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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VAYIKRA - 5769

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Covenant & Conversation

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

Sir Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British
Commonwealth

[From 5765]

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Vayikra The Sin Offering

Vayikra is about sacrifices, and though these laws have been inoperative for almost 2000 years since the destruction of the Temple, the moral principles they embody are still challenging.

One set of sacrifices, set out in detail in this week's sedra, warrants particular attention: hattat, the 'sin offering'. Four different cases are considered: the anointed priest (=high priest), the assembly (=the Sanhedrin or supreme court), the Prince (=King), and an ordinary individual. Because their roles in the community were different, so too was the form of their atonement.

The sin offering was to be brought only for major sins, those that carried the penalty of karet, 'being cut off'; and only if they were committed unintentionally or inadvertently (be-shogeg). This could happen in one of two ways, either [a] because the person concerned did not know the law (for example, that cooking is forbidden on Sabbath) or [b] he or she did not know the facts (for instance, that today is the Sabbath).

Unintentional sins stand midway between intentional sins (where you knew what you were doing was wrong) and involuntary action (ones, where you were not acting freely at all: it was a reflex action, or someone was pointing a gun at your head). Intentional sins cannot be atoned for by sacrifice. Involuntary actions do not need atonement. Thus, the sin offering is confined to a middle range of cases, where you did wrong, but you didn't know you were doing wrong.

The question is obvious: Why should unintentional sins require atonement at all? What guilt is involved? The sinner did not mean to sin. The requisite intent (mens rea) was lacking. Had the offender known the facts and the law at the time, he would not have done what he did. Why then does he have to undergo a process of atonement? To this, the commentators gave a variety of answers.

R. Samson Raphael Hirsch and R. David Zvi Hoffman give the most straightforward explanation. Ignorance - whether of the facts or the law - is a form of negligence. We should know the law, especially in the most

serious cases. We should also exercise vigilance: we should know what we are doing. That is a fundamental obligation, especially in relation to the most serious areas of conduct.

Abrabanel argues that the sin offering was less a punishment for what had been done, than a solemn warning against sin in the future. The bringing of a sacrifice, involving considerable effort and expense, was a vivid reminder to the individual to be more careful in the future.

Nahmanides suggests that the sin offering was brought not because of what led to the act, but rather because of what followed from it. Sin, even without intention, defiles. The reason for the offerings for the erring soul is that all sins [even if committed unwittingly] produce a "stain" on the soul and constitute a blemish in it, and the soul is only worthy to be received by its Creator when it is pure of all sin.'

The late Lubavitcher Rebbe, following midrashic tradition, offered a fourth interpretation. Even inadvertent sins testify to something wrong on the part of the person concerned. Bad things do not come about through good people. The sages said that G-d does not allow even the animals of the righteous to do wrong; how much more so does He protect the righteous themselves from error and mishap (see Yevamot 99b; Ketubot 28b). There must therefore have been something wrong with the individual for the mishap to have taken place.

This view - characteristic of the Habad approach, with its emphasis on the psychology of the religious life - shares more than a passing similarity with Sigmund Freud's analysis of the unconscious, which gave rise to the phrase, 'a Freudian slip'. Remarks or acts that seem unintentional often betray unconscious desires or motives. Indeed, we can often glimpse the unconscious more readily at such moments than when the person is acting in full knowledge and deliberation. Inadvertent sins suggest something amiss in the soul of the sinner. It is this fault, which may lie beneath the threshold of consciousness, which is atoned for by the hattat.

Whichever explanation we follow, the hattat represents an idea familiar in law but strangely unfamiliar in Western ethics. Our acts make a difference to the world.

Under the influence of Immanuel Kant, we have come to think that all that matters as far as morality is concerned is the will. If our will is good, then we are good, regardless of what we actually do. We are judged by our intentions, not our deeds. Judaism does recognise the difference between good will and bad. That is why deliberate sins cannot be atoned for by a sacrifice, whereas unintentional ones can.

Yet the very fact that unintentional sins require atonement tells us that we cannot dissociate ourselves from our actions by saying: 'I didn't mean to do it.' Wrong was done - and it was done by us. Therefore we must perform an act that signals our contrition. We cannot just walk away as if the act had nothing to do with us.

Many years ago a secular Jewish novelist said to me: 'Isn't Judaism full of guilt?' To which I replied, 'Yes, but it is also full of forgiveness.' The entire institution of the sin offering is about forgiveness. However, Judaism makes a serious moral statement when it refuses to split the human person into two entities - body and soul, act and intention, objective and subjective, the world 'out there' and the world 'in here'. Kant did just that. All that matters morally, he argued, is what happens 'in here', in the soul.

Is it entirely accidental that the culture most influenced by Kant was also the one that gave rise to the Holocaust? I do not mean - Heaven forbid - that the sage of Konigsberg was in any way responsible for that tragedy. Yet it remains the case that many good and decent people did nothing to protest the single greatest crime of man against man while it was taking place. Many of them surely thought that it had nothing to do with them. If they bore the Jews no particular ill will, why should they feel guilty? Yet the result of their action or inaction had real consequences in the physical world. A culture that confines morality to the mind is one that lacks an adequate defence against harmful behaviour.

The sin offering reminds us that the wrong we do, or let happen, even if we did not intend it, still requires atonement. Unfashionable though this is,

a morality that speaks about action, not just intention - about what happens through us even if we didn't mean to do it - is more compelling, more true to the human situation, than one that speaks of intention alone.

from **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> reply-to ryfrand@torah.org, genesis@torah.org to ravfrand@torah.org date Thu, Mar 26, 2009 at 11:05 AM subject Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vayikra mailed-by torah.org Images from this sender are always displayed. Don't display from now on. hide details 11:05 AM (21 hours ago)

In Order To A Believer, One Must First Be Trustworthy

The following is based on idea I heard from Rabbi Matisyahu Solomon. It was primarily a talk about Pesach, but it also has a tie-in to this week's parsha.

The first pasuk [verse] of Parshas Vayikra reads: "He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting saying (leimor)" [Vayikra 1:1] The Gemara teaches that the word leimor means to say over to others. The Talmud derives from this wording construction that one is not allowed to share information he is told in private unless the party who related the information specifically authorizes its further transmission. [Yoma 4b] This is known as the prohibition of Gilui Sod – revealing a secret.

In the secular world, there is a concept of lawyer-client privilege and doctor-patient confidentiality, where a lawyer or doctor is not permitted to reveal information provided to him in confidence. In halacha, this requirement has a much broader scope and basically applies to every Jew.

The Yalkut in Parshas Emor states that in the merit of 4 things, the Jews merited to be redeemed from Egypt. The first 3 are well known: They did not change their names, their language, or their mode of dress. The fourth source of merit enumerated by the Medrash is that they did not speak lashon hara [gossip; slander]. As proof that they did not speak lashon hara in Egypt, the Medrash cites the fact that they were able to keep a secret. The secret that they kept refers to G-d's original message to Moshe in Parshas Shmos: "I am going to take the Jews out of Egypt and before I take them out of Egypt they are going to go to their neighbors and ask for their gold and silver vessels." The Jews heard this prophecy before any of the plagues began and no one let it get out to the Egyptians that before the Jews left they would strip the Egypt of all gold and silver! The Egyptians were unsuspecting because no Jew revealed this secret.

The question that must be asked regarding this Medrash is – what is the connection between keeping a secret and not speaking lashon hara? The answer to this question is actually an explicit pasuk in Proverbs: "One who goes along slandering reveals secrets" [Mishlei 11:13]. The root problem of one who slanders is that he cannot be trusted. If a person shares it with others that which he is told in confidence, there is a fundamental problem, besides the aspect of slander (rechilus). The person's word is not a word. He cannot be trusted.

The Medrash is teaching that the reason why they were redeemed from Egypt was, among other reasons, because they were able to keep secrets. What is so great about being able to keep secrets?

Prior to answering this question, consider another incident at the beginning of Sefer Shmos. When Moshe Rabbeinu was still in Egypt, he saw an Egyptian beating up a Jew. He killed the Egyptian. The next day, he saw two Jews fighting. He said to the bully, "Wicked one, why are you hitting your fellow man?" The bully turned on Moshe and said "Aha, do you plan to kill me like you killed the Egyptian?" Moshe's reaction was "Behold, the matter is known" (achen nodah ha'davar) [Shmos 2:11-14].

Rashi explains that the words achen nodah ha'davar do not merely mean "behold the secret is out". Rather, the words mean: "behold, now I understand (i.e. – the matter is known to ME) what Israel's sin was that caused them to suffer as slaves. In other words, Moshe now understood

why the redemption has not yet arrived. It was because they couldn't keep a secret.

So we see from the very beginning of the story in Shmos that getting out of Egypt was somehow dependant on the ability of Israel to keep secrets. So again we must ask, what is so important about the ability to keep secrets?

The answer is that leaving Egypt was all about believing and keeping the Word of G-d. The whole purpose of leaving Egypt was to accept the Torah and to believe in the Almighty. When the Master of the Universe tells us to do certain things, we must believe that these things must be done!

Rav Matisyahu Solomon says that one cannot be a believer (ma'amin) unless he is first faithful (ne'eman). One cannot believe in the Word of G-d unless he himself is a person who values a word. If it means nothing when I say something, then when G-d says something, why should I believe it? The more trustworthy a person is and the more meticulous he is about his own words, the more he will be faithful to the Word of the Almighty.

At the beginning of the story of the Exodus, Moshe said: "I know why they are still here – because they can't keep a secret." So what changed to indicate that they were worthy of redemption? When Moshe returned to Egypt many years later, the Almighty trusted them with a secret that they did not reveal. Since they were able to keep that secret, G-d knew that now they could be trusted and be trustworthy and be deserving of redemption.

Since they met their commitment not to reveal the secret of taking the gold and silver out of Egypt, they could be trusted that when G-d told them "I am the L-rd your G-d", His word would mean something to them as well.

Every Yom Tov has its own mitzvah. The mitzvah of the night of Pesach is to become ma'aminim [believers]. However, in order to become ma'minim, we must first become ne'emanim [trustworthy].

This write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah Portion. Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.

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Rabbi Benjamin Yudin Not Just Lip Service

This week we begin sefer Vayikra, which concentrates on korbanos. Since we have not had a Beis Hamikdash for almost two thousand years, the topic of korbanos seems remote, removed, and foreign to us. I'd like to begin by listing the many ways that the korban Pesach impacts upon us.

1. While the yom tov of Pesach does not begin until the night of the fifteenth of Nissan, one is forbidden to eat chometz on erev Pesach from midday (Devarim 16:3), as that is the time when the korban Pesach was slaughtered.

2. One is not to own chometz on erev Pesach, as the Torah says, "you shall not slaughter my blood offering (i.e. the korban Pesach) while in possession of chmoetz" (Shemos 24:25)
3. The mishna (Pesachim 4:1) teaches that from midday on erev Pesach it is forbidden to work, as one is restricted from working whenever their korban was brought. Thus, erev Pesach starting from midday, i.e. the time for bringing the korban Pesach, is to be treated like chol hamoed, even outside of Eretz Yisroel
4. Unlike Shabbos, which one may begin from plag hamincha (a halachik hour and a quarter prior to sunset) and eat their Shabbos meal while it is still day (Friday), one is not to begin the Pesach seder until night. The reason for this is that the Torah ordains that the Pesach is to be eaten at night (Shemos 12:8) and all the other mitzvos of the night go into affect with the time of the korban Pesach
5. The custom of wearing a kitul at the seder is explained by the Netziv in his Hagadah as a remembrance to the white robe on donned when eating kodshim (sacrifices).
6. The custom of having the zroa on the sder plate is to recall the korban Pesach. The placing of the hard-boiled egg is to remember the korban chagigah
7. We wash our hands prior to eating karpas. The vegetable is dipped in salt water (dovor shetibulo bemashke), and such dipped items require hand washing when one eats the wet food. The Taz points to this practice and sharply criticizes those who are not careful to wash their hands before eating a wet fruit or vegetable all year long. One could defend the practice of "urchatz" not only to arouse the curiosity of the young, but to conduct ourselves on this night in keeping with the way all practiced when we had a Beis Hamikdash
8. Rav Chaim Brisker zt"l explained that the purpose of the custom of hiding the matzah designated as afikoman after yachatz is not only to maintain the interest and excitement of the children, but also is connected to the korban Pesach. The afikoman is eaten at the end of the meal as a remembrance of the korban Pesach, and the korban Pesach needed shemira (guarding) and hesech hadaas (lapse in awareness) could disqualify the Pesach lest it became tamei (impure). To avoid such disqualification, the korban Pesach was kept in a safe place until the time it was eaten, hence our minhag to hide the afikoman. It would therefore make sense for the one conducting the seder to hide the afikoman, not the children.
9. While we point to the matzah and marror when we explain their significance as part of Rabban Shomin ben Gamliel haya omer, we do not point to the shank bone, lest we assign it the actual status of a korban Pesach.
10. The mitzvah of eating marror today is only a mitzvah miderabanan (rabbinic mitzvah). It is doraysa (Biblical) only when it accompanies the korban Pesach.
11. The custom of Ashkenzim is to abstain from eating roasted meat at the seder lest one assume they are eating the korban Pesach, which would be a violation of kodshim bachutz.
12. In keeping with the opinion of Rosh, the afikoman is eaten at the end of the meal, just as the korban Pesach was eaten "al hasovah - when they were full", and serves as a remembrance of the korban Pesach. According to Rashbam, the afikoman, the fulfillment of the mitzvah of matzah, is eaten at the end of the meal as a remembrance of the matzah that was eaten with the korban Pesach at the end of the meal. Both Rosh and Rashbam agree that it is preferable to eat the afikoman prior to chatzos, as was the korban Pesach.
13. Rav Yosef Salant zt"l (in Be'er Yosef) explains that the practice of opening the door after birkas hamazon is not only to welcome Eliyahu hanavi ushering in the future redemption. One had to eat the korban Pesach on the ground level, as the roofs and upper floors in Yerushalayim did not share the kedusha of the rest of the city that enables the consumption of the korban Pesach. The door was kept closed during the meal lest one take the korban Pesach outside or upstairs, and after the meal the Jews went onto

the rooftops to sing Hallel. We open our doors today in remembrance of this sequence.

There is one additional way that the korban Pesach impacts upon our seder. The word seder means a prescribed order of events. Out of the fifteen components of this seder, the first fourteen are all some type of action (including the fourteenth - Hallel - the recitation of the second half of Hallel). The last component is somewhat challenging. Nirtzah means acceptance, and we daven that our seder will be accepted On High. For this reason the Chidah in his Hagadah (Simchas Haregel) lists only fourteen components, counting Hallel and nirtzah as one.

However, in light of the impact of the korban Pesach on our seder, the final component takes on great meaning. Nirtzah comes from the passuk (Vayikra 1:4), "vnirtzah lo lechaper alav - it shall become acceptable to him, to atone for him." The term ritzui is only found after and in conjunction with korbanos. We don't ask for ritzui after affixing a mezuzah, wearing tefillin, etc. We do, however, conclude every shemoneh esrei with the prayer of retzei. Since our daily tefillah substitute for the daily korbanos in the beis hamikdash, we conclude our tefillos appropriately with a supplication of ritzui.

If our rabbis looked upon the seder only as the performance of a set of mitzvos (matzah, hagadah, daled kosos, marror, etc.) there would be no place for nirtzah. However, the text of nirtzah exclaims, "as we have carried out the Pesach observance of this seder, so may we merit to fulfill the actual korban Pesach in the future." We are asking Hashem to accept our seder as a partial fulfillment of the korban Pesach, and thus the inclusion of ritzui is appropriate.

This special request, that our seder partially replace a korban Pesach, can only take place in an environment of kedusha. While it is true all year that, "when we were privileged to have a Beis Hamikdash the mizbeach was mechaper; now shulchano shel adam is mechaper" (Berachos 55a), this is especially true at the Pesach seder. I have witnessed how not yet observant families who participated at a Pesach seder found the experience to be transforming, to the point that they embraced a Torah observant lifestyle. Make your seder count. Not only during maggid should there be an exciting give and take among all the participants, but even the discussions during the meal should be channeled to reflect "ashreinu matov chelkeinu umanaim goraleinu."

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Parsha Page by Fred Toczek - A Service of Anshe Emes Synagogue (Los Angeles)

VAYIKRAH 5757

I. Summary

The Five Principal Korbanos (Sacrifices) which could be offered by an individual:

A. Olah (Consumed Offering): This was consumed entirely by the fire on the Altar.

B. Mincha (Allegiance - Gift): An offering of flour usually brought by a person of modest means.

C. Sh'lomim (Peace Offering): A means of expressing thanks to Hashem on joyous occasions.

D. Chatos (Sin Offering): An atonement for certain sins committed unintentionally by an individual (e.g., eating Chometz on Pesach, doing a Malacha on Shabbos).

Korbon Oleh V'Yored: A special type of sin offering (which varied according to the sinner's wealth) for: (1) swearing falsely that he hadn't seen or heard evidence necessary for testimony; (2) entering the Sanctuary, or eating Kodshim while "tumah" (unclean); and (3) failing to fulfill a vow.

E. Oshom (Guilt Offering): Offered as part of the penitence required for certain improper acts (e.g., retaining another's property by swearing falsely). (In each case, the wrongdoer was required to restore the property plus an

additional 20% to its rightful owner before he could offer this sacrifice and receive Divine forgiveness.)

II. Divrei Torah

A. Lil'Mode U'Lilamed (Rabbi Mordechai Katz)

1. Korbonos (Sacrifices) and Prayers. The word "Korbonos" includes the word "Korov" (near); a sacrifice was a means of approaching Hashem, supplicating for Divine forgiveness or demonstrating appreciation for Divine assistance, and bringing oneself closer to Hashem. How do we achieve this today? Through prayer. Prayer testifies to Hashem's mastery of the world, gives us an opportunity to thank Hashem and allows us to ask for Hashem's assistance.

2. Offering one's "soul". The Torah refers to one who offers the Mincha offering as "the Soul who will offer a Korbon." Why does it use the word "soul", not "person"? This sacrifice was ordinarily offered by a poor person, for whom it was a difficult financial burden. Thus, in Hashem's Eyes, it is as though his very soul was sacrificed. This is the essence of offering sacrifices, or giving charity, as illustrated by the following story: A Rabbi was approached by a widow, despondent that she didn't have any money for the marriage of her daughter. The Rabbi initially said "if only I were wealthy, I would gladly give you money"; a few minutes later, he went to the cupboard and gave her a pair of silver candlesticks which he had received as a present. After the woman left, he explained to his wife what had happened and told her that two potatoes would serve as their new candlesticks. When his wife noted how much he loved the silver candlesticks, the Rabbi responded: "I know, and now I realize what true Tzedakah (charity) means".

B. Growth Through Torah (Rabbi Zelig Pliskin)

1. Acknowledge the gifts you have received from Hashem. "And if you bring near a flour offering baked in the oven . . . and if your offering is a flour offering baked in a pan . . . and if your offering is a flour offering baked in a pot." Rabbi Hirsch comments that these three elements of the Mincha offering express our acknowledgment to Hashem for our food, comfort and satisfaction. More specifically, these items have the relationship to each other of bread (symbolizing the ordinary food for happy daily life), cake (symbolizing extra enjoyment, the unusual condition of luxury) and specially prepared foods (symbolizing temporary, passing moments of special joy). Together, they symbolize that our daily necessities, extras and moments of special joy are all gifts from Hashem.

2. Be yourself, but be certain to utilize your full potential. Yeast and honey were not permitted in the offerings on the altar, but salt was. Rabbi Mordechai Gifter teaches that yeast makes the dough rise higher and honey makes things sweeter, but both are external additives. Salt, however, only brings out the food's existing flavor. When serving Hashem, we should follow the model of salt -- we should be ourselves, but make every effort to be all that we can be. (Dipping bread in salt should remind us not only of the sacrifices, but of our obligation to use our potential to the fullest.)

3. Give charity according to your means. "And if one does not have the financial means for two turtledoves or young pigeons, one shall bring his offering for his transgression the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering". One must give charity based upon one's means; the same applies to one's other talents - e.g., the greater your intellect or listening skills, the greater your obligation to share your wisdom with, or lend an ear, to others.

C. Majesty of Man (Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz)

Moshe's Modesty. Why does the word "Vayikroh" in this Parsha include an Alef that is much smaller than the other letters? The word "vayikroh" means "called", and refers to Hashem calling upon Moshe. Moshe, however, wanted to write "vayikar" ("met" or "happened upon"), so as not to reveal the great honor Hashem bestowed upon him through direct communication with him. Hashem, however, insisted that the Alef be included, although it is printed smaller as an eternal reminder of Moshe's extraordinary humility. Rabbeinu Yonah teaches the meaning of humility by examining its opposite -- haughtiness, which results from feelings of

inferiority and inadequacy, and for which one compensates by denigrating others. However, one who is confident in himself (and has realistic understanding of his self-worth) has no need to be haughty or to pretend to be anyone he isn't. Since Moshe understood his true value, he didn't underestimate himself and therefore had no need to deprecate others. We must each realize that we have a unique soul given to us directly from Hashem and that, accordingly, our potential for achievement is immeasurable. With this understanding, we can be humble enough to admit our shortcomings and, as a result, show our inner strength and desire to improve ourselves. Humility can allow us to reach even higher levels of personal and spiritual growth and connection to Hashem.

D. Kol Dodi on the Torah (Rabbi David Feinstein)

"Torah, the service of Hashem and kind deeds" (the three pillars on which the world stands) (Pirke Avos). "And Hashem spoke to Moshe from the Tent of Meeting". Rashi comments that Hashem's voice stopped at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting; as we learn in Tehillim, Hashem's Voice is power -- why, then, didn't Hashem permit His Voice to be heard outside the walls of the Tent? The Torah was given 3 times -- at Mt. Sinai; in the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting); and on the Plains of Moab. Each time, it was conveyed in the exact same Voice, to show that all three times were of equal importance. But, why did it need to be repeated three times? Each time corresponds to one of the above pillars -- (1) Mt. Sinai represents the giving of the Torah; (2) the Mishkan, where the service of the offerings and incense took place, represents service of Hashem; and (3) the Plains of Moab, where the Jews entered into a covenant to be responsible for each other, highlights the pillar of generosity and kind relations among our fellow man. Each of these three aspects of Torah are mutually interdependent. Thus, for example, Torah learning must be for its own sake and directed towards serving Hashem and a means of finding ways of expressing kindness to others.

E. In The Garden of The Torah (the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, z'l)

The Dearness of Every Jew. The Parsha begins "And Hashem called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him". Before Hashem spoke to Moshe, He called to him, showing him an unique measure of endearment. Hashem did not call to him to impart information; rather, He did so to express the fundamental love He shares with our people (whom He was addressing through our leader, Moshe). The above concept is fundamental when it comes to relationships with our fellow Jews, even those whose conduct may be (at the present) estranged from our heritage. For every Jew has a soul that is "an actual part of G-d" (Tanya). We should strive to be inclusive, not exclusive, emulating the example of our Torah reading, and share with our fellow Jews the beauty of the Torah. In so doing, we must not be critical of another's level of observance (when Yeshayahu the prophet made harsh statements about the Jewish people, G-d rebuked him severely even though his words were justified); instead of being critical, we must endeavor to appreciate -- and always accentuate -- the positive qualities which every Jew possesses. For indeed, the very fact of a Jew's existence is an expression of G-d's praise, independent of any Divine service which he or she may perform.

F. Love Thy Neighbor (Rabbi Zelig Pliskin)

G-d is ever-present. The Torah states "If a person sins and commits a trespass against G-d, by lying to his comrade about an article for safekeeping . . . he shall give it to its owner on the day he admits his guilt". Why is this a trespass against G-d? The answer is illustrated by the following story: Once when Rabbi Zundel Salanter was riding in a wagon, the driver passed by an apple tree and was overcome by a desire to take a few apples. Not realizing the identity of his passenger, the driver told him "You keep watch and warn me if you see anyone looking." A few seconds later, Rav Zundel cried out, "Someone's looking!" The wagon driver jumped into the wagon and rode off. As he was driving away, he looked back and didn't see anyone. "What is the idea of fooling me?", shouted the

driver. "My dear friend", replied Rav Zundel, "I wouldn't lie to you. G-d sees every action".

G. Wellsprings of Torah (Rabbi Alexander Zusia Friedman)

A lesson in humility. "And he shall flay the burned offering and cut it into pieces." If a man thinks that he is a person of many virtues and fears lest this make him arrogant, let him take all his good deeds and virtues and "cut them to pieces," examine them thoroughly and critically, and he will see that he is still far from perfection.

H. Shabbos Stories (Rabbi Shimon Finkelman)

1. A lesson for children (and all of us). There is a widespread custom for young children to begin their study of Chumash (Bible) with this Parsha. The Book of Yayikrah deals with the laws of Temple service and ritual impurity. As the Midrash puts it, "Let the pure [children] come and engage in [the study of] the laws of purity." Sefer Avnei Ezel says that this custom is also a message to parents: The opening of the Book of Yayikrah deals extensively with korbanos (Temple sacrifices). A parent must be prepared to make sacrifices -- both financial and lifestyle -- so that his/her children can study Torah and grow up in a home imbued with a love and appreciation for Judaism.

2. Teaching your children. Chazal teach that the Book of Yayikrah opens with the words, "He [Hashem] called to Moshe" to teach that Hashem summoned Moshe lovingly, saying, "Moshe, Moshe, whenever He wished to speak with him." We may suggest that this, too, is implied in the custom of children beginning their study of Torah with the Book of Yayikrah. Just as Hashem called lovingly to Moshe, so too, must a parent or teacher speak lovingly to a child when teaching him or her the proper way to behave.

I. Divrei Torah (National Council of Young Israel)

A lesson of the Korbanos (Sacrifices). The above Midrash respecting the custom of children beginning their Chumash studies with this Parsha can be better understood by understanding the essence of the korbanot (sacrifices). Basically, korban, signifies "drawing near" to Hashem (from the root "korov" [near]) through the medium of sacrifices that the person offers to Hashem. This is effectuated by the understanding and realization on the part of the person that he is obligated to bring a korban. This understanding is followed by the actual performance of "smicha", laying of hands upon the offering and confessing his iniquities (Yoma 36A). The elements of repentance and appreciation of one's faults and inadequacies, thus "humbling oneself before Hashem," are basic to the proper offering of a korban. Humbleness is basic to Hashem's acceptance of the korban and greater than all sacrifices; whether bringing an external korban or an internal korban -- a willingness to sacrifice for his religious principles and convictions. By his sincerity of purpose while sacrificing, he draws nearer to Hashem. The Midrash quoted above stresses the importance of inculcating, from a very early age, the concept of humbleness before Hashem and readiness to sacrifice for one's religious convictions. Let the "pure" children occupy themselves with the "pure" -- korbanot that will teach them humbleness, leading to proper fear and reverence for Hashem, and thus develop a strength of character, ethics and morals.

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum - Parshas Vayikra Shema Yisrael Torah Network to Peninim show details Mar 26 (1 day ago) Reply from Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com> to Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com> date Thu, Mar 26, 2009 at 4:49 AM subject Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum - Parshas Vayikra mailing list peninim_shemayisrael.com.shemayisrael.com Filter messages from this mailing list mailed-by shemayisrael.com hide details Mar 26 (1 day ago) Reply PARSHAS VAYIKRA

And He (Hashem) called to Moshe. (1:1) When the Torah addresses Moshe Rabbeinu's prophecy, it uses the term, vayikra, "and He (Hashem) called", el Moshe, "to Moshe." It was a calling. When it mentions Bilaam's prophecy, it uses the word vayikar, as in Vayikar Elokim el Bilaam, "G-d happened upon Bilaam" (Bamidbar 23:4). Rashi explains that vayikar and vayikra are two completely different terms. Vayikra denotes intimacy, while vayikar is an expression which reflects impurity and transitoriness. Moshe felt uncomfortable using the word that suggests direct conversation with the Almighty. Why should he reveal the honor that Hashem had accorded to him? Thus, he spelled the calling as vayikar, in the happenstance mode, as a way of deflecting from his relationship with Hashem. Hashem, however, insisted upon including the aleph, which is printed smaller, as a reminder of the humility of our quintessential leader. The diminutive aleph defines Moshe. He felt himself to be undeserving. Hashem viewed him differently.

In light of the above, the Veinutter Rav, Horav Ezra Altschuller, zl, explains the Karnei Hod, Rays of Glory, that emanated from Moshe's face when he descended Har Sinai with the second set of Luchos. Chazal teach us that this extraordinary light emanated from the extra ink that remained after Moshe had concluded writing the Torah. Rav Altschuller explains that extra ink remained due to the miniature aleph. The ink he saved by making the aleph smaller became the radiant light that accompanied him. Thus, the light was the result of his humility. True anivus, humility, does not cause one to be less. On the contrary, it elevates the individual, causing honor to be bestowed upon him.

What is humility, and how does one acquire this important characteristic? Rabbeinu Yonah explains the root of gaavah, haughtiness, the converse of humility. From his words, we can posit the meaning of anivus, humility. He asserts that when a person feels that he is lacking in a certain quality-- or he lacks knowledge concerning a certain topic-- he often seeks to compensate for his deficit. This inferiority complex, gives the individual license to denigrate others, so that he no longer feels as small. This process may occur either overtly or on a subconscious level as a way of assuaging his feelings of incompetence. In other words, one who feels inferior, has to compensate for his feelings, by acting haughtily, arrogantly, in a superior manner. One who is self-confident, however, has no need to present himself as someone other than himself. A secure person has a need neither for acclaim nor to bend the truth. He accepts who he is, and he feels good about himself!

Horav Alter Henach Leibowitz, zl, derives from Rabbeinu Yonah that the essence of humility is the realization of one's true worth. When one believes in himself, he does not need others to support him. Moshe was the greatest man of all time. Yet, he was also the most humble. Is this not a paradox? He was so great, but, simultaneously, he was so small. When one knows his true value, it is not a paradox. He had no need to overcompensate for his underestimation, because he knew exactly who he was and what he was worth. When one has a neshamah, soul, given to him by the Almighty, his potential is unfathomable. The only obstacle that stands in his way is the one he has created himself!

In his commentary to Bamidbar 12:3, Rashi defines a humble person as someone who is shafal v'savlan, self-effacing and patient, two quality traits which Moshe epitomized. Did Moshe view himself as lowly? Did he consider himself to be insignificant and unlearned? Absolutely not! Horav Avraham Pam, zl, explains that Moshe was acutely aware of his position, his vital contribution to Klal Yisrael, his role as the consummate, eternal teacher of Torah to the Jewish People. Indeed, despite his humility, when the situation warranted action, he acted. When firm, resolute and unyielding decisions had to be made, he was present to make them. His humility was relative to Hashem; He understood that despite all of his qualities, he was a mere nothing in relation to the infinite wisdom and power of the Almighty. In fact, the more he delved into the profundities of the Torah, the more he realized and acknowledged the unimaginable depth of Divine wisdom, and, consequently, his own irrelevance.

The Rosh Yeshiva explains that his monumental achievements do not affect a truly humble person. On the contrary, the more he accomplishes,

the more he realizes what he owes Hashem for granting him the privilege and ability of attaining these heights. Rav Pam relates that the saintly Chafetz Chaim, zl, was once overheard murmuring to himself, "Yisrael Meir, look how much Hashem has done for you. He gave you the z'chus to author the Mishnah Berurah, the Shemiras Halashon, the Sefer Ahavas Chesed. He has given you a large yeshivah. He has done so much for you. What have you done for Him?"

True humility does not necessarily mean that one must shun sitting in the front row or decline to accept any honoraria. It means being a savlan, patiently accepting the critique of others-- or even their mistreatment-- and not responding, not becoming upset, not reacting angrily. A true anav shrugs off whatever disdain he receives. For some, not receiving kavod, honor, is palatable, but being the focus of abuse is going a bit too far. A true savlan can swallow his "pride" and accept critique, and even abuse, in stride.

The Chafetz Chaim would refer to Horav Nochum'ke zl of Horadno as his rebbe. Rav Nochum'ke, aside from being a Torah giant, was also a tremendous baal chesed, devoting much time and effort to raising money for the poor. He once solicited a donation from an arrogant, rich man. As part of his pomposity, the man took the liberty to belittle Rav Nochum'ke, even going as far as to slap his face for wasting his precious time. Imagine, if this would happen to one of us! Rav Nochum'ke did not react, nor did he get upset. He quietly responded, saying, "Fine, that was for me. Now what about the poor? Can I now have a donation to support the poverty stricken?"

The venerable Mashgiach of Mir and Ponevez, Horav Yechezkel Levenstein, zl, views humility as the derivative of a realization about the inherent greatness of the Jewish soul. This soul, a chelek Eloka mi'Maal, part of Hashem Above, grants us the capability to achieve incredible exalted levels of spirituality, so that we can cling securely to Hashem. While the exposition of the Mashgiach presents humility as the result of man's relationship with Hashem, this concept considers it as a comparison within each man, weighing his present and his inherent potential against one another.

When we strive to fulfill the yearning of the soul to attain every aspect of greatness in serving Hashem, we begin to realize how far we can go, and how distant we actually are from our goal. This realization catalyzes true humility, when we consider what are we, how far we have to go, and how much more we have to do. Regrettably, when we fail to appreciate our noble status, we undermine our potential and waste our lives by satisfying ourselves with accomplishments far below that of our true station. Humbled in the knowledge that Hashem has bestowed so great a legacy upon us-- and aware that He awaits our fulfillment of His mission for us-- we must exhaust every opportunity to bring ourselves closer to the goal that He has established for us. This is characteristic of the humility that guides us past the allure of the temporal, the enchantments of this transitory world, as we reach for eternity. It is this same attribute which keeps our minds and hearts in perspective, not allowing for haughtiness to creep in, that disallows for any feeling of inferiority or lack of self worth. We know what we are - but we also realize what the standard should be.

Humility was one of the many legendary features in the life of Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl. He wrote the following declaration on the door to the bais medrash of Yeshivah Kfar Chasidim, where he was Rosh Yeshivah: "I earnestly request of the public and of the yeshivah students that they not stand up for me when I enter the bais medrash, for it causes my soul much grief." He continued to express his deep humiliation in the knowledge that he was not worthy of any reverence.

His humility was real. It was an integral part of his essence. The following incident provides a classic example of his humility. He once paid a visit to Horav Yechezkel Sarna, zl, Rosh Yeshivah of Chevron. When Rav Michel David Shlepoverski, who had been Rav Elya's student in Kelm, heard that his revered rebbe was at Rav Yechezkel's home, he went there to receive him.

When Rav Michel David entered the home, he greeted his rebbe with an enthusiastic "Sholom Aleichem." Rav Elya returned his greeting with great joy. After they were all sitting together and conversing, Rav Elya asked Rav Yechezkel permission to kiss his student, Rav Michel David. Only after he received permission from Rav Yechezkel, did he rise and kiss his beloved student.

Finally, on various festive occasions, when all of the yeshivah's students were assembled in the dining room, Rav Elya generally entered together with the Mashgiach, Horav Dov Yoffe. When the students saw them entering, they would all rise and sing, Ohr zarua la'tzadik, "May a light shine for a righteous person." At that point, Rav Elya would begin to sing with the students. Then he would join hands with them as they began to dance, forming a circle around Rav Yoffe. He clearly felt that they were singing in honor of Rav Yoffe. No other thought entered his mind!

When a man among you brings an offering to Hashem. (1:2)

The pasuk uses the word adam, in reference to (the) man who brings the offering. Chazal note that adam is also the name of the Adam Ha'Rishon, the first human being created by Hashem. They feel this implies that just as Adam did not bring stolen animals as a sacrifice, because everything belonged to him, so, too, are we forbidden from offering a stolen animal as a sacrifice. It seems strange that Chazal would choose Adam as the reason for prohibiting offering stolen goods on the Altar. Can we just not say that Hashem despises theft? The Navi says in Yeshayah 61:8, "I, Hashem loves justice and hates a burnt-offering (bought) with robbery." What special lesson do we derive from Adam?

The Chafetz Chaim, zl, explains that theft is not only accomplished by force. Accepting a gift under false-- or misrepresented-- circumstances also constitutes gezel, theft. Imagine, someone gives a gift to an individual whom he feels is a talmid chacham, Torah scholar, or tzadik, righteous, virtuous person - and he is neither! Had the individual known that he is neither a tzadik or talmid chacham, he would not have given him the gift. Thus, by misrepresenting himself, he is catalyzing theft.

Adam Ha'Rishon teaches us that one must be free of all forms of theft - even misrepresentation of one's true character. Once during Bircas HaMazon, as the Chafetz Chaim was reciting the words of Bentching, he said the words, "Please make us not needful - Hashem - our G-d - of the gifts of human hands... that we not feel inner shame nor be humiliated forever and ever." Suddenly, he gave a krechts, groaned. After he concluded Bentching, one of his students asked why he had groaned. He replied, "The verse is inconsistent. We begin by asking Hashem that we not be compelled to rely on the help of human beings, and we conclude by asking Him that we not be relegated to inner shame and humiliation forever and ever. What shame is there in the World to Come for someone who is forced to accept charity, or is in need of a loan? Regrettably, one can end up humiliated in the world of truth. Imagine, someone helps you because they are under the impression that you are deserving, pious, a Torah scholar-- wonderful virtues that in this world can be deceiving. In Olam Haba, however, the truth is revealed to all, and, at times, the truth can be humiliating.

If a person will sin and will commit one of all the commandments of Hashem that may not be done, but did not know and became guilty, he shall bear his iniquity. (5:17)

In explaining the word v'ashaim, "and became guilty," the Ramban asserts that it is a derivative of the word shameim, desolate. The individual who committed a sin which is atoned for with a Korban Asham, Guilt-Offering, has committed a grave sin, one that would demand that he become isolated, forsaken, and disengaged from the community. The Korban Chatas, Sin-Offering, on the other hand, denotes one who has veered off the correct path, who has erred and lost his way. In other words, the wrongdoing of the choteh is not as deleterious as the one who brings an Asham. How are we to understand this? The Torah clearly states his error as resulting from v'lo

yada, "but (he) did not know." No evil was intended at all. In fact, it is almost an accident. Why is he so harshly indicted, to the point that he is worthy of being isolated from the community?

Horav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi, Shlita, views the v'lo yada, "but (he) did not know" as the source of his Asham. True, concerning the cheilav, non-kosher fat that he ate, it is almost an accident, but "not knowing," being "unaware" is a grave sin. A Jew must always be aware, must be ever thoughtful and cognizant of the possibility of sin. A Jew who has yiraas Shomayim, who fears Hashem, is always concerned lest he do something wrong, something inadvertent.

One who is imbued with fear of Heaven does not rest. The fire of yiraas Shomayim burns passionately within him, a fire of trepidation and worry that does not permit him to forget the One Above. There is no such thing as "relying" on something, or it is "probably" all right. No! It must be perfect. There is no room for error. In his Shaar HaGamul, the Ramban explains that one who eats non-kosher fat b'shogeg, inadvertently, is considered a choteh, sinner, because he should have been more careful. The mere possibility that he might consume something that is not one hundred percent kosher should drive him to be painstakingly cautious.

Lo yada, not knowing, is a serious offense. It indicates a lack of yiraas Shomayim, albeit minute, but a deficiency nonetheless. The critical importance of yiraas Shomayim cannot be overemphasized. In his Kovetz Maamorim, Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl, explains that only yiraas Shomayim has the power to restrain man from becoming a beast. He bases this hypothesis on the teaching of the Zohar HaKadosh. The Torah in Bereishis 1:26 quotes Hashem as saying, "Let us make man." The Zohar explains that Hashem invited each creation to contribute something of itself to man's essence. Every animal contributed a small component of its nature to man. Thus, man is a microcosm of the entire world, for he has within himself something from all that exists in heaven and earth. Since man contains some of the nature of every wild beast, he potentially becomes the most dangerous wild creature on earth. In addition, man is endowed with intellect and the power of speech, two potentially lethal weapons, which no other creature possess. Now, if an animal needs an iron chain to be restrained, how many chains are necessary to restrain the beast within man? Clearly, Hashem has provided man not only with an "antidote" to curb the beast within him, but a feature that allows him to employ all of these "beastly" qualities for the greater good.

The "iron chain" that keeps the beast within man in check, is yiraas Shomayim. To paraphrase Rav Elchonon: "Only yiraas Hashem has the power to restrain man so that he will not be like a beast that tears apart its prey. Nothing else in the world can guard man from causing harm (to others as well as to himself) - even if he is wise and a philosopher of the caliber of Aristotle - when he becomes overwhelmed by base inclinations." Yiraas Shomayim is the totality of man, without which he is nothing more than just an ordinary beast.

Constant examination and introspection characterize yiraas Shomayim. This demand on oneself should be internal, focusing one's inward life. Toward others, however, one should manifest happiness and satisfaction. In other words, do not impose your yiraas Shomayim on others; do not call attention to yourself. Be demanding on yourself - not of others. Subtly, encourage others to elevate their fear of Heaven, but do not compel, rebuke, or disdain. Yiraas Shomayim is a crucial aspect of one's personal relationship with the Almighty.

Horav Mordechai Schwab, zl, lived such a life. When he was with people, he radiated joy and friendliness, smiling to young children and playing with them. When he was alone, however, he entered into a state of solemnity concerning his yiraas Shomayim. He lived by the maxim of: Shivisi Hashem l'negdi tamid, "I place Hashem before me constantly." He always envisioned himself in the Presence of Hashem. Every endeavor, every action that he undertook, he did so only after contemplating: Is this the ratzon, will, of Hashem? If he did not feel that it was Hashem's will, he would not act. He executed every mitzvah amid the utmost concentration

and energy, regardless of its implied significance. The brachah, blessing of Asher yatzar, recited after performing one's bodily functions, was no different than Krias Shema, Bircas HaMazon, Grace after meals, being on an even keel with Shemoneh Esrai.

He would begin each day with a lengthy session in his room, privately reciting Bircas HaShachar, morning blessings, and Krias Shema with utmost concentration, intensity, and even physical exertion. His meticulous care in carrying out mitzvos was overpowering for those in his presence. It was often difficult to watch, because one felt diminished, painfully aware of his personal shortcomings in comparison to this giant of Torah and Yiraas Shomayim.

One of his nephews, the son of his brother, Horav Shimon, wanted to spend Yom Kippur with Rav Mordechai. He discussed this with his father, who permitted him to go, but added that he would be disappointed, which indeed he subsequently was. He discovered that Yom Kippur to Rav Mordechai was no different than a regular day. He prayed with the same intensity all year, expending the same amount of religious fervor. To him, it was Yom Kippur all year. He always felt himself in the Presence of Hashem.

His tefillos and berachos exhausted him physically, as well as emotionally. Indeed, he would drink a cup of coffee prior to reciting Krias Shema at night, if he felt that he was tired and his alertness impaired. When Erev Pesach occurred on Shabbos, necessitating Seudah Shlishis, the question was raised whether to split the morning seudah in two. Rav Schwab would excuse himself, maintaining that he lacked the physical strength to recite Bircas HaMazon twice in such a short period of time. He would go out of his way not to impose his personal chumros, stringencies, on anyone else. For instance, he would usually insist on preparing his own coffee on Shabbos, because of the various chumros pertaining to cooking which he kept. As meticulous as he was being adam l'Makom, mitzvos relating to Hashem, he was equally circumspect in observing mitzvos being adam l'chaveiro, interpersonal relationships. As a distinguished and revered rav, he would receive invitations to many simchos, joyous affairs. If he felt that there was the slightest chance of offending someone's feelings, he would make the effort to attend - even if he had neither the time or the energy.

He shall return the robbed item that he robbed. (5:23)

Is it not obvious that if he is returning the robbed item, he must be the robber? Why does the Torah repeat the asher gazal, "that he robbed"? He clearly is not doing this out of the goodness of his heart. He is a thief! Horav Chaim Zaitchik, zl, cites the Sefer Chassidim that asks this question, and writes the following: "If on that very same day that he stole, he returned the article, then he pays no more than the item which he returned. If he is delinquent in returning it, waiting a week, a month or even longer, he must reimburse its owner all that he could have profited during this time. The robber has to realize that what he has stolen has a constant value to its owner. This value extends far beyond the object's actual worth. In addition, the robber must consider the emotional strain caused to the owner by the item's loss. People become attached to their possessions. This is not a Biblical mandate, but it is something to which one adheres to if he cares about fulfilling the mitzvah in accordance with Heaven's criteria. There are times when the robber causes the owner to diminish his intake of food and drink. After all, he has lost part of his money, and now his portfolio has been depleted."

In other words, one does not just steal and return. He must take everything into consideration - all of the losses, both monetary and emotional. He must return the robbed item which he stole - everything that he stole - every inconvenience that he caused.

Rav Zaitchik adds that time is also something the robber should not ignore. He has wasted the owner's time. He also degraded him, since he no longer has the same financial status as before. There is so much involved when we change the status quo. When one steals from someone else, or causes him a monetary damage, it is not enough to simply return the stolen

item. There is the "arum and arum," everything else involved, that must be acknowledged. We must look at the wider ramifications of our actions, the things that we rarely see--and often tend to ignore. It can make a world of difference - in many ways.

Va'ani Tefillah Hallelukah, Halleli nafshi es Hashem! Hallelukah ,Praise Hashem, O my soul. David Hamelech has a dialogue with his neshamah, soul. He is imploring his soul to praise Hashem. The neshamah responds that Ahalleleh Hashem b'chayai, azamrah l'Elokai b'odi, "I will praise Hashem during my lifetime, I will sing to my G-d as long as I exist." Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, explains the neshamah's response based upon the principle, hashoras ha'nefesh, "the soul lives on forever." As an everlasting creation, the soul replies, "I express my praise to Hashem by the mere fact that I exist, and my continued existence is in itself a tribute to Hashem."

Horav Avigdor Miller, zl, feels that ahalleleh, with the ah suffix, denotes urging. Thus, David is speaking to himself, urging himself to more service, greater praise, more frequent devotion to Hashem. This is his- and should be every Jew's- life purpose: to praise Hashem, either actively or by the example he manifests, through his lifestyle. To paraphrase Rav Miller, "There is no greater success than that of utilizing one's life to praise Hashem... This is one of our 'national' privileges... for which we must always be thankful. Indeed, this is the purpose of life."

In honor of the Bar Mitzvah of our dear son, Avrohom Naftali Grossn'y From his proud parents, Yosef and Raizy Gross
y'hi ratzon shenirvu mimenu rov nachas

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Parashat VaYikra 5767 **Weekly Insights by Rav Meir Goldwicht**
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Parashat VaYikra

Parashat VaYikra opens with Hashem commanding Moshe Rabbeinu to tell B'nei Yisrael, "A man, when he sacrifices from you (adam ki yakriv mikem) an offering to Hashem, from the animals, from the cattle and from the flock shall you bring your offering." This passuk could have been written more succinctly as follows: "When you bring a sacrifice to Hashem..." leaving out the superfluous words "adam, a man," and "mikem, from you." Why does the Torah add these words?

Rashi explains that the word "adam" teaches us that, like Adam HaRishon, who sacrificed animals belonging to him, we must not bring sacrifices from stolen animals. Rashi does not, however, address the superfluousness of "mikem." What is the reason behind the Torah's uncharacteristic verbosity here at the beginning of VaYikra?

Additionally, in next week's parasha, Tzav, the Torah discusses the daily service of the kohen, beginning with the siluk hadeshen (removal of the ashes and leftovers of the korbanot), as it says, "And he shall separate the ash (deshen) of what the fire consumed" (VaYikra 6:3). The question that must be asked is why the daily service of the kohen doesn't begin in an active, positive way, such as sacrificing a korban or lighting the Menorah. Why does the daily service of the kohen begin with the removal of the deshen?

To answer these two questions, it is helpful to understand the following: After we eat a k'zayit of bread, we recite Birkat HaMazon, consisting of four brachot. After eating any one of the seven species for which Eretz Yisrael is praised (grapes, figs, pomegranates, etc.), we say only one bracha, the bracha achat me'ein shalosh. Why the difference? R' Soloveichik explains that bread represents a partnership with HaKadosh Baruch Hu. We actively participate in the "creation" of bread, planting, plowing, harvesting, etc. This enables us to recognize our Partner that much more, and our gratitude is therefore much greater. For fruit, on the other hand, our input is much less significant. We plant the tree and HaKadosh Baruch

Hu basically does the rest. Our partnership is much less recognizable and therefore so is our gratitude.

If we develop the Rav's reasoning a bit further, it becomes clear that HaKadosh Baruch Hu wants us to be His partners in all acts of creation. This is perhaps the reason why the first mitzvah a Jew does is brit milah – through this act, HaKadosh Baruch Hu allows us to complete ourselves, so to speak, thereby completing our own creation.

But in order to truly be partnered with Hashem, we must make room for Him in our lives. This is why the first part of the daily service in the Beit HaMikdash was the siluk hadeshen, making room both literally and figuratively.

This may explain why the Torah says, "Adam ki yakriv mikem korban laShem, A person, when he sacrifices from you an offering to Hashem." Everyone must sacrifice of himself, a part of himself, to make more room for HaKadosh Baruch Hu in his life.

This is why the midrash homiletically derives from the word "mikem," which totals 100 in gematria, that one who recites 100 brachot per day is as if he offered a sacrifice. The Tur explains in Orach Chaim that in the time of David HaMelech there was a terrible plague during which 100 people died mysteriously on a daily basis. David didn't know how to end the plague, until it was revealed to him through ruach hakodesh that the plague would end if he instituted the practice of saying 100 brachot per day. The Tur's explanation poses some difficulty, however, because the gemara in Menachot (43b) suggests that this practice was already instituted in the time of Moshe Rabbeinu. What did David HaMelech add? The answer is that in the time of Moshe Rabbeinu, every person would make 100 brachot of his choosing. David HaMelech instituted a specific set of 100 brachot to be recited over the course of the day, realizing that the brachot would then "escort" a person from the moment he woke up until he went back to sleep that night, protecting him from danger and granting him long life.

Chazal say on the words "lech lecha," again totaling 100 in gematria, that when a neshama descends to this world, HaKadosh Baruch Hu tells it to remember one thing: I give you 100 "keys of brachot," with which you must open doors for Me to make room for Me in the world. This is how our lives begin.

The first to harness the power of the 100 brachot was Avraham Avinu, who opened doors for the Creator in places His Name had never been. Therefore "Hashem blessed Avraham with everything (bakol)" – bet kol, twice kol, again totaling 100. The reason why the recitation of this passuk after Hallel on Rosh Chodesh is a segulah for longevity is now quite clear.

One who recites 100 brachot per day is as if he offered a sacrifice because through the 100 brachot, this person realizes that his task in this world is to increase the glory of Hashem and to make more room for Him, even if this requires sacrificing of himself. This is the very idea that lies behind bringing a korban in the Beit HaMikdash.

This is also the meaning of the gemara in Sanhedrin (7a): "When the love between my wife and I was strong, we were able to lie together on the blade of a sword." In other words, neither of us took up space, each of us giving space to the other. "But when our love was weak, there was not enough room for us to lie together even in a bed of 60 amot." The more we let HaKadosh Baruch Hu into our lives, into our world, the more room we will have with which to continue to sanctify His Name in all of our actions.

Shabbat Shalom! Meir Goldwicht

SHABBAT SHALOM: Parshat Vayikra (Leviticus: 1:1-5:26) 3 Nisan, 5769 - 28 March, 2009 OTS BannerOTS Banner

by **Rabbi Shlomo Riskin** Founder and Chancellor Ohr Torah Stone Play Video "TORAH LIGHTS" Video Webcasts Rabbi Riskin's video message on PARSHAT VAYIKRA: "I Sacrifice; Therefore, I Am" Printer graphic [CLICK HERE TO PRINT ARTICLE](#)
Efrat, Israel - "When the President shall sin... atonement must be made and he shall be forgiven" (Lev 4:22,26)

A story is told about a teenager from a secular American family who, after a number of years of living in Israel and growing more and more fascinated with the law and lore of hassidim, decided to become observant. Although the family had been living in Israel for nearly five years, the boy's mother still prepared a stuffed-turkey dinner replete with pumpkin pie and cranberry sauce in honor of the American Thanksgiving holiday.

Wanting to honor his parents as well as keep the laws of the Torah, our enthusiastic baal tshuvah approached his Meah Shearim trained, tenth-generation Jerusalemite Rebbe: "I'm sorry," the boy stammered "and perhaps my question is out of place, but am I required to recite the ya'ale ve'yavo prayer on Thanksgiving if I am celebrating it with my family?" The Rebbe looked confused. "What is Thanksgiving?" he asked his new-found hassid. The young man decided to seek his answer elsewhere, and so he returned to the government secular high school he'd recently attended and approached a very knowledgeable history teacher, a teacher whose classes had once been the highlight of his day, partly because he had an advanced degree from America and was an expert in American culture. "I'm sorry," the young man asked, "but might you know if one must say the ya'ale veyavo prayers on Thanksgiving?" The amused instructor, who had come to expect virtually anything from his former enthusiastic and irrepressible student, was confused by the Hebrew term. "What's ya'ale ve'yavo?," he asked. The student was frustrated but not deterred. A government minister who lived in his town just happened to be arriving home from the Knesset. Our student breathlessly ran up to him, almost poking his body-guard in the eye, "I'm sorry," he began, "but perhaps someone as important as you might know. Do observant Jews say ya'ale ve'yavo on Thanksgiving?" The Israeli minister seemed perplexed. Scratching his forehead, he asked, "What's I'm sorry?"

For those of us who live in Israel this story is too close to home to be amusing. It has been almost four years since we forced the good and brave pioneers of Gush Katif to leave their homes and jobs for the sake of the peace which our unilateral disengagement from Gaza was supposed to have brought us - and all we got was Hamas, Al Qaeda, Kassam rockets in Sderot and Ashkelon, and thousands of still homeless and unemployed Israeli citizens. And still no Israeli politician has said, "I'm sorry." The highest office in the land appointed and/or retained incompetent ministers and military leadership which led to the first war we lost since 1948 - but still no word of apology. Scandal and sexual corruption has been found in our most exalted offices - but no one admits his guilt.

And as usual, the timeless and timely festivals and Biblical portions of the week cry out with a message to which everyone must pay heed - especially our "leaders."

Obviously, admission of guilt, an honest confrontation with oneself, is painfully difficult. Were it not so, confession would not count as the very definition of repentance (Maimonides, Laws of Repentance, 1,1). But only after the individual honestly faces his weaknesses and hypocrisies can the process of healing and repair actually begin. And this is what emerges from this week's portion of Vayikra. In Biblical times the individual would bring special sin offerings if he transgressed - but a sin offering without individual heart-felt repentance was not only meaningless but considered an abomination by G-d. In fact, what distinguished Judaism from all its 'competitors' were the prophets' declarations that ritual punctiliousness without moral rectitude were useless acts beneath contempt (Isaiah 1).

After the Bible sets the stage by informing us that human beings will -- of necessity-- sin (Lev. 4:1,2), (it's built into the complex animal-angel nature of the human personality), the very first sinner to be singled out is the High-

Priest himself, the most exalted religious personality in Israel, the guardian of the Holy Temple.

Apparently, our Bible does not recognize one scintilla of "papal infallibility;" the Bible even emphasizes that "if the High Priest will sin, it is a transgression upon the whole nation," a sacrilegious blotch on our national escutcheon (4:3, Rashi as loc.). On the great white fast of the Day of Forgiveness (Yom Kippur), the first individual to confess his guilt and request purification is the High Priest. Indeed, the first word to escape the mouth of our most sacred and exalted human being on the most sacred and exalted day of the year is "Anna," please, oh, woe, a cry of personal and human anguish (as explained by my revered teacher, R. Joseph Dov Soloveitchik).

The next in line for admission of guilt is the Sanhedrin, the Highest Court in the land, the Keepers of the Divine law. When the lawmakers sin in judgment, all of Israel automatically sins, because they-the-judges- are entrusted with seeing that justice is done throughout society. The elders of the congregation as well as the High Priest must share in the guilt of the Sanhedrin, because they should have prevented the travesty of an unfit judiciary (Lev. 4:13,15,16)

And the third person to be singled out for confession and atonement is the Prince (Nasi), the Ruler, the President, the Prime Minister. Amazingly, whereas the Bible uses the word "if" (Hebrew im) regarding the transgression of the High Priest and the Sanhedrin, it uses the word "when" (Hebrew asher) regarding the Nasi, the President, the Prime Minister. Why is the number-one wielder of power most likely to fall prey to sin? Is it because he comes to believe that he is above the law, that what is good for him is automatically good for the State? Is it because he must rely on popular support, so he may fall prey to giving the people not what they need but what they want, to acting not in accordance with what is right but in accordance with the latest opinion poll (Meshekh Hakhma, ad loc)? The Bible doesn't quite tell us, but it does say that he is the most vulnerable.

A fascinating difference in the behavior of two leaders can be discerned from events described in the Book of Samuel. On a particular occasion King Saul does not wait for Samuel, the great judge and prophet of his generation, to begin the public sacrifice, and ends up losing his kingdom (1 Samuel 13). King David commits adultery and then sends Bathsheba's husband to the front lines of battle to die, yet lives to become the progenitor of the messianic line of the Davidic dynasty. (2 Samuel 12). Why?

Saul attempted to justify himself and blame the nation, whereas King David admitted his guilt and wept before the prophet and G-d. Rashi (Lev. 4:22) links the Hebrew "asher" ("when" the nasi sins) to the Hebrew "ashrei," fortunate: "fortunate is the generation whose nasi puts his heart and mind towards seeking forgiveness for his sins." Those in high office who are too high and mighty to seek forgiveness certainly ought to be brought down a few notches by those very laws they seem to have haughtily disregarded.

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What's Bothering Rashi: Vayikra 5769
Torah Portion: Vayikra
by Dr. Avigdor Bonchek

This week we start the third book of the Torah, Vayikra. The book is referred to as the Laws of the Priests, since it deals to a great extent with the sacrifices in the Temple (or Mishkan) and other laws of purity and impurity. Let us look at the following comment by Rashi on the meal offering.

LEVITICUS 2:14

"And if you offer a meal-offering of first grains to Hashem, then of newly ripened crops, roasted over fire ground kernels, shall you bring your first grain meal-offering."

RASHI

And if (Hebrew = 'im') you offer - RASHI: The word 'im' here means 'when' (not 'if') for this is not a voluntary offering, since the verse deals with the Omer meal-offering, which is obligatory (brought every year on the 16th of Nisan). Similarly, " 'If' (which really means 'when') there will be a jubilee year..."

WHAT IS RASHI SAYING?

Rashi tells us that although the word 'Im' usually means 'if,' in this verse it cannot mean that. The bringing of the first fruits offering is not optional nor conditional on our desire. It must be brought. So in this case the word 'im' must mean 'when.'

RAMBAN DISAGREES WITH RASHI

The Ramban differs with Rashi and says that one need not change the ordinary meaning of 'im' in this verse. He knows of course that the first-fruits offering is obligatory. But he says we must see the whole chapter here to get the correct understanding of this verse.

Chapter 2 begins by discussing the meal offerings. Then it describes various types of meal offerings. Verse 5 says, "If your offering is a pan-baked meal offering, then it shall be etc." Verse 7 says, "If your offering is a deep-pan meal offering, then it shall be etc." We see, says the Ramban, that the Torah is outlining the requirements of different types of meal offerings. The first-fruits meal offering is but one of the possible meal offerings. So, when the word 'im' (if) is used, it means "if the meal offering that is being brought is the first fruits offering, then it must be etc." This does not mean that the offering is optional, it only means that 'if' we are discussing the first-fruits offering, then it must be such and such.

The Ramban seems to have a point.

CAN YOU DEFEND RASHI?

Can you defend Rashi's position against the Ramban's attack, that the word 'im' here must mean 'when' and not 'if'?

Your Answer:

DEFENDING RASHI

An Answer: If you read verses 5 and 7 carefully, you will see that they differ from our verse in a significant way. Both those verses begin "If your offering is etc.," which means it is discussing a choice of possible types of meal offerings. But our verse is different; it begins, "If you will offer etc." But we cannot say 'If you will offer,' because you must offer the first-fruits offering. Rashi was sensitive to this slight difference in phrasing which gives a different emphasis to the words. Therefore he says here 'im' must be interpreted to mean 'when' not 'if.'

The Ramban often picks up on issues that Rashi seems to have been unaware of. Upon closer analysis we often find that Rashi took these points into account and can reasonably withstand the attack.

Shabbat Shalom, Avigdor Bonchek

Author Biography: "What's Bothering Rashi?" is a production of the "Institute for the Study of Rashi and Early Commentaries".

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