, it is understandable that there has been so much conflict between their respective representatives.

It is precisely because of this deeply rooted schism between the positions of Kohen and prophet that there was a special need for Moshe's participation in the Milu'im process. When the routine and ritual of the Mishkan were being initiated, it was necessary for the greatest of all prophets (as clearly stated in Bemidbar 12:6-8, Devarim 34:10, and cited as the seventh principle of faith in Rambam's listing) to infuse that ritual with Divine fire. Subsequently, these roles would be split, and Aharon would succeed Moshe as the Kohen. However, Aharon would hopefully maintain Moshe's spirit. Aharon would be performing the Avoda while infused with that same Divine guidance and spiritual balance which was apparent when Moshe performed it. It was in order to emphasize this ideal, the unity of these two roles, that Moshe himself had to be the one performing the Avoda in its initial stage.

In our lives, it is important that each person infuse his own personal Mikdash, the sanctuary which is his own self, with these two elements. It is very significant that a person have a routine rich in religious activity. Like a Kohen, he must take part in constant actions and rituals which will maintain his connection to Judaism and the world of Halakha. He must make sure that all the actions which Halakha requires of him are fulfilled. Beyond that, however, a person must supplement this rich routine, the "Kohen" aspect, with the "prophet" aspect that is within him. He has to develop the deep connection to God which is to lie behind the fulfillment of the seemingly ritualistic acts which he performs. He has to feel the spiritual connection which is supposed to come as a result of the fulfillment of rituals.

If one has the opportunity to spend some time in an environment such as a yeshiva, this goal may be temporarily attainable without too much difficulty. The real challenge is one which everyone must face at any point at which he or she lives and works in an environment which is not entirely Torah-filled and spiritually charged. That challenge is to maintain this deep commitment while involved in "everyday life." Even though only a small percentage of a person's time may be devoted to actions which are narrowly defined as ritualistic (whether learning, praying, or other mitzvot), it is of the utmost importance that he infuse these activities with prophetic vitality and passion. In this way, he will truly be a worthy successor to the prophets. *Summarized by Dov Karoll*

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Don't Let It Go to Your Head!

This week's parsha begins with the mitzvah of the Korban Olah. Aharon and his children are given the tremendous responsibility of the avodah in the Bais Hamikdash, but after the Torah introduces the Korbon Olah, the first thing Aharon is instructed is, "And the kohen shall put on his linen garment and his linen pants shall he wear on his flesh, and take up the ashes, which the fire had consumed the elevating-offering on the altar, and lay them down at the side of the mizbayach" (Vayikra 6:3). This is the mitzvah d'Oraysa of "Terumas HaDeshen." Every morning, as part of the avodah, the kohen removed the ashes of the wood and offerings that had burnt the previous night.

The Chovos HaLevovos, one of the classic works on ethics and Jewish philosophy, written by Rav Bachye ben Yosef Ibn Paqda, says that the rationale behind Terumas HaDeshen is that the Torah is particularly careful that people should not become ba'alei gayvah (haughty people).

The kohen may think that he is something special—and in fact, he is something special. He is among the select few who were chosen to do the avodas hamikdash. Nevertheless, the Torah instructs him, "Take out the ashes!" The Torah is very sensitive to human emotions. Lest Aharon come to think too much of himself, the Torah tells him to begin his day with the lowly task of taking out the ashes.

A number of years ago, I realized that the last thing I do on Erev Yom Kippur is take out the garbage. Erev Yom Kippur is a very special day. We eat the Seuda Hamafsekes (last meal before the fast). We bless our children. But the last thing before going to shul on Erev Yom Kippur is taking out the garbage.

I was struck by two thoughts: First of all, this really represents what we all try to do on Erev Yom Kippur—take out the garbage in our lives. Secondly, when someone walks into Shul on Yom Kippur wearing his kittel, he may be tempted to think of the loftiness of his station, entering into Yom Kippur enveloped in kedusha. However, a person should always remember that he still needs to deal with such things as garbage bags. He remains a very human type of being. He should never forget that he needs to take out the garbage. He must eat, drink and sleep, and yes, he must still take out the garbage. If a person thinks in those

terms, he will not let things go to his head and become a ba'al gayvah.

A Person's Honor Has Value

On one hand, as we explained, the Torah is concerned that the Kohen Gadol should not become a ba'al gayvah. On the other hand, the Torah is very particular about the honor of the less fortunate – that a poor person should not become depressed and broken.

There is an interesting gemara in Bava Kama (92a). The wealthy people brought their Bikurim (first fruit offerings) in gold and silver baskets. The poor people could not afford gold or silver baskets, so they carried their fruits to the kohen in baskets made out of reeds.

The Gemara says that the kohanim returned the gold and silver baskets to the wealthy people because they did not have the right to keep those precious utensils as a fringe benefit along with receiving the first fruits. However, the kohanim did keep the reed baskets that they received from the poor people. The poor person "lost" the basket in the deal as well. Rava applies to this the old rule "basar anyah azla aniyusa," which means, loosely translated, "the rich get richer and the poor get poorer."

It is ironic. The rich fellow gets his basket back, while the poor person, who can ill afford it, does not get his basket back. This always bothered me. Why does the kohen keep the poor fellow's basket?

I once read that the reason why the Torah takes the basket of the poor person is to bolster his ego. The fruit looks like a more substantial gift when it is in the basket. The Torah says to let the kohen keep the basket and let the poor person suffer the financial loss, but let him at least keep his pride intact. It is better for the poor person to lose the basket in order to give the Bikurim a plentiful appearance, rather than to return the basket and make the person swallow his pride. The Torah goes to great lengths to protect a person's honor.

I remember someone asking me about raising money for hachnosas kallah. A person was marrying off his daughter and he needed financial help. The fellow who approached me wanted to raise money on the other person's behalf, in order to pay for the wedding.

His question was as follows. If he told people for whom he was raising the money, there was no question that he could raise a lot of money. (The person was well-known and well-respected in the community.) On the other hand, if he kept it anonymous, he would not be able to raise as much, because these kinds of requests occur a half dozen times a week.

At that time, I asked this question to the Rosh Yeshiva (Rav Yaakov Ruderman zt"l): Should he mention the name and raise more money, or keep it anonymous and raise less money? Without batting an eyelash or the slightest hesitation, the Rosh Yeshiva said it should be anonymous — "A mensch's kavod is vert asach." (A person's pride is worth a whole lot.)

That is what we learn from the baskets. A person's respect and honor are worth a lot. It is even worth losing money over them. Money can always be replaced, but kavod habriyos and pride are much harder to replace.

Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

Routine or Rejuvenation during Shlichut?

Rabbi Avichai Apel

Every so often, or maybe even regularly, we have to face the question posed above – routine or rejuvenation? – and do some soul-searching. Is what we are doing as shlichim really important to us? How much are we willing to give of ourselves? What are our priorities?

Every person knows himself best and must prioritize in every aspect of his life in accordance with his abilities and strengths. Not everything can take center stage. However, there are some things that become meaningless if not prioritized.

There is nothing more permanent than the temporary. This phrase turns the default into the desirable. Not because of an informed decision, or the desire to fulfill an aspiration. Rather, there is always a pulling towards routine, even in situations that are temporary by definition. How did this happen? Perhaps it is the understanding that one has the need to feel connected to something. People naturally feel that the things that seem to be marginal and trivial, those requiring little attention, are ultimately the most important and cherished, physically or even emotionally, and become the most permanent and stable components of our daily routine.

It is the regular and the routine that leave a long-lasting impression. Any experience which is part and parcel of a routine becomes engraved in one's consciousness for longer. It goes without saying that even that which is fixed for now, will one day cease to be. Distractions are ever so human; hence, even permanence is prone to be absent at certain points in time. Notwithstanding the above, the impression left by any form of routine or stability helps one endure periods of instability. Even when one's sense of routine is somewhat blurred or weakened, it is still permanently ingrained within, at all times.

The concept of permanence or regularity has a number of definitions, to which one can attach varying implications and meanings. Routine may turn into habit, which denotes actions that are repeated regularly, almost absentmindedly. In such case, actions turned into habit may become somewhat bland and dull. Much like food eaten regularly which often loses its special flavor and becomes almost tasteless. We keep eating the same food again and again, not because of its taste, but because of our need for nourishment. It becomes an action done out of necessity rather than desire.

The positive aspect of routine is that it becomes a central component of our lives, something we can always fall back on. It is, therefore, only natural that we constantly attempt to rejuvenate our routine by adding hues and colors to it, thus making it more attractive and appealing. The routine component of our lives is important to us; we invest in it because it is an integral part of who we are.

After the preparations for the erection of the Mishkan come to an end, all the vessels and priestly garments completed, and after having received all the commandments pertaining to the sacrifices and their particulars – come the days of the miluim, the seven-day inauguration ceremony of the kohanim and the altar. These days began on the 23rd of the month of Adar and continued until the first of the month of Nissan, during which time Moshe erected and dismantled the Mishkan each day anew. Furthermore, during the course of these days the kohanim were trained for their sacred service, avodat hakodesh, and they sacrificed the ram of the miluim, the ram of consecration (see Shemot 22).

Ahead of these days of consecration, the kohanim were given a unique commandment: "And you shall not go out from the door of the Tent of Meeting seven days, until the days of your consecration be fulfilled; for He shall consecrate you seven days" (Vayikra 8:33). Is it possible that the kohanim sat inside the Tent of the Meeting all these days without emerging at all? What was the purpose of this?

The sacred service which takes place in the Beit HaMikdash is a central component of the Temple's routine. This avodat kodesh requires the kohanim's full attention and they are therefore not permitted to leave the premises. Although the commandment of the avodat hakodesh was given for all generations, says the Ramban (Vayikra 5:35), the days of miluim were exceptional and happened once only. During these days the kohanim had their "practicum" in preparation of the avodah and were not allowed to leave the Mishkan during the day hours, only at night, unless it was for their personal bodily needs. However, never during the sacred service itself (Ibn Ezra on Vayikra 8:33).

These days of miluim play a very important spiritual role in preparing the kohanim for the avodat hakodesh, their sacred service. To ensure that the kohanim are indeed worthy in character to enter the sanctuary regularly and serve the People by offering sacrifices and preforming other acts of atonement, it is vital to instill in them a sense of integral connection to the House of God and a constant desire to be one with God. Different verses teach us of this aspiration. For example, the verse "Happy are they who dwell in Thy house" (Tehillim 84:5)

is an eternal call of praise to those who engage in the study of Torah and the worship of God, and is meant to inspire all of us to do the same.

Another verse from Tehillim (27:4) – "One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life" – may be misinterpreted as the extreme aspiration to live a life of asceticism. However, in light of what was said earlier, this verse must be seen as the positive desire to be close to God at all times. Hence the verse goes on to say – "to behold the graciousness of the Lord, and to visit early in His temple" (ibid.). Similarly, the kohanim's residing in the Tent of the Meeting for a period of seven days was meant to achieve the following: the kohanim absorbed a great abundance of spiritual insight which impacted both their consciousness as well as their desires, and this took place by their sitting inside the sanctuary in the Tent of the Meeting. The essence of the sacred service was preserving these very insights and this lofty consciousness. By sitting at the entrance to Ohel Mo'ed, the kohanim prepared themselves for this sacred service." (Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch on Vayikra 8:35)

These noble aspirations are equally relevant to the life of every individual. For also the individual must "enter the Tent", as it were, and transform Torah study, prayer and acts of kindness into routine, turning these into the central axis of one's life. "A righteous person must never leave Ohel Mo'ed, i.e., must always be in a mindset of avodat Hashem." Avodat Hashem, the worship of God, must become the most permanent thing in our lives. Not a permanence turned into tasteless habit; rather, a blessed routine that always aspires to rejuvenate itself, the constant desire for personal growth. So much so, that when a person completes his "seven days of miluim" – which may symbolize the seven decades of one's adult life during which time one paves for himself the road upon which one treads – God will be able to attest to the fact that this person had never left His ways (Torat Moshe – the Chatam Sofer).

The life of an emissary is filled with constant renewal and rejuvenation. Every day presents new opportunities such as making new acquaintances or bonding with new people. Each such opportunity should be exploited to the fullest, because one never knows if such opportunities will recur. It is the role of the shaliach to be in a permanent state of shlichut. To be filled with ceaseless energy so that he might reach out to each and every Jew, no matter the circumstances, and escort them into the House of God. So deeply ingrained must this desire be, that the permanent mindset is one of "One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life".

The Jewish community of Frankfurt boasts a tradition of Torah learning and Torah scholars of more than a millennium – which came to an abrupt end during the devastating Holocaust. Great Torah figures like the Yalkut Shimoni, the Shelah HaKadosh, the Ba'al Hafla'a, the Pnei Yehoshua, the Chatam Sofer, Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch and many others learned and taught Torah in Frankfurt, and headed their respective communities in this city.

The Jews of Frankfurt contributed greatly to the development of the city, both economically as well as academically. The Rothschild family, Erich Fromm, Franz Rosenzweig, to name but a few, were among the many Jewish Frankfurters who had left their mark. Anne Frank, who had a great impact on Holocaust awareness around the world, is also a native of the city.

After the Holocaust, a new Jewish community started forming, and currently comprises about 7000 Jews who are active in both the public and private sectors. There are five different synagogues in the city, an elementary and high school (first grade through 12th grade), two kindergartens, retirement homes for seniors and many activities aimed at the local Jewish public as well as Jews visiting from out of town.

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Daniel Stein

Connecting with the Avos

In Judaism the number fifteen is ubiquitous. The Mishnah (Middos 2:5) records that there were fifteen steps that led up from the Ezras Nashim to the Israelite Courtyard upon which the leviim would sing the fifteen chapters in Tehillim that begin with the words, "Shir Hamaalos" - "Song of Ascent". Rav Shimon Schwab suggests that since our daily prayers are patterned after the sacrifices in the Beis Hamikdash (Berachos 26b), it is appropriate to enter davening every day with fifteen Birchos Hashachar. Those blessings precede Pesukei Dezimrah which then concludes with the fifteen praises of Yishtabach. Yishtabach in turn introduces Birchos Keriyas Shema which culminates with the fifteen laudable attributes mentioned in Emes Veyatziv, setting the stage for the Amidah. In addition, the Pesach seder is held on the fifteenth day of Nissan during which we read the Haggadah, which has fifteen parts, punctuated by Dayenu, the popular song of gratitude with its fifteen stanzas.

What is the significance and message of all these fifteens?

The Gemara (Bava Metziah 85a) attests that "anyone who is a talmid chacham, and whose son is a talmid chacham, and whose grandson is a talmid chacham, the Torah will never again cease from his descendants ... from this point forward, after three generations, the Torah returns to its lodging." When three consecutive generations study Torah intensively and sincerely the Torah becomes indelibly entrenched in the identity of the family such that it is unlikely to ever be dislodged, as the pasuk states, "a three-stranded cord is not readily broken" (Koheles 4:12). However, Tosfos (Bava Basra 59a) restrict the Gemara's guarantee to the scenario where all three generations coincide and study Torah together. It is not the consistency of Torah study per say that ensures its continuity, but rather the intergenerational conversation and shared experience of a grandfather studying together with his son and grandson.

The Chida (Midbar Kedeimos) calculates that if Yitzchak was seventy-five years old when Avraham died, and sixty years old when Yaakov was born, it emerges that the intersection of all three Avos studying Torah together lasted for a period of fifteen years. Those fifteen formative years forged the bedrock of our mesorah which is passed from generation to generation on the fifteenth of Nissan through the fifteen stages of the Haggadah. This foundation also constitutes the essence of birchas kohanim, which consists of three pesukim with a total of fifteen words, corresponding to the three Avos and the fifteen years that they overlapped. Every Friday night, when this blessing is conferred upon children, it is with the intention that they develop into the next link in the chain of the mesorah that was established by virtue of the fifteen years that the three Avos interacted and learned Torah together.

Similarly, all three Avos are represented in the Mishkan. The acacia wood was taken from trees originally planted by Avraham in Beer Sheva (Breishis 21:33) and subsequently transported down to Mitzrayim by Yaakov (Breishis 46, 1 and Midrash Rabbah, Vayigash 94:4). The inauguration of the Mishkan was deliberately delayed until the first of Nissan, the birthday of Yitzchak (Midrash Rabbah, Pekudei 52:2). Indeed, according to the Ramban (Introduction to Sefer Shemos), the whole purpose of the Mishkan was to replicate and institutionalize the atmosphere of the ancestral home of the Avos. Therefore, fifteen different items were collected and used in the construction of the Mishkan (Shemos 25:3-7), to reflect that the transcendent and perpetual holiness created by the Avos was predicated upon the fifteen years during which they toiled in Torah together.

Just like the Mishkan was destined to become a dwelling place for Hashem in this world, as the pasuk states, "And they shall make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst" (Shemos 25:8), so too every Jewish home strives to be worthy of this distinction. To that end, the Gemara (Sotah 17a) teaches, "If a man and woman merit - the Divine Presence rests between them. But if they do not merit - fire consumes them." The words "man" - "ish" and "woman" - "isha" both contain the letters aleph and shin. The

difference between them lies in the middle letter yud in "ish" and the final letter heh in "isha." These two letters can be joined to form the name of Hashem, yud-heh, but in their absence all that remains is the aleph and shin which spells "aish" - "fire." If the pair conducts their marriage properly their home can become the seat of the Shechinah, but if they fail, a destructive fire can consume them. It is instructive that the name of Hashem which the Jewish home aspires to embody is spelled yud-heh, which also has the numerical value of fifteen. In order to welcome the Shechinah into their home, the couple must conduct their relationship in a manner that is faithful to the legacy of the previous generations which was cemented by the Avos over a span of fifteen years.

At the time of Keriyas Yam Suf, all those who were present, even the maidservants, personally witnessed the Divine hand and proclaimed aloud, "This is my God and I will enshrine Him" (Shemos 15:2). However, only the Jewish people continued further and declared, "The God of my father and I will exalt Him." Rav Elya Meir Bloch (Peninei Daas) observes that for the maidservants the events of Keriyas Yam Suf were powerful but fleeting. They were maidservants before and they remained such afterwards. Only the Jewish people, who were the beneficiaries of a historical framework and tradition through which they could process and internalize the experience became permanently transformed. It was the recognition that "my God" is also "the God of my father" that perpetuated and preserved the euphoric jolt of emunah.

At the seder, as we attempt to reexperience the geulah ourselves and deepen our sense of emunah, we should simultaneously be cognizant that this is not only our story but we are connecting to "the God of our fathers." We do not approach Hashem as individuals but rather as the next link in a long and illustrious mesorah that has survived and endured for generations. Every day the kohen began the avodah in the Beis Hamikdash with the mitzvah of terumas hadeshen. He first removed the ash from the previous day's korbanos, which he then placed in a visible spot adjacent to the mizbeach, before commencing with the duties of the day. Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch explains that this is because every day presents an opportunity for a fresh start but we do so while being mindful of the sacrifices of the past. It is precisely because we invest and engage in the historical mission of the Avos that we will hopefully be equipped to write the next chapter in our collective story and address the challenges of tomorrow.

Rabbi Dr. Norman J. Lamm's Derashot Ledorot

Antiseptic Religion

We read this morning of the strange rite of the Parah adumah, the ashes of the red heifer which were used to purify one who had contracted levitical impurity by contact with a dead body, but which ceremony at the same time defiles the priest in charge of the act of purification. Parah adumah has thus always been accepted as a mystery, a hukah or incomprehensible law that defies reason in its paradoxicality. It is therefore an annual reminder that important as reason is in the life of religion, it is not the totality of religion. If man understood all that religion and God demand of him, he would not need Divine revelation; indeed, man would displace God as the center of life, and all authentic religion would thus come to an end.

Parah adumah therefore tells us that intelligent as man is, and as much as he must endeavor at all times to exercise that intelligence, his intellect nonetheless remains limited. God, as Creator and Source of all intelligence, transcends human intellect. Life conceived only in terms of reason or logic is shallow. It is even monstrous, like a man with an oversized head and an undersized heart.

The idea that pure reason is a sufficient guide for man through life is sophomoric, it is an index of intellectual adolescence. One might even describe it with that worst of modern epithets: it is non-modern, medieval. Modern science emerged only when it denied the omnipotence of reason, when it cut itself off from the tyranny of pure reason. Natural science does ont at all come to its conclusion on the basis of logic, but on the basis of empirical evidence: testing, experimenting, investigating. Indeed, one of the greatest theories of modern physics, concerning the nature of light, embodies a logical contradiction, it violates the principle of reason that a thing cannot be two opposites at the same time.

This does not mean to say that science affirms faith and religion. It does mean that shallow rationalism is a thing of the past. The Rabbis told us that the law of parah adumah was a source of vexation for Jews in their confrontation with the non-Jewish world: umot ha-olam monin et Yisrael, the nations of the world would taunt and deride the Jews because of the apparently unreasonable nature of parah adumah. Today, such tauntings sound silly indeed.

However, we must be prepared for the challenge in response to such an assertion: "Is this not an instance of blind faith?" Most Orthodox Jews, rabbis and laymen, have had to put up with such reproach, at one time or another, when trying to explain that we observe even if we do not understand the reason for every observance. What do we answer to this charge of "blind faith?"

First, let us always remember that such pejorative and emotion-laden terms always confuse, rarely clarify. Who is to say which faith is blind and which not? Usually, what is one man's blind faith is another's fearless determination; what I believe is far-sighted vision, and what the other one believes is silly superstition...

Of course, faith can be blind– but it also can be luminous and enlightening and insightful.

The emunah that transcends reason, as symbolized by parah adumah, is founded on a sense of confidence in the Divine intellect, on trust that God, in His infinite wisdom, knows what I in my limitations can never know. Thus, the first time I send a child away from home, I do so on a basis which is usually irrelevant to reason. Is this blind faith– or is it confidence? Or, I submit to a medical doctor for a very serious and delicate operation, though I know almost nothing about the technicalities of surgery and medicine. Is this blind faith or confidence? It is blind faith if I only project my own wishes irrespective of the objective situation. It is confidence if I use a wise intuition, an overview which integrates all the nuances of the situation, and hence is more than merely the facts and reason. Ezehu hakham, ha-roeh et ha-nolad, our Rabbis taught: "Who is the wise man? – one who sees the consequences that will be born from the present situation." A computer cannot do this; only a wise man can.

Certainly, then, man does not live by reason alone, even though reason helps to make order and sense out of life's experiences. Love, hate, fear, ambition, sentiment, friendship, passion, desire, suffering– these are not matters of reason, yet they are the stuff of real life. Similarly, man possesses a religious dimension to his personality, one that cannot be reduced merely to reason or to psychology. This is what Rabbi Shneour Zalman, founder of HaBaD Hasidism, called ahavah tiv'it u-mesuteret, the natural but concealed love for God that inheres in man, and what the great German-Jewish thinker, Isaac Breuer, referred to as ha-tzad ha-hazoni, the prophetic dimension of human personality. And parah adumah reminds us that this religious or spiritual or any other aspect of personality; it is separate, independant, and autonomous as a feature of human life. Without it, we deny man his very humanity and reduce man to nothing more than a biological computer. And religion as such, if it is based only on reason, becomes antiseptic and lacking in drama and depth. Furthermore, it is the kind of religion that cannot really survive a crisis. The great author of "Ore ha-Hayyim" has told us, from his personal experience, that when Spanish Jewry was expelled in the fifteenth century, those Jews who observed the Torah and the mitzvot out of faith alone, the simple Jews, were able to demonstrate remarkable heroism and prefer exile and banishment to baptism, whereas the sophisticated Jews, who prided themselves on their knowledge of philosophy and their use of "pure reason" instead of "blind faith," were the first ones to submit to Christian pressure to kiss the cross.

But if so, we face a direct and troubling challenge: does this mean that reason has no role in Judaism? Obviously it does. Furthermore, what of the Jewish rationalists, such as Saadia and Maimonides? Did they not insist that Judaism not only can but should make use of shekel, reason? In fact, the saintly Rabbi Bachya maintained that if a man has the capacity to use reason and philosophy in his

religious thinking and does not do so, he commits a sin in the eyes of Torah. How shall we fit this emphasis on reason into the context of a Judaism which proclaims a law of parah adumah, which speaks of the importance of hukah, which declares the autonomy of emunah?

The answer is that no Jewish thinker ever believed that man can fully understand God and Torah by reason alone, without any assistance from revelation. Parah adumah is the corrective for this, giving man the capacity for intellectual embarrassment, teaching him intellectual modesty. Hasidism used to say that that is why a man should cover his head. Clothing is worn for one of two reasons: either to keep one warm or because of modesty. Our heads are covered not because we fear the climate, but because it is an act of modesty: we cover the cranium to show that no matter how brilliant we are, our intellect nevertheless remains sorely limited before Him, the God of infinite wisdom. Parah adumah similarly teaches us this kind of modesty and prevents us from indulging in intellectual arrogance.

But if we cannot reach God by reason alone, why did the great Sages of Israel in the middle ages devise the classical proofs for God's existence? These proofs, truth to tell, were not potent enough to convince the agnostics,and they were essentially unnecessary for one who already believed– as did these same Sages of Israel. Why then did they offer them? Why did they emphasize the role of shekel, of reason?

The answer that I wish to commend to your attention is one that touches the very foundations of Judaism itself. It is an insight provided to us by the foremost disciples of the late Rav Kook, Rabbi Yaakov Mosheh Charlop, of blessed memory. He teaches us that man has many dimensions to his personality: amongst them, emotion, actions, ethical bent, intellect. Our sacred duty is to reveal God's presence, to make Him manifest, to bring Him into this world on every level and every manner. Man's purpose is: le'galot et ha-nistar, to take the potentialities for being aware of God–potentialities and possibilities which inhere in every atom of matter and in every moment of life and in every aspect of personality– and actualize them, expose them, reveal them, bring God to our awareness and to the consciousness of every human being. That is why we must use all dimensions of life to reach Him. We ought to experience Him with our emotions; we ought to act practically so as to build the malkhut shamayim, the Kingdom of Heaven, actualizing the will of God for man and his society; and so too we must understand Him rationally and therefore demonstrate His existence through the use of intellect and philosophy. None of these alone is sufficient; all of them together constitute the human paean of praise to the God of all perfection.

This is what parah adumah does for us: by telling us that there is something beyond our reason, it challenges us to reach God by all means, by exercising every aspect and fibre of human personality. It does not deny the value of reason at all; but it tells us that it is not enough to feel Jewish, or to think Jewishly, or to act Jewishly; rather, we must do all three– and even more; it reminds us that the human personality is infinitely rich and multifaceted, and all of it must rise in one great spiraling symphony of devotion to God. Kol atzmotai tomarna, all my bones, each and every aspect of my life and my energy and my time and my personality, must proclaim, "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord?"

The great Rabbi of Kotzk once said: "Frum iz shlecht," to be pious is sometimes to be cruel, for a man of piety is liable to the weakness of self-righteousness which results in insensitivity to the feelings of others. "Gut iz ni'uf," excessive goodness and generosity can lead to immorality, for in goodness I may try to satisfy the whims and passions of another without regard to moral restraint. And, "Klug iz krum," to be bright is often to be crooked, for brilliance frequently degenerates to mere shrewdness or craftiness. Any one of these virtues by itself can prove exceedingly damaging. However, he added, "Uber frum un gut un klug– dos iz a Yid!"--but to be pious and good and bright–that constitutes a Jew! No one aspect of personality should be overdeveloped at the expense of any other; all together must rise to the Creator of the world.

Parah adumah is thus not a doctrine of the denial of reason, not a proposition basing faith on absurdity. It appears now in a new meaning, teaching us the inadequacy of any single explanation of man, any single mode of life, any single way of reaching the Almighty. Parah adumah confirms man's marvelous complexity, it affirms the mystery of his personality, it assures us of a religion which is not flat and antiseptic but varied and colorful and deep and comprehensive, and even mysterious. It tells us that man and God meet on many levels, indeed on all levels. Therefore, no person is ever cut off from God because he was born inadequate in any one aspect of his personality. Some people may be impoverished in their intellect, some in their emotions, some in their ability practically to implement the Divine design for the world; but every one has some opportunity to reach out to Heaven.

It has been asked: should not our special portion of this morning begin with the words zot hukat ha-parah, this is the law of the parah adumah, even as we read elsewhere zot hukat ha-pesah, this is the law of Passover? Why does our portion begin with the word zot hukat ha-torah, this is the hukah, or law, of all the Torah? I suggest that this is the beauty of Torah itself, that it includes preeminently hukah, the integrating element, the principle that no one aspect of life or character is sufficient, but that all together are required and demanded of us.

A Jew is not a disembodied intellect who does nothing but philosophize: not an ecstatic and ascetic, monastic mystic; not one who believes, and believes that his belief alone will bring him salvation; not an obsessive observer of ritual or ethics who does what he does without feeling or understanding. None of these alone is enough; we need all, and even more than all of these. Zot hukat ha-torah– when we have a Torah, we have the principle of hukah,

Along with hokhmah and maaseh and reggesh, reason and action and emotion. And when we have these, we have then achieved wholeness as well as holiness, for both holiness and wholeness are the goal of Torah. Torat ha-Shem temimah, the Torah of the Lord is whole, it is perfect and comprehensive. And through our study and observance of Torah we can achieve this wholeness and thus we will discover that Torah is also meshivat nefesh, it restores wholeness to the human soul and personality.

Having understood and experienced this, we shall then learn to appreciate the remainder of that verse: Pikudei ha-Shem yesharim, mesamhei lev, the laws of the Lord are straight, they are meant for the ultimate benefit of man even if man does not understand them at the present, and they make the heart– and the mind and the soul and society– glad and happy.

Home Weekly Parsha TZAV
Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The entire thrust of Torah life lies in the word tzav which informs us as the title of the parsha of this week. Tzav means command, order, instruct. It allows little leeway for individual creativity in the performance of ritual and commandments.

The values of Torah life come with an instruction manual. And just as the wonderful gadgets of technology in our lives require adherence to the manual that accompanies each device, in order for it to operate effectively, so too the Torah in the spiritual realm of Judaism requires adherence to specific instructions.

It is not for naught that any and all of the blessings that were composed by the rabbis to be recited before the performance of a mitzvah contains the word v'tzivanu – and He has commanded us, for the word mitzvah itself, which we usually translate in terms of being a good deed, literally means something which has been commanded.

It is this recognition of being commanded, of following the instruction manual of the Torah in a committed and punctilious fashion that defines Judaism throughout the ages. In today's world there are many who seek to "improve" upon the Torah. They have written a new and ever changing manual of instructions using such sweet sounding terms as "relevant" "progressive" "attractive" to describe prayer services, Torah commandments and Jewish values.

The fault line in Jewish life today remains, as it always has been, this acceptance or rejection of the concept of v'tzivanu. But Jewish history teaches us that none of this tinkering with that concept survives the passage of time and the ever changing mores of human society. It is only the old instructional manual that still stands and preserves us after all else has passed from the scene.

The concept of v'tzivanu rubs us the wrong way. We are by nature rebellious against authority imposed upon us by others. From infancy onward we demand to do it all by ourselves, when and how we wish. We can sense what the rabbis meant when the said that the people of Israel accepted the Torah at Mount Sinai and they felt that the mountain hung over their heads as a terrible and forced burden.

Here they were going to be commanded to do things in certain exact way, to make the Torah's values supreme over their own personal desires, logic and way of life. But they were warned then that abandoning the Torah and not following the instructional manual would bring personal and national problems, tragedies, defections and harsh judgments.

The mountain still hangs over our heads as we are witness to this fact in so many facets of our lives. So again we are brought full circle to the idea of tzav and v'tzivanu. The concept of tzav as promulgated in this week's parsha is not addressed solely to Aaron and his descendants but it is part of the heritage of Judaism for all Jews and for all who wish to witness Jewish continuity in their families and the Jewish people as a whole.

Shabat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein

Why Civilisations Die
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

In The Watchman's Rattle, subtitled Thinking Our Way Out of Extinction, Rebecca Costa delivers a fascinating account of how civilisations die. When their problems become too complex, societies reach what she calls a cognitive threshold. They simply can't chart a path from the present to the future.

The example she gives is the Mayans. For a period of three and a half thousand years, between 2,600 BCE and 900 CE, they developed an extraordinary civilisation, spreading over what is today Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Belize, with an estimated population of 15 million people.

Not only were they expert potters, weavers, architects, and farmers, they also developed an intricate cylindrical calendar system, with celestial charts to track the movements of the stars and predict weather patterns. They had their own unique form of writing as well as an advanced mathematical system. Most impressively they developed a water-supply infrastructure involving a complex network of reservoirs, canals, dams, and levees.

Then suddenly, for reasons we still don't fully understand, the entire system collapsed. Sometime between the middle of the eighth and ninth century the majority of the Mayan people simply disappeared. There have been many theories as to why it happened. It may have been a prolonged drought, overpopulation, internecine wars, a devastating epidemic, food shortages, or a combination of these and other factors. One way or another, having survived for 35 centuries, Mayan civilisation failed and became extinct.

Rebecca Costa's argument is that whatever the causes, the Mayan collapse, like the fall of the Roman Empire, and the Khmer Empire of thirteenth century Cambodia, occurred because problems became too many and complicated for the people of that time and place to solve. There was cognitive overload, and systems broke down.

It can happen to any civilisation. It may, she says, be happening to ours. The first sign of breakdown is gridlock. Instead of dealing with what everyone can see are major problems, people continue as usual and simply pass their problems on to the next generation. The second sign is a retreat into irrationality. Since people can no longer cope with the facts, they take refuge in religious consolations. The Mayans took to offering sacrifices. Archaeologists have uncovered gruesome evidence of human sacrifice on a vast scale. It seems that, unable to solve their problems rationally, the Mayans focused on placating the gods by manically making offerings to them. So apparently did the Khmer.

Which makes the case of Jews and Judaism fascinating. They faced two centuries of crisis under Roman rule between Pompey's conquest in 63 BCE and the collapse of the Bar Kochba rebellion in 135 CE. They were hopelessly factionalised. Long before the Great Rebellion against Rome and the destruction of the Second Temple, Jews were expecting some major cataclysm.

What is remarkable is that they did not focus obsessively on sacrifices, like the Mayans and the Khmer. With their Temple destroyed, they instead focused on finding substitutes for sacrifice. One was gemillat chassadim, acts of kindness. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai comforted Rabbi Joshua, who wondered how Israel would atone for its sins without sacrifices, with the words:

"My son, we have another atonement as effective as this: acts of kindness, as it is written (Hosea 6:6), 'I desire kindness and not sacrifice.'"

Avot deRabbi Natan 8 Another was Torah study. The Sages interpreted Malachi's words, "In every place offerings are presented to My name," to refer to scholars who study the laws of sacrifice. (Menachot 100a).

"One who recites the order of sacrifices is as if he had brought them" (Taanit 27b).

Malachi 1:11

Another was prayer. Hosea said, "Take words with you and return to the Lord . . . We will offer our lips as sacrifices of bulls" (Hos. 14:2-3), implying that words could take the place of sacrifice.

He who prays in the house of prayer is as if he brought a pure oblation.

Yerushlami, Perek 5 Halachah 1

Yet another was teshuvah. The Psalm (51:19) says "the sacrifices of God are a contrite spirit." From this the Sages inferred that "if a person repents it is accounted to him as if he had gone up to Jerusalem and built the Temple and the altar and offered on it all the sacrifices ordained in the Torah" (Vayikra Rabbah 7:2).

A fifth approach was fasting. Since going without food diminished a person's fat and blood, it counted as a substitute for the fat and blood of a sacrifice (Brachot 17a).

A sixth was hospitality. "As long as the Temple stood, the altar atoned for Israel, but now a person's table atones for him" (Brachot 55a). And so on.

What is striking in hindsight is how, rather than clinging obsessively to the past, leaders like Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai thought forward to a worst-case-scenario future. The great question raised by parshat Tzav, which is all about different kinds of sacrifice, is not "Why were sacrifices commanded in the first place?" but rather, "Given how central they were to the religious life of Israel in Temple times, how did Judaism survive without them?"

The short answer is that overwhelmingly the Prophets, the Sages, and the Jewish thinkers of the Middle Ages realised that sacrifices were symbolic enactments of processes of mind, heart, and deed, that could be expressed in other ways as well. We can encounter the will of God by Torah study, engaging in the service of God by prayer, making financial sacrifice by charity, creating sacred fellowship by hospitality, and so on.

Jews did not abandon the past. We still refer constantly to the sacrifices in our prayers. But they did not cling to the past. Nor did they take refuge in irrationality. They thought through the future and created institutions like the synagogue, house of study, and school. These could be built anywhere, and would sustain Jewish identity even in the most adverse conditions.

That is no small achievement. The world's greatest civilisations have all, in time, become extinct while Judaism has always survived. In one sense that was surely Divine Providence. But in another it was the foresight of people like Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai who resisted cognitive breakdown, created solutions today for the problems of tomorrow, who did not seek refuge in the irrational, and who quietly built the Jewish future.

Surely there is a lesson here for the Jewish people today: Plan generations ahead. Think at least 25 years into the future. Contemplate worst-case scenarios. Ask "What we would do, if…" What saved the Jewish people was their ability, despite their deep and abiding faith, never to let go of rational thought, and despite their loyalty to the past, to keep planning for the future.

Parshat Tzav: Maimonides on Sacrifices, Revisited

Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin is the Founder and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone

"And the Lord spoke to Moses saying: 'Command Aaron and his sons, saying, this is the law of the burnt offering…'" (Leviticus 6:1-2)

When we first encountered the concept of animal sacrifices in the book of Leviticus, we explored in depth the views of Maimonides and Nahmanides. Maimonides, in his classic work, Guide for the Perplexed, explained that the purpose of these sacrifices was in order to distance the Jewish people from idolatry.

After all, having just emerged from Egypt, it was natural that their spirits remained chained to an idolatrous system of sacrificial worship. Hence, Maimonides argues that the Israelites were so accustomed to the practice of animal sacrifices and the burning of incense that when the time arrived to create a new model of worship, out of necessity God based it on the Egyptian system which they had known.

"Because it is impossible to move suddenly from one extreme to the other… divine wisdom… could not command that [the Israelites] leave all of those ways of worship, depart from them and nullify them. For such [a demand] would have been something that no human mind could expect, given the nature of the human being who is always drawn to that to which he is accustomed. Therefore God retained the sacrificial acts, but transformed them into means rather than ends, declaring that they must become the implements for directing all such energies and activities into the worship of the one true God of the Universe." (Guide for the Perplexed, Part iii, Chap. 32)

Perhaps another way of interpreting the Maimonidean position can be extracted from a striking Talmudic passage in Tractate Yoma. There we are told how the Jewish people complain to the Almighty that the inclination of idolatry has destroyed the Temple, burned down the Sanctuary, killed all the righteous, exiled the Israelites from their land, and – to add insult to injury – "…it is still dancing amongst us." They request that it be vanquished. The Almighty accedes to their desire, and after a fast of three days and three nights, God allows them to destroy the evil inclination towards idolatry. And what is the object they destroyed?

"He came forth in the image of a lion of fire emerging from the Holy of Holies." (Yoma 69b)

What a strange description for the evil inclination of idolatry, "a lion of fire emerging from the Holy of Holies!" The famous interpreter of Aggadot (Talmudic legends) Rabbi Shmuel Eidels (1555–1631), known as the Maharsha, apparently troubled by what appears to be such a positive image of evil idolatry, explains that this refers to the zodiac sign Leo (the lion), which rules the heavens during the Hebrew month of Av, when the holy Temple was destroyed. And indeed, the first Temple was destroyed largely because of the idolatrous practices of the Israelites.

The Hassidic master Rabbi Zadok Hakohen of Lublin is likewise surprised by the Talmudic description. After all, the lion is a most respected Jewish symbol, representing the majesty of Judah who is thrice identified with a lion in Jacob's blessings:

"Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up. He stooped down, he crouched as a lion, and as a lioness; who shall raise him?" (Genesis 49:9)

The lion is also an aspect of the divine merkava (chariot) in the vision of Ezekiel, and is generally depicted on the ark curtains (parokhet) guarding the Torah. Moreover, the Holy of Holies would hardly be a proper home for the evil inclination of idolatry.

And so he suggests that the message of the Talmudic passage is that every aspect of creation – including idolatry – has its roots in sanctity. When we reflect upon the various gods of the ancient world – the Sun and the Moon, Herculean strength, Zeusian power and Aphroditian beauty – they are all aspects of the physical world and the instinctive drives which are fundamental to the world around us even today.

One response to these physical and human drives is the ascetic option, denigrating and attempting to root out all physicality because of the dangers which can follow from uncontrolled addiction to their urges. This, however, has never been the Jewish response.

After all, the Almighty did not create us as disembodied spirits or ethereal intellects. The physical side of our beings must have value if it was created by God. The challenge is to direct – or sublimate – our instinctive drives properly, to see them as means and not ends, not to deny them but to ennoble them, and to utilize them in the service of the divine.

This may well be the true meaning of Maimonides' words.

When the Jews left Egypt, they still carried with them the imprint of Egyptian idolatries, the myriad of gods including manifestations of nature (the sun) and beasts, which they held up as ideals. According to Maimonides, Leviticus is the history of how God redirected these idolatrous energies, teaching the Jews to build a Sanctuary as a means toward divine service, to sanctify sexual energy within the context of marriage and family, to utilize strength and power in order to recreate society in the divine kingship.

The fact of the matter is that what was true at the time when the Jews left Egypt has not necessarily changed to this day, and quite likely may never change. And therefore the Maimonidean position regarding the animal sacrifices – to wean the Israelites away from their previous Egyptian passions – is not a temporary solution for a particular generation; we are still in need of the directed discipline which will enable us to direct and ennoble our drives and passions to the service of the God of compassion and justice.

Textual evidence for this can be found at the end of the Talmudic passage we quoted earlier. The prophet cleverly warns the Israelites, after the evil instinct was given over into their hands: "Remember, if you kill him, the world will be destroyed" (Ibid). And so we read how they imprisoned the evil desire, and after three days not one egg could be found in the Land of Israel; apparently, without the sexual attraction between male and female, creation cannot exist. Indeed, the evil instinct is a "lion of fire" which can destroy or purify, depending upon how this natural force is utilized.

It may very well be that what Maimonides understood about the generation which left Egypt may turn out to be an eternal law of human

nature: Our passions are not to be destroyed but are to be directed, are not to be consumed but are to be consecrated.
Shabbat Shalom

In common years, Parshas Tzav falls on Shabbos Hagadol, and the piyutim (and perhaps the drosha) of the day teach about kashering for Pesach. Although this year is a leap year and Shabbos Hagadol is a month from now…

The Confused Image of Glass

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Tevilas keilim

Why is glass the only material other than metal for which Chazal required immersion?

Question #2: Non-Kosher

May I use a non-kosher drinking glass for a hot cup of tea?

Question #3: Chicken soup and milk

After serving chicken soup in a glass, may I pour hot milk into the same glass?

Question #4: Kashering for Pesach

How do I kasher my chometz-dik glasses for Pesach?

Introduction

Moshe Rabbeinu hid the Egyptian that he killed in the sand; for this reason, striking the earth to bring the makeh of kinnim needed to be performed by Aharon (Rashi, Shemos 8:12). Since the world has huge deposits of sand, mankind attempted to use it for useful items, eventually discovering that, by heating sand to a very high temperature, it can be made into glassware, which is the topic of this article.

There is no mention of glassware in the Torah, although there is one reference to glassware in Tanach, in the book of Iyov (28:17). Iyov declares, regarding wisdom, lo ya'archena zahav uzechuchis, "Gold and glass do not equal it," meaning that the value of gold or glass comes nowhere near that of wisdom. From this passage we see that, at the time of Tanach, glass was considered an extremely expensive material. As we will see shortly, that glass became less costly with time has halachic ramifications.

Before discussing the halachos of glass, let us note some of its unique chemical and physical properties that affect its halachic status.

Recyclable

Glassware has many uses and can be very beautiful, but at the same time it is fragile and breakable. However, as opposed to pottery, which, when broken, is irreparable and virtually useless, broken glassware can be easily recycled. Glass can be melted down and reused over and over. In this respect, glass shares an important characteristic with metals, which are also recyclable by being melted down. For this reason, Chazal sometimes gave glassware the halachos of metals. For example, germane to the mitzvah of tevilas keilim, the Gemara rules that glass vessels must be toiveled before use, as indicated in the Gemara (Avodah Zarah 75b): Rav Ashi said, "Glass utensils, since when broken they can be repaired, are like metal utensils."

Rav Ashi lived at the very end of the period of the Gemara. A much earlier statement of Chazal, in Avos deRabbi Nosson (Chapter 41), provides the following terse statement:

"Three things were said regarding glassware:

(1) It does not absorb; it does not impart.

(2) It shows whatever is inside.

(3) If you place it in a hot place, it becomes hot. If you place it in a cold place, it becomes cold."

Avos deRabbi Nosson is not intended to be a scientific work, nor is it a handbook for manufacturers. It is similar to Pirkei Avos, although it contains much more aggaddic material, and so it would probably be best classified as an early midrash, similar to Midrash Tanchuma or Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer, or to the much later midrashic collections like Midrash Rabbah or Yalkut Shimoni. So, why is it concerned with categorizing the qualities of glassware?

The answer to this question is that, although Avos deRabbi Nosson is not usually treated as a halachic midrash, in this instance, that is exactly what it is -- providing halachic categorization with which to define the unique qualities of glass. By so doing, it provides a background with which to explain the halachos of glassware.

Does not absorb

Laboratory experiments use glass equipment because it does not absorb, nor does it impart or leach into what is heated or stored inside it. Therefore, it should not affect whatever chemical reaction or research for which it is being used. We will soon discuss the kashrus ramifications of this quality of glass, about which the Avos deRabbi Nosson was presumably concerned.

May be clear or opaque

We are accustomed to most glass being clear, but this is really a function of what other chemicals are in the sand from which the glass is made when it is fired. Even glass that is colored is usually transparent, which is one of the common qualities of glass and is highly uncommon in other materials.

This observation about glassware has much halachic ramification, although this distinction does not affect any "kitchen kashrus" issues. It does, however, have ramifications for the laws of tumah and taharah, which we will not disuss in this article because of space considerations.

It is a conductor

The third statement of the Avos deRabbi Nosson is that if you place glass in a hot place, it becomes hot, and if you place it in a cold place, it becomes cold. In other words, glass is a conductor and not a good insulator. The best insulator used today in the kitchen and in carryout shops is Styrofoam. But on the relative scale of things, glass is closer to metal in its ability to conduct heat.

Having used the Avos deRabbi Nosson as a means of explaining the unique properties of glass, we can now discuss the halachic questions that I raised at the beginning of our article.

Tevilas keilim

Our first question was: Why is glass the only material other than metal for which Chazal required immersion?

Allow me to explain. The laws of tumah and taharah germane to tools, equipment and vessels include many different types of materials. Items manufactured from metal, wood, cloth, horn, glass, and plants are all susceptible to tumah, as is food, pottery and boneware. Nonetheless, germane to the mitzvah of immersing utensils prior to food use, the requirement min haTorah applies only to metal utensils, and not to utensils, pots or pans made of pottery, wood, cloth, bone, horn or any other materials. Therefore, there is no requirement to toivel a wooden spoon, a ceramic dish, cheesecloth used for food (after all, it is called cheesecloth, and not laundry cloth, for a good reason), or flatware chiseled out of horn or bone. However, why is there a requirement to toivel glass bowls and cups?

Based on the Gemara that we quoted above, we can answer this question: Broken glass utensils can be recycled for new manufacture, just as you can recycle broken metal utensils. Since glass shares this quality with metal, Chazal instituted that glass be treated like metalware, germane to the mitzvah of toiveling food-preparatory vessels prior to using them.

Glass and kashrus

At this point, I am going to combine the next three of our opening questions into one discussion:

May I use a non-kosher drinking glass for a hot cup of tea?

After serving chicken soup in a glass, may I pour hot milk into the same glass?

How do I kasher my chometz-dik glasses for Pesach?

There is a tremendous diversity of opinion among the rishonim concerning the kashrus status of glassware. Do we assume, halachically, as does the chemist, that glass never imparts anything that it absorbs? If this is true, it should never require kashering and it may be used interchangeably from treif to kosher, from milchig to fleishig, and from chometz to Pesach without any kashering procedure at all. On the other hand, we have no Talmudic source that expressly permits using any utensil in any of these ways without a kashering procedure in between.

The different opinions that we find among the rishonim on this issue can be categorized loosely as three basic approaches:

1. No need to kasher

Several authorities contend that the nature of glass is that it does not absorb or impart any taste and that, therefore, it does not require any kashering at all (Rabbeinu Tam, quoted by Tosafos, Avodah Zarah 33b s.v. Kunya and Kesubos 107b s.v. Hani, and Rosh, Pesachim 2:8; Rashba, both in Shu"t Harashba 1:233 and in Toras Habayis 5:6; Ran, Pesachim 9a [in the Rif's pages]; Ravyah, quoted by Mordechai, Pesachim #574). Many of these authorities quote the above mentioned Avos deRabbi Nosson as a proof for this ruling.

2. Does not help to kasher

Halacha treats glassware like pottery. Once pottery was used to cook chometz or non-kosher food, the flavor absorbed into its walls can never be fully removed. Rather than becoming completely extracted when one attempts to kasher pottery, some of the absorbed taste remains and leaches out afterwards with each use, potentially spreading prohibited flavor into all subsequent cooking (Tosafos, Chullin 8a s.v. Shelivna). In other words, once pottery becomes treif, it may be impossible to make kosher again. (There are some circumstances in which it can be kashered, but these unusual situations are beyond the scope of this article.)

Some early authorities contend that, since glassware is made from sand, it should be treated like sand, or, more accurately, like pottery and cannot be kashered (Mordechai, Pesachim #574, and Avodah Zarah #826; Terumas Hadeshen 1:132, 2:151). Most of these authorities quote the source for this approach as Rabbeinu Yechiel of Paris, one of the baalei Tosafos.

3. Glass is like metal

Some rishonim rule that just as Chazal gave glassware the same halachic status as metal regarding the mitzvah of tevilas keilim, it has the same halacha regarding the laws of kashrus (Bedek Habayis of the Re'ah, 5:6; Shibbolei Haleket #207).

However, once we rule that glassware is like metal, in practice, it might become stricter than metal. This is because of a rule that, when a particular method of kashering may break an appliance, Chazal prohibited using that method, out of concern that someone will be afraid to kasher it properly (Pesachim 30b). Thus, although metal can be kashered by boiling the appliance (hag'alah), it may not be allowed to kasher glassware this way, because the owner may be afraid that it will crack (Mor Uketzi'ah end of 451). On the other hand, other authorities permit kashering glassware by hag'alah for Pesach and are not concerned that someone might be afraid to kasher it properly (Shu"t Maharsham 1:53 at end).

A major halachic ramification results from the above. Glassware that is meant to be used in the oven, such as Pyrex, should, therefore, be kasherable for Pesach, since presumably the owner will not be afraid to kasher it properly. Although this is not common custom, there are prominent halachic authorities who permit this (She'arim Hametzuyanim Bahalacha 116:11).

Difference between treif and Pesach

There is a dispute among rishonim whether glass that was used for hot chometz may be used for Pesach. Some authorities are more stringent regarding using chometz-dik glassware for Pesach than using it interchangeably between milchig and fleishig. For example, the Hagahos Semaq, a late baal Tosafos, writes: "Universal custom is not to use for Pesach any used pottery vessels (even those coated with metal or glass). Rabbeinu Yechiel prohibited using even used drinking glasses, since the Gemara compares glass to pottery, and sometimes people place bread into drinking glasses, in which instance they absorb the way pottery does." The way this statement is quoted, it implies that Rabbeinu Yechiel did not permit any form of glassware kashering for Pesach (Hagahos Semaq 222:5).

Similarly, the Issur Vaheter (58:50), an early Ashkenazic posek, quotes the Semaq as ruling that it is prohibited to kasher glass for Pesach and it should be treated lechumra as questionable whether it is considered metal or pottery.

How do we rule?

Among earlier halachic authorities, it appears that there was a big difference between Sefardic and Ashkenazic practice regarding the use of glassware. The Beis Yosef cites most of the halachic sources we quoted above, and concludes, both in Beis Yosef and in Shulchan Aruch, that glassware does not absorb and therefore may be used for Pesach without any kashering procedure at all (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 451:26). Following his approach, it would appear that someone could purchase or rent used glass equipment from a treif source, without any need to kasher it.

On the other hand, early Ashkenazic custom appears to have been closer to the approach of Rabbeinu Yechiel cited above. For example, the Rema rules that chometz-dik glassware should not be used for Pesach and that it is not kasherable for Pesach use, even when it was used only for serving cold beverages and not used ever to store them.

Although most Ashkenazic authorities subsequent to the Rema follow his approach, some rule that Ashkenazim could follow the Sefardic practice and use glassware for Pesach without kashering it first (Mor Uketzi'ah, end of 451).

Other authorities raise a different question regarding the Rema's ruling that glassware may not be used for Pesach. The Rema prohibits using glassware for cold drinks on Pesach, even when the glass is used only for cold beverages the entire year. The reason the Rema is stringent is because of concern that chometz may have fallen into the glass and became kavush, which means that chometz flavor absorbed into the glass.

The difficulty with this ruling is that the Rema himself rules that a vessel, even made of pottery, that stored chometz for a lengthy period of time may be used on Pesach, even when this long-term storage would create kavush (Orach Chayim 451:21; see Mishnah Berurah 451:122). How could the Rema treat glassware more stringently than pottery? The only reason to be stringent regarding glassware is according to the minority opinion that treats glassware as pottery!

This question is raised by the commentary Beis Meir (Orach Chayim 451:26), who answers that the Ashkenazic minhag to be stringent not to kasher glass was only regarding drinking glasses, since buying new ones for Pesach is not a major expense. However, the Rema ruled leniently regarding large storage vessels that are expensive, even when they are made from pottery, and certainly when they were manufactured from glass. In other words, even the Rema holds that glassware is inherently kasherable; there is only a custom not to kasher drinking glasses for Pesach since this does not incur a great expense.

There are several ramifications of the Beis Meir's ruling:

An individual who cannot afford to purchase glassware for Pesach may use his regular, chometz-dik glassware. In this situation, he should kasher his drinking glasses. This approach is followed by the Chayei Odom and the Mishnah Berurah (451:156) who rule that, in a place where glassware is relatively unavailable, glass items should be cleaned well and then kashered for Pesach, by a method called miluy ve'iruy. In this kashering method, glasses are submerged completely in a basin or tub full of cold water for at least 24 hours, the water is changed and glasses are submerged again for at least another 24 hours, and then a third time for at least another 24 hours.

The Mishnah Berurah rules that, if someone does not ordinarily use his glassware for hot chometz or to store chometz, and they used their glasses for Pesach without any kashering at all, the food or beverage placed in them remains kosher for Pesach. More so, in a case of major loss, the Mishnah Berurah permits Pesach-dik food, even when it was placed hot into glassware that was previously used for hot chometz. He permits this only if the glassware was not used for chometz within the previous 24 hours. There are other authorities who are even more lenient (Taz; Pri Chodosh; cf. Shaar Hatziyun 451:196).

According to the Beis Meir's conclusion, it is permitted to drink a kosher beverage, even a hot tea or coffee, in a "non-kosher" drinking glass. This opinion is mentioned by many halachic authorities (Keneses Hagedolah, Yoreh Deah 121:25 in Hagahos Tur 25; Darkei Teshuvah 121:2; Aruch Hashulchan, Yoreh Deah 121:2). Thus, if you are in a non-kosher house or hotel, the hot tea or coffee you are served in a glass is

still kosher. And, if we refer to one of our opening questions: "After serving chicken soup in a glass, may I pour hot milk into the same glass?" -- the answer, according to these authorities, is that one may. I suggest that, prior to putting this into practice, our readers should ask this question from their own rav or posek.

Conclusion

The Chiddushei Harim notes that pottery vessels become tamei only from their inside and not when something touches their outside. He explains that this is because a pottery vessel, itself, is considered without inherent value – its value is determined by what it contains, whereas vessels made from other materials have inherent value. On this basis, the Sfas Emes, the grandson and successor of the Chiddushei Harim, notes that man's value is also determined by what he contains on the inside, not on his outer projected image.

Rabbi YY Jacobson

[NEW] March 28, 2024

Good Morning Soul

The Only Job Where You Start at the Top Is Digging a Hole

And then the fight started …

"My wife sat down on the couch next to me as I was flipping channels. She asked, 'What's on TV?'

I said, 'Dust.'

"And then the fight started…

"When I got home last night, my wife demanded that I take her someplace expensive… so, I took her to a gas station.

"And then the fight started…

"My wife and I were sitting at a table at my high school reunion, and I kept staring at a drunken lady swigging her drink as she sat alone at a nearby table.

"My wife asked, 'Do you know her?' 'Yes,' I sighed, 'She's an old friend. I understand she took to drinking right after we split up many years ago, and I hear she hasn't been sober since.'

"'My God!' says my wife, 'who would think a person could go on celebrating that long?'

"And then the fight started…"

The Fire

"The fire on the altar shall remain aflame on it, it shall not be extinguished; and the Priest shall kindle wood upon it morning after morning… A constant fire shall burn upon the Altar; it shall never go out." (Leviticus 6:5-6).

With these words the Torah describes, in this weeks Torah portion (Tzav), the instruction to continuously maintain a flame on the altar which stood in the Tabernacle (a mobile sanctuary the Jewish people built in the desert to house the divine presence), and then later in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. For this purpose, the priest was required to place new firewood on the altar each morning, in order to feed a flame which must never go out.

As the Torah commentators and the Jewish mystics acutely grasped, each mitzvah (commandment) in the Torah contained, in addition to its concrete and simple meaning, many symbolisms relating to the inner psyche of the human being. This mitzvah is no exception, and it captures a simple but profound truth about our daily patterns.

"A constant fire shall burn upon the altar" – the altar, in the writings of Jewish mysticism, is symbolic of the human heart, the space in each of us most capable of sacrifice. The heart however needs a continuous fire burning in it. For the human heart to live deeply, for it to feel empathy and experience the depth of love, it needs to be on fire, passionate, aflame.

But how? There are times when our hearts and souls are inspired and aflame; but often we feel numb and apathetic. Sometimes we get cynical and detached (as in the above anecdotes.) How do we maintain the flame and the inspiration in our own inner altar?

There is only one way: "The Priest shall kindle wood upon it morning after morning." Each and every morning we must place "wood" on our altar, in order to feed its potential flame. Fire cannot exist in a vacuum; the fire in our heart and soul, too, requires "wood" to sustain it.

What is the "wood" that is capable of feeding the soul's flames each morning? Study, prayer and charity. They are the morning encounters with the living G-d that allow the fire of the soul to hold on to something and take root into the human psyche.

A delicious piece of cheesecake, reading and answering your e-mails, listening to the news – they don't do the trick of turning on your soul, your inner depth. They lack the properties to bring out the flame of the soul. In the morning, before you do anything else, you need to engage in a labor that will let the flame of your soul emerge. Good Morning Soul must precede Good Morning America. Then you're set for the day, because as Goethe said, a man sees in the world what he carries in his heart. If your heart is aflame, your world that day will be on fire.

And you must place the wood on your altar each morning, no exceptions. Consistency is the key to a meaningful and inspiring day. There are no shortcuts to inspiration; everything comes with a price. The only job where you start at the top is digging a hole. Bur life is about climbing mountains, not digging holes. And in climbing mountains you must begin on the bottom.

Perceptions

By Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Parshas Tzav

Parah-Point Presentation

Friday Night

THIS SHABBOS IS also Parashas Parah. As we learn in Parashas Naso, a person who has become defiled by contact with the dead (no, not through a séance) is ineligible to eat from the Korban Pesach. By being sprinkled with the water of the Parah Adumah (Red Heifer) was the process a person underwent to become ritually pure again. Hence, we recall that halachah in advance of Pesach.

The Parah Adumah is the quintessential chok—statute. This means there is something about the mitzvah that defies human logic, but apparently not why a red heifer is the animal of choice, as Rashi explains:

A red cow: This can be compared to the son of a maidservant who dirtied the king's palace. They said, "Let his mother come and clean up the mess." Similarly, let the cow come and atone for the calf. (Rashi, Bamidbar 19:22)

Thus, the red heifer is the Divine response to the golden calf. Had they not built and worshipped the calf, the Jewish people would have remained immortal. The calf caused death and the impurity that results, so its "mother" has to clean up the "mess."

It's a nice explanation. It's also problematic. It sounds as if the mitzvah of Parah Adumah would not have existed had the Jewish people not sinned with the golden calf. But that is not the case since every mitzvah is eternal by definition, which means there always had to be such a mitzvah. How does this work with Rashi's explanation?

The Leshem, when talking about the eternity of mitzvos, deals with a similar question. According to the Gemora, mitzvos will be battel—nullified—in Yemos HaMoshiach, the Messianic Era (Shabbos 151b). But how can eternal mitzvos ever not exist?

What the Gemora means, the Leshem explains, is not that the act of a mitzvah will no longer be performed. Rather, a mitzvah won't seem then like a mitzvah seems now, like a yoke and an obligation. With the yetzer hara gone completely (Succah 52a), a mitzvah will become second nature (Drushei Olam HaTohu, Chelek 2, Drush 4, Anaf 12, Siman 12).

The yetzer hara is basically bodily instinct, and mitzvos tend to go against it. This is how mitzvos help to spiritually refine a person. It's the Torah's way of taking a person's life's steering wheel out of the hands of the body and giving it to the soul, so they can become a Tzelem Elokim and live in the "image of God."

But the opportunity to achieve such refinement through our free will choices will end with the death of the yetzer hara and bodily instinct. At least the kind of instinct that tends to make personal comfort a priority over spiritual growth.

Shabbos Day

RASHI ALLUDES TO this same idea at the beginning of this week's parsha, on the verse:

Command—Tzav—Aharon and his sons, saying, "This is the law of the burnt offering…" (Vayikra 6:2)
Rashi comments:
The Torah especially needs to urge [people to fulfill mitzvos] where monetary loss is involved. (Rashi)
The fact that money is involved in a mitzvah instigates the yetzer hara of a person. The yetzer hara will spend all kinds of money on things that give the body instant gratification. But why spend money on a mitzvah, for which the reward won't follow until the World to Come? Not an easy sell to the yetzer hara.
That creates bodily resistance. It can be subtle, so subtle that even the person themself doesn't realize they are being affected and held back. But on some level, a little less of the person is used for the mitzvah than is ideal.
Even for someone like Moshe Rabbeinu. There is a Shalsheles cantillation note above the word for, "and he slaughtered it" (Vayikra 8:23) towards the end of this week's parsha. In the three other places it occurs in the Torah, it hints to some kind of hesitation in the heart, something not recognized on the outside of the person.
Like Lot not wanting to leave Sdom with the angel despite its impending destruction.
Like Yosef not wanting to run from the wife of Potiphar despite the sin involved.
But what reason did Moshe have at the inauguration of Aharon and his sons into the Temple service, to hesitate?
Because he had known, ever since Parashas Tetzaveh, that great people were destined to die on that day to sanctify the Name of God. He had assumed, until next week's parsha, that that was supposed to have been himself and Aharon. Could that not have easily been somewhat of a distraction during the mitzvah, a subtle one that we could only know about because of the Shalsheles?
As the Leshem explains, we learn Torah and perform mitzvos primarily to spiritually refine our bodies while rectifying our souls. This means training the body to stop resisting both, like teaching a child to grow up and do the more responsible thing for their own good and development. That takes will, lots of will.
But it won't any longer the moment God dispenses with the Sitra Achra and yetzer hara in Yemos HaMoshiach. Then the body will be happy to do any mitzvah. It will no longer have to be commanded.
Seudas Shlishis
THIS RAISES A question: If the Parah Adumah was always meant to be a mitzvah, was the golden calf destined to occur? This could suggest, yes:
Go and see how The Holy One, Blessed is He, when He created the world created the Angel of Death on the first day as well…Man was created on the sixth day, and yet death was blamed on him. What is this like? A man who decides that he wants to divorce his wife and writes her a document of divorce. He then goes home with it and looks for a pretext to give it to her.
"Prepare me a drink," he tells her.
She does, and taking it from her he says, "Here is your divorce."
She asks him, "Why?"
He tells her, "Leave my house! You made me a warm drink!" to which she replies, "Were you able to know that I would prepare you a warm drink in advance that you wrote a divorce document and came home with it?"
Similarly, Adam told The Holy One, Blessed is He, "Master of the Universe, the Torah was with You for 2,000 years before You created the world…yet it says, 'This is the law when a man will die in a tent' (Bamidbar 19:14). If You had not planned death for Your creations, would You have written this? Rather, You just want to blame death on me!" (Tanchuma, Vayaishev 4)
In other words, the Midrash says, as much as Adam HaRishon seemed to have the choice to avoid sin and death, he didn't. He was destined to eat from the Aitz HaDa'as and to bring death into the world.
Not only this, but the Midrash continues:
It was similar concerning [the sale of] Yosef…Rav Yudan said, "The Holy One, Blessed is He, wanted to carry out the decree of, 'Know that you shall surely be (strangers)' (Bereishis 15:13), and set it up that Ya'akov would love Yosef [more] so the brothers would hate him and sell him to Arabs, and they would all [eventually] go down to Egypt…" (Tanchuma, Vayaishev 4)
On one hand, this information is a relief. It takes away the need to find a good explanation for, how such great people could commit such not-so-great acts. On the other hand, it is disturbing because it implies that we can be railroaded by Divine Providence down the wrong path…against our will.
One could argue that perhaps this idea only applies to specific events with great impact on Jewish history. Or, perhaps it is a deeper insight into free will itself, and how we're meant to use it.
Melave Malkah
ONE THING IS for certain, we have free will. God told us so, and tradition teaches that we will be judged for our choices. You can question what free will is, or wonder if we have any. But when it comes to life, it would be wise to assume you have it and use it responsibly.
Something else we can be certain about is that though we have free will, we do not have absolute free will. Many choices are made for us by life itself, imposed upon us since so many things are out of our control. But then again, does that take away anything from the choice I made, as long as I believed at the time my choice could make a difference?
Let's face it, history is not random. God made it with a specific purpose in mind, and with a master plan to be fulfilled. He knows the future and doesn't make mistakes, so whatever He had in mind was as good as done once He started to think about it. This is true right down to every person who will ever exist and every decision they will ever make.
At the end of the day, though a person makes all kinds of plans, there is a good chance that they will not turn out as anticipated. We don't know the future, which allows us to live with the perception that our decisions can make a difference and direct the course of history. It's all we need to be able to make choices for which we will be held accountable.
This does not completely solve the mystery of free will, but who says we can at this time, or that we should? The Parah Adumah is a mitzvah with a message, and it reads: Some things you can understand while others you cannot. Understand what you can, but don't get bogged down and distracted by what you can't. Recognize the free will opportunity of every moment, and utilize it meaningfully. It will save you in this world and reward you in the next one.
For essays on the current situation, go to www.shaarnunproductions.org.
Good Shabbos,
Pinchas Winston

Drasha
By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky
Parshas Tzav
Bloodsport
Blood. At worst, it invokes ghastly images of death and war. At best, it represents life-saving transfusions. On any scale it is not appetizing. It is for that reason that it is difficult to comprehend the repeated warnings and admonitions that the Torah makes concerning the consumption of blood. Beginning this week, there are three warnings in the Torah concerning the prohibition of consuming blood. There is a specific verse that tells parents to admonish their children and discourage any thought they may have of eating or drinking blood.
Leviticus 22:26-27: You shall not consume blood… from fowl or animal. Any soul that consumes blood will be cut off from his people.
Leviticus 17:10-12: Any man of the House of Israel and of the proselyte who dwells among them, consume any blood — I shall concentrate My attention upon the soul consuming blood, and I will cut it off from its people.
Deuteronomy: 12:23: Only be strong as not to eat blood…
Rashi quotes the words of Rav Shimon Ben Azai: "if blood, which is so repulsive, needs such dire warnings surely one must take great precaution not to succumb to sins that are appealing." Rabbi Yehudah

explains the repetitive admonitions in the context of history. During that era, many nations would actually indulge in blood-drinking ceremonies. Thus the Torah exhorts the Jewish nation on that matter. In any case, it is quite apparent that both Rabbi Shimon and Rabbi Yehudah were bothered by repeated warnings, which should be unnecessary. It is difficult to comprehend why the Torah spends more energy warning, admonishing, and exhorting the Jews against blood-consumption than against most other prohibitions that are much more alluring.

Also, why is this one of only two prohibitions that our sages interpreted an extra verse, as "a warning for parents to admonish their children." Why does this prohibition surpass the norm of parental supervision that is required by any other Mitzvah?

An old Jewish story has a devoutly religious woman running into a Chasidic Rebbe as she was crying uncontrollably.

"Rebbe," she cried, "it's my son. He went absolutely meshuga. He started acting totally insane. Even you won't be able to help him. He needs a psychiatrist!"

"What's the matter?" Asked the Rebbe.

"The matter?" She cried. "He's crazy! He's acting like a gentile! He dances with gentile women and began dining on pig!"

The Rebbe looked to the poor woman as he tried to put her problems in perspective.

"If he would dance with pigs and dine on women, I would say that he is crazy. But the way you describe him he is not crazy at all. I'd just say that he is becoming a very lascivious young man. And I can deal with that."

On a homiletic note, perhaps, we can explain the Torah's passionate admonitions about blood. The Torah understood the test of time. Acts that are considered vile and obscene by today's standard may be accepted as the norm tomorrow. Societies change and attitudes change with them. The ten greatest problems of the 1950's public school class may be considered decent, if not meritorious, behavior today. The Torah understood that society changes. Therefore it admonishes us on the lowest form of behavior with the same intensity as if it would be the normal custom. And it tells us to pass these specific admonitions to our children. We can not dismiss the warnings by thinking, "drinking blood is bizarre behavior. Why should my children need to worry about it?" The Torah says, even if something may be base and bizarre to our generation, if it's Torah it must be told to our children. It is impossible to know what the next generation will consider repulsive and what it may consider fashionable. Today's revulsion may be tomorrow's bloodsport. Times change and people change, but Torah remains eternal. Good Shabbos!

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https://jewishlink.news/how-now-red-cow/

How Now, Red Cow?

By Rabbi Stewart Weiss

March 28, 2024

The section of the Torah we read as Maftir this Shabbat—Parshat Parah—has baffled scholars and commentators for all of our history. Taken from the parsha of Chukat, it is known as the chok par excellence, the most perplexing of all the seemingly unknowable statutes of the Torah. Said Shlomo HaMelech: "Amarti achkimah, v'hi rechokah mimeni," "I thought I could become wise, but it is beyond me" (Kohelet 7:23).

The ashes of the red heifer, when blended with various other ingredients, created a compound that somehow managed to spiritually purify those who had been defiled after coming into contact with a dead body. Yet, at the very same time that the person was purified, the Kohen who administered the compound was himself rendered tamei!

How can this be? How can the very same item have the exact opposite effect on two different people? It seems logically absurd!

To me, this is not the most challenging part of the puzzle. I find it even more mysterious that the ashes of a dead thing can bring one back from the dead; i.e. remove the stain of death from one who had touched death. Now, I can understand how some acts—such as immersion in a mikvah—can serve to alter, or negate, the imprimatur of death, for in that instance it is life (in the form of water, which is a primary source of all life) which dispels death. But how can death cancel death?! This is indeed mystifying.

While I certainly do not claim to be smarter than Shlomo HaMelech, I do have a thought on the matter.

In the circle of life, there is a very close proximity of death to life. For example, a leaf dies when it falls off a tree, but when it flutters to the ground it enriches the soil, which will then give life to new plants. A woman giving birth to a child will cause her reproductive system to (temporarily) go sterile, but she will then recover, regenerate and be capable of bearing other children. A person dies, but at the moment of death, he or she enters into life eternal; and so a cemetery is referred to in Jewish tradition as a beit chaim, a house of (eternal) life.

On a national level, our greatest moments of life are connected to the bitterest pangs of death. So it was when we reached the lowest level of degradation in Egypt, only to be followed swiftly by our redemption. And so it was 70 years ago, when from the ashes of the Shoah there arose the rebirth of our great nation Israel. It is as if Hashem cannot bear for us to remain tamei for long; we must always return to vibrant, dynamic, active life.

That is why I believe that all the trauma, all the pain, all the terrible loss that we have suffered in the war against Hamas will ultimately lead to a stronger, more secure Israel and, by extension, a safer world. Why we have to endure so many tears and so much anguish is an enigma as puzzling to us as, well, as that of the Para Aduma. But I believe wholeheartedly that when we emerge—im yirtze Hashem may it be soon—we shall toast l'chayim—to life!

Rabbi Stewart Weiss is director of the Jewish Outreach Center of Ra'anana and a member of Mizrachi's Speakers Bureau (mizrachi.org/speakers).

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https://jewishlink.news/hamotzi-and-birkat-hamazon-on-mezonot-foods/

Motzi and Birkat Hamazon on Mezonot Foods

By Rabbi Daniel Mann Eretz Hemdah March 28, 2024

לעילוי נשמת יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

Question: I understand that if one eats a sufficient amount of food whose bracha is Mezonot, he recites Hamotzi and Birkat Hamazon on it. Do bread and Mezonot combine to comprise the required amount when each separately lacks a shiur? How about different types of Mezonot, e.g., cake and oatmeal?

Answer: The Gemara (Brachot 42a) says that for "pat habaah bekisnin—food that shares qualities with bread but is not normal bread," whether one recites Hamotzi or Mezonot on it depends on whether one is koveia seuda (sets a meal) on it. When "pat habaah bekisnin" gets Hamotzi, one also recites Birkat Hamazon on it (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 168:6) and washes on it (ibid. 158:1).

To be a candidate for bread status, food must be made from "the five grains" and be baked or look like bread. (Spaghetti is not "pat habaah bekisnin" or treated like bread no matter how much of it one eats—see ibid. 168:10). Various characteristics determine whether foods that pass these tests are bread or "pat habaah bekisnin" (ibid. 7).

A kezayit of bread suffices to require Birkat Hamazon, (ibid. 9), but if one eats less, "pat habaah bekisnin" cannot take it over that threshold, because objects with different shiurim do not join together to reach the shiur (see Shabbat 76a). However, if one was slightly short of the shiur needed for "pat habaah bekisnin," the bread—with its smaller shiur—can complete the bigger shiur needed for "pat habaah bekisnin," (ibid.). Different types of bread combine for a kezayit and types of "pat habaah bekisnin," combine for keviat seuda. (Arguably, elevating "pat habaah bekisnin," to bread status must focus on one food, but I have not found sufficient basis for this in the sources.)

The Magen Avraham went much further in combining things, claiming that it is enough that the meal with "pat habaah bekisnin" is a real meal. He writes: "If he set his meal on 'pat habaah bekisnin,' even though he ate with it meat and other things and if he had eaten (that amount he had

of) it by itself he would not have been satiated from it, he still recites Hamotzi and Birkat Hamazon." His approach emanates from the Gemara (ibid.) and Rishonim who describe eating of these semi-breads as that which is done at a normal meal. After all, a normal meal includes foods other than bread. So while no amount of cooked or fried grain-based food could get Hamotzi, oatmeal that you mentioned and many other things one has as part of a meal with, say, a boreka, can—according to the Magen Avraham—change the boreka's bracha to Hamotzi.

I must warn you, though, that it is very difficult to apply the matter of being koveia seuda on "pat habaah bekisnin." First, there is a machloket whether the amount of keviat seuda to eat depends on the individual's satiation or how much most people eat (see opinions in Rosh, Brachot 6:30). Another regarded approach sets the amount at the size (weight/volume?) of three or four eggs. This is a cutoff point regarding certain halachot of serious eating, even though it does not satiate most people (see Mishna Berura 168:24).

There is also a machloket whether we accept the Magen Avraham to include other foods eaten at the meal to reach keviat seuda—the Mishna Berura (ibid.) accepts him; the Birkei Yosef (Orach Chayim 168:6) and Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chayim 168:17) disagree. There are also several permutations and opinions about how broadly to apply the Magen Avraham. Is it only for foods that are eaten with the mezonot, e.g., crackers and cheese, a sandwich on a "mezonot roll" (see discussions in Vezot Habracha 4:3; Netivot Habracha 57)? Is it only when the mezonot and other foods are eaten at the same time (Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata 54:132), in the name of Rav Auerbach? Rav Moshe Feinstein (Igrot Moshe, Orach Chayim II, 32) has an expansive approach. While the Magen Avraham assumes the "pat habaah bekisnin," must play a major part of the meal, Rav Moshe reasons that today's trend to eat less bread at meals than was once standard lowers the amount of "pat habaah bekisnin," needed as well.

Many poskim assume there is a difference between lechatchila and bedieved, i.e., avoid meals with significant "pat habaah bekisnin," and no bread due to the huge gray area. Nevertheless, common practice is to eat non-bread meals without Hamotzi/Birkat Hamazon (see Avnei Yashfeh II, Orach Chayim 20; Teshuvot Vehanhagot I:182).

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Tzav

On All Other Nights We Eat Chametz and Matzah

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1331 Should Women Bentch HaGomel? Good Shabbos!

The following is both a beautiful comment on Parshas Tzav and on the Hagaddah.

The first of the four Mah Nishtana questions is "…on all other nights we eat chametz or matzah, tonight only matzah". Most of us have been saying this since we were five years old. Maybe when we were five, we did not pause to notice the following very glaring inference:

The traditional way to translate "she'bechol haleilos anu ochloim chametz u'matzah" is that on all other nights we can eat either Chametz or Matzah. In truth, that is not what the questions says. Literally, the question states that every night of the year, we eat chametz and matzah. Now in fact, rarely, at any given meal, do we eat both chametz and matzah together. So, it seems that it would have been more appropriate to phrase this question differently.

In fact, it is not necessary to go very far to come up with a more apt way of expressing this "either/or" dichotomy between chametz and matzah. The fourth question states "…on all other nights we are seated bein yoshvin u'bein mesubin (whether sitting or reclining) tonight we are all reclining." If the author of the Hagaddah is smart enough to figure out how to contrast two alternative scenarios with the expression "bein yoshvin u'bein mesubin" why did he not utilize a similar formula and say "shebechol haleilos anu ochlim bein chametz u'bein matzah," which would mean "either/or"?

The Binyon Ariel was the Rav in Amsterdam. He says that the first question is indeed precisely articulated as stated that "on all other occasions we eat chametz and matzah together". How so?

The Binyon Ariel explains something unique about the Korban Todah (Thanksgiving Offering), which is in our parsha. The Korban Todah is a very unique offering. Not only do you bring an animal offering on the Mizbayach (Altar), but together with the Korban Todah, the person needs to bring "Lachmei Todah" (breads of the Thanksgiving Offering). Lachmei Todah are very peculiar because they include both leavened and unleavened loaves!

The Binyon Ariel explains that the first question in the Hagaddah (based on the Mishna in Arvei Pesachim) is referring to the fact that normally when we bring a Korban Todah, we do so with chametz and with matzah together. This question is not referring to what we eat on Seder night in our time. This question is referring to the Korban Pesach, which is very similar to a Korban Todah. Unlike the normal Korban Shlamim which may be eaten for two days and one night, the Korban Todah is only eaten for one day and the following night (i.e. – it must be consumed by the following morning). A Korban Pesach is like that as well. Furthermore, just like a Korban Todah needs to be accompanied with bread, so too a Korban Pesach needs to be accompanied by bread ("It shall be eaten upon matzaoh and marror" (Shemos 12:8).

The author of the Hagaddah is asking why on this night are we bringing this unique kind of Thanksgiving Offering that is eaten only with unleavened bread and not also with leavened bread? This is how the Binyon Ariel interprets the first question of the Mah Nishtana.

Rabbi Buchspan from Miami Florida wanted to explain the symbolism of the fact that the regular Korban Todah includes both chametz and matzah and the Korban Pesach only includes matzah.

Rabbi Buchspan quotes an interesting insight from Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch in Sefer VaYikra on the parsha of Korban Todah. Rav Hirsch writes that matzah represents nature in its crudest form, before human involvement and innovation. What is matzah? Flour and water. It does not get more basic than that. There is very little human innovation. You put the flour in the water, you bake it, v'nomar amen.

On the other hand, chametz is an example of man's manipulation of the natural elements, where human ingenuity yields a far more advanced and sophisticated product than the original ingredients. When you take flour and water and you add yeast and other ingredients, then instead of getting a thin little matzah that sometimes tastes not much better than cardboard, you get a geshmake challah that is a symbol of human involvement and the human ability to make something so much superior to a basic nature-based product.

Rabbi Buchspan writes that when the four individuals who are required to offer a Korban Todah (those who travel across a desert, those who travel across the sea, the seriously ill who are healed, and those who are freed from imprisonment – Brochos 54b) bring their Thanksgiving Offering, they acknowledge that there were two elements that saved them. Number one, the Hand of G-d saved them, with minimal if any human involvement. That is symbolized by the matzah. But whenever a person is saved in any one of these situations, there is also human involvement. When a person is sick and he needs an operation, it is not the doctor or the surgeon that heals, it is the Ribono shel Olam that heals. But on the other hand, healing requires hishtadlus (human effort). You need to find the right doctor. You need to go to the doctor. You need to make decisions regarding your care and follow the recommended medical protocol. A person's healing certainly requires personal involvement as well as that of the Almighty. We are not Christian Scientists who claim "The Almighty made me sick. He will make me well." We do great hishtadlus in seeking competent medical treatment, which is a very legitimate thing to do.

Likewise, if a person is crossing a desert or travelling on the high seas, he needs to make effort on his own to return to civilization. He cannot

just rely on the Ribono shel Olam to miraculously pluck him from his dangerous situation. If a person is on a sinking ship, he needs to get into the life boat. He cannot say "If G-d wants to save me, He will save me miraculously." So the four individuals who need to offer thanks must all offer a dual acknowledgement – an acknowledgement of the Yad Hashem, symbolized by the matzah (which is lacking in human involvement) and an acknowledgement of his own successful effort to return safely home or to regain his health, symbolized by the chometz (which requires human involvement).

However, the Korban Pesach is different. This is the miracle of the Ribono shel Olam acting on His Own. "You shall not leave the door of your house until morning" (Shemos 12:22). The Angel of Death was roaming the streets of Mitzrayim. What were the Jews supposed to do? They were commanded to do nothing, to act with total passivity. Everything will be taken care of by the Ribono shel Olam. That is why the Korban Pesach—which is a form of the Korban Todah, which normally involves human participation—was brought with only matzah, symbolizing the lack of human involvement in the deliverance from Mitzrayim.

Parshas Tzav

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Avrahom ben Yosef.

Installation Coronation

Take Aharon and his sons with him and the anointing oil […] (8:2).

In this week's parsha, we find Hashem giving Moshe instructions for the official installation of Aharon and his sons as kohanim – the priestly class of Bnei Yisroel. Moshe then gathers all of Bnei Yisroel to watch as he follows a step-by-step process for initiating Aharon and his sons as the kohanim.

Aside from the steps that might be expected in the process of elevating their status – immersion in a mikveh, dressing them in priestly vestments, applying and sprinkling the special anointing oil to all the vessels in the Mishkan and to Aharon and his sons as well, etc. – we find a very unusual ritual.

Several sacrifices were offered: a bull was brought as a sin offering, a ram was brought as a burnt offering, and a second ram was brought as a peace offering (see 8:22 and Rashi ad loc). Moshe then applied the blood of the peace offering to Aharon's and his sons' right ear lobes, right thumbs, and right big toes.

This ritual is only performed in one other place in the Torah: by the purification of a person who has been struck by tzora'as – commonly (and incorrectly) translated as leprosy.

What is the meaning of this enigmatic ritual and what is the relationship between initiating the kohanim and cleansing one who has recovered from tzora'as?

Aharon and his sons were being elevated to a new status over the rest of the Jewish people. They were now receiving forevermore one of the three crowns that Hashem gifted to this world; they were receiving the crown of kehuna. Without proper perspective, being crowned can be a dangerous affair as it can easily lead one to harbor false notions of self-importance. A person can actually begin to believe that he is receiving this honor because there is something intrinsically great about himself.

The unique ritual of placing the blood on the ear lobe, thumb, and big toe is intended to address this issue. The unifying connection between all of these parts of the body is that the ears, fingers, and toes represent the person's extremities. When a person gets cold, the first parts that are affected are the extremities – namely the ears, fingers, and toes – because they are the furthest from the core of the body. Yet, when a person is asked to point to himself, he always points to his core. Thus, by emphasizing the extremities, this ritual demonstrates that the position is not about them personally, it's about what they can do for others.

The message they receive is that while being anointed a kohen is an honor, it is more significantly a great and awesome responsibility. The Talmud has a dispute about whether the kohanim are agents of the people to Hashem or agents of Hashem to the people, but everyone agrees that they are merely agents. In other words, they are facilitators not principals. This is the message conveyed by placing the blood on the extremities.

This is also true of a person who has been struck by tzora'as. This punishment comes as a consequence of speaking loshon hora. The core motivating force of one who speaks loshon hora is the desire to elevate oneself by putting others down. While every sin contains an element of self-centered behavior, loshon hora is the sin of focusing on the perceived importance of oneself and trying to elevate the opinions of others regarding one's own self-importance. This is why a person needs a kohen to declare them unclean and the process of purification is the same as the kohen's initiation. The message they are supposed to receive and internalize is that they need to focus less on themselves and their own importance.

Neither Liberal Nor Conservative

And Aharon and his sons carried out all the matters that Hashem commanded through Moshe (8:36).

The very end of this week's parsha informs us that Aharon and his sons performed all procedures as they had been instructed by Moshe Rabbeinu. Rashi (ad loc) makes an unusual comment, "This is to tell their praise, that they veered neither to the right nor to the left." In other words, they did exactly as they were told by Moshe.

Rashi's illustration is a little odd. Typically, Rashi would merely say they did as they were told without altering anything. Why does Rashi take poetic license here and state that they veered neither to the right nor to the left? Furthermore, why is this a great "praise" that they actually followed the process that Moshe laid out for them? Wouldn't we expect as much?

The initiation process of the kohanim is discussed both in this week's parsha and in Parshas Tetzaveh. The commentators try, at length, to reconcile the discrepancies in the details as well as the seeming differences in intention of particular activities discussed in both of these parshios. Rashi in his final comment on this parsha seems to be addressing the overarching issue.

The Jewish people have both a written Torah and an oral Torah. Much, if not all, of the oral Torah was given to Moshe at Mount Sinai. In addition, we have another aspect of Torah known as Gemara. The Gemara is primarily Klal Yisroel's interpretation of Torah. That is, the discussions of succeeding generations and the application of those discussions to everyday law as interpreted by the greatest minds of each generation, is all part of Klal Yisroel's contribution to Torah.

This ability of the leaders of each generation to interpret and create binding laws as part of Torah is authorized by the verse "you shall come to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge who shall be in those days, and inquire; and they shall declare to you the law" (Devarim 17:9). Klal Yisroel are likewise enjoined to follow their leaders' interpretations of the law – "according to the judgment which they shall tell you, you shall do; you shall not decline from the ruling which they shall declare to you, to the right nor to the left" (ad loc 17:11).

This is exactly what Rashi is alluding to here. In Parshas Tetzaveh, Hashem told them exactly what was to be done, while in this week's parsha we are dealing with Moshe's interpretation of Hashem's commandments (see Rashi 8:5). In fact, there are some actions of the process that Moshe required them to do that Rashi points out that he is unaware of the source for those actions (see 8:11).

While Moshe is authorized to interpret what Hashem has commanded him to do, one might perhaps think it is acceptable to be more stringent or to maybe find a leniency because the rule wasn't expressly outlined by Hashem. Aharon and his sons are thus praised for following Moshe's instructions, not veering to the right nor to the left.

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https://jewishlink.news/shareholders-in-israel/

Shareholders In Israel

By Rabbi Moshe Taragin

March 28, 2024

The guidelines surrounding the Mishkan, korbanot and rituals were repeated twice. The first round of instructions, in parshat Vayikra, was directed to the rank and file, while a parallel list in parshat Tzav, was commanded directly to the Kohanim. Even though the general population wasn't directly involved in the Mishkan ceremonies they were still handed their own list of instructions. Hashem wanted every person to feel individual agency over the Mishkan experience, so that the Mishkan would not become an impersonal and heavy institution. Maintaining the dignity and sanctity of the Mishkan demands that only trained priests officiate in the daily ceremonies. If the Mishkan turns into a freeway with everyone independently ad-libbing, it loses its transcendence and gravitas. Restrictiveness is vital to the Mishkan, but it was still crucial that every Jew possessed agency and was personally invested in this house of Hashem, else it would become detached, bureaucratic and irrelevant.

Similarly, everyone was invited to the inauguration of the Mishkan. The induction of the Mishkan was launched with a seven-day vigil, known as the week of miluim, during which the Kohanim could not leave the precincts of the Mishkan. During this intense period, they practiced the various korbanot and rituals, so that they would become proficient once the Mishkan opened for business. Additionally, the seven-day vigil afforded the Kohanim time to mentally prepare for this solemn project. Though only Kohanim were directly involved in the seven-day vigil, the entire population was invited to attend its opening ceremonies.

From a purely logistical standpoint it was challenging to fit three million people into the Mishkan. Yet, despite the technical obstacles it was important to include everyone in the miluim experience so that the average Jew, who wasn't a priest, would not feel sidelined by the large and rigidified Mishkan. By inviting everyone to the gala inauguration, everyone was given agency, and all felt personally invested in the project. We became shareholders in the Mishkan, not spectators.

Agency in Israel

Traditionally, Israeli citizens have felt deep agency of their country. Israel was a new country, still in its embryonic stages and still forming its social, political and religious identity. Living through the early chapters of the modern state of Israel was deeply meaningful, as we were conscious about forging something new. Compulsory national service provided every Israeli with a seat at the table and an individual role in defending the country and in enriching daily life. National service provided us with a high engagement level in the affairs of our country. If Israelis were known to be vociferous and politically contentious it was because they possessed ownership and agency of their country. Sometimes too much ownership, but ownership nonetheless.

Shifting Away From Agency

As life in Israel shifted, our individual agency diminished. There was a pocket of about 30 years during which our country experienced spectacular and dizzying growth, as we transformed into a global economic powerhouse and a military superpower. Our fledgling little country had arrived on the grand international stage. We became fabulously successful, but the country felt less personal and more institutional. Our heimish little country transformed from a "little engine that could" into a colossal superpower.

As Israel became large and seemingly self-powered, we started taking her for granted. We assumed that the country was stable enough and secure enough to run "on its own." As we lost personal agency in day-to-day experience, life in Israel felt more humdrum and less meaningful.

Restoring Agency

October 7 reversed this trend. Having been plunged into an existential war, we were forced to take greater agency over the future of our state. The sound of our revitalized agency echoed in the exhausted voices of soldiers who battled in Aza for months, while separated from their families and professions. Declaring their firm intention to pursue this battle to its conclusion, they defiantly announced: "If we don't protect our homes, who will?" The October 7 massacre stripped away any illusion that our country is self-powered, and that day reminded us that each Israeli citizen has a personal stake in Israel.

While national identification with government institutions runs low, patriotism and enthusiasm for our security forces runs high. This will dramatically affect the future political map of Israel, but, for now, is a reflection of how empowering personal agency can be. The government is an "institution," while our security forces are every one of us.

During this war our entire country has served a modern "miluim" and it hasn't been for only eight days. For five months, teachers, hi-tech executives, doctors, lawyers, shopkeepers, men and women have kept a sacred vigil, protecting our homeland from violence. And it hasn't been merely a practice session for the real show. Everyone has served side by side defending our country, and tragically and too often fell in battle together. If we don't defend our homeland, who will? If we don't build this country, who will?

Despite the immense sadness and heart-breaking tragedy of the past five months, they were filled with meaning and soulfulness. It turns out that personal agency and becoming directly involved is not just a more effective policy, but is also more meaningful. For the past five months we have been tired and anxious, but have been filled with meaning and magnitude.

International Shareholders

The war has also provided agency to Jews who reside outside of Israel. They too, took the State of Israel for granted. As flights to Israel proliferated and hotels multiplied it became easier than ever to land in Israel for a few days, enjoy the people and the food, visit family and the Kotel and jet back to regular life. Fortunately, tourism became a booming industry, and traveling to Israel was no longer a pilgrimage.

Oer readers still remember the crowded and suffocating old airport at Ben Gurion. It wasn't pleasant to arrive at, but the second you landed you immediately knew you were in Israel. The heat, the smell and the cramped lines left no doubt. When the modest terminal was, thank God, replaced by the current modern and shiny airport, landing in Israel became similar to landing anywhere else. Once pilgrims, Jewish visitors to Israel now became tourists.

Restoring Agency Abroad

Over the past few years, it has become clear that Israel is no longer something which any Jew can take for granted. The shift in mentality began during the corona pandemic when, for a few months, the doors of our homeland were closed to non-Israeli citizens due to health concerns. The unexpected and new reality, that their homeland was no longer just a few hours away, was jolting for many. Of course, two years later, the savage attacks of October 7 further recast the relationship between non-Israeli Jews and the State of Israel by reminding everyone of just how fragile and sometimes dangerous life in Israel still is.

During the past five months, visits to Israel have been very different from the vacations of the past. Shopping and restaurants have been replaced by volunteerism and trips to charred remains of communities in the South. Jews traveling to Israel have, once again, become pilgrims rather than tourists. Tourism is a luxury while pilgrimages are personal, and provide us with agency.

The war has reminded every Jew, both Israeli and non-Israeli, that they are shareholders of Israel and not external spectators. The country isn't self-powered but dependent upon us. The war has restored our agency.

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PARSHAT TZAV
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TZAV AND VAYIKRA

Is Parshat Tzav simply a repeat of Parshat Vayikra?

In the following shiur, as we undertake a 'tedious' study that will explain how and why they are very different - we will also arrive at several conclusions that will help us appreciate why we eat 'kosher' meat.

INTRODUCTION

In both Parshiot Vayikra and Tzav we find an organized set of laws concerning each of the five basic categories of korbanot: OLAH, MINCHA, CHATAT, ASHAM and SHLAMIM. However, in each Parsha, the order and detail of their presentation are quite different.

A priori, it would have been more logical for the Torah to combine all these laws into **one** unit. To understand why they are presented separately, the following shiur analyzes Parshat Tzav in an attempt to understand its internal structure, and then compares it to Parshat Vayikra.

A KEY PHRASE

The 'key' towards understanding Parshat Tzav is the phrase "v'zot torat ha'...". To verify the centrality of this phrase, briefly review the seven "parshiot" that comprise chapters 6 & 7, noting how just about each "parshia" begins with this same phrase: "zot torat..." - as it introduces each new category.

For example, in 6:2 we find "zot torat ha'olah", in 6:7 - "zot torat ha'mincha", in 6:18 - "zot torat ha'chatat", etc. [See also 7:1 (asham), and 7:11 (shlamim).]

Then, study the last two psukim of this unit (i.e. 7:37-38), noting once again how this phrase forms a very fitting summary for each of these introductory phrases:

"zot ha'torah - la'OLAH la'MINCHA, v'la'CHATAT..." (7:37).

Furthermore, recall that we didn't find this phrase (or anything similar) in Parshat Vayikra. Hence, to understand what Parshat Tzav is all about, we must first understand the meaning of the word "torah" in this context.

Today, the word "torah" is commonly used to describe the entire Torah [i.e. Chumash], and hence the most general category encompassing all of the mitzvot. However, in Sefer Vayikra the word "torah" carries a more specific meaning, as "torah" is only one of the various categories of laws, distinct from "chukim" and "mishpatim". [See for example 18:1-5.]

Another example of the use of the word "torah" in a more specific context is in regard to God's comment to Yitzchak concerning Avraham Avinu:

"ekev asher shama Avraham b'koli - v'yishmor mishmarti mitzvoti chukotei, v'TORAHtei" - (see Breishit 26:5)

Here, the word "torah" clearly implies a specific category (and not a general one); and so claim Ibn Ezra, Rashbam, Ramban, and Seforno (even though each gives a different explanation of what that category is).

To understand the specific meaning of the word "torah", let's consider its "shoresh" [root] - the verb "l'horot" - to instruct. Hence, we should expect the word "torah" in Sefer Vayikra to refer to an instructional (or procedural) law, i.e. a series of actions necessary for the completion of a given process.

[The same is true in Sefer Bamidbar, as we shall see in our discussion of Parshat Parah.]

HOW OR WHAT

Based on this context, the pasuk in Parshat Tzav "zot torat ha'mincha..." (see 6:7-10) should be translated as, "This is the PROCEDURE for offering the "korban mincha", as this pasuk introduces the details regarding HOW the priest must offer the korban mincha. More specifically, this would include:

a) taking it to the mizbayach;
b) offering a handful ("kometz") from its flour and oil;
c) eating the leftovers as "matza" in the courtyard, etc.

In this manner, Parshat Tzav details the procedures for HOW to offer all the other types of korbanot. Herein lies the basic difference between Parshat Tzav and Parshat Vayikra. Whereas Parshat Tzav deals primarily with the procedures for **HOW** to offer the various korbanot, Parshat Vayikra focuses on **WHAT** korban (or which korban) is to be offered. Let's explain.

Parshat Vayikra discusses which offerings the individual ***can*** bring should he wish to offer a korban ["n'dava"], as well as which offering he ***must*** bring should he transgress ["chova"]. In contrast, Parshat Tzav explains ***how*** the "kohanim" offer these korbanot, i.e. the procedures for the "kohanim" to follow once the owner presents them with the "korban".

This distinction explains why the opening pasuk of each Parsha directs itself to a different audience.

* Parshat Vayikra begins with:
  "...Speak to BNEI YISRAEL and tell them, if an INDIVIDUAL among you WISHES TO OFFER a korban... " (1:1-2)

* Parshat Tzav begins with:
  "Command AHARON & HIS SONS saying, this is the procedure for bringing the OLAH..." (6:1-2)

Parshat Tzav is addressed specifically to the KOHANIM for it explains HOW they must offer the korbanot, while Parshat Vayikra directs itself towards Bnei Yisrael, since everyone must know WHICH specific korban he CAN or MUST bring in any given situation.

In other words, Parshat VAYIKRA serves as a 'halachik catalogue' - guiding the individual as to WHICH korban to bring, while Parshat TZAV serves as an 'instruction manual' - teaching the kohen HOW to offer each type of korban.

Chumash presents each 'manual' independently because each serves a different purpose. This can explain why the Torah divides these details into two separate sections.

[This distinction also explains why certain details are found in both Parshiot, i.e. those laws that must be known to BOTH the kohanim and to the individual.

Furthermore, certain procedures that only the kohen can perform are also included in Vayikra because the kohen serves in this capacity as the emissary of the individual offering the korban. Ideally the owner should offer the korban, but since only kohanim are permitted to come near the MIZBAYACH, the kohen must perform the "avodah" on his behalf. Additionally, the owner must also be aware of what he is permitted to do and which rituals are restricted to the kohanim. For example, the owner is permitted to do "shchita," but may not perform other "avodot."]

THE 'NEW ORDER'

This background also explains the difference in the ORDER of the presentation of the korbanot in each Parsha.

As we explained in last week's shiur, Parshat Vayikra discusses the categories of "korban yachid," beginning with the voluntary N'DAVA korbanot - OLAH & SHLAMIM - and then continuing with the obligatory CHOVA korbanot - CHATAT & ASHAM.

In contrast, Parshat Tzav makes no distinction between N'DAVA and CHOVA. Once the korban comes to the Mikdash, the kohen doesn't need to know why it was offered. Instead, he only needs to know its category. Hence, the order in Tzav follows the level of "kedusha" of the various korbanot: OLAH - MINCHA - CHATAT - ASHAM - SHLAMIM.

[The SHLAMIM is now last instead of second, since it has the lowest level of "kedusha" ("kodshim kalim").]

THE ORDER IN PARSHAT TZAV

One could also explain that the internal order of Tzav follows according to how much of the korban is consumed on the MIZBAYACH (in Chazal, known as "achilat mizbayach"):

The OLAH is first as it is totally consumed on the mizbayach. The MINCHA follows, as it is either totally consumed, in the case of a MINCHA brought by a kohen (see 6:16); or at least the "kometz" is consumed, while the leftover flour ["noteret"] can be eaten only by the KOHANIM.

Next we find the CHATAT and ASHAM, as their "chaylev" [fat] and "dam" [blood] is offered on the mizbayach; while the meat can be eaten only by the KOHANIM.

[All of the above korbanot are known as "kodshei kodashim", as the meat either is consumed on the mizbeyach or eaten by the kohanim, but must remain within the courtyard of the Mishkan. The Gemara explains that this meat eaten by the kohanim is considered a 'gift' to the kohanim from God (and not from the owner) -"m'shulchan gavohah k'zachu leh".]

The SHLAMIM comes last as some of its meat can be eaten by the owners (after the "chaylev" and "dam" are offered on the mizbeyach). As this meat can be eaten anywhere in the camp (and not only within the courtyard of the Mishkan), this category is known as "kodshim kalim."

AN OUTLINE of PARSHAT TZAV

The following table summarizes the overall structure of Parshat Tzav based on the principles discussed above. As you study it, note that not every 'parshia' begins with a "zot torat ha'--". Instead, we find several 'digressions' into 'parshiot' of related topics (noted by a '**"). We will discuss these digressions at the conclusion of the outline.

TORAT ha'OLAH - 6:1-6

1) bringing the daily "olat tamid";
2) "trumat ha'deshen" - daily removal of ashes from mizbeyach;
3) preparing the wood and fire on the mizbayach;
4) mitzvat "aish tamid" - to ensure a continuous fire.

TORAT ha'MINCHA - 6:7-11

1) the "kometz" (handful) of flour placed on the mizbayach;
2) the "noteret" (leftover portion), eaten by the kohen;

** RELATED LAWS: (6:12-16)

3) the "minchat chinuch" - the special inaugural meal offering brought by a kohen the first time he performs AVODA.
4) the "minchat chavitin" - offered daily by the Kohen Gadol.

TORAT ha'CHATAT - 6:17-23

1) the procedure how to offer the korban;
2) the portion eaten by the kohen;
3) where it can be eaten (in the "azara");

Related laws:

4) special laws concerning a case where the blood of a chatat touches a garment or vessel.

TORAT ha'ASHAM - 7:1-7

1) the procedure how to offer the korban;
2) the portion eaten by the kohen;
3) where it can be eaten;

[As "asham" forms the conclusion of the Kodshei Kodshim section, several laws concerning the reward of the kohen are added, such as the kohen's rights to the animal hides of the OLAH and the issue of who receives the "noteret" of the various types of korban mincha (see 7:8-10).]

TORAT ha'SHLAMIM - 7:11-34

1) the laws regarding the Korban Todah (thanksgiving);
2) the laws regarding a Korban Shlamim (freewill);

**RELATED LAWS:

3) laws concerning meat that becomes "tamey" (defiled);
4) the general prohibition of eating "chaylev" and "dam" (blood)
5) the kohen's rights to the "chazeh" (breast) and "shok" (thigh), a 'gift' to the kohen from the owner of the korban.

SUMMARY - 7:35-38 (this concludes the unit)

35-36: "This is the 'reward' of the kohanim from the korbanot. ["mashchat" = reward, but see m'forshim!]
37: ZOT HA'TORAH: l'OLAH, l'MINCHA, l'CHATAT v'l'ASHAM... ul'ZEVACH HA'SHLAMIM".

THE DIGRESSIONS

Even though most of outline follows according to the structure set by the phrase "zot torat..." (and hence its laws are directed specifically to the kohanim) we do find several digressions.

The first such digression is the 'parshia' of 6:12-16, and follows the laws of how to bring a "korban mincha". It describes both the:

* "minchat chinuch" - the inauguration flour-offering that the kohen brings on the day he begins his service; and the .
* "minchat chavitim" - an identical korban offered daily by the Kohen Gadol.

This digression is quite logical, as this law relates to both the korban mincha and to the kohanim.

Within the laws of the korban SHLAMIM we find two additional digressions. The first (7:22-27) discusses the prohibition to eat "chaylev v'dam" from any animal, even if was not offered as a korban SHLAMIM. The second (7:28-31) explains that the owner of the korban SHLAMIM must give the "chazeh' and "shok" to the kohen. Note how both of these digressions are directed to the entire congregation (and not just to the kohanim/ see 7:22&28) for everyone is required to know these related laws.

PRIESTLY REWARD

With these digressions in mind, and after reviewing the outline we may additionally conclude that one of the primary considerations of Parshat Tzav is the compensation that the kohen receives for offering the korban. In contrast to Parshat Vayikra, which does not at all raise this issue, Parshat Tzav tells us that the kohen receives the hides of the Olah offering, the leftovers of the Mincha offering, most of the meat of the "chatat" and "asham" and the "chazeh" & "shok" of the "shlamim".

The summary pasuk in 7:35-36 reinforces the significance of this point in the eyes of Parshat Tzav, as does the introduction in 6:1-2, which directs these laws specifically to Aharon and his sons.

KORBANOT THEN / KASHRUT TODAY

As we mentioned above, in the middle of the SHLAMIM section in Parshat Tzav we find a special "dibur" to Bnei Yisrael prohibiting them from eating the "chaylev" & "dam" (fat and blood) of any animal, even if that animal is not being offered as a "korban"!

This law, and its presentation at this location, suggests that the 'kashrut laws' of "chaylev v'dam" can be viewed as an EXTENSION of the laws of korbanot. In other words, Chumash purposely includes the laws of "chaylev" and "dam" in Parshat Tzav to teach us that they are forbidden specifically because these parts of the animal, had it been a korban, belong on the mizbeyach!

Ideally, as Sefer Devarim establishes (see 12:20-22), one should eat meat only within the framework of a korban shlamim. Eating "chulin" (meat which is not a korban) is allowed only when bringing a korban shlamim is unfeasible. [In Sefer Devarim this meat is referred to as "basar ta'ava" ('meat of 'desire').]

Nevertheless, even in the realistic, non-ideal condition, when one does eat "chulin," he still may not eat the "chaylev v'dam." Therefore, whenever a Jew does eat meat, he must remind himself that this animal could (or should) have been a "korban shlamim".

One could suggest that man's desire for meat may reflect an animalistic tendency latent in human behavior. By offering a korban shlamim, man can channel this desire in a more positive direction - towards the enhancement of his relationship with God.

[Recall from our shiur on Vayikra that the korban shlamim is the ideal "korban N'DAVA" in that it reenacts the covenantal ceremony between God and Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai.]

Even today (without a Mikdash), by refraining from eating "chaylev" and "dam", we can elevate our physical world with "kedusha" and retain a certain level of "kedusha" - even while eating meat.

shabbat shalom
menachem

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FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. WHAT'S A MISHPAT?

What do you think is the difference between a "chok" and a "mishpat"? Consider the linguistic relationship between the words "mishpat" and "shofet" (= shoresh sh.p.t.), and recall Parshat Mishpatim (Shmot chapter 21) and its 'key' word (pun intended).

B. SOME MORE 'TORAH'

Note the similar use of the word "torah" - "procedure" - in Tazria-Metzora - see Vayikra 12:7, 13:59, 14:2,32,54.
See also Bamidbar 5:29-30, 6:21.
Note also Breishit 26:5 - see m'forshim!
Note how the word "torah" takes on a more general meaning in Sefer Devarim - see 1:5 & 4:44! Can you explain why?

See Shmot 24:12, And note the words TORAH & MITZVAH.

If "mitzvah" refers to TZIVUI HA'MISHKAN, i.e. Shmot 25->31, then to what does TORAH refer? Based on 7:37-38, could this be referring (at least partially) to Parshat Tzav?

Could it include other parshiot of mitzvot found in Sefer Vayikra and Sefer Bamidbar? If so, can you explain why?

Relate to your answers to C & D above.

C. THE PROBLEMATIC FINALE

See 7:37, which accurately summarizes the entire Parsha, except for one 'small' detail:

"zot ha'torah la'OLAH la'MINCHA, v'la'CHATAT v'la'ASHAM *v'la'MILUIM* u'l'ZEVACH HA'SHLAMIM..."

What is "v'la'miluim" doing in this pasuk?
1. Scan the Parsha to make sure you understand the question.
2. Note the two directions taken by the commentators in dealing with this problem. [See Rashi & Ibn Ezra.]
3. Relate these answers to 6:12-16 and the next perek (8:1-36).
4. Now relate this issue to Shmot perek 29.

Note that from 7:38 it appears that the mitzvot of Parshat Tzav were given on HAR SINAI, and NOT from the Ohel Moed as were the mitzvot in Parshat Vayikra [see Ramban].

How does this help answer the question concerning the word "miluim"?
5. Why are the laws concerning the 'miluim' recorded in Shmot (perek 29) while all the other "torot" appear in Vayikra?
6. How does all this relate to Shmot 24:12 and Parshiot Terumah - Tezaveh? To what does the word "torah" refer in that pasuk?

[Iy"h, next week's shiur will deal with this topic.]

D. THE SEVEN DAYS OF MILUIM

At the end of Parshat Tzav (8:1-36), we find the narrative describing the seven-day "miluim" dedication ceremony. Prove from the style of this parsha that it belongs in Pkudei. (Look for the repetition of the key phrase.) Where in Parshat Pkudei does this parsha belong? Why do you think it is placed here?

How does this parsha relate to Parshat Shmini?
Why do you think this narrative is included in Sefer Vayikra rather than Sefer Shmot?

Note as well that the fulfillment of all the commandments concerning how to build the Mishkan in Parshiot Terumah Tezaveh were repeated in Vayakhel Pekudei, EXCEPT the commandment concerning the seven day milium ceremony.

E. DAM HA'NEFESH

In the related parsha of "basar ta'ava" in Sefer Devarim (12:20-28), we find what appears to be a different reason for the prohibition against eating blood:

"Be sure not to eat the BLOOD, for the blood is the 'nefesh' (life/soul), and you must not consume the 'nefesh' with the 'basar' (meat)." (12:23)

In truth, however, this reason involves the very same principle we discussed. The sprinkling of the korban's blood on the mizbayach represents the 'nefesh' of the person offering the korban - "ki ha'dam hu ha'nefesh" (12:23). This is the reason why the blood was chosen to be sprinkled on the mizbayach, and this is the reason why we are not permitted to eat the blood.

How does offering a korban or refraining from eating certain animal parts bring anyone closer to God?

Man's relationship with God stems from his understanding that he was created for a purpose. Towards that purpose, God created man "b'tzelem Elokim" (Br. 1:27), i.e. with a creative mind (see first chapter of Moreh Nvuchim of the Rambam!). It is this trait of "tzelem Elokim" that differentiates man from animal. Upon seeing the blood of an animal, man should ask himself, how am I different from that animal? The animal's shape may be a bit different, but the blood is the same blood as the human being's, just as the inner organs and limbs are the same as his.

One could suggest that the experience of offering a korban stimulates this process of introspection; it may help man recognize that despite these similarities, he is different, insofar as he was created "b'tzelem Elokim" - for a purpose. The search for that purpose sets man on the proper path. As we say in Tehilim:

"Adam bi'kar" - a man [lives] with wealth and honor - "v'lo yavin" - but does not contemplate his way in life - "nimshal k'bhay'mot nidmu" - he is like the animals that perish. (Tehilim 49:21)

F. ANOTHER "DIBUR" OUT OF PLACE?

Imbedded within the parsha's discussion of shlamim we find yet another "dibur" to Bnei Yisrael (7:28-34). Again, why do we find a "dibur" to Bnei Yisrael in the Parsha intended for kohanim? Shouldn't these laws appear in Parshat Vayikra?

This "dibur" details the laws requiring the owner of the shlamim to give the "chazeh v'shok" to the kohen. These laws are in Parshat Tzav because they deal with the portion of the animal reserved for the kohanim. On the other hand, it must be emphasized that this portion is a gift to the kohen from the owner of the korban. As such, it requires a special "dibur" to Bnei Yisrael.

G. KORBAN TODAH & KORBAN PESACH

One could suggest that the korban Pesach is simply a 'special type' of korban Todah. The following questions (in lieu of a shiur) will help you understand their connection. (Read Vayikra 7:11-15 & Shmot 12:3-12.)
1. What is the time frame in which these korbanot can be eaten?
2. What type of bread must be eaten with each korban?
Do any other korbanot come with bread or matza?
3. Would you say these laws 'force' someone to invite people to join him in eating his Korban Todah?
Must one invite others to join him when eating the Korban Pesach?
4. What is supposed to happen during this "Todah" seudah?
Relate to Tehilim 107, especially pasuk 22!
How is this similar to "leil ha'seder"?
5. How does the recitation of "Hallel" apply to both korbanot?
Relate to Tehilim 100("mizmor l'Todah").
6. According to this comparison, why do we eat matza with the Korban Pesach?
Does it have anything to do with the matza that Bnei Yisrael baked after leaving Egypt (see Shmot 12:39)?
Iy"h, we'll have a shiur on this topic before Pesach.

Parshat Tzav: A Sin Offering But No Sins?

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

Sefer VaYikra (Leviticus) opens with the "korbanot manual," seven perakim (chapters) of instructions about sacrifices: what different types of sacrifices there are, under what conditions we are to bring each sacrifice to Hashem, and all of the details about the actual process of sacrifice and its aftermath (e.g., when and by whom various korbanot are to be eaten). To many of us nowadays, this manual is not only technical and unfamiliar, but can seem like a closed book. Our goal, then, is to unpack some of the ideas behind the korbanot: when we bring each of the various different types of korban, what are we trying to accomplish? How do the details of the process of bringing each type of korban effectively accomplish what we want/need to do? (As usual, we draw on a variety of sources. Almost none of these ideas are my own.)

Our first step is to get our bearings. Why is this manual placed here at the opening of Sefer VaYikra, between the completion of the construction of the Mishkan (portable Temple) in Sefer Shemot (Exodus) and the Mishkan's inauguration in VaYikra? The most accessible answer seems to be that since the inauguration's centerpiece is its korbanot, we need to know what the different types are, how they are brought, and what is the purpose of each, otherwise the inauguration won't mean much to us.

LAST WEEK: THE "SHELAMIM":

Last week we looked at one of those types of korbanot -- the shelamim -- and discussed some of its details and their significance:

1) Possible meanings of the name "shelamim."
2) Under what circumstances I would bring a shelamim.
3) We focused especially on the parts of the shelamim offered to Hashem on the mizbe'ah (altar): the helev (certain parts of the animal's fat), a symbol of the best, richest part, given to Hashem, and the blood, the symbol of life, placed on the mizbe'ah before Hashem to show respect for life and recognition that Hashem is the master of life -- a crucial lesson in context of the shelamim, since we are given permission to take life for food. This is also why the Torah stresses the prohibition of eating blood particularly in the shelamim context: we have to be reminded that life must be respected even when we are given permission to take it. Eating the symbol of life would obviously show disrespect for the sacredness of life.

A "SIN-OFFERING?"

This week we will look at a different type of korban: the korban hattat, the so-called "sin-offering."

First of all, what does "hattat" mean? Usually, translators translate the korban hattat as "sin-offering." This is no shock, since "hattat" means "sin." When I commit a sin inadvertently, I must bring a korban hattat to Hashem to atone for the sin: in order to be forgiven for particularly serious averot, I need to do teshuva and also bring a korban hattat. The problem with this translation of "hatta" is that according to the Torah, I must bring a korban hattat not just when I sin, but also on many other occasions which seem to have nothing at all to do with sin. Here are some examples:

1) Yoledet: a woman who gives birth becomes tamei (ritually impure), and when she reaches the end of the period of impurity, she must bring a korban hattat. Surely there is no sin in giving birth! If anything, the parturient (yoledet) deserves a parade, not penance! What is the hattat for, then? (Some talmudic authorities, such as R. Shimon b. Yohai, propose that the yoledet, overcome by pain, swears "I'll never do this again!" and then usually violates the oath by having another baby. But see Shevuot 8a, this appears not to be the mainstream position; if so, why does she bring a "sin-offering"?)

2) Zav: a man who experiences a gonorrheal genital several times becomes tamei. When the discharge stops and he goes through a period of seven clean days, he can then purify himself -- and he must also bring a hattat (in most cases). But since there is no sin here, why is there a "sin-offering"?

3) Zava: a woman who experiences a menstrual blood flow at an unexpected time, and which continues for three days, becomes tamei. When the blood stops and she marks a period of seven clean days, she can then purify herself -- and she must also bring a hattat. But since there is no sin here, why is there a "sin-offering"?

4) Metzora: someone who has the skin condition called tzara'at (formerly translated "leprosy," now often translated "scale disease") becomes tamei. When the metzora recovers, he or she must bring a hattat. But once again, there is no apparent sin, so why is there a need for a hattat? (Note that even according to those talmudic authorities, such as R. Shmuel b. Nahmeini, who hold that tzara'at is triggered by sin, hold that the hattat itself does not atone for the sin; instead, the suffering brought on by the disease itself atones, and the hattat serves a different function; see Shevuot 8a.)

5) The Para Aduma: people who come into contact (halakhically defined) with dead human bodies become tamei. A reddish cow (para aduma) is slaughtered and its ashes (together with other ingredients) are poured over the tamei people; this is a necessary element in purifying the people. Now, the para aduma is referred to by the Torah as a "hattat." But since there is no sin in contracting ritual impurity by touching a dead body (unless you are a kohen or a nazir), why is the para aduma called a hattat? There is no sin for which to atone!

6) The nazir: the nazir voluntarily takes on a set of prohibitions, usually for a set period of time: he or she swears off wine, lets his or her hair grow long, and must avoid all contact with dead bodies. When he or she completes the period of nezirut, or when it is cut short by his becoming tamei, he must bring a hattat. But why?

ANY OTHER POSSIBILITIES?

It looks like it will be hard to explain how all of these cases are connected in some way to sin. If so, then it is difficult to translate "korban hattat" as "sin-offering," since the hattat is offered in many cases where there seems to be no sin.

One other problem -- and here we are on the verge of a solution -- is that the word "hattat" does not grammatically come form the word "het," meaning "sin," but instead from the word "hattei," which means to "cleanse," "purify," or "decontaminate." Where is "hattat" used in the Torah to mean "cleanse" or "purify" or "decontaminate"? Some examples:

1) Shemot 29:36 -- in the instructions given to Moshe for how the Mishkan inauguration ceremony is to be done, Hashem commands: "Make a bull as a hattat each day [of the inauguration] besides the purifications, and purify ["ve-hitteta"] the altar . . . ."

2) VaYikra 8:15 -- During the actual inauguration process, as part of one of the korbanot: "It was slaughtered; then Moshe took the blood and placed some on the corners of the altar all around with his finger; he purified ["va-ye-hattei"] the altar . . . ."

3) VaYikra 14:52 -- in the context of tzara'at ha-bayyit, a fungus-like growth which can appear on the walls of a house and causes tum'ah (impurity): "He should purify [ve-hittei"] the house with the blood of the bird . . . ."

4) BeMidbar (Numbers) 8:7 -- when the Leviyyim (Levites) are appointed as caretakers and transporters of the Mishkan, they are to undergo a special purification ceremony: "So shall you do to them to purify them: sprinkle upon them waters of purification ["mei hattat"] . . . and they will be purified."

If the "hattat" in "korban hattat" means "purifying"/ "cleansing" -- and not "sin" -- then the korban hattat is not a "sin-offering," it is a "cleansing offering" or a "purification offering." This makes sense not only grammatically, but also helps explain why there is a korban hattat in so many cases where there is no sin at all, but there is instead impurity: yoledet, zav, zava, metzora, nazir, para aduma (the para aduma is referred to by the Torah as a "hattat"). Since the hattat is a purification offering, it makes sense that it is brought in case of impurity.

SIN AND PURIFICATION:

It makes sense that a ritually impure person offers a korban hattat to attain full purity, but why does a person need to bring a korban hattat when he or she commits a sin? What does sinning have to do with being purified?

This brings us to a crucial element of the Torah's perspective on sin: according to the Torah, committing a sin is not just a rebellion against Hashem (of course, committing an avera on purpose is more of a rebellion than doing so unintentionally) and a rejection of His command, it also has a spiritual effect on us and the environment. It produces tum'ah in us and in the environment around us. Not only has a person done something morally wrong when he does an avera, he actually affects himself and his environment when he does so.

JUST HAVING A PUFF?

When you smoke, you're not smoking just for now -- it's not an activity in which you engage just for now and which is then over and leaves no trace. Every time you take a puff, you inhale little pieces of sticky filth which are distributed through your lungs. If you have a serious smoking habit, you eventually accumulate so much dirt in your lungs that you make it hard for yourself to breathe. And not only does smoking affect you, it also affects everyone around you -- today we call this "second-hand smoke," and medical studies show that exposure to second-hand smoke can be harmful as well.

The same is true of averot (sins): they are not just actions in which we engage and which then disappear forever (and for which Hashem may punish us) -- they have a concrete effect on our "spiritual lungs" and on our spiritual environment. According to the Torah, they make us tamei, impure. It is no surprise, then, that a person who does an avera needs to purify himself of the tum'ah caused by the avera: he must do teshuva (repent) and he must bring a korban hattat -- a cleansing offering -- to clean up the mess he has made through the avera. Note, though, that there are two completely different kinds of tum'ah in the Torah: "moral tum'ah," tum'ah produced by doing an avera (and which cannot be transmitted to others), and "ritual tum'ah," tum'ah produced by certain ritual situations, such as coming into contact with a dead body, giving birth, menstruating, becoming a metzora, etc.; there is of course nothing sinful about this latter type of tum'ah. What is common to both types of tum'ah -- moral and ritual -- is that both must be mopped up, and the "mop" for both is the korban hattat.

Getting back to "moral tum'ah": what does the korban hattat actually clean? Where is this spiritual dirt? The first place where this impurity is found is in the sinner himself. But the solution for this kind of impurity is not to go to the mikvah, it is to do teshuva. The Rambam addresses this requirement in the last section of his code on the laws of ritual purity. He begins by observing that we all know that tum'ah is not dirt which is washed away by the mikveh; it is a status invented by the Torah for a particular purpose (what exactly this purpose might be, the Rambam addresses in his Guide to the Perplexed). But in order for the mikveh to properly "work," the person who is dunking himself in it must be aware of what he is doing and intend thereby to become pure (unlike taking a shower to clean away dirt; the shower works just as well even if you are sleeping). The Rambam says that the same thing applies to "moral tum'ah":

"Just as one who sets his intent on purifying himself [from ritual tum'ah], once he has immersed in the mikveh, he is tahor [pure] even though nothing at all has changed in him physically, so it is with one who sets his intent on purifying his soul from impurities of the soul [something like what I have called "moral tum'ah" -- EM], which are evil thoughts and evil character traits; once he has decided in his heart to abandon those behaviors and has immersed his soul in the waters of knowledge, he is immediately purified . . . . May Hashem in His great mercy purify us from all of our sins, transgressions, and iniquities, Amen."

Purify? From sin? What does impurity have to do with sin? Clearly, the Rambam is making the connection the Torah makes in many places between sin and moral tum'ah. Sin is not just a decision to disobey, it makes a mark in a concrete way.

Besides doing teshuva, in order to be forgiven (i.e., in order for the stain on his spirit to be cleaned) the sinner must also supply powerful "detergent," and this is provided by the Torah in the form of the korban hattat. The blood of the hattat, which is placed on the mizbe'ah, is a symbol of life. As we will see as we go further in Sefer VaYikra, life is always connected with purity, so when the blood is placed on the mizbe'ah, the person who brought it is making a statement: instead of producing death and impurity through sins, he is committing himself to producing purity and life.

SPIRITUAL ECOLOGY: CLEANING UP THE ENVIRONMENT:

The second dimension of the hattat is that the offerer must also clean up the environment: he has to find every person who has inhaled the smoke from his cigarettes and make sure that their lungs are cleaned. In terms of the korban hattat, that means that when we make the environment impure by doing an avera, we have to clean up our mess. We have to counteract the impurity with blood, which represents life and purity.

Let's look at some examples of how this works out in Sefer VaYikra:

Example 1: VaYikra 18:24-30 -- After delivering a long list of sexual crimes (incest of various sorts, male homosexual sex, bestiality, sex with a menstruating woman, etc.), Hashem warns us not to commit sexual averot so that they do not make us and Eretz Yisrael impure. This would be a strange equation (sin=impurity) unless we had made this connection earlier:

"Do not impurify yourselves through all of these [actions], for through all of these were impurified the nations whom I am sending away from before you [i.e., throwing them out of Eretz Yisrael -- EM]. The land became tamei, and I recalled its sin upon it, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. You shall keep my laws and commandments -- do not do these abominations, neither citizens nor strangers among you, for the nations who lived in the land before you did all these abominations, and the land became tamei -- so that the land should not vomit you out when you impurify it, just as it vomited out the nation before you."

The word "tamei" appears here about seven times in as many pesukim; one gets the idea that this is a concept the Torah wants to drive home very clearly. Our actions affect not only our individual fates and spiritual stature, but affect the entire community and its relationship with its holy surroundings, Eretz Yisrael. As an antidote to the impurity produced by our averot, we must clean up the mess we have made of both ourselves and our environment.

FALL CLEANING:

Example 2: VaYikra 16:15-20, 30-34. Nowadays, we think of Yom Kippur as a day of teshuva and prayer. But when we had a Beit haMikdash (Temple), Yom Kippur was not just a time for teshuva, it was also time to let loose the heavy guns of purification in the Mikdash, to release the most powerful "hattat-detergents" of the entire year:

16:15-20 -- "He [the Kohen Gadol, High Priest] should slaughter the hattat-goat which belongs to the people [the whole nation] and bring its blood inside the curtain [=into the Holy of Holies] . . . and sprinkle it on the Ark-covering and before the Ark-covering. He should purify the holy place from the impurities of Bnei Yisrael, from their transgressions with all their sins; he shall do the same with the Ohel Mo'ed [the rest of the Mishkan], which resides among them in their impurity. . . . He should leave [the Mishkan] and go out to the altar which is before Hashem and purify it: he shall take from the blood of the bull and the goat and put it on the corners of the altar all around."

What is clear from this command to purify the Mishkan from our sins is that the Mishkan is made impure by a year of the people's sins. Their sins produce tum'ah not only in themselves, but also in the Mishkan itself! Every time a person commits an avera, he not only blackens his own "lungs," he also dumps a bucket of filth into the Mikdash, so to speak.

But why is the Mishkan connected with our averot? Why is it made impure by our averot? The Mishkan is the focal point of purity and holiness in Am Yisrael. It is our spiritual lungs, so to speak, where we inhale Hashem's presence, the place where the Shekhina rests in purity and holiness, the central source of our contact with Hashem and His holiness. It is only natural that the Mishkan is blackened by averot we commit; a little bit of the Mishkan's purity is pushed out by a little bit of the impurity we produce. The same thing also happens to us as individuals, so once a year, Hashem commands us to bring on the heavy cleaning artillery and scour ourselves and the Mishkan from all the dirt with which he have filled it during the year.

16:30-34 -- Here the Torah summarizes by telling us what Yom Kippur is all about: "For on this day, you will be atoned for so that you will be purified ["le-taher"] from all of your sins; before Hashem will you be purified . . . [The kohen] shall purify the Holy of Holies, the Ohel Mo'ed, the altar, the kohanim, and the people . . . to purify the Bnei Yisrael from all of their sins once a year . . . ."

Again, the Torah makes it clear that both the Mikdash and the people are made tamei by the people's sins, and must be cleansed on Yom Kippur. The reason this is such a serious business is the same reason smoking is such a serious business. A few puffs may not really hurt us much, but it starts to accumulate quickly -- and sin, like smoking, becomes a habit. Eventually, the lungs become blocked to the degree that it is a real exertion to climb a few flights of stairs. Then the smoker develops a cough that won't go away, or a frightening case of asthma. Covered with dirt, the lungs can no longer do their job. This is not just a technicality, it can become life-threatening; sometimes, when the lungs have had enough of the dirt we keep throwing down, they rebel and the smoker develops lung cancer.

The same is true of our own personal spiritual lungs and our communal spiritual lungs. When we ignore what Hashem wants, we begin to close off our spiritual connection with Him. It becomes a little harder to "breathe," and we find that Hashem seems a lot more distant than He was before. And as we fill the Mishkan, His house, with filth, He begins to withdraw. Who would live in a house where people come to dump their garbage? Hashem is the essence of purity and holiness, and when we make the Mishkan impure, we make it inhospitable for His Presence. Inevitably, He moves out and withdraws from us. This is communal spiritual lung cancer -- that is what it means when Hashem abandons the Mikdash and withdraws His protection and Presence from us. It is only a matter of time until another nation is sent to destroy the

physical shell of the Mikdash, which we ourselves have already destroyed in a spiritual sense. And it is only a matter of time until the Land spits us out, no longer willing to tolerate our incessant dumping of filth everywhere, and we are forced to find our way in foreign countries.

Note that it is also natural that the more serious the avera, the more deeply the impurity penetrates into the Mikdash and the more powerful a detergent is necessary: when a member of the people commits an avera and must bring a hattat, the blood is placed on the mizbe'ah -- the altar in the courtyard just outside the Mishkan building proper. But when a Kohen Gadol or the High Court sins, the tum'ah penetrates further, so when they bring their hattat, the blood is placed on the inner mizbe'ah, the incense altar which is actually inside the Mishkan. And when people sin purposely, the tum'ah is powerful enough to penetrate into the Kodesh ha-Kodashim itself, where the Ark is. Of course, a korban hattat cannot be offered by an individual for an intentional sin, but that does not mean the Ark remains tamei forever -- as the Torah tells us, it is purified with the blood of the communal hattat on Yom Kippur, when the Kohen Gadol enters the holiest space on Earth and atones not only for inadvertent sins, but also for wanton sins: "pesha'im."

BROADER IMPLICATIONS:

One of the most crucial implications of this system is that the entire community is together responsible, each individual for every other individual. Since everyone's action affects the Mikdash, every individual is responsible to the community to clean up his mess so that the tum'ah does not accumulate in the Mikdash and begin to force Hashem away from the entire nation as a whole. In this way, the spiritual status of every individual in the nation is linked to everyone else's -- we all suffer the consequences of the sins of each individual, unless each individual is responsible and cleans up. In closing, I can only echo the words of the Rambam: "May Hashem in His great mercy purify us from all of our sins, transgressions, and iniquities, Amen."

Shabbat Shalom