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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON SHMINI - 5771

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**Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from
Lord Jonathan Sacks**

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British
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Shemini 5769 Between Hope and humanity

It should have been the great day of celebration. The tabernacle – Israel's first collective house of worship – was complete. All preparations had been made. For seven days, Moses had performed the inauguration. Now, the eighth day – the first of Nisan – had arrived. The priests, led by Aaron, were ready to begin their service. The Talmud (Megillah 10b) says that this day was as joyous to G-d as the day the heavens and earth were created. It was then that tragedy occurred. Two of Aarons sons, Nadav and Avihu, brought 'strange fire, which [G-d] had not commanded them'. Fire 'came forth from the Lord', and they died. There then follow two scenes between Moses and Aaron. The first: Moses then said to Aaron, 'This is what the Lord spoke of when he said: "Among those who are near to Me I will show myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honoured."' 'Aaron remained silent. Moses then commands their bodies to be removed, and forbids Aaron and his remaining sons to engage in the rituals of mourning. He gives them further instructions, to prevent such tragedies occurring in the future, and then proceeds to check whether the sacrifices of the day have been performed. He discovers that Aaron and his sons have burned the sin offering, instead of eating it as prescribed: When Moses inquired about the goat of the sin offering and found that it had been burned up, he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's remaining sons, and asked, 'Why didn't you eat the sin offering in the sanctuary area? It is

most holy; it was given to you to take away the guilt of the community by making atonement for them before the Lord. Since its blood was not taken into the Holy Place, you should have eaten the goat in the sanctuary area, as I commanded.' Aaron replied to Moses, 'Today they sacrificed their sin offering and their burnt offering before the Lord, but such things as this have happened to me. Would the Lord have been pleased if I had eaten the sin offering today?' When Moses heard this, he approved. Without going into the details of these exchanges, their psychology is enthralling. Moses tries to comfort his brother, who has lost two of his sons. He tells him that G-d has said, 'Among those who are near to Me, I will show myself holy.' According to Rashi, he said: 'Now I see that they [Nadav and Avihu] were greater than you and me.' The holier the person, the more G-d demands of them. It is as if Moses said to Aaron: 'My brother, do not give up now. We have come so far. We have climbed so high. I know your heart is broken. So is mine. Did we not think – you and I – that our troubles were behind us, that after all we suffered in Egypt, and at the Red Sea, and in the battle against Amalek, and in the sin of the Golden Calf, we were finally safe and free. And now this has happened. Aaron, don't give up, don't lose faith, don't despair. Your children died not because they were evil but because they were holy. Though their act was wrong, their intentions were good. They merely tried too hard.' But despite Moses' words of consolation, 'Aaron remained silent', lost in a grief to deep for words. In the second exchange, Moses is concerned with something else – the community, whose sins should have been atoned for by the sin offering. It is as if he had said to Aaron: 'My brother, I know you are in a state of grief. But you are not just a private person. You are also the High Priest. The people need you to perform your duties, whatever your inner feelings.' Aaron replies: 'Would the Lord have been pleased if I had eaten the sin offering today?' We can only guess at the precise import of these words. Perhaps they mean this: 'I know that in general, a high priest is forbidden to mourn as if he were an ordinary individual. That is the law, and I accept it But had I acted on this inaugural day as if nothing had happened, as if my sons had not died, would this not seem to the people as if I were heartless, as if human life and death meant nothing, as if the service of G-d meant a renunciation of my humanity?' This time, Moses is silent. Aaron is right, and Moses knows it. In this exchange between two brothers, a momentous courage is born: the courage of an Aaron who has the strength to grieve and not accept any easy consolation, and the courage of a Moses who has the strength to keep going in spite of grief. It is almost as if we are present at the birth of an emotional configuration that will characterize the Jewish people in centuries to come. Jews are a people who have had more than their share of suffering. Like Aaron, they did not lose their humanity. They did not allow their sense of grief to be dulled, deadened, desensitized. But neither did they lose their capacity to continue, to carry on, to hope. Like Moses, they never lost faith in G-d. But like Aaron, they never allowed that faith to anesthetize their feelings, their human vulnerability

from Torah in Motion <info@torahinmotion.org> date
Fri, Apr 17, 2009 at 3:59 PM subject Shmini: A Loud
Silence The Paper Parshas Tazriah-Metzorah

A Thought for the Week: Shmini
Silence

Shabbat Shalom

A Thought for the Week: Shmini

Rabbi Jay Kelman

Modern society often expects people to keep their emotions in check and to avoid displaying them publicly. This is especially true of our leaders whom we expect to hide their emotions and to act stoically even

in the face of great crisis. While an emotional outburst can be refreshing to see it is the height of political incorrectness and a violation of diplomatic etiquette to actually display strong emotions.

What is true about the public arena carries over to the private lives of our leaders. While we tend to expect our leaders to be loving and caring people devoted to their family, we expect them to rise above the emotional issues they may have at home. Perhaps this is nowhere better demonstrated than in Israel where rarely mentioned are the personal tragic losses of war and terrorism (and traffic accidents) which so many of those in public life have had to endure. It is as if their personal stories should have no impact on their political views.

As parshat Shimini opens the Jewish people are celebrating the dedication of the Mishkan, the symbol of G-d's presence on Earth. The terrible sin of the golden calf is apparently forgiven as G-d reestablishes His covenant with the Jewish people. Yet in the midst of the great joy Aharon Hakohen is faced the greatest of all tragedies, the death of his two older sons.

The first words we hear in the aftermath of their death are Moshe trying to comfort his older brother with the words "this is how G-d has spoken, with those closest to Me I will be sanctified and before the entire nation I will be honoured". Regarding Aharon the Torah records but two words of immediate reaction, or shall we say non-reaction, Vayidom Aharon and Aharon was silent. What was there to say? No words could express his pain or help console him. Words are so inadequate to describe the personal anguish on the loss of loved ones. This "loud" silence is reflected in the Jewish laws of mourning. One is not allowed to speak to a mourner until the mourner first speaks to you. To do otherwise may just deepen the pain.

Strangely the Torah does not even record any tears that Aharon must surely have shed. Not only is crying natural and necessary it is in the words of the Netziv "meguneh" distasteful and degrading not to cry upon the death of a relative. How can one be so insensitive? Can it truly be that Aharon really did not cry? While one could argue that of course he cried, just the Torah does not record it, by using the unique phrase "vayidom" and no other, the Torah seems to be recording his complete, or at the very least his outward reaction.

"And regarding Aharon G-d was very angry (and wanted) to destroy him" (Devarim 9:20). The Torah does not mince words in describing G-d's reaction towards the role Aharon played in the sin in the golden calf. "And I (Moshe) prayed also for Aharon at that time". Yet as RaHSI notes Moshe's prayers were only partially successful. Instead of destroying the entire family line, the lives of Elazar and Itamar, Aharon's younger two sons were spared.

Once Moshe had declared that the death of his two sons was to bring honor to the nation, Aharon understood that the death of his two sons was his punishment for his role in the sin of the golden calf. All had not quite been forgotten or forgiven. (While a human court may never punish a child for the sins of a parent, G-d is apparently not bound by such rules).

Aharon stoically accepted the Divine will, "the will of the Father is the will of the son", the Netziv notes. To cry in this particular instance would have somehow negated acceptance of the Divine will and of his punishment.

Yet the Torah does not use the expression Vayishma Aharon, and Aharon heard, the term Vayishma connoting, in Biblical Hebrew, joyful acceptance. Rather vayidom connotes acceptance of the divine will coupled with internal sadness. There was no joy here in accepting the will of G-d.

Immediately after this great tragedy G-d commands both Moshe and Aharon regarding the laws of Kashrut. Even, perhaps especially after tragedy man must redevelop his relationship with G-d. And that relationship begins with the physical and progresses to the spiritual.

As the high priest Aharon could go where no one else could enter, the kodesh kodahsim the place where the Divine presence rests. Closeness to G-d is the most wonderful experience man can have. It is in times of tragedy that that closeness is needed more. May we merit feeling the closeness of G-d through all that life offers. Shabbat Shalom!
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<http://matzav.com/video-rav-chaim-kanievsky-confirms-famous-grasshopper-story-discusses-kashrus-of-chagavim>

Rav Chaim Kanievsky Confirms Famous Grasshopper Story, Discusses Kashrus of Chagavim

Thursday October 22, 2009

Earlier today, various kinds of grasshoppers were brought to the home of Rav Chaim Kanievsky, on Rechov Rashbam in Bnei Brak, by Rav Yitzchok Ratzabi to discuss halacha-related issues regarding grasshoppers. Amongst the issues discussed was the permissibility to eat grasshoppers and whether a mesorah can be relied upon.

At 37 seconds into the video, the questioner asks Rav Chaim about the famous story told about Rav Chaim that a grasshopper landed on his table as he was studying that inyan. Rav Chaim confirms that the story is true. He doesn't provide the background to the story, which Matzav.com will share here based on information we gathered earlier in the year:

Approximately eight years ago, Rav Chaim was learning Maseches Chullin and a sugyah relating to chagovim, grasshoppers. Rav Chaim realized that he needed to see a grasshopper to better understand the Gemara - apparently he had never seen a live grasshopper before - and asked his daughter to bring him one. She tried, but reported to her father that she failed to find one. He went back to the sugyah, and lo and behold, a grasshopper came hopping through the window, landing on his Gemara. After examining it, he let it go. As he continued through the sugyah, he realized that he needed to study the hind legs a bit more, but the grasshopper was long gone. Before closing his Gemara, a second grasshopper hopped in and on to his Gemara, giving him the ability to study its hind leg in detail.

That part of the story is rather famous. But Matzav.com learned that the story continues.

About ten months ago, a rov giving a shiur in Bnei Brak criticized the tales people tell about gedolim, explaining that the stories cannot all be true, and sound silly. As a case in point, he brought the maaseh of Rav Chaim and the grasshoppers, viewing it as ridiculous and leading people to the wrong conclusions regarding Rav Chaim, who, after all, learns Torah like everyone else. After the shiur, the maggid shiur went home and found his house infested with grasshoppers (in the same Bnei Brak that Rav Kanievsky's daughter - seeking to fulfill the mitzvah of kibbud av - could not find one). He tried for three days to rid his home of the insects, but could not. Someone suggested that he go to Rav Chaim and ask for mechilah.

The rov approached Rav Chaim and told him what had happened. Rav Chaim laughed, saying that he did not need his mechilah at all, as the grasshoppers could have come to anybody (after all, the window was open!), and he was certainly mochel him if he needed it. The maggid went home - and the grasshoppers were gone!

For those who have questioned whether the story is true, the video below shows Rav Chaim humbly responding that it did indeed happen.

THE REST OF THE VIDEO

The rest of the video contains fascinating discussions and halachic analysis regarding the kashrus of grasshoppers.

At minute 3:30, the questioner shows Rav Chaim that the grasshopper has four feet, to which he responded that indeed the Torah says regarding the grasshoppers, “Lenater bam al haaaretz.”

At 7:16, it is mentioned to Rav Chaim that Yemenites have a siman to identify a kosher grasshopper, in that they possess a Ches shape on their stomach. Rav Chaim responded that the poskim bring this very siman that there is a Ches on the stomach.

At minute 15:21, Rav Chaim is questioned on the Teimani mesorah, saying that there is a machlokes haposkim as to whether we rely on their mesorah, but that there are indeed poskim who rely on that.

At minute 17:35, the issue of why shechitah on a grasshopper is not needed is mentioned, as is the issue of baal teshaktzu and why there is no problem of this when eating a grasshopper. Rav Chaim responds that if the Torah permits the consumption of a grasshopper, then obviously there is no issue of baal tishaktzu.

Thanks to hamelaket@gmail.com for collecting the following items:

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
<info@jewishdestiny.com>
Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Jerusalem Post :: Friday, March 25, 2011
BEIN HAZMANIM :: Rabbi Berel Wein

Now that Purim is safely past us and the month of Nissan fast approaches with the glorious holiday of Pesach in its wings, the yeshiva world enters a period of time called bein hazmanim - between the times (the semesters of Torah study.) There are three semesters in the yeshiva world and they run from Succot to Nissan, Iyar to the Ninth of Av and then the month of Elul to Yom Kippur.

The periods of time between these semesters is therefore called bein hazmanim – the time between semesters. I find a great deal of symbolism lurking in this apparently somewhat prosaic title of bein hazmanim. I have always felt that all of us in life constantly find ourselves bein hazmanim. We are always between our changing stages of life, moving our location, changing jobs or professions, traveling, adjusting to new family situations and hoping to make some sense of the bewildering world events that always seem to blindside us.

I feel that bein hazmanim is therefore in its broadest sense not an intermission time in our lives but it is really the constant state of life and being in our lives. We are always between things – life cycle events, plans, trips and projects. Many times therefore we somehow sacrifice the certain present for the uncertain future.

By looking forward to the zman – the coming semester itself, so to speak, we oftentimes ignore the bein hazmanim, frittering away opportunity and time that are currently present before us for our use and positive exploitation.

In the yeshiva world there is almost always a lecture given by the heads of the yeshiva at the end of the zman to the student body imploring the students not to waste the bein hazmanim and to never allow it to be a time of backsliding in Torah studies and correct behavior.

Many times the bein hazmanim can cancel out the hard won accomplishments of the recent zman itself. Thus the goal is to make the student realize that in truth bein hazmanim is a zman in itself and that it should be treated accordingly. How true that is in everyday life as well. Rabbi Akiva said that one should not postpone study and good deeds for a later time when he or she thinks it will be available for those projects, for that time or opportunity may never arrive. Living in a lackadaisical bein hazmanim mode is dangerous and counterproductive to human accomplishment.

The rabbis of Israel, over all of the generations of our history, stressed that time is the only commodity in life that is irreplaceable. By this they meant that bein hazmanim is always the zman itself. The Talmud itself tells us that Rabbi Akiva never announced that it was time to leave the study hall except on the eve of Yom Kippur and of Pesach. To Rabbi Akiva bein hazmanim was always the zman itself and that is what helped make him the paradigm hero of the Jewish people for all times and circumstances.

Naturally life and its necessary mundane and ordinary chores persist. In the yeshiva world, the buying of new hats, suits and other accessories; helping prepare for Pesach at home and elsewhere; and serious matchmaking efforts take place then. In our world of year-round constant bein hazmanim work, family and all of the ordinary tasks of living occupy us.

Yet we can realize that even while performing these tasks we can do so with a higher intent and a deeper understanding of the value and purpose of time. The commonly used phrase “to kill time” indicates a hidden appreciation within our subconscious that this is somehow akin to the heinous crime of taking human life. The great blessing of shehecheyanu – that You have given us life and preserved us – is called in the Talmud the blessing of zman – of time. That is how life is measured and also how it should be appreciated. That is why we mark birthdays and anniversaries and treasure special days and celebrate the holidays of the year.

Our father Avraham was eulogized as “having arrived with his days.” That is meant to indicate that all of his days were filled with constructive activities, holy endeavors and great kindness and attention to the needs of others. He arrived at the end of his life with full days. He never differentiated between bein hazmanim and the zman itself. As such, he continues to set an example for all of his descendants, the people of Israel.

Shabat shalom.

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
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Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha :: SHMINI :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The events described in this week parsha occur on the eighth day – after the seven day dedication period of the Mishkan and the installation of the kohanim/priests that would serve in that sanctuary. And this eighth day turns into a day of challenge and eventually sad tragedy. By emphasizing that all of this occurred on the eighth day, the Torah teaches us a vital lesson in life.

The seven days of dedication are days of exhilaration and accomplishment. But such feelings and emotions cannot usually be maintained indefinitely. In life there always is the day after, the eighth day, which is one of challenge, struggle and even of pain. This day, though, can define and determine one’s life and future.

I have often thought that this is perhaps one of the more subtle messages implied by the Torah when fixing the day of circumcision of a Jewish infant boy to be on the eighth day of his life. It is the day that imprints on him his Jewishness forever. It is a day of joy and commemoration for parents and the family, but also one of pain – with the drawing of blood from the infant.

It is therefore a day of solemnity and dedication and it teaches that sacrifice, consistency and determination all are part of one’s lot in life. One of my revered teachers in the yeshiva put it to us starry eyed teenagers quite succinctly, if not somewhat ironically, many decades ago. He said: “Life is like chewing gum – a little flavor and the rest is simply chew, chew, chew.” And so it is.

My beloved grandson, Binyamin Gewirtz, the youngest of all of my beloved grandsons, is celebrating his Bar Mitzva this Shabat. Happily, parshat Shmini was also my bar mitzvah parsha. I remember that my father of blessed memory said to me in his synagogue sermon that Shabat, that what I would make out of my life on the eighth day – after all of the bar mitzvah celebrations had receded - was the important challenge in life.

It is certainly correct that the challenge of the eighth day is the true test in life. I pray that the Lord grant my Binyamin all of the blessings of life but my main prayer is that he, like all of us, realizes that the challenges of life lie in the everyday mundane behavior which we can, if we so desire, transform with purpose and holiness.

That is the message that is transmitted here in the parsha to Aharon and his sons. Steadfastness, belief, obedience to Torah law and Jewish values is what is asked of them. The seven days of celebration and dedication have ended and now the task of caring for the holy Mishkan is entrusted to them.

And perhaps that is what the rabbis meant when they indicated that the two sons of Aharon who were killed in the Mishkan died because they were inebriated from wine. They were still in the seven days of celebration mode which had ended and not in the eighth day mode which now descended upon them. Such errors in life can be fatal and often disastrous.

Shabat shalom.

From Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>
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Subject Torah Weekly

TORAH WEEKLY :: Parshat Shemini
For the week ending 26 March 2011 / 19 Adar II 5771
from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com
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

One Small Step For A Man

“Lest you become contaminated...” (11:43)

The road to holiness does not start with lofty ideals or sublime thoughts. It does not begin with a mind-expanding revelation or a Close Encounter. It cannot be produced by psychotropic drugs, nor can it be experienced by climbing the Alps or the Andes.

True, gazing down from Mont Blanc or Everest may fill us with awe at the Creator's handiwork. Nature can truly inspire closeness to G-d. But

all this inspiration will vanish like a cloud of smoke if we lack the fundamental ingredients to concretize inspiration into actuality. The road to holiness starts with a few small boring steps. Like being a decent moral person, controlling our emotions and our appetites. As Jews, we may not eat what we like when we like. On Pesach we may eat no bread. On Yom Tov we should eat meat. On Yom Kippur we may eat nothing. At all times we may not eat the forbidden foods that are the subject of this week's Torah portion.

“Lest you become contaminated....” In Hebrew this sentence is expressed as one word, V'nitmay'tem. The spelling of this word is unusual. It lacks an aleph, and thus it can also read as V'nitmitem, which means “Lest you become dulled.”

In our search for holiness and meaning in this world, one of our greatest assets and aids are the laws of kashrut. Kosher food is soul food. Food for the soul. Food that feeds our spirituality and sharpens our ability to receive holiness.

Food that is not kosher does the reverse. It dulls our senses. It makes us less sensitive, less receptive to holiness. A Jew who tries to seek holiness sitting on top of some mountain in the Far East living on a diet of salted pork will find it impossible to achieve his goal. The view of Ganges, or the Himalayas (or his navel) may titillate his spiritual senses, but he will find no growth or nourishment reaching his core.

The spiritual masters teach that if a person contaminates himself a little, he becomes contaminated a great deal. Spirituality is a delicate thing. It doesn't take much to jam the broadcast from “Upstairs”. On the other hand, a little bit of holiness goes a long way. As the Torah teaches “You shall sanctify yourselves and you shall become holy.” (11:44) A little bit of sanctity generates a lot of holiness. If we sanctify ourselves down here in this lowly world with all its barriers to holiness, if we guard our mouths, our eyes and our ears, then the Torah promises us that we will be given help to lift us to lofty peaks of holiness.

It all starts with one small step.

Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

From Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com>
To Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com>
Subject Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
Parshas Shemini

Moshe said, "This is the thing that Hashem has commanded you to do; then the glory of Hashem will appear to you." (9:6)

What was the *davar*, "thing," that Moshe Rabbeinu commanded them to do? The *Toras Kohanim* writes: "Moshe told Klal Yisrael 'that' yetzer hora, evil-inclination, you shall remove from your hearts; then all of you will be (bound) together with one fear (of Hashem) and one counsel: to serve the Almighty, and that His service should be exclusive to you. If you will achieve this, then the glory of Hashem will appear to you." We still do not have clarity concerning the identity of "that" yetzer hora. From which of the yetzer hora's advocacies were they cautioned to distance themselves? Exactly what were they to remove from their hearts?

The Brisker Rav, zl, explains that when Moshe revealed to Aharon and his sons that they were to be privileged to perceive the Revelation of Hashem during the Inauguration of the Mishkan, the possibility existed that this experience could be self-deceiving. They might end up executing the service just for the purpose of perceiving the Shechinah, not in a manner *l'shem Shomayim*, for the sake of Heaven. Yes - one can delude himself even with the proper intentions. We serve Hashem for one purpose: to carry out His will. To serve Hashem for the spiritual ecstasy associated with experiencing the Divine detracts from the proper motive inherent in carrying out His command. This is the yetzer hora to which Moshe is alluding. One must be totally sincere when serving

Hashem. His intentions should be for one purpose only: to carry out Hashem's will - nothing else.

Horav Chaim Kamil, zl, applies the Brisker Rav's exposition to explain the necessity for such perfection during the Inauguration of the Mishkan. Specifically because this was the initial offering, the dawn of the holy service in the Mishkan, it was absolutely essential that everything be perfectly aligned, that the intentions and motives be only oriented towards carrying out the will of the Almighty. The Chanukas HaMishkan, Inauguration of the Mishkan, was a seminal event in the formation of Klal Yisrael as a Torah nation under Hashem. The term chinuch, which is the root of chanukas, means an individual's commencement on the journey/road which he will be traveling for quite some time. Chinuch is a reference to a beginning.

As Klal Yisrael stood at the threshold of a new service to Hashem, it was important that this chinuch be accomplished in a manner free of any vestiges of personal consideration, regardless of how sublime they may be. The influence of this beginning would be far-reaching.

This idea applies equally to chinuch ha'banim, educating our children. If we hope to see Torah nachas, satisfaction and pleasure, from our offspring, we must see to it that from "day one" the goals and objectives of the child's education are focused l'shem Shomayim, for no objective other than sanctifying Hashem's Name. We can then aspire to see true greatness from our children.

The idea of acting solely because this is the tzivui, commandment, of Hashem is underscored by the Chidushei HaRim as he addresses the sin of Nadav and Avihu. Chazal offer a number of infractions associated with the behavior of Nadav and Avihu. One important note must be emphasized: Nadav and Avihu were tzaddikim, righteous men, of the highest order. Any allusion to sin on their part is relative to their exalted level of sanctity. When a garment is bright white, any taint, the slightest speck, stands out. The Torah does state a "sin" in connection with their service on that fateful day: "And they brought before Hashem an alien fire that He had not commanded them," asher lo tzivah osome - "that He (Hashem) had not commanded them" (Vayikra 10:1). According to the Ramban, this is a reference to their offering of the daily incense upon the Mizbayach HaPenimi, Inner Altar, even though Hashem had not commanded them to do so.

Was their sin that egregious? We derive from here that everything depends on the command. In every area of Torah and mitzvos, our behavior has to be in accordance with Hashem's command. Initiative is a wonderful thing - as long as it is consistent with Hashem's command. They acted on their own, setting a dangerous precedent. The Chidushei HaRim notes that, if this is the punishment for acting without first being commanded by Hashem, can we begin to imagine the incredible reward in store for one who acts solely because Hashem has commanded him to do so? The individual who does not question, who acts unequivocally, with total equanimity, because Hashem has commanded him to do so is truly worthy of boundless reward. This is what is meant by the term asher kideshanu b'mitzvosav, "Who has sanctified us with His commandments. By executing our duties purely because they are Hashem's command, we become consecrated to Him.

(3:01) .tnelis saw norahA dnA 1

In order to understand completely the spiritual level of Aharon HaKohen to have reached a response of "non-response," as he demonstrated to the tragic deaths of his sons, one must acknowledge the depth of devotion to Hashem that is personified by his middah, attribute of bitachon, trust. A true adam ha'shalem, spiritually complete/refined individual, senses no other factors controlling his life other than Hashem and the Torah. Such an individual fears nothing and no one, other than Hashem. If the Torah instructs him to act - he acts, regardless of the personal consequences. If the Torah instructs him to desist - he desists, without considering the ramifications. His trust is total and unequivocal. He understands that no

creature - man or animal - can do him harm, unless it has been mandated by Hashem.

In Tehillim 4:9, David Hamelech says, "In peace, in harmony, I lie down and sleep; for You, Hashem, will make me dwell safe and secure." The commentators explain that David Hamelech's sleep is unlike that of other men. When a warrior goes to battle, he sleeps out of exhaustion and always with fear - with one eye open. His sleep is often restless, as he is constantly waking up to the slightest sound. He is always vigilant. David Hamelech acted in the battlefield in a manner not unlike the way he acted at home, in his palace. He does not sense any unusual fear, other than his constant fear of Heaven. There was only one controlling entity in his life: Hashem. Thus, he slept in harmony and peace, because his trust allowed him to feel secure and safe.

Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon HaKohen certainly had reason to fear for their lives when they were commanded to approach Pharaoh with a demand that he release the Jews. Imagine, going to the most powerful despot in the world, a man responsible for the brutal persecution of an entire nation, a tyrant who feared no one: Should they not have feared for their lives? Pharaoh was playing for "keeps." He was not taking any prisoners. Yet, Moshe and Aharon confronted him with total equanimity, without any fear whatsoever. Their trust in Hashem was consummate and irrevocable. They feared no man - only Hashem.

Horav Moshe Reis, zl, a distinguished disciple of Novardok, derives from here that, given the right opportunity and the proper commitment, an individual is capable of transforming his natural tendencies. The individual who is prone to fear and who, under normal circumstances, has reason to be afraid can overcome that sense of fear as if it were non-existent. One who truly fears Hashem fears no man. One who fears man is lacking in his fear of Hashem. To fear Hashem means to fear only Hashem.

Rav Reis continues by applying this thought to Aharon HaKohen's reaction to the deaths of Nadav and Avihu. The Torah tells us, Vayidom Aharon, "And Aharon was silent." Aharon is lauded for his silence. Why? What else could he have done? All of the screaming and chest-beating was not going to bring them back. If anything, Aharon was challenged to declare, "All that Hashem does is for good." He could also have said, Gam zu l'tovah, "This is also for the (good)." Chazal teach us that just as one blesses over the good, so, too, must he bless over what is (or seems to be) bad. These are guidelines that are considered to be the appropriate Jewish response to tragedy and adversity. If these rules concerning attitude apply to the common Jew, how much more so are they incumbent upon Aharon!

Rav Reis explains that Va'yidom Aharon, complete silence, no reaction whatsoever, is the optimum level of response. It indicates total acceptance - complete silence. One who declares: Kol man d'avid Rachmana l'tav avid, demonstrates by his words that - yes - he has every reason to complain, to weep, to react, but he does not, because Hashem's decisions are for good. The desire to cry out exists, but he controls himself, due to his belief in Hashem. After all is said and done, he is definitely bothered, but, as a sign of respect, he is accepting. Va'yidom Aharon is even greater, because essentially he has no response. Total silence; complete acceptance. He seeks no justification for Hashem's actions. He seeks no response, because he has no questions.

One who accepts the Din, Judgment, is truly a laudable person. One who is completely silent is even greater. He has no reason to attest to Hashem's goodness, because, as far as he is concerned, he has not experienced anything problematic. Aharon accepted the decree of the Almighty with joy. He had no questions; he needed no answers. He did not have to justify Hashem's actions precisely because he had no questions.

How does one achieve such distinction? How does one reach such a spiritual plateau? Anivus, humility/modesty. One who thinks highly of himself does not allow Hashem to be part of his life. His arrogance

takes up too much space within him . Aharon always viewed himself as being unworthy of his noble position. He always felt a searing sense of blame for the sin of the Golden Calf. Could he have prevented it? Could he have somehow lessened its effect? These are questions with which he lived throughout his life. He did not run to the mizrach vant, eastern wall, set aside for distinguished leadership. The rear of the shul was fine with him. He was the eastern wall. Wherever he sat, whatever position he assumed, became the eastern wall. When Aharon was instructed to approach the Mizbayach, Altar, to initiate the services in the Sanctuary, he was reluctant. He was ashamed. After all, did he not play a role in catalyzing the Golden Calf? Moshe told him, "Do not be ashamed, for this is why you were chosen for the position of Kohen Gadol." Aharon taught us a lesson: Do not cop out. Do not be reluctant to confront your errors. Do not gloss over your indiscretions by justifying your actions, seeking excuses, or blaming someone else. That might be human nature, but it was not Aharon HaKohen. We possess an almost uncanny ability to produce a number of plausible reasons to justify our actions. We can transform the most heinous sin into a positive command, an act of kindness. The commentators present a number of possible justifications of Aharon's actions concerning the Golden Calf. He could have used these excuses, but, he did not. He took full responsibility, understanding that for an individual of his spiritual standing, the bar is raised, a higher level of moral and spiritual rectitude is expected. Aharon was willing to accept the consequences.

This was the greatness of Aharon, and this is why he was able to react as he did to the tragic deaths of his sons. We now understand why Hashem chose him to be the Kohen Gadol. Taking responsibility and acting with total commitment to Hashem are tall orders for the average individual, but-- to the Kohen Gadol, this is what defines him; this is the only way he is able to live.

This may you eat from everything that is in the water. (11:9)

The Torah details two physical signs that distinguish a kosher fish. The fish must have fins and scales. Once a fish possesses these two signs, it needs no further preparation to render it kosher. When Yaakov Avinu blessed Yosef's two sons, Menashe and Ephraim, he said, "And may they proliferate abundantly like fish within the land" (Bereishis 48:16).

Simply explained, fish are not subject to the evil eye, since they live calmly beneath the surface of the water, unseen by man. Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, quotes a fascinating explanation.

The various "challenges" that a kosher animal, wild beast, or fowl must undergo until it is prepared appropriately for the table of an observant Jew are well-known. Many prohibitions prevent these kosher creatures from entering the mouth of a Jew. First, the animal must undergo a kosher shechitah, ritual slaughtering. There is no room for error. The knife must be inspected; the animal must be whole-- with no parts missing. The slightest puncture in a vital organ disqualifies the animal. Once an animal has been slaughtered and its vital organs checked, its fat and organs that are not permitted to be eaten must be removed.

We now have before us a ritually-slaughtered kosher carcass. It is not yet ready for the table. One must remove the blood by washing and then salting the flesh. Once that process has been completed, the next step is preparation. We must be careful not to mix it with milk or any milk derivative. We take this all for granted, but it is a demanding process.

Unlike the animal, beast or fowl, a fish does not have to fulfill such demanding criteria before it can be eaten. A fish needs scales and fins in order to be accepted on a Jew's table. That is all. A fish that is born with simanei taharah, kosher signs, remains in its state of kashrus forever. No more demands; no shechitah; no issues concerning milk; its blood is acceptable. A fish is taken from the water and can immediately be placed on the kosher table. It has fulfilled its requirements by virtue of its birth. This is why our Patriarch Yaakov chose to bless Yosef's children to be like fish. Just as they were born into holiness, to a righteous father and mother, so should they remain on this exalted spiritual level throughout

their entire lives - just like fish, who at birth have already fulfilled the requirements of kashrus. Yaakov prayed that his grandsons and all future progeny should remain pure and holy throughout their lives. Challenges to their spiritual integrity should simply disappear as if they were non-existent. The yetzer hora, with his many deceptions, should not succeed in turning them away from Hashem.

That you shall not make yourself impure through them. (11:43)

The laws of tumah v'taharah, ritual contamination and purity, impress upon us that the basic pre-requisite for our ability to execute Hashem's mitzvos-- and to fulfill our moral and spiritual obligations-- is that we maintain our physical bodies on an elevated level of ritual purity. Only then can we hope to remain receptive, obedient and efficient instruments, imbued with our Heavenly mission to carry out the will of Hashem. Ritual impurity taints the body, as well as the soul. It is something which is not observed by the naked eye, but rather, perceived by the knowing soul.

In a thesis on the laws of tumah v'taharah, Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, underscores this idea time and again. The present chapter of the Torah addresses the tumos which fall under the category of tumas maga, impurity resulting from coming into physical contact with an unclean thing. We specifically address the laws of tumas neveilah and sheretz, impurity resulting from contact with the carcasses of all large mammals and eight small animal species. First, what is tumah? The dead body of a human being creates a scenario which fosters the pernicious state known as tumah. When we see the body of a recently deceased person, we see what appears to be a human being who has succumbed completely to the power of physical forces. The dead person seems to illustrate the power of the physical and its domination of the human being.

This cannot be further from the truth. It would be true, if this body that lays before was indeed the human being that until recently was vibrant and alive. This is, however, not true. We know that the corpse which we see before us is not the real human being, because man's true being cannot be affected by physical forces. Hashem nosan; Hashem lokach, "The Almighty gives; the Almighty takes." The soul of life that breathes vibrancy into the earthly shell that lays before us departed before the physical body became subject to the laws of earth's natural forces. Once the soul of life has been removed from the body, "nature" takes over.

Otherwise, nature cannot reign over the handiwork of the Divine. Furthermore, during the soul's "tenure" in the body, while the life-giving force of what is the essence of the human being was a part of the body/shell, the person was a vibrant, free-willed, self-determining, G-dly individual. Now that the body has succumbed to the forces of "nature" that body/person has been liberated from subservience to mere physical forces. The body has been elevated -- with all of its capacities for action and also for pleasure-- into the realm of true freedom, where it can perform the moral task of its life of its own free will. In other words, the essential person is now granted the opportunity to serve Hashem, unencumbered by the demands of physicality.

Life allows man to dominate and reign over the physical aspects of his body He is endowed with emotions, intelligence, and the ability to execute his plans of action and to employ the physical aspects of his body, with all of its inherent powers, drives and faculties, to the free-willed discharge of Hashem's commandments and duties. This is the meaning of life. While we live, we use the physical components of our body to carry out Hashem's mitzvos. One might think, and regrettably this is what the secular world would have us believe, that, in the face of the phenomenon of death, all of this comes to an abrupt end. The individual who has until now lived - dies. He no longer is capable of anything. With death comes an end to all of his functioning.

If so, why bother? It is almost like the old cliché, "Life is tough, and then you die." One has nothing to which to look forward. In the face of the phenomenon of death, the secular world preaches the frailty of man, his submission to the physical forces that exert their control over him. It

The Baal HaTurim then quotes a Medrash that Moshe (who served as the functioning High Priest during the Seven Days of Consecration) remarked, "Since I refused G-d's charge to me for seven days at the Burning Bush, I merited to be the High Priest for seven days."

On the face of it, this Medrash begs for an explanation. Moshe's refusal to accept the mission that he was asked to undertake should count against him. Why does he think that he was rewarded for those seven days with seven days of being the Kohen Gadol? If he would have refused for two weeks, would we assume that he would have been the High Priest for two weeks? Obviously not!

Rav Simcha Zissel, in his *Sefer Sam Derech*, gives a very nice interpretation of this Medrash. Moshe Rabbeinu refused to take the Jews out of Egypt. Why did he do that? It was a function of his humility (he did not think he was worthy of the assignment) and his sensitivity (he did not want to offend his older brother). Thus, on the one hand, Moshe's refusal to accept the assignment stemmed from positive character traits. On the other hand, we do read in Parshas Shmos [4:14]: "And Hashem was angry with Moshe and He said 'Is there not Aaron your brother the Levite? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he will come forth to meet you and when he sees you he will be glad in his heart.'" The Talmud [Zevachim 102a] wonders how Hashem's anger was manifest in this situation. Normally every time we find the expression "Vayichar Af Hashem" [the Anger of the L-rd was kindled], it is immediately followed by some type of punishment. However, punishment did not seem to be forthcoming here. Rav Shimon bar Yochai suggests that here too, we find punishment. In speaking to Moshe, G-d mentioned "Aaron your brother the Levite". Why was the description "the Levite" necessary? The Gemara answers that the original plan was that Aaron would remain a Levite the rest of his life and not become a Kohen. According to this original plan, the High Priesthood would have been entrusted to Moshe and his descendants. However, because of this "Divine Anger," the plan was changed such that Aaron and his sons became the Priests and Moshe and his family remained Levites.

This, then, is what Moshe meant when he said that because he refused for seven days, he got to be a Kohen for seven days: Moshe is saying that really he should have been a Kohen for all Eternity. However, since I refused for seven days (which was inappropriate, given G-d's insistence), I was penalized and only allowed to be the Kohen for seven days and no more. Given the fact that Moshe's refusal stemmed from noble character traits, he was rewarded by the fact that at least for 7 days he was a Kohen, but since he protested too much, it was for no more than 7 days. Hashem's Justice is very precise!

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Rabbi Mordechai Willig
The TorahWeb Foundation
The Joy of Purim, Pesach, and Family

I

"Vayehi bayom ha'shemini" refers to the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan, Rosh Chodesh Nissan, when the Mishkan was established (Rashi, Vayikra 9:1). This day was the day on which Hashem's heart was joyful (Rashi Shir haShirim 3:11).

When Adar enters, we increase joy (Ta'anis 29a) commemorating the miracles of Purim and Pesach (Rashi). In a leap year, we read Shemini between Purim and Pesach, as we approach the midpoint between these

two yomim tovim, - Rosh Chodesh Nissan - which is the day on which Hashem and Am Yisrael rejoiced.

How do we increase joy on Purim and Pesach? On Purim, we should increase gifts to the poor, "as there is no joy as great and splendid as gladdening the hearts of the poor, orphans, and strangers. One who gladdens the heart of these unfortunates resembles Hashem, "Who revives the spirit of the lowly and the heart of the crushed" (Rambam, Hilchos Megilla 2:17. Also see "Purim: The Holiday of Giving," TorahWeb 1999). On Pesach, experiencing the authentic joy demanded by the mitzvah of "v'samachta b'chagecha" requires assisting the poor as well (Rambam, Hilchos Yom Tov 6:18). Rashi (Kiddushin 34b) goes further and reads v'samachta b'chagecha (Devarim 16:14) as v'seemachta, indicating that you must make others happy. Alternatively, only by making others happy can one himself be happy.

Despite the emphasis on achieving joy by helping the less fortunate, the primary obligation of joy on holidays is that a family be joyful together (Rambam, Hilchos Yom Tov 6:17, Ra'avad Chagiga 1:1). Furthermore, the requirement to be joyful as a family, "rejoice - you and your household" (Devarim 14:25), which is quoted in the context of the yomim tovim, applies year round as well (Tosafos Pesachim 109a). Indeed, one who dwells without a wife dwells without joy, as it says "Rejoice, you and your household" (Yevamot 62b).

II

"Vayehi bayom ha'shemini" - the word vayehi teaches that the joy was incomplete (Yalkut Shimoni 520) because on that very day, Nadav and Avihu died (Vayikra 10:2) as a punishment for bringing before Hashem a fire (aish zara) that He had not commanded them to bring (Vayikra 10:1).

Nadav and Avihu were great people, perhaps greater than Moshe and Aharon (Rashi 10:3). They were passionate in their love of Hashem and went so far as to pursue it without the limitation of the law by offering the ketores, which brings one extraordinarily close to Hashem. This, however, was against Hashem's will and led to their death (Ha'emek Davar 9:6, Harchev Davar 10:1).

Nadav and Avihu were unsatisfied with their exalted status and attempted to raise it in an unauthorized manner. Perhaps their unhappiness was connected to their not having established families of their own (as noted earlier from Yevamot 62b), as we are taught that they were punished for not having fulfilled this mitzvah (Yalkut Shimoni 524). This unhappiness led them to seek both spiritual heights which Hashem did not authorize them to experience as well as greater authority to rule over the people in place of Moshe and Aharon (ibid).

As the Rambam taught, gladdening others is a wonderful way to emulate Hashem and to achieve heights of joy which obviate the need for prohibited or inappropriate manifestations of religious fervor. This mandate is not limited to gladdening the poor on Purim and Pesach; as noted above, it applies within a family all year.

Raising children is the most important religious undertaking one can engage in (Igros Moshe 4:49). The satisfaction of serving Hashem in this critical manner, in a home which is imbued with the mandated simcha shel mitzvah discussed above, should protect against repeating the mistake of Nadav and Avihu who pursued a relationship with Hashem via an aish zara (halachically unauthorized religious activity) rather than through the authentic simcha shel mitzvah accessible through having and raising a family.

In these days of increased joy, may we all serve and cleave to Hashem appropriately, and by resembling and emulating Him, reach the greatest levels of simchah.

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Person in the Parsha by Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb
SH'MINI
The Stork and the Heron

I don't think that parents tell this one to their children anymore, but they used to when I was a boy. When children once inquired about where babies come from, they were told that the stork brought them. The stork is a migratory bird that was very familiar to people living in central Europe. The stork would suddenly, almost mysteriously, appear in the spring after a long absence during the cold winter. The stork would nest on rooftops, adjacent to, and often right on top of, the chimneys of the house.

Since every child was witness to the absence and ultimate return of these large white birds with long beaks, it was only natural that parents would avoid telling their children the "facts of life" for as long as they could get away with, attributing the appearance of new babies to the stork. Interestingly, the stork makes its appearance in this week's Torah portion, Sh'mini. The Torah, however, does not stoop to the once common myth that the stork was responsible for the delivery, if not production, of new babies. Indeed in next week's Torah portion, Tazri'a, the opening verses contain a fairly explicit account of the biology of conception and childbirth.

But the Torah does enumerate the stork as one of the numerous "unclean" birds; that is, as one of the species of birds that a Jew is forbidden to eat.

The Hebrew term for the stork is "chasidah", upon which Rashi has a fascinating commentary. He begins by identifying the chasidah as "a large white fowl" and applies the old French name *tzikonion* to it. A quick consultation with a children's book on zoology informed me that the European white stork, which nests on rooftops and in trees and is a symbol of childbirth, is technically classified in Latin as *ciconia ciconia*. Rashi was apparently very familiar with this bird. He continues to suggest the reason why the *ciconia ciconia*, or stork, is called "chasidah" in Hebrew. After all, that Hebrew term means "the kindly one", the one who does acts of *chesed* (loving-kindness). The reason, already offered in the Talmud, is that the stork "is kind to her friends"; that is, generous and protective of other members of its own species.

Keen students of the parsha long ago began to wonder why a bird that was so kind and passionate should be listed among the unclean fowl. After all, it is commonly assumed that those animals which are prohibited to be eaten are each representative of some undesirable character trait. Here is a bird which deserves to be called "chasidah", pious one. Why should it be considered unclean?

One such keen student, and it is difficult to ascertain his identity, long ago suggested that the problem with the chasidah is that, although she is kind, she is kind only to her friends. She shows compassion only for other members of her own species. To those who are not her friends but belong to a different species, she is indifferent and, often, even cruel. Being kind in a discriminatory fashion is a negative character trait. Hence, the stork is *treif*, forbidden.

What a powerful and relevant lesson for each of us! Barely two weeks ago, we witnessed the effects of a devastating earthquake and tsunami wreaked upon the islands of Japan. We also observed all the graphic and horrible images of human misery and suffering. We all were summoned to contribute in any way we could to assist the Japanese victims.

But who among us can deny not having at least had a fleeting temptation to look away from that human suffering because it occurred so far away from us, to people who are unrelated to us? It is only natural that our response would be, "Charity begins at home", and that we would turn to the needs of our own friends and close ones, blotting out the cries and tears of those of an "alien species".

The message that Rashi gives us is clear. Such a reaction is *treif*. It is utterly wrong to ignore the suffering of human beings just because they are different or distant from us. The chasidah is sympathetic and charitable, but only to its own kind. We are not allowed to emulate the chasidah.

Just after the chasidah is listed in this week's parsha, in Vayikra 11:19, we find mentioned another bird, the anafah. Rashi describes the anafah as an ill-tempered large fowl, an angry bird, and hazards a guess that it is the heron, with which he was personally familiar, living in north central Europe.

If the stork symbolizes the evil of discriminatory generosity, the heron symbolizes the evils of anger.

Anger is judged very negatively by Jewish tradition. Our Sages tell us that it is by the manner in which a person controls his anger that his true character can be assessed. The Talmud tells us that a person who becomes angry is susceptible to grievous errors, so that even the wisest of men can make mistakes if he permits himself to become angry. Our Sages offer an example of a wise man who fell prey to anger and then erred. That wise man was none other than Moshe Rabeinu himself, and the incident happened in our very Torah portion, Sh'mini. "And Moshe diligently inquired for the goat of the sin offering, and, behold, it was burnt; and he was angry with Elazar and Itamar..." (Vayikra 10:16) In the immediate subsequent verses, it became clear, as Aharon, Moshe's brother, pointed out, that Moshe "rushed to judgment" and was mistaken. To his credit, Moshe was not too embarrassed to admit his mistake.

Malbim, a brilliant and often creatively insightful 19th century commentator, suggests with regard to these verses that there is a reciprocal relationship between anger and error. Yes, when one is in a state of anger, his judgment is clouded, and he is prone to error. But it is also true, he argues, that when one is blinded by error, he is prone to anger. Often, seeing the facts clearly precludes the angry response. Once again, we have seen the great wisdom that can be accessed by merely "scratching the surface" of the biblical text. On the surface, this week's biblical portion offers us the names of two species of fowl which are ritually excluded from the Jewish menu. But beneath the surface, these two birds, the stork and the heron, open up two vast chapters in the comprehensive book of Jewish ethics. From the stork, we learn how important it is that our charity be inclusive and extend even to populations far-removed, geographically, ethnically or religiously, from us.

And from the heron, we learn about the dangers of anger and about the dynamic relationship between our intellectual powers and our emotional passions. Sometimes, intellectual faults lead to sinful emotions. More frequently, unbridled emotions compromise our intellect in ways which can be disastrous.

Two lessons from two birds: Be sensitive to the needs of all human beings whether they resemble you or not, and control your anger, lest you fall into the snares of errors and mistakes.

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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parsha Parables- Shemini - Split Decision
Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky
Stories & Anecdotes that Illuminate the Weekly Torah Portion and Holidays

Dedicated in memory of George Fisch and Rebecca Stein by Ruth and Lionel Fisch. In memory of Rebecca Stein ob"m -- Rivka bas Avraham Tzvi - Adar 21 & George Fisch ob"m -- Yehuda ben Yosef ob"m Adar 22

I have always been fascinated by a Gemara in Tractate Kidushin 30a. that mentions two words in this week's portion. The two words are next to each other, but in a way, they are worlds apart. "The early [scholars] were called sofrim (counters) because they used to count all the letters of the Torah. Thus, they said, the vav in (the word) gachon in this week's Parshas Shemini marks half the letters of the Torah; (indeed the word contains a large Vav, perhaps as a demarcation symbol of its significance). But I'd like to focus on the next line: "The words darosh darash, represent the halfway mark of the words of the Torah." According to the Gemara, this week we reach the halfway mark of the entire Torah in this week's parsha, (Can you imagine already a half of a year has gone by since Parshas Breishis?), and the divide are two words, spelled exactly the same way with three letters, Dalet Reish Shin. One Dorosh is on the right side of the Torah and the other Dorash though right next to it on the page, is on the left side of the Torah. What fascinates me is that the Divine architecture of the Torah has two words, spelled exactly the same way each on different sides of the Torah. One is on the left; one is on the right.

I pondered this fact for a while and analyzed it in the context of the Dorosh, Dorash story as I wondered why Hashem would have wanted to split the Torah right there on that spot. It must be teaching us something. What is the message? What can be the meaning?

The basic context of the story is that in this week's portion, the Mishkan is dedicated. It was festive day, with sacrifices being brought and praise for the Almighty, that is, until tragedy struck. Two of Aharon's children, Nadav and Avihu, brought a strange offering which He had not commanded them. "And there came forth fire from before the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before Hashem."

The tragedy rendered Aharon the Kohen Gadol and his sons mourners which invalidated some of them from certain service in the newly dedicated Mishkan.

The Torah tells us that Moses diligently enquired (darosh darash) after the goat of the sin-offering, and behold, it had been burnt and not eaten as he felt the case should have been. Thus he became upset with Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's surviving sons. I won't go into the intricacies of Moshe's objection, to which his brother actually rejoined leading to Moshe's admission of error. But what I'd like to analyze is the reason why the words for this particular inquiry and ultimate chastisement (darosh darash) represent two sides of the Torah.

The Story

noted psychiatrist and author, Rabbi Dr. Abraham Joshua Twerski telling a story, which I have heard personally, but found transcribed and thus present in that form: "I can't let this talk go by without sharing my favorite memory, which goes back to the thirties when I grew up living over a Beis Medrash. People at that time were mainly horse drivers collecting scraps of metal and rags. Before minchah every day, the men would sit drinking hot tea and playing chess. At five years old, I watched, learned, and played chess with the men. By nine I could beat all the local old folks. Once a visiting rabbi from Chicago challenged me to a game on Rosh HaShanah. He told me it was OK. Later the shamash told me that the (Milwaukee) Rebbe, (Rav Jacob Twerski) my father, wanted to see me. He looked up from his sefer and asked me if I'd played chess and with a slight look, conveyed that I shouldn't have. I waited to be dismissed. I couldn't leave without being dismissed. I stood there waiting to be told, "Gei gezunteheit." Finally my father asked, "Did you beat him?" "Twice," I answered. And then my father said, "Gei gezunteheit."

A la Twerski story, my own mother, Rebbitzin Tzirel Kamenetzky (nee Spiegel) is also fond of telling the story of her own brothers, each now a Chassidic Rebbe in their own right, who as kids were listening to a Yankee game on a hidden transistor, probably during time that they should have been learning. My grandfather Rav Pinchus Eliyahu

Spiegel, the Ostrover Kalushiner rebbe, chided them as well. But as they turned to leave, he called them back with a twinkle, "Nu? Huben zai khotch gevunen? (Nu, did they at least win?)

The Message

The Talmud tells us an amazing axiom about giving mussar. There must be a combination of firm admonition on the left hand, but caring and compassion on the other hand, or, as the Talmud puts it, "One must push away with the left hand while drawing closer with the right hand" (Sanhedrin 107b).

Perhaps the Torah divides the words, (darosh darash) into two parts, one on the right side of the Torah, and the other on the left to hint to us that there is a right side dorosh and a left side darash. Indeed, the Torah tells us on the left side of the Torah, that Moshe dorash and became upset. Maybe it is a veiled allusion to the left handed mussar that must be a bit firmer. While the right dorash is detached from it as a separate entity to draw the children close.

In honor of Ronald and Sonya Krigsman shetichyu. Saadia and Sorala Krigsman and family, Chaim and Ann Krigsman and family, Tzvi and Hudi Krigsman and family, Meyer and Sharon Weissman and family

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Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Psalm 24: Climbing and Standing

"Who shall climb God's mountain? And who shall stand in His holy place?" (Ps. 24:3)

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

Ascending in Knowledge

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

Climbing God's mountain suggests a spiritual ascent, through intellectual enlightenment and refinement of character. Torah study in particular is associated with spiritual advance, as one gains knowledge and ethical insight. Therefore Torah study is referred to as a derech, a path upon which one advances. As Hillel taught, "One who does not increase his knowledge - decreases" (Avot I:12).

Standing in Prayer

Which Divine service corresponds to 'standing in His holy place'?

When we walk or climb, our legs are apart. We make progress, but our position is less secure and less stable. When we stand, on the other hand, our legs are joined together. Standing indicates a state of stability and balance.

Spiritually, to stand is to absorb that which we have learned and grasped. It is a critical part of Divine service, when we reinforce our spiritual acquisitions. By ingraining these attainments in the soul, we ensure that they will stay with us, despite life's trials and vicissitudes.

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

For this reason, the Sages taught that one should pray standing, with one's legs together. In this service we are like the angels, who are described as having a single, straight leg - "their leg was a straight leg"

(Ezekiel 1:7). Angels do not progress in holiness. Their very essence is one of maintaining their level of spiritual perfection. When we pray, we emulate the angel's stance of unity and harmony, of being at one with our spiritual state.

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

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

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By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

The Milky Whey – The Cholov Yisrael controversy

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1:

Shirley mentions to her friend: "I do not understand why some people keep chalav Yisrael today. Do they really think that someone is adding pig's milk?"

Question #2:

Muttie inquires: "My friend quoted his rav that it is more important to keep chalav Yisrael today than it ever was before. How could this be?"

Chazal derive from this week's parsha a rule that whatever derives from a non-kosher species, such as eggs or milk from non-kosher species, is also non-kosher, and thus milk of mares, camels, llamas, donkeys or sows are all non-kosher. Still people find chalav Yisrael a perplexing subject matter. We have all heard various authorities quoted that today use of chalav Yisrael is only a chumrah, whereas others rule that consuming non-chalav Yisrael foods is a serious infraction of halacha. The mission of this article is to provide appreciation of the issues involved. So, let us start from the beginning of the topic, by understanding the origins of this proscription and then explaining the different approaches why it does or does not apply today.

Before we even begin our halachic discussion, we need some biological and food production information. The definition of a mammal is an animal that nurses its young with mother's milk. (The Modern Hebrew word for mammal is yoneik, literally, that which nurses, meaning that the young suckles mother's milk.) Hashem, who provides for all His creatures, custom-developed a formula that provides the ideal nourishment for the young of each mammalian species. This supplies the perfect "food pyramid" balanced diet with all the proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals that a young growing foal, cub, kitten, puppy, kid, lamb, infant or calf need to thrive and mature until they are ready for an adult diet, which in many species is when they are ready to earn their own living.

There are thousands of species of mammals, yet each species' milk is somewhat unique. The young of kosher animals require a certain protein, called caseine, in higher proportions than do the young of non-kosher animals, and therefore Hashem made kosher milk with a higher proportion of caseine. Non-kosher milk, of course, also contains significant amount of protein necessary for a young growing mammal, but most of this protein is categorized as "whey protein." (When I use the term "non-kosher milk" in this article I will be referring to milk from non-kosher species.) Kosher milk also contains whey protein, but in much smaller proportion to the casein in the milk.

The Origins of Chalav Yisrael

The Mishnah (Avodah Zarah 35b, 39b) proscribes consuming milk that a gentile milked unless a Jew supervised the milking, a prohibition called chalav akum. The Gemara notes that we are not concerned that the gentile is misrepresenting non-kosher milk as kosher -- milk from non-kosher species looks different from kosher milk, and this would be easily identified. Rather, the prohibition is because the milk may have been adulterated with milk of a non-kosher species. The Gemara subsequently discusses how closely must the Jew supervise the milking, concluding that when the gentile has both kosher and non-kosher animals that could be milked, the Jew may be sitting in a place where he/she cannot observe the milking, provided that should he/she stand up he would be able to observe the milking. Since the Jew can rise to his feet at any moment, we may assume that the gentile would not risk milking his non-kosher animal and lose the Jew's business. Therefore this milk still qualifies as kosher chalav Yisrael, meaning milk that was supervised by a Jew. On the other hand, should the gentile have only kosher species in his herd, the Gemara implies that the Jew does not need to maintain as close supervision, but it does not define exactly how much supervision is required. Although the milking still requires the attendance of a Jew, the halachic authorities dispute the reason and purpose of the Jew's presence. This dispute is what underlies the controversy alluded to above.

The most lenient approach

The most lenient approach to the question of chalav akum is that of the Pri Chodosh (Yoreh Deah 115:15), who understands that one only needs to be concerned about chalav akum when the non-kosher milk is less expensive than the kosher variety, or it is difficult to sell. However, when kosher milk is less expensive, he contends that one does not need to be concerned that the gentile would add more expensive specialty non-kosher milk into regular kosher milk. The Pri Chodosh reports that he was living in Amsterdam at the time that he wrote his commentary, and the vast majority of the Torah community there drank the milk sold by gentiles and did not consider it to be chalav akum. He further adds that he himself relied on this approach and drank this milk. The key point of the Pri Chodosh is that there is no requirement that a Jew actually observe the milking, nor is there even a requirement that one be absolutely certain that no non-kosher milk was added. It is adequate if the situation is such that we can assume that the gentile has no incentive to add non-kosher milk to his product, and the Mishnah and Gemara that required a Jew to supervise the milking did so only when the gentile has an incentive to adulterate the milk.

The Chasam Sofer's approach

On the other hand, the Chasam Sofer took tremendous umbrage at people who were lenient in observing chalav Yisrael and used milk from gentiles. He maintained that the requirement that a Jew actually supervise the milking creates a prohibition with the halachic status of *davar shebeminyan*, a rabbinic injunction that remains binding until a larger and more authoritative body declares the original sanction invalid, even when the reason the *takanah* was introduced no longer applies (see Gemara Beitzah 5a). Since a more authoritative *beis din* never rescinded the prohibition on unsupervised gentile milk, consuming this milk involves a serious violation. The Chasam Sofer requires that a Jew be on hand to observe (or be able to observe) the milking, and if a Jew was not there, the produced milk is completely non-kosher because of the rabbinic injunction, even when there is no incentive for the non-Jew to adulterate the product.

In general, Chazal (Bava Basra 110a; Avodah Zarah 27b) invoke the verse *uporeitz geder yishachenu nachash* (see Koheles 10:8) to mean that someone who violates a rabbinic injunction deserves to be punished by being bitten by a snake, an indication that people should be exceedingly careful not to ignore rabbinic prohibitions. The Chasam Sofer (Shu"t

Yoreh Deah #107) writes that someone who ignores the rabbinic prohibition of chalav akum and drinks milk relying that the gentile would not add non-kosher milk deserves this punishment. Furthermore, the Chasam Sofer contends that even if the Pri Chodosh is correct that when kosher milk is cheaper than non-kosher the prohibition of chalav akum does not apply, since the Jewish people rejected this ruling of the Pri Chodosh, they are prohibited from consuming dairy product that a Jew did not supervise because of the laws of nedarim, vows. Since Jews do not use chalav akum even in places where non-kosher species are not milked, it is considered that they accepted a vow to prohibit unsupervised milk. As a result, it is prohibited min HaTorah to consume unsupervised milk with the full stringency of a vow.

One in-between position

There is an approach in between these two positions, that of Rav Moshe Feinstein and the Chazon Ish (Yoreh Deah 41:4) who contend that in a place where non-kosher milk commands a higher price than kosher milk, it is still prohibited to use non-supervised milk. However, Rav Moshe understands that the takanah did not specifically require that a Jew attend the milking, but that one is completely certain that the milk has no admixture of non-kosher. However, when one is certain that the kosher milk is unadulterated; halacha considers the milk to be "supervised" (Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah 1:47).

How can one be certain? The Mishnah recommended the most obvious way: have a Jew nearby who may enter at any moment. Of course, we realize that even this method is not foolproof, but it is as thorough as halacha required.

Is there another way that one can be certain? Allow me to use my own example to explain Rav Moshe's approach. Someone runs laboratory tests on some unsupervised milk and concludes with absolute certainty that in front of him is 100% sheep's milk. However, no Jew supervised the milking. Is the milk kosher?

According to Rav Moshe's analysis, this milk is certainly kosher since we can ascertain its source.

In his earliest published teshuvah on the subject, Rav Moshe explained that when the government fines for adulteration of cow's milk, the fear of this fine is sufficient proof that the milk is kosher. In later teshuvos, he is very clear that other reasons why we can assume that the milk is kosher are sufficient proof, including that normal commercial practice is that standard milk is bovine milk (Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah 1:48, 49). One should note that the Chazon Ish also agrees with Rav Moshe's approach.

Being Stringent

Although Rav Moshe concludes that where one can rely that the standardly available milk is kosher there is no prohibition of chalav akum, he still rules in a different teshuvah that a chinuch institution use only chalav Yisrael products even if all the children come from homes that do not use chalav Yisrael exclusively. He contends that part of chinuch is to show children that one follows a stricter standard even when halacha does not necessarily require one.

Contemporary Problem

There is another potential reason why some poskim who in general accept the lenient approaches regarding the prohibition of chalav akum feel that one should be stringent which is because of a common veterinary problem that affects dairy cows called displaced abomasum. I will discuss this topic a different time.

At this point we can answer Shirley's question, which I mentioned above: "I do not understand why some people keep chalav Yisrael today. Do they really think that someone is adding pig's milk?"

Indeed, even in the time of the Gemara, it was probably unheard of for anyone to add pig's milk or, for that matter, for anyone to use pig's milk,

since sows are almost impossible to milk. Although most non-kosher species do not allow themselves to be milked (Have you ever tried to milk a cat?), camels, donkeys, and mares can all be milked and produce a palatable product. As a matter of fact, at times there was a large (non-kosher) market for mare's milk because of its reputed health benefits. (See Encyclopedia Talmudis Volume 15 column 178-179.)

Contemporarily, there is extensive research at Ben Gurion University about use of some antibodies found in camel's milk for treatment of a host of autoimmune diseases. (The shaylos that result from this last case will need to be dealt with a different time.)

To answer Shirley's question succinctly: Although we can assume that the milk on your supermarket shelf is unadulterated cow's milk, the Chasam Sofer still rules that Chazal prohibited consuming this milk, and this prohibition is in full effect today, even when the reason for the takanah no longer applies. In addition, other rabbonim have voiced different concerns about the kashrus of unsupervised dairy cows.

Stricter than before?

At this point, let us examine the second question I mentioned above:

"My friend quoted his rav that it is more important to keep chalav Yisrael today than it ever was before. How could this be?" One obvious reason for this rav's position is that he holds like the Chasam Sofer that using non-chalav Yisrael incurs a Torah prohibition of violating vows. Furthermore, he may feel that since being lenient on this issue is so rampant one must demonstrate the importance of this mitzvah. He also may be concerned about the displaced abomasums problem.

In Conclusion

Notwithstanding that the Chazon Ish writes the reasons why unsupervised milk is permitted, he never allowed its use; and Rav Moshe similarly advocates being strict, and himself did not rely on the heter. Similarly, it is well known that Rav Eliezer Silver traveled across North America by train taking his own chalav Yisrael milk with him as he went. (I have no idea why it did not spoil en route.) In conclusion, we allow each reader to clarify with his own rav whether his or her circumstances permit relying on using non-chalav Yisrael milk.
