

Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet Shmini 5767

Tonight, the evening of Friday, April 13, we will count day 11, which is 1 week and 4 days of the omer.

Rabbi Hershel Schachter The TorahWeb Foundation When do we “Duchen”?

The Torah tells us that on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the eighth day of inaugurating the Mishkan, Aharon Hakohen was charged with the offering of the special sacrifices[1]. At the conclusion of Aharon's offering of these korbonos tzibbur[2] Aharon recited the priestly blessings (Vayikra 9:22). The Talmud (Sotah 38a) points out that based on this statement it would appear that the halacha is that duchenin (the mitzvah of reciting birchas kohanim - the priestly blessings) can only be fulfilled at the conclusion of the offering of the korbonos tzibbur.

This Talmudic statement led Rav Yaakov Emden to comment that the fact that we still practice this mitzvah today, even though we have not offered any korbonos, is only miderabonan; Min haTorah, the mitzvah of duchenin must be connected with korbonos. The Mishna Brura (vol. 2 pg. 19 in footnote) disagrees vehemently with Rav Yaakov Emden, and proves from many sources that even today the mitzvah to duchen is still min haTorah[3]. The Mishna Brura does not, however, deal with the possuk cited above.

The solution to this problem was given by two brothers, who were both prominent geonim in the nineteenth century, in their respective seforim:

Rav Yaakov Karliner in his Teshuvos Mishkenos Yaakov (Orach Chaim, siman 66) and Rav Yitzchok Bruchin in his sefer, Keren Orach (Sotah). The Talmudic statement (Berachos 26b) that Tefilos (prayers) are considered as if we had offered korbonos is a biblical principal. When an individual davens, it is considered as if he had offered a korban yachid. When the chazzan recites the tefillah out loud representing the entire tzibbur, it is considered as if a korban tzibbur had been brought. And indeed, it is at the conclusion of the chazan's tefillah that the kohanim fulfill their mitzvah to duchen. Their obligation to duchen at that point is min haTorah, since the conclusion of the chazzan's prayers is biblically equivalent to the conclusion of the offerings of the korbonos tzibbur!

When we duchen on yomim tovim, we all recite the piyut “v'se'erav”: that Hashem should accept our prayers and consider it as if we had offered actual sacrifices. This piyut is inserted in the middle of the chazzan's recitation of the beracha of retzei, which is referred to in the Talmud (Megillah 18a) as “avodah”, the literal translation of which is “the offering of sacrifices”. The piyut just makes more explicit the simple meaning of that beracha, that our prayers should be considered as if we had actually offered sacrifices. Because it is the theme of this particular beracha that makes it possible to fulfill the mitzvah of duchenin, the rabbis required (Sotah 38b) that the kohanim must at least begin to go towards the duchen (the platform where they will recite the birchas kohanim) by the end of this beracha.

Rav Soloveitchik added on (in a yearzeit shiur) that the beracha of retzei is not simply a repeat of the immediately preceding beracha of shema koleinu. In shema koleinu we ask Hashem to accept our tefillos. In retzei we add a request that Hashem should accept our prayers as if they were a sacrifice. The term “ritzu” is a technical halachik term appearing most often in Tanach in connection with acceptance of sacrifices. In mishnaic Hebrew as well “hurtzah” means the sacrifice is “kosher” and is accepted; as opposed to “lo hurtzah” which means that the sacrifice is “not kosher”, i.e. not acceptable (see Beikvei Hatzon, pg. 82). The gemara (Beachos 22b) disqualifies one's prayer in a specific instance, and requires that he daven all over, based on the principle of “zevach reshaim to'eivai - the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination” (Mishlei 21:27). The equation

between the tefillah and the offering of the korban is taken very seriously; it was not intended as a mere metaphor[4].

[1] As opposed to the first seven days, when the special sacrifices were offered by Moshe Rabbeinu

[2] Communal sacrifices, as opposed to korbonos yachid, which are offered on behalf of an individual person

[3] See also Binyan Shlomo (teshuvos of Rav Shomo Vilner) siman 10

[4] In Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim, end of siman 76) the same halacha appears regarding kriyas shema: we sometimes disqualify one's recital of shema (due to the principle of zevach reshaim to'eivai), and require that shema be repeated. The students who attended the yearzeit shiur found it difficult to understand why this principle should be extended even to kriyas shema, according to the Rav Soloveitchik's understanding of the gemara.

Jerusalem Post :: Apr 12 2007

CHAMETZ AFTER PESACH :: Rabbi Berel Wein

There is a strong rabbinic decree forbidding the use of chametz after Pesach by a Jew if that chametz was actually in Jewish possession during the holiday of Pesach itself. The basis for this rabbinic decree is to prevent Jews from having chametz in their possession during Pesach, so to speak hoarding it for use after Pesach. The obvious danger is that that chametz will be used on Pesach and there is a prohibition against not only as to eating chametz on Pesach but also as to possessing chametz.

Therefore, in order to insure that no chametz remains in Jewish possession during Pesach, the rabbis decreed that Jews could not benefit from such chametz after Pesach. The solution to somehow have use of such chametz after Pesach lies in the long accepted Jewish tradition of “selling” the chametz to a non-Jew before Pesach and of reacquiring that chametz after Pesach. This legal sale of mechirat chametz is of ancient origin, though it really only came into general use in the late middle Ages.

Jews then increasingly were occupied in operating distilleries for the production and distribution of liquor derived from chametz grain and fermenting agents. Because of the heavy financial complications involved, the use of a legal sale of the chametz to a non-Jew took hold and has become de rigeur for Jewish individuals and companies in our time and for the past many centuries.

By selling their chametz before Pesach and only reacquiring it after Pesach, these individuals and companies avoid any problems regarding the use of and benefit from chametz after Pesach. Because of these circumstances, stores and companies notify their Jewish customers after Pesach that they in fact did sell their chametz before Pesach, thus obviating any hesitation on the part of their Jewish customers in purchasing chametz goods.

As the economies of the world became more complex and intertwined the rabbinic decisors of halacha had to deal with new situations and financial arrangements regarding this issue of chametz after Pesach. What about Jews who own shares in public companies that do business on Pesach with chametz goods? What about large supermarket chains outside of Israel who sell their chametz before Pesach but nevertheless continue to sell those products on a regular normal basis in their stores on Pesach itself? Does this not render the sale of their chametz to a non-Jew before Pesach a sham?

In countries that require that tax stamps be affixed to the sale documents, is this necessary for the sale of the chametz to the non-Jew and the reacquiring of the chametz after Pesach by the Jews as well? Whose loss is it if the chametz became damaged or destroyed during Pesach while technically under the ownership of the non-Jew?

How real does this apparently unreal sale really have to be? All of these questions have been raised, thoroughly discussed and argued over by the great decisors of halacha of the past centuries. Needless to say, proper

solutions to all of these issues have been found and implemented. It is an irony, but a very true one, that it is the very rigidity of halacha and its absolute adherence to traditional norms and constructs that allows it to be so flexible and fresh in addressing problems such as this.

In Jewish kabbalistic and philosophical thought, chametz on Pesach represents our evil inclination and immoral desires. The holiday of Pesach is very instrumental in making us more focused Jews and better people. But in order for this self-improvement mode to take hold within us, the chametz after Pesach that still somehow remained within us must be removed from our midst. The rabbinic decree regarding chametz after Pesach should not be reduced to its simple, practical terms. Rather it should be elevated to its highest spiritual form.

In a world of chaff we should be the true kernel of nourishing grain and in a world of self-promotion and swollen puffing we should continue to be the unleavened matzo with its low profile and holy form. Perhaps this spiritual lesson is one of the very reasons that our rabbis so emphasized the problems associated with the concept of chametz after Pesach. The lessons of disciplined freedom that Pesach created within us have to be reinforced and nurtured after Pesach as well. The temptations of chametz on Pesach are well known to all of us. The harm that undisposed of chametz after Pesach can cause us should also be recognized and dealt with. Shabat shalom.

Weekly Parsha :: SHMINI :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The title of this week's parsha takes its name from the description of the events that took place on the eighth day after the dedication and opening of the services of the Mishkan in the desert. The term "eighth day" means more than just the count of the number of days that elapsed since the Mishkan came to life and to service. It signifies the moment that euphoria ends and reality sets in. It marks the beginning of facing problems and finding solutions for them. It also marks the hardships of life, its disappointments and tragedies.

The "seven days" of consecration are a joyful time; the seven days of sheva brachot for chatan and kallah, tiring as they may be, are nevertheless days of exhilaration and happiness. The "eighth day" is the beginning of the intrusion of life's events into our dream world. It is the "eighth day" therefore that is the true measure of a human being's mettle and accomplishments.

The challenges of the "seven days" are usually more easily met and overcome by the added adrenalin that infuses us in times of joy. The test of the "eighth day" is one of a lifelong struggle to prevail over the pitfalls and vicissitudes of life and its constant problems. A new-born male Jewish infant is circumcised on the eighth day of his life, signifying the beginning of his struggle to be a good person and a believer in accordance with Jewish tradition, no matter what difficulties that life will raise against those efforts and beliefs.

The great High Priest Aharon is leveled by terrible personal tragedy in this week's parsha. A sudden and mysterious heavenly fire kills his two eldest sons, apparently engaged in holy service in the Mishkan. Aharon is faced with the ultimate tragedy of life and its fragility. The "eighth day" descends upon him with a thunderous clap.

Even more than all of the other tests of life that he faced in leading the Jewish community yet in slavery in Egypt, or at the fateful moment of the creation of the Golden Calf, the events of the eighth day of the Mishkan's dedication are truly his "eighth day" – the ultimate test of life and faith and belief.

Aharon's reaction to this is silent acceptance of the realities that now face him. He does not rail against perceived injustice, as does Iyov. Nor does he withdraw from the fray of life and go into seclusion, as did many others when faced with similar tragic situations. Aharon becomes the paradigm for how humans are to deal with the "eighth day" – with life and its ups and downs.

Resilience and silent inner strength engendered by faith and acceptance of God's will are the weapons of living on in spite of all that the "eighth day" imposes upon one's life. These words are much easier to write and to read than to actually implement. Yet the Torah expects no less from us than it

did from Aharon. Life and our contributions and meaningful behavior towards making it better and stronger are always played out on the background of the "eighth day." Shabat shalom.

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Shemini For the week ending 14 April 2007 / 26 Nisan 5767

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Overview

On the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan, Aharon, his sons, and the entire nation bring various korbanot (offerings) as commanded by Moshe. Aharon and Moshe bless the nation. G-d allows the Jewish People to sense His Presence after they complete the Mishkan. Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, innovate an offering not commanded by G-d. A fire comes from before G-d and consumes them, stressing the need to perform the commandments only as Moshe directs. Moshe consoles Aharon, who grieves in silence. Moshe directs the kohanim as to their behavior during the mourning period, and warns them that they must not drink intoxicating beverages before serving in the Mishkan. The Torah lists the two characteristics of a kosher animal: It has split hooves, and it chews, regurgitates, and re-chews its food. The Torah specifies by name those non-kosher animals which have only one of these two signs. A kosher fish has fins and easily removable scales. All birds not included in the list of forbidden families are permitted. The Torah forbids all types of insects except for four species of locusts. Details are given of the purification process after coming in contact with ritually-impure species. Bnei Yisrael are commanded to be separate and holy — like G-d.

Insights

High As A Kite

"G-d spoke to Aharon saying: Do not drink intoxicating wine, you and your sons with you when you come into the Tent of Meeting..." (10:8-9)

Statistics show a lower rate of alcoholism among Jews than their neighbors.

This could be due to genetics. However sociologists surmise that there are other factors at work. For example, Jews meet alcohol in the context of holiness rather than in the local pub: A Jewish boy is introduced to alcohol at the ripe old age of eight days when the mohel places a few drops of wine into his mouth to mollify the pain of the circumcision.

Alcohol appears on the Shabbat table every Friday night with kiddush, and again the following morning in the daytime kiddush. On Saturday night during the havdala service we take our leave of Shabbat over a cup of wine. There are the four cups of wine to be drunk on Pesach and (many) more on Purim. The cycle of Jewish life embraces alcohol as part of a holy life.

Another controlling factor in the Jew's consumption of alcohol is the perception that being drunk does not befit a Jew. There is a Yiddish maxim that loosely translates as "Jews don't drink."

However, together with a rise in social dysfunction amongst Jews including depression and lack of self-esteem, there has been a concomitant rise in substance abuse, including alcohol.

A happy person doesn't need a chemical crutch.

The Ba'al Shem Tov said that if a Jew knew what it meant to be a Ben Olam Haba, someone who has an eternal existence, he would be so happy that he would rush out into the street and start to do the Kezatzke (Cossack dance) like a meshugenne.

The essence of Jewish happiness is to know that with every mitzvah, every word of Torah and of kindness, we are building an eternal existence. That knowledge is more inebriating than the most potent liquor.

In this week's Torah portion, G-d warns Aharon that the kohanim must refrain from alcohol while performing the Temple service or adjudicating legal matters. This was not just a concern for motor efficiency or clear thought. The kohen is the epitome of Divine service; his high should come only from Torah and serving G-d. He should need no external chemical help; as the saintly Chazon Ish wrote over half a century ago to a world in great darkness, "There is no sadness for he who knows the light of truth..."

Based on Rebbe Bunim m'Pshiske

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

PARSHAS SHEMINI

Moshe said to Aharon: come near the Altar. then perform the service of the people's offering and provide atonement for them. (9:7)

Moshe Rabbeinu calls to his brother, Aharon, designating him to be the Kohen Gadol who is to offer the sacrifices and perform the Divine service in the Sanctuary. Rashi cites the Midrash, which quotes a compelling statement Moshe made regarding his brother, Aharon: "Aharon, my brother, is more worthy and important than I, for through his offerings and his service will the Divine Presence rest upon the people." This is a striking statement. Is it possible that Aharon had achieved greater stature than Moshe? Was Moshe not the most outstanding individual that has ever lived?

The Torah makes two statements concerning Moshe's supremacy, which clearly excluded everyone else: "A prophet will not arise like Moshe, who knew G-d face to face" (Devarim 34:10). "The man Moshe was the most humble of all men upon the face of the earth" (Bamidbar 12:3). Apparently, Moshe superseded Aharon in every respect, from prophecy to humility. Nonetheless, in his commentary to Sefer Shemos 6:26, Rashi writes, "There are some instances where Aharon is mentioned prior to Moshe, and others where Moshe is mentioned prior to Aharon. This teaches that they were equal." Rashi means that concerning the Exodus and in terms of being agents of Hashem they had equal status, but clearly, regarding their innate abilities and qualities, Moshe was superior to Aharon.

In an alternative exposition, the Shem MiShmuel suggests that the equality between Moshe and Aharon that Rashi suggests refers to the circumstances prior to the Exodus and the Giving of the Torah. After these seminal events, however, Moshe emerged as an entirely different person on an unparalleled plateau. This was a consequence of his direct contact with the Almighty which catapulted him into an unprecedented spiritual realm. Indeed, the Yalkut Shimoni writes that Moshe was like G-d from the waist up and like man from the waist down. Because he had experienced the Divine, Moshe was unlike any other human - even Aharon. We once again revert to our original question: How could Aharon be considered more worthy than Moshe at the inauguration of the Mishkan?

Furthermore, Chazal teach us that Moshe and Aharon's humility surpassed even that of Avraham Avinu. He said, "I am but dust and ashes" (Bereishis 18:27), while they went so far as to say, "What are we?" (Shemos 16:8). How could Moshe's level of humility have exceeded even that of Aharon? Aharon answered that he was nothing. How could Moshe have been more humble than that? How could he have been less than nothing?

The Avnei Nezer distinguishes between two forms of humility of which Moshe and Aharon each espoused a different form. One can live a life of humility with the feeling that he is insignificant. In another type of humility the individual recognizes his capabilities, his lofty achievements and exemplary spiritual plateau. Yet, in comparison with the unfathomable greatness of Hashem, he realizes that he is infinitely inconsequential. This second variety of humility is an attribute from which the greatest men on earth can benefit, for the only true existence is that of the Almighty; the only true reality is that of Him.

We now understand what motivated Moshe's sense of humility. Moshe was the greatest person, the consummate human being, the quintessential leader and teacher of the Jewish People. Certainly, he was aware of his significance, his distinction, his exalted position. How could he possibly have retained his humility in light of this awareness?

Apparently, Moshe knew who he was and the outstanding role in which he functioned, but -- specifically because of his closeness to Hashem, Who would always be infinitesimally greater -- he felt insignificant. Moshe understood that he could never achieve even a minute fraction of Hashem's greatness. Indeed, as is quoted in Avos D'Rabbi Nassan 9, "Moshe was the humblest of all men, but not of the ministering angels, who were even more humble than he." The higher one is, the closer to Hashem he becomes, the less he thinks of himself, because he sees that in comparison

to the Almighty, he is nothing. Moshe maintained his humility because he always kept the majesty of Hashem on his mind.

Aharon was quite different. His humility was more of a direct nature. He really believed himself to be insignificant and unworthy of any distinction. His role in the sin of the Golden Calf never left his mind. This incident perpetuated his lowly self-image to the point that he perceived the Altar to be in the shape of a bull due to its protracted "horns." In his mind, he had sinned and he could not erase that reality. He felt that as a result of his part in the eigel, he would be deficient in achieving atonement for the Jewish People at the Altar.

Two brothers reflected two types of humility: Both had said, "What are we?" This is where, however, the similarity between them ends. Moshe achieved humility with respect to Hashem. Aharon felt that he was intrinsically worthless.

When the Torah describes Moshe as the humblest of men, it refers to his ability to achieve humility in an unparalleled manner, particularly in relation to Hashem. This was an unprecedented form of humility. In this respect, Moshe was greater than Aharon, who did not have the opportunity to develop such a connection with the Almighty, and, hence, could not perceive this form of self-assessment. On the other hand, in his own way, Aharon was as great as Moshe -- and perhaps even greater than he -- in the way that he was able to view his own deficiencies and the compelling impact they had on his total demeanor.

And they (Nadav and Avihu) brought before Hashem an alien fire that He had not commanded them. A fire came out from before Hashem and consumed them. (10:1,2)

Rashi cites Chazal who say that Nadav and Avihu perished because they rendered a halachic decision in the presence of their rebbe, Moshe Rabbeinu. Others cite Chazal who relate that Nadav would say to Avihu, "When will those two elders (referring to Moshe and Aharon) pass on, and you and I will lead the generation?" These statements are certainly true, but they apparently are not consistent with the Torah's description of their sin. The Torah clearly states that they perished as a result of offering an alien fire which Hashem had not commanded them to bring. Why do Chazal cite different reasons? Furthermore, is it possible that Nadav and Avihu, who were both righteous individuals to the point that Moshe attested to their superseding even himself and Aharon in greatness, could be guilty of such sinful behavior?

Horav Reuven Elbaz, Shlita, explains that, indeed, their sin was eish zarah, offering an alien fire. Everything else which Chazal cited were outgrowths, ramifications of this sin. Alien fire is a reference to intense fiery passion and fervor in serving Hashem. They went, so to speak, overboard, beyond the limits. Nadav and Avihu went too far, such that they overstepped the perimeters of religious observance. Their extremism caused them not to marry, because they wanted to pour out all of their love to the Almighty. There was not enough room in their hearts to share this love with a wife and children. This brought them to drink wine in order to increase and heighten their sense of joy, and this intensity brought them to rule in the presence of their rebbe, Moshe. In other words, they became carried away, and this led to a number of egregious errors.

Thus, while they questioned, "When will those two elders pass on?" they were not speaking from a malevolent heart. There was nothing evil about them in any way. They simply could not tolerate Moshe and Aharon's passivity with regard to the people. They complained that the nation was rude, the people were disrespectful. Yet, Moshe and Aharon responded, Vnachnu mah, "(and) What are we?" Their incredible humility and their outstanding sense of self-effacement were too much for Nadav and Avihu. They wanted action. This was not the way a strong leader should respond. The people had gross chutzpah and should, therefore, be punished. A leader must be strong. A leader must not tolerate any form of infraction. Nadav and Avihu's attitude towards leadership was unlike that of Moshe and Aharon. A leader must lead - not follow. A leader must be strong and dynamic - not obsequious. The members of the nation who had complained needed to be dealt with immediately. One does not complain.

Hashem did not agree with Nadav and Avihu. The only way to lead is with love and tolerance, patience and sensitivity. Humility is to be the guiding

force, the moral compass by which one leads, inspires and achieves an enduring legacy.

Moshe heard and approved. (10:20)

On that auspicious-- but fateful day-- three he-goats were offered as Sin-offerings. One was the special offering of Nachshon ben Aminadav, the Nasi, Prince, of Shevet Yehudah. The second offering was in honor of the Chanukas, Inauguration, of the Mishkan. These two were considered kodoshei shaah, holy for the current time, since they would never again be offered. The third sacrifice was the Korban Rosh Chodesh, in honor of the new moon. Prior to this, Moshe Rabbeinu had instructed the Kohanim to eat the Meal-offerings, which were kodoshei shaah. The Kohanim did this. This was an exception to the rule of mourning in which an onen, mourner prior to the burial of the deceased, may not eat of the offerings. The question confronting Aharon and his sons was: Does Moshe's command regarding the Korban Minchah, Meal-offering, apply to the meat of the Sin-offerings as well? Furthermore, if, in fact, it did apply, did it apply to all three of the offerings?

Hashem did command the Kohanim to eat, even during their status as onenim. It was now up to Moshe and/or Aharon to determine if this command applied under all circumstances. Moshe was of the opinion that the command was unequivocal and should apply to all sacrifices, even the Korban Rosh Chodesh, which was kodesh l'doros, holy for all the generations. Aharon, however, felt that since the direct command was initially made concerning the Meal-offerings, which are kodoshei shaah, only the first two sacrifices, that of Nachshon and the Inauguration of the Mishkan, were to be eaten. The Korban Rosh Chodesh was kodesh forever. It, therefore, should not be eaten during animus, the period of mourning.

The Kohanim burnt the he-goat which was designated for Rosh Chodesh, because they felt that as a kodoshei doros, it was not to be eaten. Moshe became angry with them. Chazal tell us that since Moshe became angry, he erred in the halachah. Aharon was actually correct in his p'sak, determination of the law. Aharon's sons did not respond to Moshe, as it would have been disrespectful to speak up in their father's presence. Aharon explained the halachah to Moshe, who conceded that he had erred. Moshe Rabbeinu demonstrated his true humility, as well as the reason that he was selected to be Klal Yisrael's quintessential leader. His humility was the essence of his greatness. Rather than defend his position, he realized his error and conceded to Aharon. This is the mark of a true gadol, great Torah leader.

Horav Isser Zalman Meltzer, zl, was an individual of such strength of character. Whenever he was in a dispute with another individual regarding a Torah law or logic, he never insisted that he was right. Rather, he would say, Efsheir zeit ihr gerecht, "Perhaps you are correct!" He never insisted that he was correct. He always looked for a way to validate the other person's point of view. This applied even when the other point of view was that of a young man, many years his junior. Once, as he was giving a shiur, Torah lecture, one that he had prepared and worked on for quite some time, a bachur, student, asked a compelling question. Rav Isser Zalman said, "This young man has asked a very good question. He is correct in his understanding of the subject. I have no more to say." With that, he closed his Gemorah, volume of Talmud, and bid everyone a good day.

Moshe could have told Aharon that he had never heard the halachah. Instead, he said, Shomaati v'shochachti, "I heard, but I forgot." Furthermore, he publicized his error throughout the camp, telling everyone that he had erred and his brother had been right.

The Baalei Mussar, Ethicists, explain that the greatest deterrent which prevents the individual from being modeh al ha'emes, conceding to the truth, is the loud voice and screaming associated with presenting his point of view in a dispute. All of the screaming backs the individual into a corner from which he cannot retreat. It is very difficult to concede an error after one has just loudly vocalized his position. It is more embarrassing and degrading than people can tolerate. Moshe Rabbeinu was not "most people." This is why he was selected to be our consummate leader.

If people dispute quietly, respectfully, pleasantly, then it is no challenge to concede to an error in judgment. Under such circumstances, when one discovers that he has erred, he is not yet on a high pedestal, elevated by his

loud voice. He has spoken quietly, patiently. He is now ready to admit that he has made a mistake.

The individual who loses his cool during a dispute finds it difficult to back down from his position. Chazal teach us that Bais Shamai and Bais Hillel were in dispute for three years, each one claiming that the halachah was as they had stated it. At the end of three years, a Bas Kol, Voice from Heaven, decreed that both the words of Bais Shamai and Bais Hillel were divrei Elokim Chaim, words of the Living G-d. Nonetheless, the halachah concurred with Bais Hillel. Chazal question why the halachah was in agreement with Bais Hillel? They explain that Bais Hillel were people of tolerance and acceptance. Indeed, when they rendered their decision, they would first quote Bais Shamai, followed by their own point of view.

Maharal M'Prague questions the reason for adjudicating in accordance with Bais Hillel simply because they were nochin va'aluvin, easygoing and forbearing. Since when is this a basis for rendering a halachah opinion? The Maharal explains that a person's ability to think cogently coincides directly with his middas ha'savlanus, capacity for tolerance. The thought process of one who possesses a calm and relaxed personality, who is not easily given to anger or to losing his cool, reflects this state of composure. His logic will be clear and astute, not garbled and anxiety-laden. On the other hand, the individual who is ill-tempered and irritable, who quickly resorts to fits of rage--regardless of his acumen, his sagacity notwithstanding-- will err in judgment. It is as if his brain suddenly short circuits. The tools are present, but the wiring is faulty.

Someone who is cool-headed and amicable, who accepts a challenge without falling apart, who is easy-going and of a mild temperament, has an enhanced capacity for judging a situation with greater clarity and objectivity. Bais Hillel exemplified this level of character refinement. We find in Meseches Edyos that Bais Hillel reversed their p'sak, halachic decision, a number of times. Closer to our own times, the Chazon Ish, zl, who was one of the most celebrated and erudite poskim, halachic arbiters, writes: "I am constantly beset with errors. At times, it is in logic or in my understanding of the Talmud. I am not ashamed of this, because there is nothing for which to be ashamed. On the contrary, one who is ashamed demonstrates a lack of respect for the halachah."

Modeh al ha'emes, conceding to the truth, accepting that one is wrong, is especially necessary in one's relationship with students. A rebbe who errs should be able to admit his error, whether it is concerning p'shat, explanation of the subject matter, or regarding an incident in which the rebbe has made the wrong judgment call. It happens, and when it does, one should be big enough to concede his faulty judgment. One who is a modeh al ha'emes earns the respect of his peers and, ultimately, merits their trust.

We allude to this idea in our daily tefillah: L'olam yehei adam yerei Shomayim b'seiser u'vagalui, u'modeh al ha'emes, v'doveir emes bilevavo. "Always should a man fear Heaven, in private and in public, and speak truth within his heart." The Minchas Elazar interprets the word l'olam, always, as meaning l'olam, because of/for the world. This means that his words should be heard and accepted by the world community. This is possible only if he is modeh al ha'emes. It is not enough to speak the truth privately. One must be willing and able to concede the truth publicly, even if it hurts. Then people will respect him and accept what he has to say, l'olam - for the world - and for himself.

Va'ani Tefillah

Yismechu ha'Shomayim v'sagel ha'aretz - The Heavens will be glad and the earth will rejoice.

What is the difference between simchah, gladness/joy, and gilah, rejoicing? In his commentary to Divrei Hayamim, the Gaon, zl, m'Vilna explains that simchah applies to the joy one manifests over a recent occurrence, something novel that just took place. Gilah, however, is the rejoicing one experiences even for something that has happened a while ago, but still elicits joy for him.

Shlomo HaMelech says in Mishlei 23:24, Gil yagil avi tzaddik, "The father of a righteous person will be mirthful (gilah)"; v'yoleid chacham yismach bo, "one who begets a wise child will rejoice in him (simchah)." The Gaon explains that a tzaddik remains in his righteous status on a constant basis. Thus, the joy which refers to him is a joy of gilah. The chacham, wise one,

is constantly renewing his wisdom as he becomes privy to new lessons. Hence, the word *simchah* is used regarding his birth.

Shlomo HaMelech says in *Koheles* 1:9, "There is nothing new beneath the sun." In this world there is nothing new. Hashem has already provided everything. The resources are there, together with the conditions and the concepts all waiting for man's discovery and invention. Above this world, in Heaven, however, there is something new. Therefore, we say, *Yismechu haShomayim*, "The Heavens will be glad (*simchah*), and *v'sagel ha'aretz*, the earth will rejoice (*gilah*)."

Sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Kenny Fixler in memory of his father

h a a r e t z

Portion of the Week / Split-screen narrative

By Benjamin Lau

his week's Torah portion contains a very painful narrative. The reading opens with the festive atmosphere on the eighth day of the preparations for making Aaron and his sons priests. Up until now, Moses was the nation's sole leader and the leadership's direction was from the top down - God's message was handed down to Israel. Now the leadership will be more comprehensive: Aaron, in offering sacrifices, will work in the opposite direction, heavenward. He is promised that, after preparation of the altar and the sacrifice, God's glory will be revealed to the Israelites.

The nation gathers for the consecration ceremony. Following protocol, Aaron performs his duties meticulously, ascends to the altar and raises his hands to bless the people - but nothing happens. God's glory is not revealed.

In this embarrassing moment, the narrative becomes a split screen. On one screen, Moses approaches, leading Aaron into the Tabernacle: "And Moses and Aaron went into the Tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people. And there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces" (*Leviticus* 9:23-24). Seeing Aaron's embarrassment, Moses tries to help him. After reciting a prayer to placate God, the two brothers emerge to bless the nation. In addition to Aaron, Moses also gives the blessing. Their actions prove successful; God's glory is revealed to all the Israelites, who rejoice in seeing the flames burst forth. However, on the second screen, another event unfolds simultaneously. Two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, want to protect their father's dignity. It is their impression that this time, too, fire is being sent from above, not below. Aaron's consecration as high priest was intended to enable fire to be sent to heaven from earth through the priest's work, instead of it being sent from heaven via the effort of the prophet, Moses. When they see Moses standing beside Aaron and joining him in blessing Israel, the sons feel their father's honor and the priesthood's dignity are being compromised. They quickly take their censers, full of incense, and light them, intending to encourage earthly fire to ascend heavenward. But heavenly fire strikes them: "And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (*Lev.* 10:2).

The ecstatic nation has not yet noticed this horrible disaster; however, Aaron's immediate family realizes that this festive day has become a day of mourning. Moses' initial reaction is harsh: "Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace" (*Lev.* 10:3).

Some commentators interpret Aaron's silence as signifying that Moses' words have consoled him. In the Talmud, we read about Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai, whose son had died, and whom other Talmudic scholars tried to comfort. Each of his students compared Rabbi Yohanan's tragedy to catastrophes that had befallen other Jews throughout our history. They wanted to convey a single message: We must learn from the tragedies of others that the world continues to exist despite these tragedies. The Talmud continues: "Then Rabbi Yossi entered and sat before him. He said to him, 'My dear rabbi, may I tell you something?' Rabbi Yohanan replied, 'Please do.' Rabbi Yossi went on: 'Aaron had two grown sons who died on the

very same day. He was consoled in his grief, as it is written, "And Aaron held his peace.""

Aaron's silence has nothing to do with Moses' declaration, which is a human attempt to find a meaning in the horrifying event and to translate it into mortal language. However, in holding his peace, Aaron expresses his choice to leave the disaster in the realm of mystery and meaninglessness. Holding one's peace is not silence. Whereas silence is a cessation of talk, holding one's peace is an absence of talk. When Elijah flees to Mount Horeb, God wants to show his glory to him: "And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice" (*1 Kings* 19:11-12). Similarly, the High Holy Day prayer "Unetaneh tokef" states: "A great shofar (ram's horn) will be sounded and a still small voice will be heard."

Still small voice

This Monday, the 28th of the Hebrew month of Nissan, is Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Day here in Israel. On this day a still small voice pierces our ears from every direction. The deafening air-raid siren attempts to convey the sound of this still small voice, which leaves us in the realm of mystery, where we are unable, and perhaps also unwilling, to find meaning for that mega-event.

After arriving in this country following his release from the Buchenwald concentration camp, on the 28th of Nissan, 5705 (April 11, 1945), my father settled in Jerusalem and was invited to have an audience with Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter, the Gerrer rebbe (author of "Imrei Emes"), who was then in his 80s. The rebbe's son, Rabbi Yisrael Alter (who was named head of the Gerrer Hasidic sect after his father and was known as the *Beis Yisroel*) had lost practically all his family in the Holocaust. He took my father for a nocturnal walk through Jerusalem's streets, near Schneller Camp. They walked in silence, a 60-year-old widower and bereaved father, with a 19-year-old who had lost all his siblings but one. After they had walked a considerable distance, the rabbi stopped and, his eyes blazing, he turned to my father.

"Did you see the chimneys?"

"Yes," he replied.

The silent walk continued; then, after a few minutes, the rabbi again stopped and asked, "Did you see the smoke?"

"Yes," answered my father.

They continued their walk and again, after a few minutes, the rabbi stopped and asked, "And did you see Him?"

My father did not reply.

A still silent voice was heard. The two walked back to the rabbi's room.

Shabbat Shalom | www.ou.org

Parashat Shemini: Consistent Messages

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Isru Chag Ha'Pessach and parashat Shemini 5767

"The Haggadah speaks of four sons: the wise, the evil, the naive and the ignoramus," and parashat Shemini prohibits eating the four species which have only one characteristic of *kashrut*.

Aside from the number four, one would be hard pressed to find a connection between the four sons of the Haggadah and the four species which have only one kosher characteristic. However, there is a great lesson to be learned from them.

The four sons are not unrelated people, they are the children of the same parents; so despite the differences which exist between siblings, the striking personality and spiritual gaps between these four are very odd.

How does it come about that the same family unit produces a talmid chacham righteous son and an evil son who are religiously different, and two other sons who are intellectually so different?

On Chol Ha'moed, while riding in the mountains of the tribes of Binyamin and Efrayim, just north of Yerushalayim, I recalled the episode of "pessel Micha" brought in the Book of Judges (Shoftim), which transpired in that area.

Micha erected a sanctuary for avoda zara (a"z) in the town of Gerev. But not being versed in the ceremonies, he required the services of a "talmid chacham" in a"z.

It just happened that when Micha was searching for the "right" man, that a Layvi passed his door. One thing lead to another and Micha offered the Layvi a handsome salary if he would serve as the kohen for a"z. The Layvi accepted. The Tanach informs us that his name was "Yehonatan ben Gershom ben Menashe". But the letter "nun" in Menashe is written differently than the others in order to camouflage his true identity. For if we remove the letter "nun" from the name Menashe, we are left with the name "Moshe". Yes! The Layvi who dedicated himself to a"z was the grandson of Moshe Rabbeinu!

The facts get even more bewildering. The Yerushalmi in Brachot (chap. 9 halacha 2) relates that David Hamelech met with Yonatan and asked him how he serves a"z? Yonatan answered that he received from his grandfather Moshe, a rule that it is preferable to give yourself over to a"z then to live off the proceeds of tzedaka. And since he had no means of making a livelihood he accepted the position at Micha's a"z. David was shocked and explained to Yonatan that Moshe meant that it is preferable to do work which is "zara" strange to (if you cannot find work in your profession then do other work which is "zara" to you but do not accept charity). David understood that Yonatan was a man who craved material things and appointed him to the position of Minister of Finance. After the demise of David, King Shlomo dismissed all the ministers in David's cabinet including Yonatan, who, as the Yerushalmi tells us, returned to serve a"z.

What a bizarre man this Yonatan ben Gershom ben Moshe, who weaves in and out of Yirat Shamayim and a"z with such ease. What went on in the mind of this man?

The midrash in Yalkut Shimoni, opens a window of understanding into the workings of this strange man's mind.

Rabbi Natan says that Gerev (the place of pessel Micha) was three kilometers from the Holy city of Shilo, where the sacrificial service was performed for 369 years until it was destroyed in the time of the prophet Shmuel. The smoke from the holy sacrifices of Shilo and the smoke from the profane sacrifices of Yonatan ben Gershom met and became intertwined while rising into the shamayim.

This merger of kodesh and chol, tahara and tuma, was the external expression of the inner thoughts of Yonatan. His inner self was a twisted reservoir of contradictory and unclear spiritual messages. Yonatan studied Torah under his grandfather, Moshe Rabbeinu, but he was also affected by the life styles of the other nations. His loyalties to Hashem became perverted by the merger with foreign beliefs and produced this dual personality. He did not receive a clear message of what the Torah demands from a Jew, but received messages which vied with each other for his soul. Yonatan was not a "kosher" Jew nor was he a total non-kosher Gentile, for he had one kosher characteristic and one trayfe, just as the four species in our parsha have only one kosher sign and are deemed "asur".

The sad episode of Yonatan teaches us the first principle in Torah education. Transmit to your children, to your students and to your congregation clear messages, free of contradiction and compromise. To do otherwise is to invite ideological dissension and strife just as the poor parents of the wise son and his three dysfunctional brothers in the Haggadah.

This would be the perfect place to conclude this week's message. But then I would sound like one more rabbi "blowing off" theoretical steam. My intention is to relate this message to the enormous sin of these last generations - the denial of Medinat Yisrael as the harbinger of the end of our galut punishment and Hashem's call for us to return home.

I read of Jewish communities replete with yeshivot, mikvaot, kollelim and even batei din, springing up in parts of the world. They are lead by talented and conscientious rabbis. But I liken it to the case of a world renowned surgeon who himself suffers from Hepatitis B. Would you let him operate

on a loved one? On the one hand he is the best in his field, but at the same time that he is helping the patient he is passively killing him. The rabbis and leaders of the communities coming up all over America bring Torah to the people, but the message is mixed and contradictory - you can live in galut and still be a loyal son to Hashem. What you get is a community of people who live in two incompatible worlds.

Six million Jews are being challenged here in Eretz Yisrael by hundreds of millions of enemies, while many of the other half of the Jewish nation abroad cannot even find Israel on a map.

Most Bnei Torah abroad have no more than a passing interest in what happens in Eretz Yisrael. They have no concept of the spiritual opportunity afforded every Jew living in Eretz Yisrael by bonding with the personalities of the Tanach in fulfilling our role in the continuation of Jewish history.

In one of the most dramatic moments in our history, when on the day of the Mishkan's dedication, Hashem descended from His heavenly glory in order to create a presence among lowly human beings, two great men, Nadav and Avihu, died in order to serve as an example to the nation for all time, that the holier the person the greater are his responsibilities and punishments. Rashi adds that Moshe said to Aharon on the death of his two eldest sons, that he (Moshe) knew that on this day the greatest of the nation will be sacrificed, and Moshe believed it would be either himself or Aharon. But now he sees that Nadav and Avihu were greater than they.

I shall never be able to comprehend two realities in our generation: 1) How can a religious Jew remain with a clean conscience in the galut? How can he be so oblivious to the huge historical call to return home sent out by the millions of Jews who were slaughtered in the galut in the last two thousand years? 2) Why is it that so many non-religious Jews cling and love this embattled land?

In conclusion. I turn to you dear brothers and sisters. Set your sights on reaching greatness as Jews who took up the challenge to bring to fruition the promises made by Hashem to our fathers and mothers that the Holy land will be our heritage forever.

Shabbat Shalom

This Week's Shabbat Shalom | www.ou.org

Shemini - Making Meat Permissible

Rabbi Asher Meir

Our parsha defines the forbidden and permissible species of animals. However, the permissibility of meat is dependent not only on the variety of animal but also on the method of its slaughter. Animals during their lifetime are "ever min hachai" which are forbidden even to non-Jews. If they die by themselves or are killed in a haphazard way (neveila and treifa), then they are permitted to non-Jews, but not to Jews. Proper shechita which makes meat permissible according to the Torah is careful slaughter with a perfectly sharp knife which instantly cuts both the windpipe and the blood vessels which supply "dam hanefesh" - the blood on which life depends.

Finally, permitted fish require no slaughter at all; rather, "the very collection of fish is like slaughter for livestock" (Rambam Shechita 1:3; as we learn from Moshe's statement in Bamidbar 11:22).

The Zohar at the end of our parsha makes a cryptic analogy based on this law: "Roshei Yeshiva require no shechita; their very collection makes them permissible". Let us examine the meaning of this surprising metaphor.

One way of understanding this statement is to view the laws of ritual slaughter, which relate to how an animal is separated from life, to the way in which a person separates himself from bestiality and the life of this world during his lifetime. This determines a person's "permissibility" or heter - his ability to contribute to holiness.

Some people are completely absorbed in material, animal existence - they are not separated from it at all. This is the analog of "ever min hachai", a live animal which has no permissibility whatsoever. A person who is completely bestial can not make any contribution or connection to kedusha.

Some people distinguish themselves from gross materialism unintentionally or in a haphazard way. This corresponds to a neveila or treifa which are permitted to a non-Jew, that is, they can contribute to the world's material and ethical perfection.

Some holy people go beyond this; they are scrupulous to separate themselves from bestiality by their very breath and life's blood - their vitality is not drawn from materiality but rather from kedusha. This is the kosher shechita which makes the kosher animal completely able to be assimilated to holiness - to be eaten or even offered on the altar.

Beyond this are the roshei yeshiva, the leading Torah scholars. These individuals live and breathe in a completely different element - in the sea of Torah. They are distinguished from the life of this world by their very being; indeed, they would die merely by virtue of being drawn out of the sea and collected into this world. Even in their everyday mundane activities, they are distinguished from our everyday experience; they don't have to distinguish their breath of life from that which comes naturally to them, because they breathe Torah. Therefore, no shechita whatever is required for them; their very being is one of connection to holiness.

Fortunate indeed are those who are able to attain, or even to strive for, this exalted plane of existence.

Rabbi Asher Meir is the author of the book Meaning in Mitzvot, distributed by Feldheim. The book provides insights into the inner meaning of our daily practices, following the order of the 221 chapters of the Kitzur Shulchan Arukh.

Ohr Somayach :: TalmuDigest :: Chagigah 9 - 15
For the week ending 14 April 2007 / 26 Nisan 5767
by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

Danger of Missing Out Chagiga 9a-b

A Jew who missed offering his Festival sacrifices on the first day can make this up on the succeeding days. But if he fails to do so until the Festival is over he has missed out. In regard to such a person the Mishna applies the passage: "That which is crooked cannot be straightened and that which is missing cannot be counted." (Kohélet 1:15)

Another application of this passage is found in a beraita. The reference there is to one who failed to recite the Shema in the morning or evening or who failed to say his morning or evening prayers or who did not join his comrades in performing a mitzvah.

Maharsha explains that the "crooked which cannot be straightened" refers to one who failed to recite the Shema or say the Shacharit morning and Ma'ariv evening prayers throughout that day and night. The second half about "that which is missing cannot be counted" refers to one who did pray but failed to join others in a minyan.

The reason the Mincha service is not mentioned, although missing it comes under the same category of "that which is crooked", is because of the beraita's interest in keeping the prayer part parallel to the Shema part which is recited only morning and night.

What the Sages Say

"Whoever studies Torah during the night is blessed by G-d with a special grace during the day. Some say that whoever studies Torah in this world will be blessed by G-d with a special grace in the World-to-Come." Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish - Chagigah 12b

Ohr Somayach :: The Weekly Daf :: Chagiga 11 - 17
For the week ending 14 April 2007 / 26 Nisan 5767
by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

Sacrifices Made in Heaven

One of the Seven Heavens, says Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish, is called Zevul, and it contains the Heavenly counterpart of Jerusalem and the Beit Hamikdash. There, too, is an altar upon which the Malach (angel) Michael offers a daily sacrifice.

The obvious question which arises is what does he offer on this altar, as there are no animals in Heaven? In his footnotes (and this appears in parenthesis in the Ein Yaakov) the Bach adds this question to the text, as well as an answer. The answer is also found in a Tosefot in Mesechta Menachot (110a). Tosefot cites conflicting midrashim as to the nature of these sacrifices. One states that the Malach offers the souls of the tzaddikim (righteous) upon this altar, and another states that the sacrifices are of fire in animal form.

It is the first midrash above, the one regarding the souls of the righteous, which appears in the aforementioned Bach and Ein Yaakov. And this answer is presented by Tosefot as an explanation of the prayer we say three times a day: Accept willingly, we ask of Hashem, Your people Israel and hearken to their prayer; return the sacred service to Your sanctuary and the fire offerings of Israel accept with favor. How can we ask Hashem to accept the fire offerings of Israel when there is no Beit Hamikdash today in which to offer sacrifices? According to the midrash, the phrase ishei Yisrael does not translate as the fire offerings of Israel but rather the men of Israel the tzaddikim whose souls are offered before Hashem.

Tosefot notes, however, that there is another opinion which translates these words literally as sacrifices, and views them as an extension of the request that Hashem return the sacred service to His sanctuary. Our prayer thus is that Hashem restore our ability to offer actual sacrifices. The Tur (Orach Chaim 187) presents a third opinion: We ask Hashem to accept our prayers which we offer in place of sacrifices.

The Mishna Berura (Orach Chaim 120) quotes the opinion of the Turei Zahav as favoring the first approach, about the souls of tzaddikim, and also quotes the Gaon of Vilna as expressing a preference for the second one, that it is a request for the return of the sacrificial service here on earth. (Chagiga 12b)

Between Angel and Animal

Six things have been said about Man, say our Sages; in three of them he is similar to the malachim (angels) and in three he is like an animal.

People are like the malachim in that they have intelligence, they walk upright and they speak the Holy Tongue of Hebrew. People are like animals in that they eat and drink, they multiply, and they expel wastes from their bodies.

The midrash (Bereishet Rabbah 8) adds one more comparison to each. Men see like the malachim and perish like animals. Why are these comparisons not listed by our gemara?

The comparison of sight does not present such a problem because an animal has the power of sight as well. But why is the comparison of man and animal regarding death ignored?

Two answers are found in the commentaries. Rif suggests that the gemara is referring to the initial creation of Man, before Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge and brought death to the world. Iyun Yaakov explains that although both man and animal have limited existence in this world, the cause of their respective deaths is not the same. Man dies as a result of his sins, while the animal dies because Hashem has so programmed its existence. (Chagiga 16a)

Please address all comments and requests to
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Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet Shmini 5767

Tonight, the evening of Friday, April 13, we will count day 11, which is 1 week and 4 days of the omer.

Rabbi Hershel Schachter The TorahWeb Foundation When do we “Duchen”?

The Torah tells us that on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the eighth day of inaugurating the Mishkan, Aharon Hakohen was charged with the offering of the special sacrifices[1]. At the conclusion of Aharon's offering of these korbonos tzibbur[2] Aharon recited the priestly blessings (Vayikra 9:22). The Talmud (Sotah 38a) points out that based on this statement it would appear that the halacha is that duchenin (the mitzvah of reciting birchas kohanim - the priestly blessings) can only be fulfilled at the conclusion of the offering of the korbonos tzibbur.

This Talmudic statement led Rav Yaakov Emden to comment that the fact that we still practice this mitzvah today, even though we have not offered any korbonos, is only miderabonan; Min haTorah, the mitzvah of duchenin must be connected with korbonos. The Mishna Brura (vol. 2 pg. 19 in footnote) disagrees vehemently with Rav Yaakov Emden, and proves from many sources that even today the mitzvah to duchen is still min haTorah[3]. The Mishna Brura does not, however, deal with the possuk cited above.

The solution to this problem was given by two brothers, who were both prominent geonim in the nineteenth century, in their respective seforim:

Rav Yaakov Karliner in his Teshuvos Mishkenos Yaakov (Orach Chaim, siman 66) and Rav Yitzchok Bruchin in his sefer, Keren Orach (Sotah). The Talmudic statement (Berachos 26b) that Tefilos (prayers) are considered as if we had offered korbonos is a biblical principal. When an individual davens, it is considered as if he had offered a korban yachid. When the chazzan recites the tefillah out loud representing the entire tzibbur, it is considered as if a korban tzibbur had been brought. And indeed, it is at the conclusion of the chazan's tefillah that the kohanim fulfill their mitzvah to duchen. Their obligation to duchen at that point is min haTorah, since the conclusion of the chazzan's prayers is biblically equivalent to the conclusion of the offerings of the korbonos tzibbur!

When we duchen on yomim tovim, we all recite the piyut “v'se'erav”: that Hashem should accept our prayers and consider it as if we had offered actual sacrifices. This piyut is inserted in the middle of the chazzan's recitation of the beracha of retzei, which is referred to in the Talmud (Megillah 18a) as “avodah”, the literal translation of which is “the offering of sacrifices”. The piyut just makes more explicit the simple meaning of that beracha, that our prayers should be considered as if we had actually offered sacrifices. Because it is the theme of this particular beracha that makes it possible to fulfill the mitzvah of duchenin, the rabbis required (Sotah 38b) that the kohanim must at least begin to go towards the duchen (the platform where they will recite the birchas kohanim) by the end of this beracha.

Rav Soloveitchik added on (in a yearzeit shiur) that the beracha of retzei is not simply a repeat of the immediately preceding beracha of shema koleinu. In shema koleinu we ask Hashem to accept our tefillos. In retzei we add a request that Hashem should accept our prayers as if they were a sacrifice. The term “ritzu” is a technical halachik term appearing most often in Tanach in connection with acceptance of sacrifices. In mishnaic Hebrew as well “hurtzah” means the sacrifice is “kosher” and is accepted; as opposed to “lo hurtzah” which means that the sacrifice is “not kosher”, i.e. not acceptable (see Beikvei Hatzon, pg. 82). The gemara (Beachos 22b) disqualifies one's prayer in a specific instance, and requires that he daven all over, based on the principle of “zevach reshaim to'eivai - the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination” (Mishlei 21:27). The equation

between the tefillah and the offering of the korban is taken very seriously; it was not intended as a mere metaphor[4].

[1] As opposed to the first seven days, when the special sacrifices were offered by Moshe Rabbeinu

[2] Communal sacrifices, as opposed to korbonos yachid, which are offered on behalf of an individual person

[3] See also Binyan Shlomo (teshuvos of Rav Shomo Vilner) siman 10

[4] In Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim, end of siman 76) the same halacha appears regarding kriyas shema: we sometimes disqualify one's recital of shema (due to the principle of zevach reshaim to'eivai), and require that shema be repeated. The students who attended the yearzeit shiur found it difficult to understand why this principle should be extended even to kriyas shema, according to the Rav Soloveitchik's understanding of the gemara.

Jerusalem Post :: Apr 12 2007

CHAMETZ AFTER PESACH :: Rabbi Berel Wein

There is a strong rabbinic decree forbidding the use of chametz after Pesach by a Jew if that chametz was actually in Jewish possession during the holiday of Pesach itself. The basis for this rabbinic decree is to prevent Jews from having chametz in their possession during Pesach, so to speak hoarding it for use after Pesach. The obvious danger is that that chametz will be used on Pesach and there is a prohibition against not only as to eating chametz on Pesach but also as to possessing chametz.

Therefore, in order to insure that no chametz remains in Jewish possession during Pesach, the rabbis decreed that Jews could not benefit from such chametz after Pesach. The solution to somehow have use of such chametz after Pesach lies in the long accepted Jewish tradition of “selling” the chametz to a non-Jew before Pesach and of reacquiring that chametz after Pesach. This legal sale of mechirat chametz is of ancient origin, though it really only came into general use in the late middle Ages.

Jews then increasingly were occupied in operating distilleries for the production and distribution of liquor derived from chametz grain and fermenting agents. Because of the heavy financial complications involved, the use of a legal sale of the chametz to a non-Jew took hold and has become de rigeur for Jewish individuals and companies in our time and for the past many centuries.

By selling their chametz before Pesach and only reacquiring it after Pesach, these individuals and companies avoid any problems regarding the use of and benefit from chametz after Pesach. Because of these circumstances, stores and companies notify their Jewish customers after Pesach that they in fact did sell their chametz before Pesach, thus obviating any hesitation on the part of their Jewish customers in purchasing chametz goods.

As the economies of the world became more complex and intertwined the rabbinic decisors of halacha had to deal with new situations and financial arrangements regarding this issue of chametz after Pesach. What about Jews who own shares in public companies that do business on Pesach with chametz goods? What about large supermarket chains outside of Israel who sell their chametz before Pesach but nevertheless continue to sell those products on a regular normal basis in their stores on Pesach itself? Does this not render the sale of their chametz to a non-Jew before Pesach a sham?

In countries that require that tax stamps be affixed to the sale documents, is this necessary for the sale of the chametz to the non-Jew and the reacquiring of the chametz after Pesach by the Jews as well? Whose loss is it if the chametz became damaged or destroyed during Pesach while technically under the ownership of the non-Jew?

How real does this apparently unreal sale really have to be? All of these questions have been raised, thoroughly discussed and argued over by the great decisors of halacha of the past centuries. Needless to say, proper

solutions to all of these issues have been found and implemented. It is an irony, but a very true one, that it is the very rigidity of halacha and its absolute adherence to traditional norms and constructs that allows it to be so flexible and fresh in addressing problems such as this.

In Jewish kabbalistic and philosophical thought, chametz on Pesach represents our evil inclination and immoral desires. The holiday of Pesach is very instrumental in making us more focused Jews and better people. But in order for this self-improvement mode to take hold within us, the chametz after Pesach that still somehow remained within us must be removed from our midst. The rabbinic decree regarding chametz after Pesach should not be reduced to its simple, practical terms. Rather it should be elevated to its highest spiritual form.

In a world of chaff we should be the true kernel of nourishing grain and in a world of self-promotion and swollen puffing we should continue to be the unleavened matzo with its low profile and holy form. Perhaps this spiritual lesson is one of the very reasons that our rabbis so emphasized the problems associated with the concept of chametz after Pesach. The lessons of disciplined freedom that Pesach created within us have to be reinforced and nurtured after Pesach as well. The temptations of chametz on Pesach are well known to all of us. The harm that undisposed of chametz after Pesach can cause us should also be recognized and dealt with. Shabat shalom.

Weekly Parsha :: SHMINI :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The title of this week's parsha takes its name from the description of the events that took place on the eighth day after the dedication and opening of the services of the Mishkan in the desert. The term "eighth day" means more than just the count of the number of days that elapsed since the Mishkan came to life and to service. It signifies the moment that euphoria ends and reality sets in. It marks the beginning of facing problems and finding solutions for them. It also marks the hardships of life, its disappointments and tragedies.

The "seven days" of consecration are a joyful time; the seven days of sheva brachot for chatan and kallah, tiring as they may be, are nevertheless days of exhilaration and happiness. The "eighth day" is the beginning of the intrusion of life's events into our dream world. It is the "eighth day" therefore that is the true measure of a human being's mettle and accomplishments.

The challenges of the "seven days" are usually more easily met and overcome by the added adrenalin that infuses us in times of joy. The test of the "eighth day" is one of a lifelong struggle to prevail over the pitfalls and vicissitudes of life and its constant problems. A new-born male Jewish infant is circumcised on the eighth day of his life, signifying the beginning of his struggle to be a good person and a believer in accordance with Jewish tradition, no matter what difficulties that life will raise against those efforts and beliefs.

The great High Priest Aharon is leveled by terrible personal tragedy in this week's parsha. A sudden and mysterious heavenly fire kills his two eldest sons, apparently engaged in holy service in the Mishkan. Aharon is faced with the ultimate tragedy of life and its fragility. The "eighth day" descends upon him with a thunderous clap.

Even more than all of the other tests of life that he faced in leading the Jewish community yet in slavery in Egypt, or at the fateful moment of the creation of the Golden Calf, the events of the eighth day of the Mishkan's dedication are truly his "eighth day" – the ultimate test of life and faith and belief.

Aharon's reaction to this is silent acceptance of the realities that now face him. He does not rail against perceived injustice, as does Iyov. Nor does he withdraw from the fray of life and go into seclusion, as did many others when faced with similar tragic situations. Aharon becomes the paradigm for how humans are to deal with the "eighth day" – with life and its ups and downs.

Resilience and silent inner strength engendered by faith and acceptance of God's will are the weapons of living on in spite of all that the "eighth day" imposes upon one's life. These words are much easier to write and to read than to actually implement. Yet the Torah expects no less from us than it

did from Aharon. Life and our contributions and meaningful behavior towards making it better and stronger are always played out on the background of the "eighth day." Shabat shalom.

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Shemini For the week ending 14 April 2007 / 26 Nisan 5767 by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Overview

On the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan, Aharon, his sons, and the entire nation bring various korbanot (offerings) as commanded by Moshe. Aharon and Moshe bless the nation. G-d allows the Jewish People to sense His Presence after they complete the Mishkan. Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, innovate an offering not commanded by G-d. A fire comes from before G-d and consumes them, stressing the need to perform the commandments only as Moshe directs. Moshe consoles Aharon, who grieves in silence. Moshe directs the kohanim as to their behavior during the mourning period, and warns them that they must not drink intoxicating beverages before serving in the Mishkan. The Torah lists the two characteristics of a kosher animal: It has split hooves, and it chews, regurgitates, and re-chews its food. The Torah specifies by name those non-kosher animals which have only one of these two signs. A kosher fish has fins and easily removable scales. All birds not included in the list of forbidden families are permitted. The Torah forbids all types of insects except for four species of locusts. Details are given of the purification process after coming in contact with ritually-impure species. Bnei Yisrael are commanded to be separate and holy — like G-d.

Insights

High As A Kite

"G-d spoke to Aharon saying: Do not drink intoxicating wine, you and your sons with you when you come into the Tent of Meeting..." (10:8-9)

Statistics show a lower rate of alcoholism among Jews than their neighbors.

This could be due to genetics. However sociologists surmise that there are other factors at work. For example, Jews meet alcohol in the context of holiness rather than in the local pub: A Jewish boy is introduced to alcohol at the ripe old age of eight days when the mohel places a few drops of wine into his mouth to mollify the pain of the circumcision.

Alcohol appears on the Shabbat table every Friday night with kiddush, and again the following morning in the daytime kiddush. On Saturday night during the havdala service we take our leave of Shabbat over a cup of wine. There are the four cups of wine to be drunk on Pesach and (many) more on Purim. The cycle of Jewish life embraces alcohol as part of a holy life.

Another controlling factor in the Jew's consumption of alcohol is the perception that being drunk does not befit a Jew. There is a Yiddish maxim that loosely translates as "Jews don't drink."

However, together with a rise in social dysfunction amongst Jews including depression and lack of self-esteem, there has been a concomitant rise in substance abuse, including alcohol.

A happy person doesn't need a chemical crutch.

The Ba'al Shem Tov said that if a Jew knew what it meant to be a Ben Olam Haba, someone who has an eternal existence, he would be so happy that he would rush out into the street and start to do the Kezatzke (Cossack dance) like a meshugenne.

The essence of Jewish happiness is to know that with every mitzvah, every word of Torah and of kindness, we are building an eternal existence. That knowledge is more inebriating than the most potent liquor.

In this week's Torah portion, G-d warns Aharon that the kohanim must refrain from alcohol while performing the Temple service or adjudicating legal matters. This was not just a concern for motor efficiency or clear thought. The kohen is the epitome of Divine service; his high should come only from Torah and serving G-d. He should need no external chemical help; as the saintly Chazon Ish wrote over half a century ago to a world in great darkness, "There is no sadness for he who knows the light of truth..."

Based on Rebbe Bunim m'Pshiske

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

PARSHAS SHEMINI

Moshe said to Aharon: come near the Altar. then perform the service of the people's offering and provide atonement for them. (9:7)

Moshe Rabbeinu calls to his brother, Aharon, designating him to be the Kohen Gadol who is to offer the sacrifices and perform the Divine service in the Sanctuary. Rashi cites the Midrash, which quotes a compelling statement Moshe made regarding his brother, Aharon: "Aharon, my brother, is more worthy and important than I, for through his offerings and his service will the Divine Presence rest upon the people." This is a striking statement. Is it possible that Aharon had achieved greater stature than Moshe? Was Moshe not the most outstanding individual that has ever lived?

The Torah makes two statements concerning Moshe's supremacy, which clearly excluded everyone else: "A prophet will not arise like Moshe, who knew G-d face to face" (Devarim 34:10). "The man Moshe was the most humble of all men upon the face of the earth" (Bamidbar 12:3). Apparently, Moshe superseded Aharon in every respect, from prophecy to humility. Nonetheless, in his commentary to Sefer Shemos 6:26, Rashi writes, "There are some instances where Aharon is mentioned prior to Moshe, and others where Moshe is mentioned prior to Aharon. This teaches that they were equal." Rashi means that concerning the Exodus and in terms of being agents of Hashem they had equal status, but clearly, regarding their innate abilities and qualities, Moshe was superior to Aharon.

In an alternative exposition, the Shem MiShmuel suggests that the equality between Moshe and Aharon that Rashi suggests refers to the circumstances prior to the Exodus and the Giving of the Torah. After these seminal events, however, Moshe emerged as an entirely different person on an unparalleled plateau. This was a consequence of his direct contact with the Almighty which catapulted him into an unprecedented spiritual realm. Indeed, the Yalkut Shimoni writes that Moshe was like G-d from the waist up and like man from the waist down. Because he had experienced the Divine, Moshe was unlike any other human - even Aharon. We once again revert to our original question: How could Aharon be considered more worthy than Moshe at the inauguration of the Mishkan?

Furthermore, Chazal teach us that Moshe and Aharon's humility surpassed even that of Avraham Avinu. He said, "I am but dust and ashes" (Bereishis 18:27), while they went so far as to say, "What are we?" (Shemos 16:8). How could Moshe's level of humility have exceeded even that of Aharon? Aharon answered that he was nothing. How could Moshe have been more humble than that? How could he have been less than nothing?

The Avnei Nezer distinguishes between two forms of humility of which Moshe and Aharon each espoused a different form. One can live a life of humility with the feeling that he is insignificant. In another type of humility the individual recognizes his capabilities, his lofty achievements and exemplary spiritual plateau. Yet, in comparison with the unfathomable greatness of Hashem, he realizes that he is infinitely inconsequential. This second variety of humility is an attribute from which the greatest men on earth can benefit, for the only true existence is that of the Almighty; the only true reality is that of Him.

We now understand what motivated Moshe's sense of humility. Moshe was the greatest person, the consummate human being, the quintessential leader and teacher of the Jewish People. Certainly, he was aware of his significance, his distinction, his exalted position. How could he possibly have retained his humility in light of this awareness?

Apparently, Moshe knew who he was and the outstanding role in which he functioned, but -- specifically because of his closeness to Hashem, Who would always be infinitesimally greater -- he felt insignificant. Moshe understood that he could never achieve even a minute fraction of Hashem's greatness. Indeed, as is quoted in Avos D'Rabbi Nassan 9, "Moshe was the humblest of all men, but not of the ministering angels, who were even more humble than he." The higher one is, the closer to Hashem he becomes, the less he thinks of himself, because he sees that in comparison

to the Almighty, he is nothing. Moshe maintained his humility because he always kept the majesty of Hashem on his mind.

Aharon was quite different. His humility was more of a direct nature. He really believed himself to be insignificant and unworthy of any distinction. His role in the sin of the Golden Calf never left his mind. This incident perpetuated his lowly self-image to the point that he perceived the Altar to be in the shape of a bull due to its protracted "horns." In his mind, he had sinned and he could not erase that reality. He felt that as a result of his part in the eigel, he would be deficient in achieving atonement for the Jewish People at the Altar.

Two brothers reflected two types of humility: Both had said, "What are we?" This is where, however, the similarity between them ends. Moshe achieved humility with respect to Hashem. Aharon felt that he was intrinsically worthless.

When the Torah describes Moshe as the humblest of men, it refers to his ability to achieve humility in an unparalleled manner, particularly in relation to Hashem. This was an unprecedented form of humility. In this respect, Moshe was greater than Aharon, who did not have the opportunity to develop such a connection with the Almighty, and, hence, could not perceive this form of self-assessment. On the other hand, in his own way, Aharon was as great as Moshe -- and perhaps even greater than he -- in the way that he was able to view his own deficiencies and the compelling impact they had on his total demeanor.

And they (Nadav and Avihu) brought before Hashem an alien fire that He had not commanded them. A fire came out from before Hashem and consumed them. (10:1,2)

Rashi cites Chazal who say that Nadav and Avihu perished because they rendered a halachic decision in the presence of their rebbe, Moshe Rabbeinu. Others cite Chazal who relate that Nadav would say to Avihu, "When will those two elders (referring to Moshe and Aharon) pass on, and you and I will lead the generation?" These statements are certainly true, but they apparently are not consistent with the Torah's description of their sin. The Torah clearly states that they perished as a result of offering an alien fire which Hashem had not commanded them to bring. Why do Chazal cite different reasons? Furthermore, is it possible that Nadav and Avihu, who were both righteous individuals to the point that Moshe attested to their superseding even himself and Aharon in greatness, could be guilty of such sinful behavior?

Horav Reuven Elbaz, Shlita, explains that, indeed, their sin was eish zarah, offering an alien fire. Everything else which Chazal cited were outgrowths, ramifications of this sin. Alien fire is a reference to intense fiery passion and fervor in serving Hashem. They went, so to speak, overboard, beyond the limits. Nadav and Avihu went too far, such that they overstepped the perimeters of religious observance. Their extremism caused them not to marry, because they wanted to pour out all of their love to the Almighty. There was not enough room in their hearts to share this love with a wife and children. This brought them to drink wine in order to increase and heighten their sense of joy, and this intensity brought them to rule in the presence of their rebbe, Moshe. In other words, they became carried away, and this led to a number of egregious errors.

Thus, while they questioned, "When will those two elders pass on?" they were not speaking from a malevolent heart. There was nothing evil about them in any way. They simply could not tolerate Moshe and Aharon's passivity with regard to the people. They complained that the nation was rude, the people were disrespectful. Yet, Moshe and Aharon responded, Vnachnu mah, "(and) What are we?" Their incredible humility and their outstanding sense of self-effacement were too much for Nadav and Avihu. They wanted action. This was not the way a strong leader should respond. The people had gross chutzpah and should, therefore, be punished. A leader must be strong. A leader must not tolerate any form of infraction. Nadav and Avihu's attitude towards leadership was unlike that of Moshe and Aharon. A leader must lead - not follow. A leader must be strong and dynamic - not obsequious. The members of the nation who had complained needed to be dealt with immediately. One does not complain.

Hashem did not agree with Nadav and Avihu. The only way to lead is with love and tolerance, patience and sensitivity. Humility is to be the guiding

force, the moral compass by which one leads, inspires and achieves an enduring legacy.

Moshe heard and approved. (10:20)

On that auspicious-- but fateful day-- three he-goats were offered as Sin-offerings. One was the special offering of Nachshon ben Aminadav, the Nasi, Prince, of Shevet Yehudah. The second offering was in honor of the Chanukas, Inauguration, of the Mishkan. These two were considered kodoshei shaah, holy for the current time, since they would never again be offered. The third sacrifice was the Korban Rosh Chodesh, in honor of the new moon. Prior to this, Moshe Rabbeinu had instructed the Kohanim to eat the Meal-offerings, which were kodoshei shaah. The Kohanim did this. This was an exception to the rule of mourning in which an onen, mourner prior to the burial of the deceased, may not eat of the offerings. The question confronting Aharon and his sons was: Does Moshe's command regarding the Korban Minchah, Meal-offering, apply to the meat of the Sin-offerings as well? Furthermore, if, in fact, it did apply, did it apply to all three of the offerings?

Hashem did command the Kohanim to eat, even during their status as onenim. It was now up to Moshe and/or Aharon to determine if this command applied under all circumstances. Moshe was of the opinion that the command was unequivocal and should apply to all sacrifices, even the Korban Rosh Chodesh, which was kodesh l'doros, holy for all the generations. Aharon, however, felt that since the direct command was initially made concerning the Meal-offerings, which are kodoshei shaah, only the first two sacrifices, that of Nachshon and the Inauguration of the Mishkan, were to be eaten. The Korban Rosh Chodesh was kodesh forever. It, therefore, should not be eaten during animus, the period of mourning.

The Kohanim burnt the he-goat which was designated for Rosh Chodesh, because they felt that as a kodoshei doros, it was not to be eaten. Moshe became angry with them. Chazal tell us that since Moshe became angry, he erred in the halachah. Aharon was actually correct in his p'sak, determination of the law. Aharon's sons did not respond to Moshe, as it would have been disrespectful to speak up in their father's presence. Aharon explained the halachah to Moshe, who conceded that he had erred. Moshe Rabbeinu demonstrated his true humility, as well as the reason that he was selected to be Klal Yisrael's quintessential leader. His humility was the essence of his greatness. Rather than defend his position, he realized his error and conceded to Aharon. This is the mark of a true gadol, great Torah leader.

Horav Isser Zalman Meltzer, zl, was an individual of such strength of character. Whenever he was in a dispute with another individual regarding a Torah law or logic, he never insisted that he was right. Rather, he would say, Efsheir zeit ihr gerecht, "Perhaps you are correct!" He never insisted that he was correct. He always looked for a way to validate the other person's point of view. This applied even when the other point of view was that of a young man, many years his junior. Once, as he was giving a shiur, Torah lecture, one that he had prepared and worked on for quite some time, a bachur, student, asked a compelling question. Rav Isser Zalman said, "This young man has asked a very good question. He is correct in his understanding of the subject. I have no more to say." With that, he closed his Gemorah, volume of Talmud, and bid everyone a good day.

Moshe could have told Aharon that he had never heard the halachah. Instead, he said, Shomaati v'shochachti, "I heard, but I forgot." Furthermore, he publicized his error throughout the camp, telling everyone that he had erred and his brother had been right.

The Baalei Mussar, Ethicists, explain that the greatest deterrent which prevents the individual from being modeh al ha'emes, conceding to the truth, is the loud voice and screaming associated with presenting his point of view in a dispute. All of the screaming backs the individual into a corner from which he cannot retreat. It is very difficult to concede an error after one has just loudly vocalized his position. It is more embarrassing and degrading than people can tolerate. Moshe Rabbeinu was not "most people." This is why he was selected to be our consummate leader.

If people dispute quietly, respectfully, pleasantly, then it is no challenge to concede to an error in judgment. Under such circumstances, when one discovers that he has erred, he is not yet on a high pedestal, elevated by his

loud voice. He has spoken quietly, patiently. He is now ready to admit that he has made a mistake.

The individual who loses his cool during a dispute finds it difficult to back down from his position. Chazal teach us that Bais Shamai and Bais Hillel were in dispute for three years, each one claiming that the halachah was as they had stated it. At the end of three years, a Bas Kol, Voice from Heaven, decreed that both the words of Bais Shamai and Bais Hillel were divrei Elokim Chaim, words of the Living G-d. Nonetheless, the halachah concurred with Bais Hillel. Chazal question why the halachah was in agreement with Bais Hillel? They explain that Bais Hillel were people of tolerance and acceptance. Indeed, when they rendered their decision, they would first quote Bais Shamai, followed by their own point of view.

Maharal M'Prague questions the reason for adjudicating in accordance with Bais Hillel simply because they were nochin va'aluvin, easygoing and forbearing. Since when is this a basis for rendering a halachah opinion? The Maharal explains that a person's ability to think cogently coincides directly with his middas ha'savlanus, capacity for tolerance. The thought process of one who possesses a calm and relaxed personality, who is not easily given to anger or to losing his cool, reflects this state of composure. His logic will be clear and astute, not garbled and anxiety-laden. On the other hand, the individual who is ill-tempered and irritable, who quickly resorts to fits of rage--regardless of his acumen, his sagacity notwithstanding-- will err in judgment. It is as if his brain suddenly short circuits. The tools are present, but the wiring is faulty.

Someone who is cool-headed and amicable, who accepts a challenge without falling apart, who is easy-going and of a mild temperament, has an enhanced capacity for judging a situation with greater clarity and objectivity. Bais Hillel exemplified this level of character refinement. We find in Meseches Edyos that Bais Hillel reversed their p'sak, halachic decision, a number of times. Closer to our own times, the Chazon Ish, zl, who was one of the most celebrated and erudite poskim, halachic arbiters, writes: "I am constantly beset with errors. At times, it is in logic or in my understanding of the Talmud. I am not ashamed of this, because there is nothing for which to be ashamed. On the contrary, one who is ashamed demonstrates a lack of respect for the halachah."

Modeh al ha'emes, conceding to the truth, accepting that one is wrong, is especially necessary in one's relationship with students. A rebbe who errs should be able to admit his error, whether it is concerning p'shat, explanation of the subject matter, or regarding an incident in which the rebbe has made the wrong judgment call. It happens, and when it does, one should be big enough to concede his faulty judgment. One who is a modeh al ha'emes earns the respect of his peers and, ultimately, merits their trust.

We allude to this idea in our daily tefillah: L'olam yehei adam yerei Shomayim b'seiser u'vagalui, u'modeh al ha'emes, v'doveir emes bilevavo. "Always should a man fear Heaven, in private and in public, and speak truth within his heart." The Minchas Elazar interprets the word l'olam, always, as meaning l'olam, because of/for the world. This means that his words should be heard and accepted by the world community. This is possible only if he is modeh al ha'emes. It is not enough to speak the truth privately. One must be willing and able to concede the truth publicly, even if it hurts. Then people will respect him and accept what he has to say, l'olam - for the world - and for himself.

Va'ani Tefillah

Yismechu ha'Shomayim v'sagel ha'aretz - The Heavens will be glad and the earth will rejoice.

What is the difference between simchah, gladness/joy, and gilah, rejoicing? In his commentary to Divrei Hayamim, the Gaon, zl, m'Vilna explains that simchah applies to the joy one manifests over a recent occurrence, something novel that just took place. Gilah, however, is the rejoicing one experiences even for something that has happened a while ago, but still elicits joy for him.

Shlomo HaMelech says in Mishlei 23:24, Gil yagil avi tzaddik, "The father of a righteous person will be mirthful (gilah)"; v'yoleid chacham yismach bo, "one who begets a wise child will rejoice in him (simchah)." The Gaon explains that a tzaddik remains in his righteous status on a constant basis. Thus, the joy which refers to him is a joy of gilah. The chacham, wise one,

is constantly renewing his wisdom as he becomes privy to new lessons. Hence, the word *simchah* is used regarding his birth.

Shlomo HaMelech says in *Koheles* 1:9, "There is nothing new beneath the sun." In this world there is nothing new. Hashem has already provided everything. The resources are there, together with the conditions and the concepts all waiting for man's discovery and invention. Above this world, in Heaven, however, there is something new. Therefore, we say, *Yismechu haShomayim*, "The Heavens will be glad (*simchah*), and *v'sagel ha'aretz*, the earth will rejoice (*gilah*)."

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h a a r e t z

Portion of the Week / Split-screen narrative

By Benjamin Lau

his week's Torah portion contains a very painful narrative. The reading opens with the festive atmosphere on the eighth day of the preparations for making Aaron and his sons priests. Up until now, Moses was the nation's sole leader and the leadership's direction was from the top down - God's message was handed down to Israel. Now the leadership will be more comprehensive: Aaron, in offering sacrifices, will work in the opposite direction, heavenward. He is promised that, after preparation of the altar and the sacrifice, God's glory will be revealed to the Israelites.

The nation gathers for the consecration ceremony. Following protocol, Aaron performs his duties meticulously, ascends to the altar and raises his hands to bless the people - but nothing happens. God's glory is not revealed.

In this embarrassing moment, the narrative becomes a split screen. On one screen, Moses approaches, leading Aaron into the Tabernacle: "And Moses and Aaron went into the Tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people. And there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces" (*Leviticus* 9:23-24). Seeing Aaron's embarrassment, Moses tries to help him. After reciting a prayer to placate God, the two brothers emerge to bless the nation. In addition to Aaron, Moses also gives the blessing. Their actions prove successful; God's glory is revealed to all the Israelites, who rejoice in seeing the flames burst forth. However, on the second screen, another event unfolds simultaneously. Two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, want to protect their father's dignity. It is their impression that this time, too, fire is being sent from above, not below. Aaron's consecration as high priest was intended to enable fire to be sent to heaven from earth through the priest's work, instead of it being sent from heaven via the effort of the prophet, Moses. When they see Moses standing beside Aaron and joining him in blessing Israel, the sons feel their father's honor and the priesthood's dignity are being compromised. They quickly take their censers, full of incense, and light them, intending to encourage earthly fire to ascend heavenward. But heavenly fire strikes them: "And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (*Lev.* 10:2).

The ecstatic nation has not yet noticed this horrible disaster; however, Aaron's immediate family realizes that this festive day has become a day of mourning. Moses' initial reaction is harsh: "Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace" (*Lev.* 10:3).

Some commentators interpret Aaron's silence as signifying that Moses' words have consoled him. In the Talmud, we read about Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai, whose son had died, and whom other Talmudic scholars tried to comfort. Each of his students compared Rabbi Yohanan's tragedy to catastrophes that had befallen other Jews throughout our history. They wanted to convey a single message: We must learn from the tragedies of others that the world continues to exist despite these tragedies. The Talmud continues: "Then Rabbi Yossi entered and sat before him. He said to him, 'My dear rabbi, may I tell you something?' Rabbi Yohanan replied, 'Please do.' Rabbi Yossi went on: 'Aaron had two grown sons who died on the

very same day. He was consoled in his grief, as it is written, "And Aaron held his peace.""

Aaron's silence has nothing to do with Moses' declaration, which is a human attempt to find a meaning in the horrifying event and to translate it into mortal language. However, in holding his peace, Aaron expresses his choice to leave the disaster in the realm of mystery and meaninglessness. Holding one's peace is not silence. Whereas silence is a cessation of talk, holding one's peace is an absence of talk. When Elijah flees to Mount Horeb, God wants to show his glory to him: "And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice" (*1 Kings* 19:11-12). Similarly, the High Holy Day prayer "Unetaneh tokef" states: "A great shofar (ram's horn) will be sounded and a still small voice will be heard."

Still small voice

This Monday, the 28th of the Hebrew month of Nissan, is Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Day here in Israel. On this day a still small voice pierces our ears from every direction. The deafening air-raid siren attempts to convey the sound of this still small voice, which leaves us in the realm of mystery, where we are unable, and perhaps also unwilling, to find meaning for that mega-event.

After arriving in this country following his release from the Buchenwald concentration camp, on the 28th of Nissan, 5705 (April 11, 1945), my father settled in Jerusalem and was invited to have an audience with Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter, the Gerrer rebbe (author of "Imrei Emes"), who was then in his 80s. The rebbe's son, Rabbi Yisrael Alter (who was named head of the Gerrer Hasidic sect after his father and was known as the Beis Yisroel) had lost practically all his family in the Holocaust. He took my father for a nocturnal walk through Jerusalem's streets, near Schneller Camp. They walked in silence, a 60-year-old widower and bereaved father, with a 19-year-old who had lost all his siblings but one. After they had walked a considerable distance, the rabbi stopped and, his eyes blazing, he turned to my father.

"Did you see the chimneys?"

"Yes," he replied.

The silent walk continued; then, after a few minutes, the rabbi again stopped and asked, "Did you see the smoke?"

"Yes," answered my father.

They continued their walk and again, after a few minutes, the rabbi stopped and asked, "And did you see Him?"

My father did not reply.

A still silent voice was heard. The two walked back to the rabbi's room.

Shabbat Shalom | www.ou.org

Parashat Shemini: Consistent Messages

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Isru Chag Ha'Pessach and parashat Shemini 5767

"The Haggadah speaks of four sons: the wise, the evil, the naive and the ignoramus," and parashat Shemini prohibits eating the four species which have only one characteristic of *kashrut*.

Aside from the number four, one would be hard pressed to find a connection between the four sons of the Haggadah and the four species which have only one kosher characteristic. However, there is a great lesson to be learned from them.

The four sons are not unrelated people, they are the children of the same parents; so despite the differences which exist between siblings, the striking personality and spiritual gaps between these four are very odd.

How does it come about that the same family unit produces a talmid chacham righteous son and an evil son who are religiously different, and two other sons who are intellectually so different?

On Chol Ha'moed, while riding in the mountains of the tribes of Binyamin and Efrayim, just north of Yerushalayim, I recalled the episode of "pessel Micha" brought in the Book of Judges (Shoftim), which transpired in that area.

Micha erected a sanctuary for avoda zara (a"z) in the town of Gerev. But not being versed in the ceremonies, he required the services of a "talmid chacham" in a"z.

It just happened that when Micha was searching for the "right" man, that a Layvi passed his door. One thing lead to another and Micha offered the Layvi a handsome salary if he would serve as the kohen for a"z. The Layvi accepted. The Tanach informs us that his name was "Yehonatan ben Gershom ben Menashe". But the letter "nun" in Menashe is written differently than the others in order to camouflage his true identity. For if we remove the letter "nun" from the name Menashe, we are left with the name "Moshe". Yes! The Layvi who dedicated himself to a"z was the grandson of Moshe Rabbeinu!

The facts get even more bewildering. The Yerushalmi in Brachot (chap. 9 halacha 2) relates that David Hamelech met with Yonatan and asked him how he serves a"z? Yonatan answered that he received from his grandfather Moshe, a rule that it is preferable to give yourself over to a"z then to live off the proceeds of tzedaka. And since he had no means of making a livelihood he accepted the position at Micha's a"z. David was shocked and explained to Yonatan that Moshe meant that it is preferable to do work which is "zara" strange to (if you cannot find work in your profession then do other work which is "zara" to you but do not accept charity). David understood that Yonatan was a man who craved material things and appointed him to the position of Minister of Finance. After the demise of David, King Shlomo dismissed all the ministers in David's cabinet including Yonatan, who, as the Yerushalmi tells us, returned to serve a"z.

What a bizarre man this Yonatan ben Gershom ben Moshe, who weaves in and out of Yirat Shamayim and a"z with such ease. What went on in the mind of this man?

The midrash in Yalkut Shimoni, opens a window of understanding into the workings of this strange man's mind.

Rabbi Natan says that Gerev (the place of pessel Micha) was three kilometers from the Holy city of Shilo, where the sacrificial service was performed for 369 years until it was destroyed in the time of the prophet Shmuel. The smoke from the holy sacrifices of Shilo and the smoke from the profane sacrifices of Yonatan ben Gershom met and became intertwined while rising into the shamayim.

This merger of kodesh and chol, tahara and tuma, was the external expression of the inner thoughts of Yonatan. His inner self was a twisted reservoir of contradictory and unclear spiritual messages. Yonatan studied Torah under his grandfather, Moshe Rabbeinu, but he was also affected by the life styles of the other nations. His loyalties to Hashem became perverted by the merger with foreign beliefs and produced this dual personality. He did not receive a clear message of what the Torah demands from a Jew, but received messages which vied with each other for his soul. Yonatan was not a "kosher" Jew nor was he a total non-kosher Gentile, for he had one kosher characteristic and one trayfe, just as the four species in our parsha have only one kosher sign and are deemed "asur".

The sad episode of Yonatan teaches us the first principle in Torah education. Transmit to your children, to your students and to your congregation clear messages, free of contradiction and compromise. To do otherwise is to invite ideological dissension and strife just as the poor parents of the wise son and his three dysfunctional brothers in the Haggadah.

This would be the perfect place to conclude this week's message. But then I would sound like one more rabbi "blowing off" theoretical steam. My intention is to relate this message to the enormous sin of these last generations - the denial of Medinat Yisrael as the harbinger of the end of our galut punishment and Hashem's call for us to return home.

I read of Jewish communities replete with yeshivot, mikvaot, kollelim and even batei din, springing up in parts of the world. They are lead by talented and conscientious rabbis. But I liken it to the case of a world renowned surgeon who himself suffers from Hepatitis B. Would you let him operate

on a loved one? On the one hand he is the best in his field, but at the same time that he is helping the patient he is passively killing him. The rabbis and leaders of the communities coming up all over America bring Torah to the people, but the message is mixed and contradictory - you can live in galut and still be a loyal son to Hashem. What you get is a community of people who live in two incompatible worlds.

Six million Jews are being challenged here in Eretz Yisrael by hundreds of millions of enemies, while many of the other half of the Jewish nation abroad cannot even find Israel on a map.

Most Bnei Torah abroad have no more than a passing interest in what happens in Eretz Yisrael. They have no concept of the spiritual opportunity afforded every Jew living in Eretz Yisrael by bonding with the personalities of the Tanach in fulfilling our role in the continuation of Jewish history.

In one of the most dramatic moments in our history, when on the day of the Mishkan's dedication, Hashem descended from His heavenly glory in order to create a presence among lowly human beings, two great men, Nadav and Avihu, died in order to serve as an example to the nation for all time, that the holier the person the greater are his responsibilities and punishments. Rashi adds that Moshe said to Aharon on the death of his two eldest sons, that he (Moshe) knew that on this day the greatest of the nation will be sacrificed, and Moshe believed it would be either himself or Aharon. But now he sees that Nadav and Avihu were greater than they.

I shall never be able to comprehend two realities in our generation: 1) How can a religious Jew remain with a clean conscience in the galut? How can he be so oblivious to the huge historical call to return home sent out by the millions of Jews who were slaughtered in the galut in the last two thousand years? 2) Why is it that so many non-religious Jews cling and love this embattled land?

In conclusion. I turn to you dear brothers and sisters. Set your sights on reaching greatness as Jews who took up the challenge to bring to fruition the promises made by Hashem to our fathers and mothers that the Holy land will be our heritage forever.

Shabbat Shalom

This Week's Shabbat Shalom | www.ou.org

Shemini - Making Meat Permissible

Rabbi Asher Meir

Our parsha defines the forbidden and permissible species of animals. However, the permissibility of meat is dependent not only on the variety of animal but also on the method of its slaughter. Animals during their lifetime are "ever min hachai" which are forbidden even to non-Jews. If they die by themselves or are killed in a haphazard way (neveila and treifa), then they are permitted to non-Jews, but not to Jews. Proper shechita which makes meat permissible according to the Torah is careful slaughter with a perfectly sharp knife which instantly cuts both the windpipe and the blood vessels which supply "dam hanefesh" - the blood on which life depends.

Finally, permitted fish require no slaughter at all; rather, "the very collection of fish is like slaughter for livestock" (Rambam Shechita 1:3; as we learn from Moshe's statement in Bamidbar 11:22).

The Zohar at the end of our parsha makes a cryptic analogy based on this law: "Roshei Yeshiva require no shechita; their very collection makes them permissible". Let us examine the meaning of this surprising metaphor.

One way of understanding this statement is to view the laws of ritual slaughter, which relate to how an animal is separated from life, to the way in which a person separates himself from bestiality and the life of this world during his lifetime. This determines a person's "permissibility" or heter - his ability to contribute to holiness.

Some people are completely absorbed in material, animal existence - they are not separated from it at all. This is the analog of "ever min hachai", a live animal which has no permissibility whatsoever. A person who is completely bestial can not make any contribution or connection to kedusha.

Some people distinguish themselves from gross materialism unintentionally or in a haphazard way. This corresponds to a neveila or treifa which are permitted to a non-Jew, that is, they can contribute to the world's material and ethical perfection.

Some holy people go beyond this; they are scrupulous to separate themselves from bestiality by their very breath and life's blood - their vitality is not drawn from materiality but rather from kedusha. This is the kosher shechita which makes the kosher animal completely able to be assimilated to holiness - to be eaten or even offered on the altar.

Beyond this are the roshei yeshiva, the leading Torah scholars. These individuals live and breathe in a completely different element - in the sea of Torah. They are distinguished from the life of this world by their very being; indeed, they would die merely by virtue of being drawn out of the sea and collected into this world. Even in their everyday mundane activities, they are distinguished from our everyday experience; they don't have to distinguish their breath of life from that which comes naturally to them, because they breathe Torah. Therefore, no shechita whatever is required for them; their very being is one of connection to holiness.

Fortunate indeed are those who are able to attain, or even to strive for, this exalted plane of existence.

Rabbi Asher Meir is the author of the book Meaning in Mitzvot, distributed by Feldheim. The book provides insights into the inner meaning of our daily practices, following the order of the 221 chapters of the Kitzur Shulchan Arukh.

Ohr Somayach :: TalmuDigest :: Chagigah 9 - 15
For the week ending 14 April 2007 / 26 Nisan 5767
by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

Danger of Missing Out Chagiga 9a-b

A Jew who missed offering his Festival sacrifices on the first day can make this up on the succeeding days. But if he fails to do so until the Festival is over he has missed out. In regard to such a person the Mishna applies the passage: "That which is crooked cannot be straightened and that which is missing cannot be counted." (Kohélet 1:15)

Another application of this passage is found in a beraita. The reference there is to one who failed to recite the Shema in the morning or evening or who failed to say his morning or evening prayers or who did not join his comrades in performing a mitzvah.

Maharsha explains that the "crooked which cannot be straightened" refers to one who failed to recite the Shema or say the Shacharit morning and Ma'ariv evening prayers throughout that day and night. The second half about "that which is missing cannot be counted" refers to one who did pray but failed to join others in a minyan.

The reason the Mincha service is not mentioned, although missing it comes under the same category of "that which is crooked", is because of the beraita's interest in keeping the prayer part parallel to the Shema part which is recited only morning and night.

What the Sages Say

"Whoever studies Torah during the night is blessed by G-d with a special grace during the day. Some say that whoever studies Torah in this world will be blessed by G-d with a special grace in the World-to-Come." Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish - Chagigah 12b

Ohr Somayach :: The Weekly Daf :: Chagiga 11 - 17
For the week ending 14 April 2007 / 26 Nisan 5767
by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

Sacrifices Made in Heaven

One of the Seven Heavens, says Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish, is called Zevul, and it contains the Heavenly counterpart of Jerusalem and the Beit Hamikdash. There, too, is an altar upon which the Malach (angel) Michael offers a daily sacrifice.

The obvious question which arises is what does he offer on this altar, as there are no animals in Heaven? In his footnotes (and this appears in parenthesis in the Ein Yaakov) the Bach adds this question to the text, as well as an answer. The answer is also found in a Tosefot in Mesechta Menachot (110a). Tosefot cites conflicting midrashim as to the nature of these sacrifices. One states that the Malach offers the souls of the tzaddikim (righteous) upon this altar, and another states that the sacrifices are of fire in animal form.

It is the first midrash above, the one regarding the souls of the righteous, which appears in the aforementioned Bach and Ein Yaakov. And this answer is presented by Tosefot as an explanation of the prayer we say three times a day: Accept willingly, we ask of Hashem, Your people Israel and hearken to their prayer; return the sacred service to Your sanctuary and the fire offerings of Israel accept with favor. How can we ask Hashem to accept the fire offerings of Israel when there is no Beit Hamikdash today in which to offer sacrifices? According to the midrash, the phrase ishei Yisrael does not translate as the fire offerings of Israel but rather the men of Israel the tzaddikim whose souls are offered before Hashem.

Tosefot notes, however, that there is another opinion which translates these words literally as sacrifices, and views them as an extension of the request that Hashem return the sacred service to His sanctuary. Our prayer thus is that Hashem restore our ability to offer actual sacrifices. The Tur (Orach Chaim 187) presents a third opinion: We ask Hashem to accept our prayers which we offer in place of sacrifices.

The Mishna Berura (Orach Chaim 120) quotes the opinion of the Turei Zahav as favoring the first approach, about the souls of tzaddikim, and also quotes the Gaon of Vilna as expressing a preference for the second one, that it is a request for the return of the sacrificial service here on earth. (Chagiga 12b)

Between Angel and Animal

Six things have been said about Man, say our Sages; in three of them he is similar to the malachim (angels) and in three he is like an animal.

People are like the malachim in that they have intelligence, they walk upright and they speak the Holy Tongue of Hebrew. People are like animals in that they eat and drink, they multiply, and they expel wastes from their bodies.

The midrash (Bereishet Rabbah 8) adds one more comparison to each. Men see like the malachim and perish like animals. Why are these comparisons not listed by our gemara?

The comparison of sight does not present such a problem because an animal has the power of sight as well. But why is the comparison of man and animal regarding death ignored?

Two answers are found in the commentaries. Rif suggests that the gemara is referring to the initial creation of Man, before Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge and brought death to the world. Iyun Yaakov explains that although both man and animal have limited existence in this world, the cause of their respective deaths is not the same. Man dies as a result of his sins, while the animal dies because Hashem has so programmed its existence. (Chagiga 16a)

Please address all comments and requests to
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Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet Shmini 5767

Tonight, the evening of Friday, April 13, we will count day 11, which is 1 week and 4 days of the omer.

Rabbi Hershel Schachter The TorahWeb Foundation When do we “Duchen”?

The Torah tells us that on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the eighth day of inaugurating the Mishkan, Aharon Hakohen was charged with the offering of the special sacrifices[1]. At the conclusion of Aharon's offering of these korbonos tzibbur[2] Aharon recited the priestly blessings (Vayikra 9:22). The Talmud (Sotah 38a) points out that based on this statement it would appear that the halacha is that duchenin (the mitzvah of reciting birchas kohanim - the priestly blessings) can only be fulfilled at the conclusion of the offering of the korbonos tzibbur.

This Talmudic statement led Rav Yaakov Emden to comment that the fact that we still practice this mitzvah today, even though we have not offered any korbonos, is only miderabonan; Min haTorah, the mitzvah of duchenin must be connected with korbonos. The Mishna Brura (vol. 2 pg. 19 in footnote) disagrees vehemently with Rav Yaakov Emden, and proves from many sources that even today the mitzvah to duchen is still min haTorah[3]. The Mishna Brura does not, however, deal with the possuk cited above.

The solution to this problem was given by two brothers, who were both prominent geonim in the nineteenth century, in their respective seforim:

Rav Yaakov Karliner in his Teshuvos Mishkenos Yaakov (Orach Chaim, siman 66) and Rav Yitzchok Bruchin in his sefer, Keren Orach (Sotah). The Talmudic statement (Berachos 26b) that Tefilos (prayers) are considered as if we had offered korbonos is a biblical principal. When an individual davens, it is considered as if he had offered a korban yachid. When the chazzan recites the tefillah out loud representing the entire tzibbur, it is considered as if a korban tzibbur had been brought. And indeed, it is at the conclusion of the chazan's tefillah that the kohanim fulfill their mitzvah to duchen. Their obligation to duchen at that point is min haTorah, since the conclusion of the chazzan's prayers is biblically equivalent to the conclusion of the offerings of the korbonos tzibbur!

When we duchen on yomim tovim, we all recite the piyut “v'se'erav”: that Hashem should accept our prayers and consider it as if we had offered actual sacrifices. This piyut is inserted in the middle of the chazzan's recitation of the beracha of retzei, which is referred to in the Talmud (Megillah 18a) as “avodah”, the literal translation of which is “the offering of sacrifices”. The piyut just makes more explicit the simple meaning of that beracha, that our prayers should be considered as if we had actually offered sacrifices. Because it is the theme of this particular beracha that makes it possible to fulfill the mitzvah of duchenin, the rabbis required (Sotah 38b) that the kohanim must at least begin to go towards the duchen (the platform where they will recite the birchas kohanim) by the end of this beracha.

Rav Soloveitchik added on (in a yearzeit shiur) that the beracha of retzei is not simply a repeat of the immediately preceding beracha of shema koleinu. In shema koleinu we ask Hashem to accept our tefillos. In retzei we add a request that Hashem should accept our prayers as if they were a sacrifice. The term “ritzu” is a technical halachik term appearing most often in Tanach in connection with acceptance of sacrifices. In mishnaic Hebrew as well “hurtzah” means the sacrifice is “kosher” and is accepted; as opposed to “lo hurtzah” which means that the sacrifice is “not kosher”, i.e. not acceptable (see Beikvei Hatzon, pg. 82). The gemara (Beachos 22b) disqualifies one's prayer in a specific instance, and requires that he daven all over, based on the principle of “zevach reshaim to'eivai - the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination” (Mishlei 21:27). The equation

between the tefillah and the offering of the korban is taken very seriously; it was not intended as a mere metaphor[4].

[1] As opposed to the first seven days, when the special sacrifices were offered by Moshe Rabbeinu

[2] Communal sacrifices, as opposed to korbonos yachid, which are offered on behalf of an individual person

[3] See also Binyan Shlomo (teshuvos of Rav Shomo Vilner) siman 10

[4] In Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim, end of siman 76) the same halacha appears regarding kriyas shema: we sometimes disqualify one's recital of shema (due to the principle of zevach reshaim to'eivai), and require that shema be repeated. The students who attended the yearzeit shiur found it difficult to understand why this principle should be extended even to kriyas shema, according to the Rav Soloveitchik's understanding of the gemara.

Jerusalem Post :: Apr 12 2007

CHAMETZ AFTER PESACH :: Rabbi Berel Wein

There is a strong rabbinic decree forbidding the use of chametz after Pesach by a Jew if that chametz was actually in Jewish possession during the holiday of Pesach itself. The basis for this rabbinic decree is to prevent Jews from having chametz in their possession during Pesach, so to speak hoarding it for use after Pesach. The obvious danger is that that chametz will be used on Pesach and there is a prohibition against not only as to eating chametz on Pesach but also as to possessing chametz.

Therefore, in order to insure that no chametz remains in Jewish possession during Pesach, the rabbis decreed that Jews could not benefit from such chametz after Pesach. The solution to somehow have use of such chametz after Pesach lies in the long accepted Jewish tradition of “selling” the chametz to a non-Jew before Pesach and of reacquiring that chametz after Pesach. This legal sale of mechirat chametz is of ancient origin, though it really only came into general use in the late middle Ages.

Jews then increasingly were occupied in operating distilleries for the production and distribution of liquor derived from chametz grain and fermenting agents. Because of the heavy financial complications involved, the use of a legal sale of the chametz to a non-Jew took hold and has become de rigeur for Jewish individuals and companies in our time and for the past many centuries.

By selling their chametz before Pesach and only reacquiring it after Pesach, these individuals and companies avoid any problems regarding the use of and benefit from chametz after Pesach. Because of these circumstances, stores and companies notify their Jewish customers after Pesach that they in fact did sell their chametz before Pesach, thus obviating any hesitation on the part of their Jewish customers in purchasing chametz goods.

As the economies of the world became more complex and intertwined the rabbinic decisors of halacha had to deal with new situations and financial arrangements regarding this issue of chametz after Pesach. What about Jews who own shares in public companies that do business on Pesach with chametz goods? What about large supermarket chains outside of Israel who sell their chametz before Pesach but nevertheless continue to sell those products on a regular normal basis in their stores on Pesach itself? Does this not render the sale of their chametz to a non-Jew before Pesach a sham?

In countries that require that tax stamps be affixed to the sale documents, is this necessary for the sale of the chametz to the non-Jew and the reacquiring of the chametz after Pesach by the Jews as well? Whose loss is it if the chametz became damaged or destroyed during Pesach while technically under the ownership of the non-Jew?

How real does this apparently unreal sale really have to be? All of these questions have been raised, thoroughly discussed and argued over by the great decisors of halacha of the past centuries. Needless to say, proper

solutions to all of these issues have been found and implemented. It is an irony, but a very true one, that it is the very rigidity of halacha and its absolute adherence to traditional norms and constructs that allows it to be so flexible and fresh in addressing problems such as this.

In Jewish kabbalistic and philosophical thought, chametz on Pesach represents our evil inclination and immoral desires. The holiday of Pesach is very instrumental in making us more focused Jews and better people. But in order for this self-improvement mode to take hold within us, the chametz after Pesach that still somehow remained within us must be removed from our midst. The rabbinic decree regarding chametz after Pesach should not be reduced to its simple, practical terms. Rather it should be elevated to its highest spiritual form.

In a world of chaff we should be the true kernel of nourishing grain and in a world of self-promotion and swollen puffing we should continue to be the unleavened matzo with its low profile and holy form. Perhaps this spiritual lesson is one of the very reasons that our rabbis so emphasized the problems associated with the concept of chametz after Pesach. The lessons of disciplined freedom that Pesach created within us have to be reinforced and nurtured after Pesach as well. The temptations of chametz on Pesach are well known to all of us. The harm that undisposed of chametz after Pesach can cause us should also be recognized and dealt with. Shabat shalom.

Weekly Parsha :: SHMINI :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The title of this week's parsha takes its name from the description of the events that took place on the eighth day after the dedication and opening of the services of the Mishkan in the desert. The term "eighth day" means more than just the count of the number of days that elapsed since the Mishkan came to life and to service. It signifies the moment that euphoria ends and reality sets in. It marks the beginning of facing problems and finding solutions for them. It also marks the hardships of life, its disappointments and tragedies.

The "seven days" of consecration are a joyful time; the seven days of sheva brachot for chatan and kallah, tiring as they may be, are nevertheless days of exhilaration and happiness. The "eighth day" is the beginning of the intrusion of life's events into our dream world. It is the "eighth day" therefore that is the true measure of a human being's mettle and accomplishments.

The challenges of the "seven days" are usually more easily met and overcome by the added adrenalin that infuses us in times of joy. The test of the "eighth day" is one of a lifelong struggle to prevail over the pitfalls and vicissitudes of life and its constant problems. A new-born male Jewish infant is circumcised on the eighth day of his life, signifying the beginning of his struggle to be a good person and a believer in accordance with Jewish tradition, no matter what difficulties that life will raise against those efforts and beliefs.

The great High Priest Aharon is leveled by terrible personal tragedy in this week's parsha. A sudden and mysterious heavenly fire kills his two eldest sons, apparently engaged in holy service in the Mishkan. Aharon is faced with the ultimate tragedy of life and its fragility. The "eighth day" descends upon him with a thunderous clap.

Even more than all of the other tests of life that he faced in leading the Jewish community yet in slavery in Egypt, or at the fateful moment of the creation of the Golden Calf, the events of the eighth day of the Mishkan's dedication are truly his "eighth day" – the ultimate test of life and faith and belief.

Aharon's reaction to this is silent acceptance of the realities that now face him. He does not rail against perceived injustice, as does Iyov. Nor does he withdraw from the fray of life and go into seclusion, as did many others when faced with similar tragic situations. Aharon becomes the paradigm for how humans are to deal with the "eighth day" – with life and its ups and downs.

Resilience and silent inner strength engendered by faith and acceptance of God's will are the weapons of living on in spite of all that the "eighth day" imposes upon one's life. These words are much easier to write and to read than to actually implement. Yet the Torah expects no less from us than it

did from Aharon. Life and our contributions and meaningful behavior towards making it better and stronger are always played out on the background of the "eighth day." Shabat shalom.

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Shemini For the week ending 14 April 2007 / 26 Nisan 5767 by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Overview

On the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan, Aharon, his sons, and the entire nation bring various korbanot (offerings) as commanded by Moshe. Aharon and Moshe bless the nation. G-d allows the Jewish People to sense His Presence after they complete the Mishkan. Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, innovate an offering not commanded by G-d. A fire comes from before G-d and consumes them, stressing the need to perform the commandments only as Moshe directs. Moshe consoles Aharon, who grieves in silence. Moshe directs the kohanim as to their behavior during the mourning period, and warns them that they must not drink intoxicating beverages before serving in the Mishkan. The Torah lists the two characteristics of a kosher animal: It has split hooves, and it chews, regurgitates, and re-chews its food. The Torah specifies by name those non-kosher animals which have only one of these two signs. A kosher fish has fins and easily removable scales. All birds not included in the list of forbidden families are permitted. The Torah forbids all types of insects except for four species of locusts. Details are given of the purification process after coming in contact with ritually-impure species. Bnei Yisrael are commanded to be separate and holy — like G-d.

Insights

High As A Kite

"G-d spoke to Aharon saying: Do not drink intoxicating wine, you and your sons with you when you come into the Tent of Meeting..." (10:8-9)

Statistics show a lower rate of alcoholism among Jews than their neighbors.

This could be due to genetics. However sociologists surmise that there are other factors at work. For example, Jews meet alcohol in the context of holiness rather than in the local pub: A Jewish boy is introduced to alcohol at the ripe old age of eight days when the mohel places a few drops of wine into his mouth to mollify the pain of the circumcision.

Alcohol appears on the Shabbat table every Friday night with kiddush, and again the following morning in the daytime kiddush. On Saturday night during the havdala service we take our leave of Shabbat over a cup of wine. There are the four cups of wine to be drunk on Pesach and (many) more on Purim. The cycle of Jewish life embraces alcohol as part of a holy life.

Another controlling factor in the Jew's consumption of alcohol is the perception that being drunk does not befit a Jew. There is a Yiddish maxim that loosely translates as "Jews don't drink."

However, together with a rise in social dysfunction amongst Jews including depression and lack of self-esteem, there has been a concomitant rise in substance abuse, including alcohol.

A happy person doesn't need a chemical crutch.

The Ba'al Shem Tov said that if a Jew knew what it meant to be a Ben Olam Haba, someone who has an eternal existence, he would be so happy that he would rush out into the street and start to do the Kezatzke (Cossack dance) like a meshugenne.

The essence of Jewish happiness is to know that with every mitzvah, every word of Torah and of kindness, we are building an eternal existence. That knowledge is more inebriating than the most potent liquor.

In this week's Torah portion, G-d warns Aharon that the kohanim must refrain from alcohol while performing the Temple service or adjudicating legal matters. This was not just a concern for motor efficiency or clear thought. The kohen is the epitome of Divine service; his high should come only from Torah and serving G-d. He should need no external chemical help; as the saintly Chazon Ish wrote over half a century ago to a world in great darkness, "There is no sadness for he who knows the light of truth..."

Based on Rebbe Bunim m'Pshiske

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

PARSHAS SHEMINI

Moshe said to Aharon: come near the Altar. then perform the service of the people's offering and provide atonement for them. (9:7)

Moshe Rabbeinu calls to his brother, Aharon, designating him to be the Kohen Gadol who is to offer the sacrifices and perform the Divine service in the Sanctuary. Rashi cites the Midrash, which quotes a compelling statement Moshe made regarding his brother, Aharon: "Aharon, my brother, is more worthy and important than I, for through his offerings and his service will the Divine Presence rest upon the people." This is a striking statement. Is it possible that Aharon had achieved greater stature than Moshe? Was Moshe not the most outstanding individual that has ever lived?

The Torah makes two statements concerning Moshe's supremacy, which clearly excluded everyone else: "A prophet will not arise like Moshe, who knew G-d face to face" (Devarim 34:10). "The man Moshe was the most humble of all men upon the face of the earth" (Bamidbar 12:3). Apparently, Moshe superseded Aharon in every respect, from prophecy to humility. Nonetheless, in his commentary to Sefer Shemos 6:26, Rashi writes, "There are some instances where Aharon is mentioned prior to Moshe, and others where Moshe is mentioned prior to Aharon. This teaches that they were equal." Rashi means that concerning the Exodus and in terms of being agents of Hashem they had equal status, but clearly, regarding their innate abilities and qualities, Moshe was superior to Aharon.

In an alternative exposition, the Shem MiShmuel suggests that the equality between Moshe and Aharon that Rashi suggests refers to the circumstances prior to the Exodus and the Giving of the Torah. After these seminal events, however, Moshe emerged as an entirely different person on an unparalleled plateau. This was a consequence of his direct contact with the Almighty which catapulted him into an unprecedented spiritual realm. Indeed, the Yalkut Shimoni writes that Moshe was like G-d from the waist up and like man from the waist down. Because he had experienced the Divine, Moshe was unlike any other human - even Aharon. We once again revert to our original question: How could Aharon be considered more worthy than Moshe at the inauguration of the Mishkan?

Furthermore, Chazal teach us that Moshe and Aharon's humility surpassed even that of Avraham Avinu. He said, "I am but dust and ashes" (Bereishis 18:27), while they went so far as to say, "What are we?" (Shemos 16:8). How could Moshe's level of humility have exceeded even that of Aharon? Aharon answered that he was nothing. How could Moshe have been more humble than that? How could he have been less than nothing?

The Avnei Nezer distinguishes between two forms of humility of which Moshe and Aharon each espoused a different form. One can live a life of humility with the feeling that he is insignificant. In another type of humility the individual recognizes his capabilities, his lofty achievements and exemplary spiritual plateau. Yet, in comparison with the unfathomable greatness of Hashem, he realizes that he is infinitely inconsequential. This second variety of humility is an attribute from which the greatest men on earth can benefit, for the only true existence is that of the Almighty; the only true reality is that of Him.

We now understand what motivated Moshe's sense of humility. Moshe was the greatest person, the consummate human being, the quintessential leader and teacher of the Jewish People. Certainly, he was aware of his significance, his distinction, his exalted position. How could he possibly have retained his humility in light of this awareness?

Apparently, Moshe knew who he was and the outstanding role in which he functioned, but -- specifically because of his closeness to Hashem, Who would always be infinitesimally greater -- he felt insignificant. Moshe understood that he could never achieve even a minute fraction of Hashem's greatness. Indeed, as is quoted in Avos D'Rabbi Nassan 9, "Moshe was the humblest of all men, but not of the ministering angels, who were even more humble than he." The higher one is, the closer to Hashem he becomes, the less he thinks of himself, because he sees that in comparison

to the Almighty, he is nothing. Moshe maintained his humility because he always kept the majesty of Hashem on his mind.

Aharon was quite different. His humility was more of a direct nature. He really believed himself to be insignificant and unworthy of any distinction. His role in the sin of the Golden Calf never left his mind. This incident perpetuated his lowly self-image to the point that he perceived the Altar to be in the shape of a bull due to its protracted "horns." In his mind, he had sinned and he could not erase that reality. He felt that as a result of his part in the eigel, he would be deficient in achieving atonement for the Jewish People at the Altar.

Two brothers reflected two types of humility: Both had said, "What are we?" This is where, however, the similarity between them ends. Moshe achieved humility with respect to Hashem. Aharon felt that he was intrinsically worthless.

When the Torah describes Moshe as the humblest of men, it refers to his ability to achieve humility in an unparalleled manner, particularly in relation to Hashem. This was an unprecedented form of humility. In this respect, Moshe was greater than Aharon, who did not have the opportunity to develop such a connection with the Almighty, and, hence, could not perceive this form of self-assessment. On the other hand, in his own way, Aharon was as great as Moshe -- and perhaps even greater than he -- in the way that he was able to view his own deficiencies and the compelling impact they had on his total demeanor.

And they (Nadav and Avihu) brought before Hashem an alien fire that He had not commanded them. A fire came out from before Hashem and consumed them. (10:1,2)

Rashi cites Chazal who say that Nadav and Avihu perished because they rendered a halachic decision in the presence of their rebbe, Moshe Rabbeinu. Others cite Chazal who relate that Nadav would say to Avihu, "When will those two elders (referring to Moshe and Aharon) pass on, and you and I will lead the generation?" These statements are certainly true, but they apparently are not consistent with the Torah's description of their sin. The Torah clearly states that they perished as a result of offering an alien fire which Hashem had not commanded them to bring. Why do Chazal cite different reasons? Furthermore, is it possible that Nadav and Avihu, who were both righteous individuals to the point that Moshe attested to their superseding even himself and Aharon in greatness, could be guilty of such sinful behavior?

Horav Reuven Elbaz, Shlita, explains that, indeed, their sin was eish zarah, offering an alien fire. Everything else which Chazal cited were outgrowths, ramifications of this sin. Alien fire is a reference to intense fiery passion and fervor in serving Hashem. They went, so to speak, overboard, beyond the limits. Nadav and Avihu went too far, such that they overstepped the perimeters of religious observance. Their extremism caused them not to marry, because they wanted to pour out all of their love to the Almighty. There was not enough room in their hearts to share this love with a wife and children. This brought them to drink wine in order to increase and heighten their sense of joy, and this intensity brought them to rule in the presence of their rebbe, Moshe. In other words, they became carried away, and this led to a number of egregious errors.

Thus, while they questioned, "When will those two elders pass on?" they were not speaking from a malevolent heart. There was nothing evil about them in any way. They simply could not tolerate Moshe and Aharon's passivity with regard to the people. They complained that the nation was rude, the people were disrespectful. Yet, Moshe and Aharon responded, Vnachnu mah, "(and) What are we?" Their incredible humility and their outstanding sense of self-effacement were too much for Nadav and Avihu. They wanted action. This was not the way a strong leader should respond. The people had gross chutzpah and should, therefore, be punished. A leader must be strong. A leader must not tolerate any form of infraction. Nadav and Avihu's attitude towards leadership was unlike that of Moshe and Aharon. A leader must lead - not follow. A leader must be strong and dynamic - not obsequious. The members of the nation who had complained needed to be dealt with immediately. One does not complain.

Hashem did not agree with Nadav and Avihu. The only way to lead is with love and tolerance, patience and sensitivity. Humility is to be the guiding

force, the moral compass by which one leads, inspires and achieves an enduring legacy.

Moshe heard and approved. (10:20)

On that auspicious-- but fateful day-- three he-goats were offered as Sin-offerings. One was the special offering of Nachshon ben Aminadav, the Nasi, Prince, of Shevet Yehudah. The second offering was in honor of the Chanukas, Inauguration, of the Mishkan. These two were considered kodoshei shaah, holy for the current time, since they would never again be offered. The third sacrifice was the Korban Rosh Chodesh, in honor of the new moon. Prior to this, Moshe Rabbeinu had instructed the Kohanim to eat the Meal-offerings, which were kodoshei shaah. The Kohanim did this. This was an exception to the rule of mourning in which an onen, mourner prior to the burial of the deceased, may not eat of the offerings. The question confronting Aharon and his sons was: Does Moshe's command regarding the Korban Minchah, Meal-offering, apply to the meat of the Sin-offerings as well? Furthermore, if, in fact, it did apply, did it apply to all three of the offerings?

Hashem did command the Kohanim to eat, even during their status as onenim. It was now up to Moshe and/or Aharon to determine if this command applied under all circumstances. Moshe was of the opinion that the command was unequivocal and should apply to all sacrifices, even the Korban Rosh Chodesh, which was kodesh l'doros, holy for all the generations. Aharon, however, felt that since the direct command was initially made concerning the Meal-offerings, which are kodoshei shaah, only the first two sacrifices, that of Nachshon and the Inauguration of the Mishkan, were to be eaten. The Korban Rosh Chodesh was kodesh forever. It, therefore, should not be eaten during animus, the period of mourning.

The Kohanim burnt the he-goat which was designated for Rosh Chodesh, because they felt that as a kodoshei doros, it was not to be eaten. Moshe became angry with them. Chazal tell us that since Moshe became angry, he erred in the halachah. Aharon was actually correct in his p'sak, determination of the law. Aharon's sons did not respond to Moshe, as it would have been disrespectful to speak up in their father's presence. Aharon explained the halachah to Moshe, who conceded that he had erred. Moshe Rabbeinu demonstrated his true humility, as well as the reason that he was selected to be Klal Yisrael's quintessential leader. His humility was the essence of his greatness. Rather than defend his position, he realized his error and conceded to Aharon. This is the mark of a true gadol, great Torah leader.

Horav Isser Zalman Meltzer, zl, was an individual of such strength of character. Whenever he was in a dispute with another individual regarding a Torah law or logic, he never insisted that he was right. Rather, he would say, Efsheir zeit ihr gerecht, "Perhaps you are correct!" He never insisted that he was correct. He always looked for a way to validate the other person's point of view. This applied even when the other point of view was that of a young man, many years his junior. Once, as he was giving a shiur, Torah lecture, one that he had prepared and worked on for quite some time, a bachur, student, asked a compelling question. Rav Isser Zalman said, "This young man has asked a very good question. He is correct in his understanding of the subject. I have no more to say." With that, he closed his Gemorah, volume of Talmud, and bid everyone a good day.

Moshe could have told Aharon that he had never heard the halachah. Instead, he said, Shomaati v'shochachti, "I heard, but I forgot." Furthermore, he publicized his error throughout the camp, telling everyone that he had erred and his brother had been right.

The Baalei Mussar, Ethicists, explain that the greatest deterrent which prevents the individual from being modeh al ha'emes, conceding to the truth, is the loud voice and screaming associated with presenting his point of view in a dispute. All of the screaming backs the individual into a corner from which he cannot retreat. It is very difficult to concede an error after one has just loudly vocalized his position. It is more embarrassing and degrading than people can tolerate. Moshe Rabbeinu was not "most people." This is why he was selected to be our consummate leader.

If people dispute quietly, respectfully, pleasantly, then it is no challenge to concede to an error in judgment. Under such circumstances, when one discovers that he has erred, he is not yet on a high pedestal, elevated by his

loud voice. He has spoken quietly, patiently. He is now ready to admit that he has made a mistake.

The individual who loses his cool during a dispute finds it difficult to back down from his position. Chazal teach us that Bais Shamai and Bais Hillel were in dispute for three years, each one claiming that the halachah was as they had stated it. At the end of three years, a Bas Kol, Voice from Heaven, decreed that both the words of Bais Shamai and Bais Hillel were divrei Elokim Chaim, words of the Living G-d. Nonetheless, the halachah concurred with Bais Hillel. Chazal question why the halachah was in agreement with Bais Hillel? They explain that Bais Hillel were people of tolerance and acceptance. Indeed, when they rendered their decision, they would first quote Bais Shamai, followed by their own point of view.

Maharal M'Prague questions the reason for adjudicating in accordance with Bais Hillel simply because they were nochin va'aluvin, easygoing and forbearing. Since when is this a basis for rendering a halachah opinion? The Maharal explains that a person's ability to think cogently coincides directly with his middas ha'savlanus, capacity for tolerance. The thought process of one who possesses a calm and relaxed personality, who is not easily given to anger or to losing his cool, reflects this state of composure. His logic will be clear and astute, not garbled and anxiety-laden. On the other hand, the individual who is ill-tempered and irritable, who quickly resorts to fits of rage--regardless of his acumen, his sagacity notwithstanding-- will err in judgment. It is as if his brain suddenly short circuits. The tools are present, but the wiring is faulty.

Someone who is cool-headed and amicable, who accepts a challenge without falling apart, who is easy-going and of a mild temperament, has an enhanced capacity for judging a situation with greater clarity and objectivity. Bais Hillel exemplified this level of character refinement. We find in Meseches Edyos that Bais Hillel reversed their p'sak, halachic decision, a number of times. Closer to our own times, the Chazon Ish, zl, who was one of the most celebrated and erudite poskim, halachic arbiters, writes: "I am constantly beset with errors. At times, it is in logic or in my understanding of the Talmud. I am not ashamed of this, because there is nothing for which to be ashamed. On the contrary, one who is ashamed demonstrates a lack of respect for the halachah."

Modeh al ha'emes, conceding to the truth, accepting that one is wrong, is especially necessary in one's relationship with students. A rebbe who errs should be able to admit his error, whether it is concerning p'shat, explanation of the subject matter, or regarding an incident in which the rebbe has made the wrong judgment call. It happens, and when it does, one should be big enough to concede his faulty judgment. One who is a modeh al ha'emes earns the respect of his peers and, ultimately, merits their trust.

We allude to this idea in our daily tefillah: L'olam yehei adam yerei Shomayim b'seiser u'vagalui, u'modeh al ha'emes, v'doveir emes bilevavo. "Always should a man fear Heaven, in private and in public, and speak truth within his heart." The Minchas Elazar interprets the word l'olam, always, as meaning l'olam, because of/for the world. This means that his words should be heard and accepted by the world community. This is possible only if he is modeh al ha'emes. It is not enough to speak the truth privately. One must be willing and able to concede the truth publicly, even if it hurts. Then people will respect him and accept what he has to say, l'olam - for the world - and for himself.

Va'ani Tefillah

Yismechu ha'Shomayim v'sagel ha'aretz - The Heavens will be glad and the earth will rejoice.

What is the difference between simchah, gladness/joy, and gilah, rejoicing? In his commentary to Divrei Hayamim, the Gaon, zl, m'Vilna explains that simchah applies to the joy one manifests over a recent occurrence, something novel that just took place. Gilah, however, is the rejoicing one experiences even for something that has happened a while ago, but still elicits joy for him.

Shlomo HaMelech says in Mishlei 23:24, Gil yagil avi tzaddik, "The father of a righteous person will be mirthful (gilah)"; v'yoleid chacham yismach bo, "one who begets a wise child will rejoice in him (simchah)." The Gaon explains that a tzaddik remains in his righteous status on a constant basis. Thus, the joy which refers to him is a joy of gilah. The chacham, wise one,

is constantly renewing his wisdom as he becomes privy to new lessons. Hence, the word *simchah* is used regarding his birth.

Shlomo HaMelech says in *Koheles* 1:9, "There is nothing new beneath the sun." In this world there is nothing new. Hashem has already provided everything. The resources are there, together with the conditions and the concepts all waiting for man's discovery and invention. Above this world, in Heaven, however, there is something new. Therefore, we say, *Yismechu haShomayim*, "The Heavens will be glad (*simchah*), and *v'sagel ha'aretz*, the earth will rejoice (*gilah*)."

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h a a r e t z

Portion of the Week / Split-screen narrative

By Benjamin Lau

his week's Torah portion contains a very painful narrative. The reading opens with the festive atmosphere on the eighth day of the preparations for making Aaron and his sons priests. Up until now, Moses was the nation's sole leader and the leadership's direction was from the top down - God's message was handed down to Israel. Now the leadership will be more comprehensive: Aaron, in offering sacrifices, will work in the opposite direction, heavenward. He is promised that, after preparation of the altar and the sacrifice, God's glory will be revealed to the Israelites.

The nation gathers for the consecration ceremony. Following protocol, Aaron performs his duties meticulously, ascends to the altar and raises his hands to bless the people - but nothing happens. God's glory is not revealed.

In this embarrassing moment, the narrative becomes a split screen. On one screen, Moses approaches, leading Aaron into the Tabernacle: "And Moses and Aaron went into the Tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people. And there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces" (*Leviticus* 9:23-24). Seeing Aaron's embarrassment, Moses tries to help him. After reciting a prayer to placate God, the two brothers emerge to bless the nation. In addition to Aaron, Moses also gives the blessing. Their actions prove successful; God's glory is revealed to all the Israelites, who rejoice in seeing the flames burst forth. However, on the second screen, another event unfolds simultaneously. Two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, want to protect their father's dignity. It is their impression that this time, too, fire is being sent from above, not below. Aaron's consecration as high priest was intended to enable fire to be sent to heaven from earth through the priest's work, instead of it being sent from heaven via the effort of the prophet, Moses. When they see Moses standing beside Aaron and joining him in blessing Israel, the sons feel their father's honor and the priesthood's dignity are being compromised. They quickly take their censers, full of incense, and light them, intending to encourage earthly fire to ascend heavenward. But heavenly fire strikes them: "And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (*Lev.* 10:2).

The ecstatic nation has not yet noticed this horrible disaster; however, Aaron's immediate family realizes that this festive day has become a day of mourning. Moses' initial reaction is harsh: "Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace" (*Lev.* 10:3).

Some commentators interpret Aaron's silence as signifying that Moses' words have consoled him. In the Talmud, we read about Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai, whose son had died, and whom other Talmudic scholars tried to comfort. Each of his students compared Rabbi Yohanan's tragedy to catastrophes that had befallen other Jews throughout our history. They wanted to convey a single message: We must learn from the tragedies of others that the world continues to exist despite these tragedies. The Talmud continues: "Then Rabbi Yossi entered and sat before him. He said to him, 'My dear rabbi, may I tell you something?' Rabbi Yohanan replied, 'Please do.' Rabbi Yossi went on: 'Aaron had two grown sons who died on the

very same day. He was consoled in his grief, as it is written, "And Aaron held his peace.""

Aaron's silence has nothing to do with Moses' declaration, which is a human attempt to find a meaning in the horrifying event and to translate it into mortal language. However, in holding his peace, Aaron expresses his choice to leave the disaster in the realm of mystery and meaninglessness. Holding one's peace is not silence. Whereas silence is a cessation of talk, holding one's peace is an absence of talk. When Elijah flees to Mount Horeb, God wants to show his glory to him: "And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice" (*1 Kings* 19:11-12). Similarly, the High Holy Day prayer "Unetaneh tokef" states: "A great shofar (ram's horn) will be sounded and a still small voice will be heard."

Still small voice

This Monday, the 28th of the Hebrew month of Nissan, is Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Day here in Israel. On this day a still small voice pierces our ears from every direction. The deafening air-raid siren attempts to convey the sound of this still small voice, which leaves us in the realm of mystery, where we are unable, and perhaps also unwilling, to find meaning for that mega-event.

After arriving in this country following his release from the Buchenwald concentration camp, on the 28th of Nissan, 5705 (April 11, 1945), my father settled in Jerusalem and was invited to have an audience with Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter, the Gerrer rebbe (author of "Imrei Emes"), who was then in his 80s. The rebbe's son, Rabbi Yisrael Alter (who was named head of the Gerrer Hasidic sect after his father and was known as the Beis Yisroel) had lost practically all his family in the Holocaust. He took my father for a nocturnal walk through Jerusalem's streets, near Schneller Camp. They walked in silence, a 60-year-old widower and bereaved father, with a 19-year-old who had lost all his siblings but one. After they had walked a considerable distance, the rabbi stopped and, his eyes blazing, he turned to my father.

"Did you see the chimneys?"

"Yes," he replied.

The silent walk continued; then, after a few minutes, the rabbi again stopped and asked, "Did you see the smoke?"

"Yes," answered my father.

They continued their walk and again, after a few minutes, the rabbi stopped and asked, "And did you see Him?"

My father did not reply.

A still silent voice was heard. The two walked back to the rabbi's room.

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Parashat Shemini: Consistent Messages

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Isru Chag Ha'Pessach and parashat Shemini 5767

"The Haggadah speaks of four sons: the wise, the evil, the naive and the ignoramus," and parashat Shemini prohibits eating the four species which have only one characteristic of *kashrut*.

Aside from the number four, one would be hard pressed to find a connection between the four sons of the Haggadah and the four species which have only one kosher characteristic. However, there is a great lesson to be learned from them.

The four sons are not unrelated people, they are the children of the same parents; so despite the differences which exist between siblings, the striking personality and spiritual gaps between these four are very odd.

How does it come about that the same family unit produces a talmid chacham righteous son and an evil son who are religiously different, and two other sons who are intellectually so different?

On Chol Ha'moed, while riding in the mountains of the tribes of Binyamin and Efrayim, just north of Yerushalayim, I recalled the episode of "pessel Micha" brought in the Book of Judges (Shoftim), which transpired in that area.

Micha erected a sanctuary for avoda zara (a"z) in the town of Gerev. But not being versed in the ceremonies, he required the services of a "talmid chacham" in a"z.

It just happened that when Micha was searching for the "right" man, that a Layvi passed his door. One thing lead to another and Micha offered the Layvi a handsome salary if he would serve as the kohen for a"z. The Layvi accepted. The Tanach informs us that his name was "Yehonatan ben Gershom ben Menashe". But the letter "nun" in Menashe is written differently than the others in order to camouflage his true identity. For if we remove the letter "nun" from the name Menashe, we are left with the name "Moshe". Yes! The Layvi who dedicated himself to a"z was the grandson of Moshe Rabbeinu!

The facts get even more bewildering. The Yerushalmi in Brachot (chap. 9 halacha 2) relates that David Hamelech met with Yonatan and asked him how he serves a"z? Yonatan answered that he received from his grandfather Moshe, a rule that it is preferable to give yourself over to a"z then to live off the proceeds of tzedaka. And since he had no means of making a livelihood he accepted the position at Micha's a"z. David was shocked and explained to Yonatan that Moshe meant that it is preferable to do work which is "zara" strange to (if you cannot find work in your profession then do other work which is "zara" to you but do not accept charity). David understood that Yonatan was a man who craved material things and appointed him to the position of Minister of Finance. After the demise of David, King Shlomo dismissed all the ministers in David's cabinet including Yonatan, who, as the Yerushalmi tells us, returned to serve a"z.

What a bizarre man this Yonatan ben Gershom ben Moshe, who weaves in and out of Yirat Shamayim and a"z with such ease. What went on in the mind of this man?

The midrash in Yalkut Shimoni, opens a window of understanding into the workings of this strange man's mind.

Rabbi Natan says that Gerev (the place of pessel Micha) was three kilometers from the Holy city of Shilo, where the sacrificial service was performed for 369 years until it was destroyed in the time of the prophet Shmuel. The smoke from the holy sacrifices of Shilo and the smoke from the profane sacrifices of Yonatan ben Gershom met and became intertwined while rising into the shamayim.

This merger of kodesh and chol, tahara and tuma, was the external expression of the inner thoughts of Yonatan. His inner self was a twisted reservoir of contradictory and unclear spiritual messages. Yonatan studied Torah under his grandfather, Moshe Rabbeinu, but he was also affected by the life styles of the other nations. His loyalties to Hashem became perverted by the merger with foreign beliefs and produced this dual personality. He did not receive a clear message of what the Torah demands from a Jew, but received messages which vied with each other for his soul. Yonatan was not a "kosher" Jew nor was he a total non-kosher Gentile, for he had one kosher characteristic and one trayfe, just as the four species in our parsha have only one kosher sign and are deemed "asur".

The sad episode of Yonatan teaches us the first principle in Torah education. Transmit to your children, to your students and to your congregation clear messages, free of contradiction and compromise. To do otherwise is to invite ideological dissension and strife just as the poor parents of the wise son and his three dysfunctional brothers in the Haggadah.

This would be the perfect place to conclude this week's message. But then I would sound like one more rabbi "blowing off" theoretical steam. My intention is to relate this message to the enormous sin of these last generations - the denial of Medinat Yisrael as the harbinger of the end of our galut punishment and Hashem's call for us to return home.

I read of Jewish communities replete with yeshivot, mikvaot, kollelim and even batei din, springing up in parts of the world. They are lead by talented and conscientious rabbis. But I liken it to the case of a world renowned surgeon who himself suffers from Hepatitis B. Would you let him operate

on a loved one? On the one hand he is the best in his field, but at the same time that he is helping the patient he is passively killing him. The rabbis and leaders of the communities coming up all over America bring Torah to the people, but the message is mixed and contradictory - you can live in galut and still be a loyal son to Hashem. What you get is a community of people who live in two incompatible worlds.

Six million Jews are being challenged here in Eretz Yisrael by hundreds of millions of enemies, while many of the other half of the Jewish nation abroad cannot even find Israel on a map.

Most Bnei Torah abroad have no more than a passing interest in what happens in Eretz Yisrael. They have no concept of the spiritual opportunity afforded every Jew living in Eretz Yisrael by bonding with the personalities of the Tanach in fulfilling our role in the continuation of Jewish history.

In one of the most dramatic moments in our history, when on the day of the Mishkan's dedication, Hashem descended from His heavenly glory in order to create a presence among lowly human beings, two great men, Nadav and Avihu, died in order to serve as an example to the nation for all time, that the holier the person the greater are his responsibilities and punishments. Rashi adds that Moshe said to Aharon on the death of his two eldest sons, that he (Moshe) knew that on this day the greatest of the nation will be sacrificed, and Moshe believed it would be either himself or Aharon. But now he sees that Nadav and Avihu were greater than they.

I shall never be able to comprehend two realities in our generation: 1) How can a religious Jew remain with a clean conscience in the galut? How can he be so oblivious to the huge historical call to return home sent out by the millions of Jews who were slaughtered in the galut in the last two thousand years? 2) Why is it that so many non-religious Jews cling and love this embattled land?

In conclusion. I turn to you dear brothers and sisters. Set your sights on reaching greatness as Jews who took up the challenge to bring to fruition the promises made by Hashem to our fathers and mothers that the Holy land will be our heritage forever.

Shabbat Shalom

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Shemini - Making Meat Permissible

Rabbi Asher Meir

Our parsha defines the forbidden and permissible species of animals. However, the permissibility of meat is dependent not only on the variety of animal but also on the method of its slaughter. Animals during their lifetime are "ever min hachai" which are forbidden even to non-Jews. If they die by themselves or are killed in a haphazard way (neveila and treifa), then they are permitted to non-Jews, but not to Jews. Proper shechita which makes meat permissible according to the Torah is careful slaughter with a perfectly sharp knife which instantly cuts both the windpipe and the blood vessels which supply "dam hanefesh" - the blood on which life depends.

Finally, permitted fish require no slaughter at all; rather, "the very collection of fish is like slaughter for livestock" (Rambam Shechita 1:3; as we learn from Moshe's statement in Bamidbar 11:22).

The Zohar at the end of our parsha makes a cryptic analogy based on this law: "Roshei Yeshiva require no shechita; their very collection makes them permissible". Let us examine the meaning of this surprising metaphor.

One way of understanding this statement is to view the laws of ritual slaughter, which relate to how an animal is separated from life, to the way in which a person separates himself from bestiality and the life of this world during his lifetime. This determines a person's "permissibility" or heter - his ability to contribute to holiness.

Some people are completely absorbed in material, animal existence - they are not separated from it at all. This is the analog of "ever min hachai", a live animal which has no permissibility whatsoever. A person who is completely bestial can not make any contribution or connection to kedusha.

Some people distinguish themselves from gross materialism unintentionally or in a haphazard way. This corresponds to a neveila or treifa which are permitted to a non-Jew, that is, they can contribute to the world's material and ethical perfection.

Some holy people go beyond this; they are scrupulous to separate themselves from bestiality by their very breath and life's blood - their vitality is not drawn from materiality but rather from kedusha. This is the kosher shechita which makes the kosher animal completely able to be assimilated to holiness - to be eaten or even offered on the altar.

Beyond this are the roshei yeshiva, the leading Torah scholars. These individuals live and breathe in a completely different element - in the sea of Torah. They are distinguished from the life of this world by their very being; indeed, they would die merely by virtue of being drawn out of the sea and collected into this world. Even in their everyday mundane activities, they are distinguished from our everyday experience; they don't have to distinguish their breath of life from that which comes naturally to them, because they breathe Torah. Therefore, no shechita whatever is required for them; their very being is one of connection to holiness.

Fortunate indeed are those who are able to attain, or even to strive for, this exalted plane of existence.

Rabbi Asher Meir is the author of the book Meaning in Mitzvot, distributed by Feldheim. The book provides insights into the inner meaning of our daily practices, following the order of the 221 chapters of the Kitzur Shulchan Arukh.

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For the week ending 14 April 2007 / 26 Nisan 5767
by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

Danger of Missing Out Chagiga 9a-b

A Jew who missed offering his Festival sacrifices on the first day can make this up on the succeeding days. But if he fails to do so until the Festival is over he has missed out. In regard to such a person the Mishna applies the passage: "That which is crooked cannot be straightened and that which is missing cannot be counted." (Kohélet 1:15)

Another application of this passage is found in a beraita. The reference there is to one who failed to recite the Shema in the morning or evening or who failed to say his morning or evening prayers or who did not join his comrades in performing a mitzvah.

Maharsha explains that the "crooked which cannot be straightened" refers to one who failed to recite the Shema or say the Shacharit morning and Ma'ariv evening prayers throughout that day and night. The second half about "that which is missing cannot be counted" refers to one who did pray but failed to join others in a minyan.

The reason the Mincha service is not mentioned, although missing it comes under the same category of "that which is crooked", is because of the beraita's interest in keeping the prayer part parallel to the Shema part which is recited only morning and night.

What the Sages Say

"Whoever studies Torah during the night is blessed by G-d with a special grace during the day. Some say that whoever studies Torah in this world will be blessed by G-d with a special grace in the World-to-Come." Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish - Chagigah 12b

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by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

Sacrifices Made in Heaven

One of the Seven Heavens, says Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish, is called Zevul, and it contains the Heavenly counterpart of Jerusalem and the Beit Hamikdash. There, too, is an altar upon which the Malach (angel) Michael offers a daily sacrifice.

The obvious question which arises is what does he offer on this altar, as there are no animals in Heaven? In his footnotes (and this appears in parenthesis in the Ein Yaakov) the Bach adds this question to the text, as well as an answer. The answer is also found in a Tosefot in Mesechta Menachot (110a). Tosefot cites conflicting midrashim as to the nature of these sacrifices. One states that the Malach offers the souls of the tzaddikim (righteous) upon this altar, and another states that the sacrifices are of fire in animal form.

It is the first midrash above, the one regarding the souls of the righteous, which appears in the aforementioned Bach and Ein Yaakov. And this answer is presented by Tosefot as an explanation of the prayer we say three times a day: Accept willingly, we ask of Hashem, Your people Israel and hearken to their prayer; return the sacred service to Your sanctuary and the fire offerings of Israel accept with favor. How can we ask Hashem to accept the fire offerings of Israel when there is no Beit Hamikdash today in which to offer sacrifices? According to the midrash, the phrase ishei Yisrael does not translate as the fire offerings of Israel but rather the men of Israel the tzaddikim whose souls are offered before Hashem.

Tosefot notes, however, that there is another opinion which translates these words literally as sacrifices, and views them as an extension of the request that Hashem return the sacred service to His sanctuary. Our prayer thus is that Hashem restore our ability to offer actual sacrifices. The Tur (Orach Chaim 187) presents a third opinion: We ask Hashem to accept our prayers which we offer in place of sacrifices.

The Mishna Berura (Orach Chaim 120) quotes the opinion of the Turei Zahav as favoring the first approach, about the souls of tzaddikim, and also quotes the Gaon of Vilna as expressing a preference for the second one, that it is a request for the return of the sacrificial service here on earth. (Chagiga 12b)

Between Angel and Animal

Six things have been said about Man, say our Sages; in three of them he is similar to the malachim (angels) and in three he is like an animal.

People are like the malachim in that they have intelligence, they walk upright and they speak the Holy Tongue of Hebrew. People are like animals in that they eat and drink, they multiply, and they expel wastes from their bodies.

The midrash (Bereishet Rabbah 8) adds one more comparison to each. Men see like the malachim and perish like animals. Why are these comparisons not listed by our gemara?

The comparison of sight does not present such a problem because an animal has the power of sight as well. But why is the comparison of man and animal regarding death ignored?

Two answers are found in the commentaries. Rif suggests that the gemara is referring to the initial creation of Man, before Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge and brought death to the world. Iyun Yaakov explains that although both man and animal have limited existence in this world, the cause of their respective deaths is not the same. Man dies as a result of his sins, while the animal dies because Hashem has so programmed its existence. (Chagiga 16a)

Please address all comments and requests to
HAMELAKET@hotmail.com