

**In My Opinion A Long Journey**  
**Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog**

I traveled to America last week in order to spend the holiday of Pesach with my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Because of the troubles associated with the Coronavirus, it was very difficult to obtain a plane reservation. However, a number of resourceful people in Israel arranged a charter flight through El Al on behalf of yeshiva students and young women in Israeli seminaries. Since they could no longer stay in their dormitories they were forced to go home. So, I found myself, through the great influence of 'protectia,' in a business class seat on that flight.

There were a few hundred young women from the seminaries on the flight as well as some young couples and about a dozen little babies. As you can imagine, the flight was not a silent one.

It took 12 hours, and I really feel that the amount of patience shown by the stewards and stewardesses on El Al was exemplary – with people congregating in the aisles, and since babies are babies. One of the babies, about two and a half years old, a very precocious girl, marched up and down the aisle and refused to sit for most of the trip. However, she was very attracted to me and kept on climbing up on my lap whether she was invited to do so or not.

Now, the line between children who are annoying and children who are cute is a very thin one. So after a period of time, when things were about to become more annoying, I discovered, when the mother came over to once again retrieve her from my lap, that the child was related to me.

The child is a great grand-niece of mine through the Levine side of the family. Well, once she became a relative, annoying became cute and we had a very pleasant flight, even though she came back numerous times in order to sit on my lap. The flight generally was full of such incidents. Whenever you fly on a plane, you never know who you're going to meet or how that meeting will have an effect upon you.

Because I had my great grand-niece accompanying me, I spent most of the flight reminiscing about my lifetime and my relatives. Since the flight was long, there was plenty of time to do so. I think that it is one of the hallmarks of advanced years that one is always reviewing incidents, people and events, mistakes and triumphs, hopes and fulfillment of plans that occurred during one's lifetime.

Whether or not this is healthy for one's psyche is debatable, but I have spent a great deal of time over the past years looking backwards and reminiscing. Nevertheless, I have many projects that I want to complete and many things that I want to see and events that I want to experience. So, though I plan for the future, the past is omnipresent and always looming in my thoughts.

When I landed in the United States, because of the Coronavirus, I had to undergo a health inspection. They took my temperature, looked me over, asked a few innocuous but, I assume, important questions, and cleared me for entry into the United States. All of this took about two hours. The line was enormous as literally thousands of people had come in during those hours at JFK airport in New York and they were being processed one by one.

Since I was on the plane with the seminary women, you can only imagine the amount of luggage that was coming around the carousel. It took at least an additional half hour for my lonely bag to appear but, thank God, it did appear. Eventually I was able to leave the airport and was brought safely to my daughter's home here in Woodmere, New York. Here I am in splendid isolation because everything in also shut down. There's no synagogue, no restaurants, just the way it used to be when the native Americans controlled this area of the world.

I am confident that all of this will pass in good time and in good stead just as it will pass in Israel, but the experience really is a chastening one for all of us. It teaches us how puny and insignificant we are and how we are given over to psychological pressures, fears, panic, and how wildly our imaginations can work.

I want to commend the government for doing whatever it can to prevent the spread of this pandemic and to manage it so that it has emerged more slowly, making dire cases more treatable. And up until this time, thank God, we have done very well in recovering from it, at least physically. The other effects will last undoubtedly for years, but that also will pass. So, let us look forward to a brighter future and to a wonderful Pesach holiday, and I will continue to inform you about conditions here as I check to find out about conditions back in Israel.

Shabbat Shalom

Berel Wein

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**Weekly Parsha Vayikra**  
**Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog**

In this week's Torah reading, the Torah describes for us the rituals of offering sacrifices in the temple. Our generation and our society are far removed from the concept of animal sacrifices and, because of this, the Torah reading somehow does not really speak directly to us.

Already in the 13th century, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon offered the idea that we have to view sacrifices for the value that they entail and not so much for the rituals themselves. Even though one of the six sections of the Mishnah and the Talmud concerns itself almost exclusively with the laws and rituals of animal sacrifices, this has become more of a theoretical and scholarly exercise, without it having any practical effect upon our lives.

When the temple will be rebuilt, then all these things will become actualized once more, but for now they are theoretical. Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, said that the idea of sacrifice was that the person offering the sacrifice should see his own self as being the sacrifice.

This means that one must sacrifice one's desires, habits, lifestyle and all sorts of other pleasures to the service of God and of Israel. This type of sacrifice certainly remains alive and necessary today as well, and it entails the ability to give away what we think is ours for a cause that we believe to be greater and nobler than our own personal needs and wants.

Because of this, the concept of sacrifices has cogency and meaning for each one of us. If we look at our lives, we see that every day we make choices in which ultimately lie the sacrifice of oneself, one's interests, and one's own desires, for a higher cause.

There are many different types of sacrifices listed in this week's Torah reading. There is a sacrifice that is a complete donation to God where the man or woman bringing the sacrifice really has no immediate or material benefit. This altruism was reserved usually for public sacrifices that were offered twice a day in the temple.

There are sacrifices, however, that are very personal. There are sacrifices that are meant to atone for sins and only we know which sins we have committed. There are sacrifices for wrongdoing when we are not even certain if the wrongdoing occurred. Because of this, we are constantly involved in reassessing our lives and rethinking events and policies that we have subscribed to.

People change during their lifetime and hopefully they mature and see things in a different light. The idea of sacrifice for sins passed makes for a stronger present and a brighter future. There are also sacrifices of thanksgiving. That is a sacrifice of one's own ego. In this instance we have to acknowledge that we found ourselves in terrible difficulty, in great danger and we survived and emerged from the crisis...with help. We must admit that we did not do it on our own.

We are thankful to others and we are thankful to our creator for having allowed us to be able to survive the issue, that is a sacrifice of ego. No one wants to admit that we need help from others. We all desire to be self-sufficient in the broadest sense of the word. But life teaches us that none of us are completely self-sufficient, that all of us are dependent upon others.

Then there are sacrifices that mark our holidays that are, so to speak, ritual sacrifices imposed upon us by history. The sacrifice of the paschal

lamb is the outstanding example of this. We cannot proceed with the future unless we are aware of the past and are aware of the sacrifices of the past that enable us to even contemplate a future, a better future.

All these ideas are encompassed in the ritual laws of the sacrifices introduced in this week's Torah reading. The Torah reading begins by God calling out to Moshe. The same word in Hebrew that represents calling out also represents glory and honor. Because of that, when we hear God calling out to us, governing our behavior and thoughts, then we are aware of the glory and honor of being part of the people of Israel. Everyone should stay healthy and cheerful. I look forward to seeing you soon.

Shabbat Shalom,  
Rabbi Berel Wein

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## **The Prophetic View of Sacrifice (Vayikra 5780)**

### **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**

Sacrifices, the subject of this week's parsha, were central to the religious life of biblical Israel. We see this not only by the sheer space devoted to them in the Torah, but also by the fact that they occupy its central book, Vayikra.

We have not had the sacrificial service since the destruction of the second Temple almost 2000 years ago. What is deeply relevant today, however, is the critique of sacrifices we find among the Prophets of the first Temple. That critique was sharp and deep and formed many of their most powerful addresses. One of the earliest was delivered by the Prophet Samuel: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obedience to the Lord's command? Surely, obedience is better than sacrifice, compliance than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22).

Amos said in the name of God: "If you offer Me burnt offerings—or your meal offerings—I will not accept them; I will pay no heed to your gifts of fatlings ... But let justice well up like water, righteousness like a never-ending stream" (Amos 5:21-24). Likewise Hosea: "For I desire goodness, not sacrifice; obedience to God, rather than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6).

We find a similar critique in several Psalms. "Were I hungry, I would not tell you, for Mine is the world and all it holds. Do I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" (Ps. 50:8-15). "Lord, open my lips, and let my mouth declare Your praise. You do not want me to bring sacrifices; You do not desire burnt offerings. True sacrifice to God is a contrite spirit; God, You will not despise a contrite and crushed heart" (Ps. 51:17-19).

Jeremiah seems to suggest that the sacrificial order was not God's initial intention: "For when I freed your fathers from the land of Egypt, I did not speak with them or command them concerning burnt offerings or sacrifice. But this is what I commanded them: Do My bidding, that I may be your God and you may be My people; walk only in the way that I enjoy upon you, that it may go well with you" (Jer. 7:22-23).

Strongest of all is the passage at the beginning of the book of Isaiah that we read on Shabbat Chazon (before Tisha b'Av): "'What need have I of all your sacrifices?' says the Lord. 'I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of My courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to Me'" (Is. 1:11-13).

This entire line of thought, sounded by many voices and sustained across centuries, is extraordinary. The people were being criticised not for disobeying God's law but for obeying it. Sacrifices were commanded. Their offering was a sacred act performed in a holy place. What then aroused the Prophets' anger and rebuke?

It was not that they were opposed to sacrifice as such. Jeremiah foresaw the day when "People shall come from the towns of Judah and from the environs of Jerusalem ... bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, meal offerings and frankincense, and bringing offerings of thanksgiving to the House of the Lord" (Jer. 17:26).

Likewise Isaiah: "I will bring them to My sacred mount and let them rejoice in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices shall be welcome on My altar, for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (Is. 56:7).

They were not criticising the institution of sacrifices. They were criticising something as real now as it was in their time. What distressed them to the core of their being was the idea that you could serve God and at the same time act disdainfully, cruelly, unjustly, insensitively or callously toward other people. "So long as I am in God's good graces, that is all that matters." That is the thought that made the Prophets incandescent with indignation. If you think that, they seem to say, then you haven't understood either God or Torah.

The first thing the Torah tells us about humanity is that we are each in the image and likeness of God Himself. Therefore if you wrong a human being, you are abusing the only creation in the universe on which God has set His image. A sin against any person is a sin against God.

In the first mission statement of the Jewish people, God said about Avraham, "For I have chosen him that he may instruct his children and his posterity to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is just and right" (Gen. 18:19). The way of the Lord is to act justly and righteously toward your fellow human beings. In context, this meant that God was inviting Avraham to pray on behalf of the people of Sodom, even though he knew that they were wicked and sinners.

It is specifically in the book of sacrifices, Vayikra, that we find the twin commands to love your neighbour as yourself, and love the stranger (Lev. 19:18, 33-34). The sacrifices that express our love and awe of God should lead to love of the neighbour and the stranger. There should be a seamless transition from commands between us and God to commands between us and our fellow humans.

Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah and Jeremiah all witnessed societies in which people were punctilious in bringing their offerings to the Temple, but in which there was bribery, corruption, perversion of justice, abuse of power and the exploitation of the powerless by the powerful. The Prophets saw in this a profound and dangerous contradiction.

The very act of bringing a sacrifice was fraught with ambiguity. Jews were not the only people in ancient times to have temples, priests and sacrifices. Almost everyone did. It was precisely here that the religion of ancient Israel came closest, outwardly, to the practices of their pagan neighbours. But the sacrificial systems of other cultures were based on totally different beliefs. In many religions sacrifices were seen as a way of placating or appeasing the gods. The Aztecs believed that sacrificial offerings fed the gods who sustained the universe. Walter Burkert speculated that the ancient Greeks experienced guilt when they killed animals for food, so they offered sacrifices as a way of appeasing their consciences.

All these ideas are alien to Judaism. God cannot be bribed or appeased. Nor can we bring Him anything that is not His. God sustains the universe: the universe does not sustain Him. And wrongs righted by sacrifice do not excuse other wrongs. So intention and mindset were essential in the sacrificial system. The thought that "If I bring a sacrifice to God, He will overlook my other faults" – in effect, the idea that I can bribe the Judge of all the earth – turns a sacred act into a pagan one, and produces precisely the opposite result than the one intended by the Torah. It turns religious worship from a way to the right and the good, into a way of easing the conscience of those who practice the wrong and the bad.

To serve God is to serve humanity. That was the point made memorably by Micah: "He has told you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: To do justice, to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:6-8). Jeremiah said of King Josiah: "He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know Me? says the Lord" (Jer. 22:16). Knowing God, said Jeremiah, means caring for those in need.

Maimonides said essentially the same at the end of The Guide for the Perplexed (III, 54). He quotes Jeremiah: "Only in this should one glory: that they have the understanding to know Me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I

delight,' says the Lord" (Jer. 9:23). To know God is to know what it is to act with kindness, justice and righteousness.

The danger of the sacrificial system, said the Prophets, is that it can lead people to think that there are two domains, the Temple and the world, serving God and caring for one's fellow humans, and they are disconnected. Judaism rejects the concept of two disconnected domains. Halachically they are distinct, but psychologically, ethically and spiritually they are part of a single indivisible system.

I believe that to love God is to love our fellow humans. To honour God is to honour our fellow humans. We may not ask God to listen to us if we are unwilling to listen to others. We may not ask God to forgive us if we are unwilling to forgive others. To know God is to seek to imitate Him, which means, said Jeremiah and Maimonides, to exercise kindness, justice and righteousness on earth.

Shabbat Shalom

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### **Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Vayikra (Leviticus 1:1-5:26)**

#### **By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin**

Efrat, Israel – "He [God] called to Moses, and the Lord spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting saying..." (Leviticus 1:1)

So opens the third book of the Pentateuch, the book known as *Torot Kohanim*, the book of the priest-ministers of the Divine Sanctuary, the guardians of the rituals connecting Israel to God. Indeed, this book in Hebrew is, like the others, called by its opening word, *Vayikra*.

And herein lies a problem. Each of the other four books is called by its opening words, but in those instances the opening words have great significance.

*Bereishit* [Genesis] is the beginning, the moment in which God called the world-creation into being; *Shemot* [Exodus], the names of the family members who came down to Egypt, and the exile-slavery experience which transformed them from a family into a nation with a national mission of universal freedom; *Bamidbar* [Numbers], the desert sojourn of a newly freed people who had to learn the responsibilities of managing a nation-state before entering their promised homeland; and *Devarim* [Deuteronomy], the farewell words and legacy of Moses, the agent of Hashem.

But what is the significance of *Vayikra* – God "calling out" to Moses, as the name for a Biblical book? Did not God call out to Moses from the time that he came onto the scene of Jewish history? And why is it specifically this time that Moses chose to express his modesty, the word is spelled with a small alef, as if to record that God merely "chanced upon him" (*Vayiker*), but had not specifically called out to him? I believe that the answer lies in the very strange concluding words of the last portion of the Book of Exodus, towards the end of *Pekudei*: "The cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting, for the cloud rested upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle..." (Exodus 40:34-35)

We saw in last week's commentary the majestic words of the Ramban (Nahmanides), explaining how the Book of Exodus concludes the Jewish exile with the glory of the Lord resting upon – and filling – the Tabernacle. Was it not Moses who asked God to reveal His glory to him? Was Moses not the supreme individual in human history who came closer to the Divine than anyone else, who "spoke to God face to face," whose active intellect actually kissed the active intellect of the Shechina? Then why is Moses forbidden from entering the Tent of Meeting? Moses should have entered straightaway, precisely because the glory of God was then filling the Tabernacle!

Apparently, the Bible is teaching a crucial lesson about Divine Service: God wants human beings to strive to come close to God, but not too close. God demands even from Moses a measured distance between Himself (as it were) and human beings. We must serve Him, but not beyond that which He commands us to do. In Divine Service, we dare not go beyond the laws He ordains that we perform.

There is no "beyond the requirements of the law" in the realm of the laws between humans and God.

God understands the thin line between *kadosh* and *kadesh*: Divine service and diabolical suicide bombers, fealty to the King of all Kings and fanatic sacrifice to Moloch. Hence not only does our Bible record the commands God gave to Moses regarding the construction of every aspect of the Divine Sanctuary (*Truma* and *Tetzaveh*) but it painstakingly informs us again and again in *Vayakhel* and *Pekudei* that those orders were carried out exactly as they had been commanded, no less and no more: "Moses did according to everything that the Lord had commanded, so did he do" (Ex. 40:16).

This is why, further on in the Book of Leviticus God metes out a stringent death penalty upon Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, when they bring before the Lord a "strange fire which they had not been commanded to bring" (Lev. 10:1) in the midst of national fervor of exultant song. Moses even explains this tragic occurrence by saying, "of this did the Lord speak, saying 'I will be sanctified by those who come [too] close to Me.'" Too close to God can be more dangerous than too distant from Him, if over-zealous Fanaticism is what measured Divine service turns into!

This is why both the Rambam (Maimonides) and the Ramban interpret the commandment par excellence in interpersonal human relationships, "You shall do what is right and good" (Deut. 6:18), to necessitate going beyond the legal requirements, to make certain that you not act like a "scoundrel within the confines of the law," whereas in the area of Divine-human relationships, you dare not take the law into your own hands; our legal authorities are concerned lest your motivation be *yuhara*, excessive pride before God, religious "one-upmanship, which too early may overtake the sober humility of the all-too eager zealot."

Thus the sacred Book of *Vayikra*, the book which features our religious devotion to the Lord, opens with Moses's reluctance to enter the Tabernacle of the Lord unless he is actually summoned to do so by God. His humility is even more in evidence when he records only in miniature the final letter alef in the word *Vayikra*, as if to say that perhaps the call he had received by God was more by accident than by design.

Indeed, the Midrash (*Tanhuma* 37) teaches that the small amount of unused ink which should have been utilized on the regular-sized alef of the Torah (as it were), was placed by God on Moses's forehead; that ink of humility is what provided Moses's face with the translucent glow with which he descended from Mount Sinai (Ex. 34:33-35).

Fanatic zealots are completely devoid of humility; they operate with the fire without rather than the radiant light from within!, the authorities light of glory which suffused Moses entire being, the truest rays of splendor which express the sanctity beyond deeds and beyond words.

Shabbat Shalom!

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### **Vayikra: The Inner Light of Destruction**

#### **Rav Kook Torah**

Flooding, wars, earthquakes - every day we are bombarded with news of catastrophe and disaster. Is this how God envisioned His world? How can we relate to the many destructive forces in the world?

The offering of a *korban* in the Temple culminated in the ritual of *zerikat ha-dam*, as the kohen sprinkled the animal's blood - its life-force - around the Altar.

"He will slaughter [the offering] near the Altar's base, on the north side before God. The kohanim, descendants of Aaron, will then dash its blood all around the Altar." (Lev. 1:11)

What is the significance of the offering being slaughtered on the northern side of the Temple compound? Why does the verse note that the kohanim are "descendants of Aaron" - is that not well-known? And why does it say the blood was dashed all around the Altar, when in fact it was just sprinkled twice, on the two diagonally opposite corners of the Altar?

Concealed Before God

Slaughter is an act of severe judgment. When performed on an offering, it serves to connect all the terrible decrees, disasters, and destruction that take place in the world to the hidden Divine rule of the universe.

Everything emanates from the secret ways of the merciful God. All is ultimately good, leading to blessing and kindness.

From our limited perspective, slaughtering is held in low regard. It is thus performed near the base of the Altar. But it conceals a hidden light of kindness. The offering was slaughtered *tzafoonah lifnei Hashem*. Literally, this means “on the northern side, before God.” But the word *tzafoon* also means ‘hidden,’ so the verse may be translated as “concealed - before God alone.”

The task of revealing the inner light in the forces of destruction was given to the *kohanim*, the descendants of Aaron. Why the emphasis on Aaron’s lineage? Aaron was renowned for his compassion and kindness. “Be a disciple of Aaron: Love peace and pursue peace; love people, and draw them to Torah” (Avot 1:12). Aaron’s descendants inherited the special qualities necessary to uncover this hidden light.

The Temple service teaches us that destruction of life has a place even in the holiest of services. It is precisely due to their connection to the highest level - the most all-encompassing perspective of reality - that phenomena which appear inexplicable and destructive from our limited outlook may be seen as contributing to the world. Our physical perception can discern only a sliver of reality; it is severely limited in terms of time, space, and true understanding of events. We lack knowledge of the overall context, and are unable to see the full picture.

The method the *kohanim* used to dash the blood is a fitting metaphor for our superficial perception. The physical eye only sees a partial reality, broken and disconnected. It sees the *kohen* dashing blood on two opposite corners. But on a higher plane, the vision is continuous and complete. The sprinkling encompasses the entire Altar.

Thus the compassionate children of Aaron, as they performed the service of *zerikat ha-dam* around the Altar, provided a glimpse of the hidden source of good and kindness in the universe.

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*Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Vayikra*

*For the week ending 28 March 2020 / 3 Nisan 5780*

*Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com*

*Parsha Insights*

*A Special Calling*

*“And He called...” (1:1)*

It’s been a while since I was in New York City. But whenever I go there, I always think of the verse in *Tehillim*, *Psalms*, that says, “And the land, He has given to the sons of man.” The avenues that stretch to the limit of vision, the feeling of the human dynamo that is New York. I was walking along Central Park East, just by 62nd Street, and I saw some road works and realized how they can build skyscrapers of more than a hundred stories. In London and in Jerusalem, dig into the ground and you will find soil with some rocks. In Manhattan, try and dig into the ground and your spade will bounce back with a hefty ring as it hits solid black granite. And it was that solid granite that has been hewn to form the two memorials to the nearly three thousand people who were murdered by the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11th 2001.

As you approach the memorial you see all the names of all those who fell victim. Each name is engraved on a metal wall surrounding two vast chasms in the ground where the buildings stood; into those chasms pours an enormous and continual four-sided waterfall, and at that bottom of those chasms are smaller abysses into which the water pours, and of those you cannot see the bottom. It seems like a flood of tears constantly pouring into the depths of the world. What makes the monument so impressive is its sheer scale. I tried to take a video of it, but when I played it back it conveyed nothing of the feeling that I experienced. There are some things you just can’t film, you can’t video. Scale is not just size. It is the yardstick of my relationship to the creation. When you film something, you lose that point of reference, even if you include a human being to indicate scale.

In our world, the ultimate measurement is the measure of a man. So many of the measurements of the Torah and our Sages relate to the human being — the *tefach* — a hand’s-breadth; the *amah* — the distance

from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger, the *zeret* — the length of the small finger. There is a way that Hashem speaks to us that is beyond language; there is a language of the emotions, the ‘still small voice’ that speaks to us as a language of connection, of *chiba*. As Rashi mentions when commenting on the first word in this week’s *Parsha*, *Vayikra*, “And He called...” — ‘an expression of affection.’ Rashi says that the angels call to each other using this phrase. But maybe the only creation to whom Hashem ‘calls’ — the only creation that is attuned to that special broadcast of the emotions — is Man.

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*Parshas Vayikra: Forgiving Fallibility*

*Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb*

"I was wrong. I am sorry. Please forgive me."

These are rare words indeed, but I heard them pronounced clearly by a woman I once worked for, and whom I still admire.

She was the superintendent of a small school district just outside of Washington, DC. Several of the school districts in that geographical area were under a federal court order to guarantee desegregation of the races in the public schools. Believe it or not, the court found that even as late as the early 1970s, proper integration of the races was still not achieved in many of these schools.

The superintendent, whom I will call Dr. Cassidy, had selected a group of school system employees to serve as part of a specially trained team to deal with the tensions in the community that were caused by the implementation of this court order.

I was then working as a school psychologist in this school district, and was one of those chosen to serve on this team. We had spent several weeks training for this sensitive human relations project. She had initially assured us that federal funding for our salaries was guaranteed, and that we could be confident that our jobs were secure once certain formalities were finalized.

One Monday morning we were summoned to an urgent meeting. She informed us that the funds were not available, and that we would be denied not only our future salaries, but even remuneration for the time we had already spent. It was then that she uttered the words, "I was wrong. Please forgive me."

I have subsequently witnessed many situations in which a leader made a terrible mistake impacting upon the lives of others. But, almost invariably, those leaders shirked responsibility, blamed others, or concocted ludicrous excuses for their failures. Very few had Dr. Cassidy's courage.

This week's Torah portion, *Vayikra* (Leviticus 1:1-5:26), describes an individual who demonstrated just such courage, and who indeed was expected to do so.

Chapter 4 of our Torah portion lists a number of individuals who occupied special roles in the ancient Jewish community. They included the High Priest; the judges of the central court or Sanhedrin; and the *Nasi*, or chieftain. Of the latter we read:

"In case it is a chieftain who incurs guilt by doing unwittingly any of the things which by the commandment of the Lord his God ought not to be done, and he realizes his guilt... He shall bring as his sin offering a male goat without blemish... Thus the priest shall make expiation on his behalf for his sin, and he shall be forgiven." (Leviticus 4:22-26)

The Hebrew for the first phrase in the above quotation, "in case", is "asher". Rashi notes the similarity between the word "asher" and the word "ashrei", or "fortunate". Based on that similarity he comments: "Fortunate is the generation whose leader is concerned about achieving forgiveness for his unintentional transgressions. How much more so will he demonstrate remorse for his intentional misdeeds."

Fortunate indeed is the community which is blessed with leadership which can acknowledge error unambiguously. Even more fortunate is the community whose leaders ask for forgiveness.

Our commentators note that it is to be expected that leaders will commit moral errors. Rabbi Obadiah Sforno, the medieval Italian physician and

Torah scholar, comments that it is unavoidable that men in positions of power will sin. He quotes the phrase in Deuteronomy 32:15 which reads, "Jeshurun grew fat and kicked", indicating that when one becomes "fat" with power he will "kick" sinfully. How similar is this insight to Lord Acton's famous quote: "Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely."

If the Torah assumes that misdeeds by leaders are unavoidable, it also expects that those leaders will humbly acknowledge their misdeeds and beg forgiveness for them. That is the lesson of the passage in our Torah portion.

However, the process cannot end with the leader's apologies. His followers must accept his sincere regret, and, much more difficult, must bring themselves to forgive him. In the passage in our Parsha it would seem that it is the Almighty who forgives a leader, and not necessarily the people.

My personal experience has taught me that just as it is difficult for people, especially those in power, to confess their shortcomings and to appeal for forgiveness, so is it all the more difficult for people to grant forgiveness to those who have offended them.

Yet, our sages point out that the Almighty wants us to be as forgiving as He is. Thus, there is a verse in the book of the prophet Micah which reads, "Who is a God like You, forgiving iniquity and remitting transgression...?" Upon this verse the Talmud comments: "Whose iniquities does God forgive? Those of he who remits the transgressions of others." (Talmud Bavli, Rosh Hashana 17a).

So, let's return to the story with which I began this column. Dr. Cassidy proved herself to be capable of confessing that she was mistaken, and of asking us to forgive her. But I also remember our reaction, the reaction of the small group of hard workers who learned that they were not only out of a job, but would not even be getting paycheck that they earned.

Our reaction was one of great anger. I imagine that the feelings in the room were close to those of a lynch mob. We vented some of those feelings, but then moved on to feelings of frustration and impotence. We asked Dr. Cassidy to leave the room so that we could plan our next step rationally, which she did.

I won't report on the details of the long discussion which ensued. Suffice it to say that we moved from anger and frustration to acknowledging Dr. Cassidy's good intentions, to empathizing with her dilemma, and finally, as a group, deciding to express to her our understanding and forgiveness. She reentered the room, and was visibly touched by our compassionate response

I must conclude by telling you dear reader, that although happy endings are generally confined to fairy tales, this particular story did have a happy ending.

Perhaps emboldened by the support she felt from our group, Dr. Cassidy renewed her efforts to obtain the grant from the federal agency, enlisted the assistance of several regional congressman, and obtained the funds available for this training program.

The lessons of ordinary life often parallel the lessons of the Torah. For a society to advance, its leaders must be self-aware and courageous enough to recognize and confess their failures, and to seek forgiveness from those whom they have affronted. Equally important, those who have been affronted most find it in their hearts to sincerely forgive.

Then, and only then, can problems be solved, and greater goals achieved.

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**Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Vayikra**  
*Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya*

Learning to be Happy with our Portion from an "Out of Order" Rashi Vayikra begins with the words: "He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying: Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: When a person (Adam) from among you will bring an offering to Hashem; from the animals – from the cattle and from the flocks you shall bring your offering." [Vayikra 1:1-2].

Rashi explains that this ambiguous opening "When a person from among you will bring a sacrifice..." implies that the Torah is speaking of a voluntary sacrificial offering (korban nedavah). Rashi questions why the Torah uses the generic word Adam when speaking about the subject who brings the offering. Rashi answers that this expression calls to mind Adam, the first man, and thereby teaches: Just as Adam did not bring offerings from stolen property (because he owned all animals in the world), so too, you shall not bring offerings from property that does not belong to you.

It is interesting that although the first word in the pasuk is "Adam" (from which Rashi derives the lesson that one cannot bring a stolen animal as a sacrifice) and the next two words are ki yakriv — when he will offer – (from which Rashi learns that we are speaking about a voluntary offering), Rashi reverses the sequence when presenting these two lessons. Rashi first presents the lesson learned from the second and third words of the pasuk (ki yakriv) and only subsequently presents the lesson learned from the first word in the pasuk (Adam). Why did Rashi, the extremely precise master of Biblical interpretation, do that?

The super-commentaries of Rashi all ask this question. The Kli Yakar gives somewhat of an ingenious interpretation: Elsewhere [Bamidbar 19:14] Chazal teach that the word "Adam" refers to the Jewish people, not the nations of the world. Hence, had I only seen the words "Adam ki yakriv" (when a person will bring...) my initial inclination would be to think that the pasuk is only referring to Jews. However, then Rashi says that we are speaking about voluntary offerings and we know that Gentiles can bring voluntary offerings. Given then that we are speaking about voluntary offerings, the word Adam cannot be coming to teach us that the pasuk is referring exclusively to Jews. It must be teaching us something else. So now that Rashi taught us that we are speaking about voluntary offerings by expounding the words "ki yakriv," it now becomes necessary for Rashi to expound the word Adam as teaching us that the offerings cannot be from stolen property.

The Tolner Rebbe has a different approach to explain these apparently out-of-sequence comments by Rashi. To appreciate his insight, however, we need to introduce one additional difficulty: Why was it necessary to expound the word "Adam" to teach that a person may not bring a stolen animal as a sacrifice? The truth of the matter is there are several other Talmudic sources for this halacha. Why does Rashi seemingly ignore these Talmudic sources prohibiting the offering of stolen property, rather quoting a less authoritative Medrashic source?

The Tolner Rebbe explains that there are two categories of people. There is the type of person that no matter what he has and no matter how much he has, he never has enough. Shomo Hamelech said about such a person: "One who loves money will never be satisfied with money..." [Kohel 5:9]. A person can have everything under the sun, but if he has such a nature that he is never satisfied no matter what he has, he will never be happy. Someone out there has a better house; someone has a better car; someone has a better boat; someone has a private airplane. There is always more to be had. If someone does not learn how to be satisfied with what he has, he will always be lacking.

On the other hand, there is another type of extremely poor person. He has very little. However, his nature is (to use Mishnaic language) to be a "Sameach b'Chelko" (happy with his lot in life). He does not sense the lack. He does not feel the want. This is the type of individual that the Mishna calls a truly rich person [Avos 4:1]. A person can have a multi-million-dollar portfolio with every luxury item a person could imagine and feel that he is lacking; another can be on the verge on bankruptcy and feel that he has everything he could possibly need. Those are the two types of people in the world.

Which is the type of person who brings a Voluntary Offering? It is the second type of person who brings a Korban Nedava. It does not hurt him. It does not bother him to part with his money. This type of person willingly wants to make a donation, show his appreciation to the Almighty and bring a voluntary offering.

These two personalities, with which we are all familiar, are personified by the Biblical personalities of Yaakov and Eisav. Yaakov Avinu tells his brother "I have everything." [Bereshis 33:11]. Eisav concedes only

“I have a lot” [Bereshis 33:9]. If a person can only admit “I have a lot,” it indicates that he is always lacking something. If a person’s attitude is “I have everything” then he is never lacking.

The type of person who brings a Korban Nedava has the attitude: I have enough. I can share. I can pay back. I can give this animal of mine to the Ribono shel Olam.

Rashi first explains that we are speaking of a voluntary offering. Then Rashi says, “Do you know what type of person brings a voluntary offering? Someone who is like Adam. Adam felt no need to steal. He felt no need to take from somebody else because everything was his. We can emulate that type of person by being satisfied with what we have and thereby demonstrating the willingness to give.

Rashi here is not speaking about halacha. He is not trying to teach us the specific Biblical exegesis that teaches that someone may not bring an offering from stolen property. The Talmud teaches that in a number of places when addressing the ‘cheftza of the mitzvah’ (i.e. – the halachic status of the monetary ownership of the item with which one fulfills the commandment). Here Rashi is not interested in telling us about the ‘cheftza’. Rather he is interested in telling us about the ‘gavra’ (the moral status of the individual who brings the item with which the mitzvah is performed). What type of mensch brings a voluntary offering? It is the type of person who feels “I have enough already.”

The paradigm – the model – for such action was the first man, Adam haRishon. He had everything and felt no urge or need to steal. One who can emulate that attitude can bring a korban nedava.

This is why Rashi wrote the second comment first and the first comment second. Rashi must first explain that the pasuk is speaking of the situation of a Voluntary Offering. He then goes on to explain the proper attitude a person has while bringing a voluntary offering. What is the philosophy of a Korban Nedava? What type of person brings such a sacrifice? Rashi answers by telling us that it is a person like Adam who in fact accurately felt “I have everything.”

#### The Lowly Salt Teaches an Elevated Lesson

The other comment I would like to share is on the pasuk “You shall salt your every meal-offering with salt; you may not discontinue the salt of your G-d’s covenant from upon your meal-offering – on all your offerings shall you offer salt.” [Vayikra 2:13] Rashi explains the requirement that all the sacrifices must have salt added to them: “For a covenant has been made with salt since the Six Days of Creation, for the lower (earthly) waters were promised to be offered on the Mizbayach in the form of salt ...”

This was a consolation prize, so to speak. When the Ribono shel Olam split the waters of creation, some waters stayed down on earth in the oceans, rivers, and lakes, while other waters ascended to Heaven. The “lower waters” felt jealous. Hashem, so to speak, made a “deal” with the “lower waters” so they would not feel so cheated by their lack of spiritual mission in creation. The salt – which was a key component of the lower waters – would also be close to the Almighty – because of the law that all sacrifices must be accompanied by salt.

One may ask, however, it seems that it is the water – not the salt – that needs the consolation prize and the compensation for the role of the “upper waters”. Why the emphasis here on the salt?

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky makes a very interesting comment: Rashi — says in Tractates Kesuvos and Shabbos – that salt was made in olden times as follows: They would dig an inlet. The ocean water would come in. It would evaporate and salt was left behind. Salt is the lowest of the low. The water that evaporates eventually goes back up to Heaven. The salt is left behind here on earth!

The Ribono shel Olam is trying to tell the water that “I appreciate the lowest of the low.” Not only will the water participate in the Korbonos (as is the case on Succos with the Water Libations) but even the salt of the water, the last earthly residual of the water after the water itself evaporates – that too is part of the sacrificial service.

The message, Rav Yaakov says, is an important lesson in the Jewish concept of spirituality. Spirituality is not always found in the “Higher Worlds”. A person can achieve Ruchniyus (spirituality) even with the

lowest of the low. The lowly salt, which remains from water that evaporates, can also play a role in spirituality. The consolation to the water was not just that the lower waters have a spiritual role to play in this world. More than that! Even the water’s salt component – the last material residue after water “evaporates to the heavens” – has a spiritual role to play in this world. And so too, any person can achieve spiritual heights in this material world, no matter in what situation he finds himself.

*Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com*

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#### *chiefrabbi.org*

#### **Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis**

#### **Dvar Torah: Vayikra**

Why do we add salt to our bread at the commencement of our meals?

In Parshat Vayikra the Torah tells us ‘al kol korbancha takriv melach’ – ‘you must offer salt together with every one of your sacrifices’. Rabenu Bachya brings Tosfot in mesechet Pesachim, Daf 94a, who explains that there are three types of area in this world. We have inhabited places, deserts, and the seas and rivers.

The Torah was given to us in a desert. Our Temple was built in an inhabited area. And Hashem gave recognition to the waters of the world by instructing us to use salt in our sacrifices because salt is ever present in the waters of the sea.

There is a further extraordinary dimension of salt. Salt is NaCl – sodium chloride. No one would think about placing sodium or chlorine on our tables. But remarkably the fusion of the two produces salt, a staple element of our diet and one of the great preservatives of food.

The salt that we have on our tables for our meals serves as an ongoing reminder that there are some things that we will never be able to work out. As clever and as advanced as we are within our sophisticated age, nonetheless, there are some things that will always be beyond our understanding. The mystery of salt sends us a reminder of Hashem’s mastery over our world and our ongoing indebtedness to him for the world that he has created – the world that he maintains and food that is on our plates – each and everyday.

Shabbat shalom

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

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#### *blogs.timesofisrael.com*

#### **Vayikra: Sanctity Versus Power**

#### **Ben-Tzion Spitz**

*We thought, because we had power, we had wisdom. - Stephen Vincent Benet*

The beginning of the Book of Leviticus details a variety of sacrifices that are brought by different people for different sins. Two individuals are singled out in the list of sinners and they are prescribed different sacrifices. One personality is the Kohen Gadol (the High Priest); the other is the King.

The Meshech Chochma on Leviticus 4:21 analyses the differences between these two personalities. The Kohen Gadol is the most sacred role in Israel. He and only he is the one with the task, the burden and the great honor of entering the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur. He represents the holiest person, in the holiest place at the holiest time in a unique annual communion with God, that when successful, conveys forgiveness to the entire people of Israel.

In Biblical times, the Kohen Gadol also wore the Urim Ve’tumim, the special breastplate with the twelve precious stones that enabled a very specific but powerful communication between God and the leadership of Israel. The bottom line is that the Kohen Gadol represented the pinnacle of sanctity and closeness to God. Because of this closeness, any sin that the Kohen Gadol committed, even if it was inadvertent, would be considered by the public as purposeful.

The King, on the other hand, was considered all too human. Because of his excess power, it was presumed that he would err more than your average citizen. That is why he was given additional strictures above those of non-Kings, such as the prohibition of accumulating too much wealth, too many horses or too many wives, and his need to carry a Torah scroll on him at all times.

The people, knowing well the King's likelihood to blunder and to show poor judgment, would know that any sins of his are indeed mistakes and they would be more careful not to imitate such mistakes.

The Meshech Chochma adds that this is the reason why we don't appoint Kohens as Kings (a reminder of the ultimately catastrophic Hasmonean monarchy – the combination of Kohens and kingship ended in disaster). The Kohen who is meant to be more attuned to divine service will turn away from God because of the royal power he gets. His arrogance will remove his fear of God. And if this Kohen King sins, the people may follow his example, considering him a holy man.

On the other hand, the Meshech Chochma continues, the people likewise can affect their king. When the people sin, the king can very likely be influenced by them and follow in their ways. The converse is likewise true: if the people are good and follow God, the king will be strengthened and encouraged to do the same.

May we never confuse holiness with power.

*Dedication: To all those working on a COVID-19 vaccine and cure.*

*Shabbat Shalom*

*Ben-Tzion Spitz is a former Chief Rabbi of Uruguay. He is the author of three books of Biblical Fiction and over 600 articles and stories dealing with biblical themes.*

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### **Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz - Vayikra 5780**

#### **Let's Heed the Call!**

This Shabbat, we begin reading the third book of the Bible: the book of Vayikra, Leviticus.

It seems likely that in light of the situation around the world due to the spread of the coronavirus, we will not be able to pray in synagogues as we follow the directives of the authorities. We are obligated to take these directives seriously and follow them responsibly. Where told to do so, people should pray at home, thus preserving their own health and that of others. Many of those who come to the synagogue every Shabbat and listen to the weekly portion being read will not be able to do so this Shabbat. Therefore, it is advisable to read the parasha from a Bible while adding a special prayer for those who are sick, "Shabbat should afford you a respite from crying out in pain and you shall soon be healed."

The book of Leviticus deals mostly with halachot (Jewish laws) pertaining to the Temple: laws of sacrifices, purity and impurity, special laws for the kohanim (priests) and more. For this reason, Chazal refer to this book as Torat Kohanim, Torah of the Priests. But during the last few centuries, it has become customary to refer to the books of the Bible according to the first words of each book, so this book is called Vayikra. Midrash HaTanna'im (midrash written by rabbinic sages from the 1st and 2nd centuries) on Leviticus is also called Torat Kohanim or Sifra, and it clarifies verses, examines them, and learns from them. Let's see what the sages learned from the first verse in the book of Leviticus:

"And He called (vayikra) to Moses, and the Lord spoke (vayedaber) to him from the tent of meeting" – We are hereby taught that the voice was "cut off" and would not be heard outside the tent of meeting. Could it be because [the voice] was low? It is, therefore, written (Numbers 7:89): "And he heard the voice" – the distinctive voice described in Scripture (Psalms 29:47): "The voice of the Lord, in power; the voice of the Lord, in glory. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon... The voice of the Lord hews out flames of fire, etc." Why, then, (if the voice is so vast) is it written "from the tent of meeting"? We are hereby taught that the voice was "cut off" and did not travel beyond the (the confines of) the tent of meeting.

(Sifra, Diburrah D'Nedavah, 2)

This midrash is briefly referred to in Rashi's commentary on this verse: "The [Divine] voice emanated and reached Moses' ears, while all [the

rest] of Israel did not hear it." If so, this was a unique and amazing phenomenon. An incredibly and strong voice was heard by one person only: Moses. What was the meaning of this?

The founder of the Hasidic movement, Rabbi Yisrael "Ba'al Shem Tov" (Ukraine 1700-1760) wrote about this with piercing wisdom. He said that the great voice, the voice of G-d, was heard in each person's heart. There is no one who cannot hear G-d speaking to him, with His voice coming through Torah, through history, through various events, through reality – Man hears G-d but it is his responsibility to listen and recognize the voice. Moses was on such a high level that he could hear G-d's voice giving him the commandments of the Torah. Other who could not recognize G-d's voice weren't able to hear it.

How relevant this all is to our current situation, unfortunately. Modern man who was accustomed to controlling the forces of nature, suddenly finds himself out of control. The coronavirus is wreaking havoc on humanity, and the support systems we became used to leaning on are suddenly unstable: the support of routine, of work, financial support, activities, science, public bodies, social support, and the support of leisure. World order has been so undermined, it leads us all to ask an important question: What support can we confidently count on?

The entire Bible, from its first page to its last, conveys this message: G-d speaks to man. Listen to Him! We are all going through an extremely challenging time, especially those who aren't well. Let us be those who can recognize G-d's voice through the events around us. Let us be those who learn the lessons we are being taught. Let us be those who comprehend that the coronavirus is not just a natural phenomenon but a call for repair and progress.

Wishing everyone – the Jewish nation and all of humanity - good health!!

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

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### **Shema Yisrael Torah Network**

#### **Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Vayikra**

**פרשת ויקרא תשפ**

**אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן**

#### **When a man among you brings an offering. (1:2)**

Unlike pagan offerings and the "dogma" surrounding that form of worship, *korbanos* which are mandated by Hashem are not meant to influence the Almighty. Pagan sacrifice was meant to appease their pantheon of gods and other imaginary idol figures. Humans were taught to believe that by offering various forms of sacrifices to the gods, they would succeed in dissipating his anger. How fortunate are we that we have been blessed with minds that comprehend that such an idea is ludicrous. When we distance ourselves from Hashem through sin, we must seek an avenue of return, a medium for narrowing the distance that we have created. The Hebrew term *korban* is derived from *karov*, close, to/ come close. Our goal (mission in life) is to come as close as possible to Hashem. When we offer an animal on the Altar, we are, by our actions, expressing our intention to bring our material side closer to Hashem. Thus, the *korban* experience teaches us that we are to take the physical/material base aspect of ourselves, and sanctify it to Hashem. The esoteric aspect of *korbanos* is beyond the scope of this *dvar Torah*.

A young man who had fought in the Vietnam War informed his parents that, now that the war was over, he was coming home. He had to address a few issues before he left, and then he would come home. He added that he had a friend who was a war hero who would be accompanying him as a house guest. Would they mind?

The parents were excited to hear from their son and only too happy to acquiesce to hosting his friend. He then explained to his parents that he had "forgotten" to mention that his friend had been seriously wounded in a heavy firefight, during which he had been instrumental in saving his platoon. His face was badly disfigured, and his leg was damaged. In addition, he suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. When the parents heard this, they quickly recanted their invitation, opting instead to contribute to the young man's therapy.

Weeks passed, and after hearing nothing from their son, they decided to visit the base where he was staying. When they arrived, they were informed that no one by their son's name either was on active duty or had returned from Vietnam. Perhaps they should inquire at the hospital. They visited the hospital and after being directed from one staffer to another, they discovered that their son was in the serious burns unit – refusing visitors. Parents never give up. They went to the unit and demanded to see their son. After all, they had just spoken to him a few weeks ago. The physician in charge of his case said that it was precisely a few weeks ago that their son had succumbed to a deep melancholy and had refused to speak to anyone. They insisted that he allow them to visit. The doctor added one condition: that they do not upset his patient. They entered his room and took one look at their son, and they realized why he was refusing to see or speak to anyone. He was the imaginary friend whom they had refused to host. He was feeling them out to see what their reaction would be to their son who had been disfigured on the battlefield. They cried, they pleaded. He would not listen. They explained that while they were not prepared to host a stranger, their own flesh and blood was always welcome, under any circumstances, regardless of his condition.

End of hypothetical story. Hashem dispatches us to this world, in which we must battle the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination. Throughout life, the battle is severe, and we sustain a number of serious hits. We fall prey to the wiles of the *yetzer hora*, and the sins which we commit damage our spiritual persona. Our entire spiritual image is disfigured, much like the soldier who had survived a firefight with the enemy. As a result, we distance ourselves from Hashem, figuring that that He would never welcome us back. What we forget is that we are His children, and a Father never closes the door on his son.

Hashem asks that we make the first move. This is the idea behind *korbanos*. He wants to see if we are prepared to return, to remember that He is a loving Father, and we are returning to our rightful home, where we belong. We are ashamed. Our sins have so disfigured us that we are no longer recognizable. Our identity has changed. Perhaps it might make a difference to strangers. A father, however, always welcomes his child home, regardless of his transformation.

Today, we no longer have the ritual sacrifices that were once offered in the Temple which is no longer extant. We still have prayer. Let us plead to Hashem. The right words will open the door. But we no longer know how to pray. “We have forgotten the words. Hashem, now what should we do?” The Almighty replies, “Weep. Tears will always pierce the Heavens.” Our Heavenly Father waits for us to overcome our shame and return to Him. The light is on; the door is open, but we must know and ask if we may enter. The answer will be, “Yes.”

אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן

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

The word *korban* is derived from *karov*, close/near. A *korban* brings us closer to Hashem. The *Navi Hoshea* (6:6) states, “For I (Hashem) wanted *chesed*, acts of lovingkindness, and not a *korban*.” *Chesed* is being presented as being on par with *korbanos*, but also as being better than *korbanos*. *Chesed* brings about atonement, but *chesed* has an advantage that exceeds the *korban* effect. *Maharal (Nesivos Olam/Nesiv Gemilus Chassadim)* explains that *chesed* elevates a person, granting him a higher level of spirituality, while a *korban* does not. As *Horav Tzvi Kushelevsky, Shlita*, puts it: “*Chesed* elevates a person above his natural earthliness by allowing him to emulate Hashem when he performs kindness to others.” In other words, a *korban* atones; *chesed* causes a person to grow. Furthermore, when one performs acts of *chesed*, he achieves greater connectivity with Hashem. When one connects with the Ruler of the kingdom, the forces that want to take him down desist out of fear of offending the Ruler. So, too, when one emulates Hashem by performing *chesed*, he becomes one of His people. The forces of evil and impurity leave him alone.

The *Maharal (Netzach Yisrael 36)* writes that one who attaches himself to Torah and *chesed* becomes untouchable. He explains that evil cannot rule over someone who is attached to consummate good.

Torah is goodness in a non-physical sense, while *chesed* is goodness in a physical, tangible sense. One who pursues both—Torah and *chesed* – is impregnable. He will be spared from the *Chevlei*, birth pangs, of *Moshiach*.

The *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, encourages us to do evil because it is evil. Indeed, Hashem refers to the *yetzer hora* as evil (*Talmud Succah 52A*). *Chazal (Berachos 61B)* compare the *yetzer hora* to a fly. Flies gravitate to the decayed, to the decomposed, to the dirty objects. Flies are not attracted to clean, pristine objects. Evil is attracted to evil; pure good is not a magnet for evil. It actually makes sense. Evil seeks to blend in; thus, it is drawn to its own kind. It distances itself from inherent good, because it attracts too much attention.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* concludes with our mission statement: Develop your goodness; increase your Jewish identity as a Torah Jew by studying Torah and carrying out acts of lovingkindness. [Torah defines *chesed* as acts of lovingkindness that adhere to Torah guidelines. An activity might be “kind,” but still not necessarily stand under the rubric of *chesed*.]

והיה כי יחטא ואשם והשיב את הגזילה אשר גזל

#### So it shall be when he will sin and become guilty, he shall return the robbed item that he robbed. (5:23)

The thief brings his guilt-offering only after he has appeased the victim by returning the stolen goods. Hashem's forgiveness follows after the thief has made his peace with his victim. Everyone wants to be observant, repent and return to good, spiritual standing. Hashem is not interested in pardoning one who has no respect for the feelings of his fellow Jew. Furthermore, one who steals indicates that he has no faith in Hashem's ability to provide for his needs. By his very actions, such a person demonstrates that he is more concerned with his own needs than with the feelings of others. His guilt-offering is certainly not sincere. Hashem responds only to heartfelt, sincere pleas for forgiveness.

Returning the stolen item is not always simple. First, one may have spent or used it. Second, he originally took it because he was in need. If the situation has not changed, to return it would place him in greater need. The following story is inspiring and gives us something to think about. A young man was the product of an American modern, Jewish background. (*Shabbos* was respected; his mother lit candles before they went out for the evening; meat and dairy foods were separated – at home; *Yom Kippur* was observed with the traditional fasting; *Passover* consisted of a family *Seder* together, regardless of the distance necessary to travel; integrity was paramount in the marketplace; business ethics and moral integrity of all sorts were not only preached, but adhered to; an elementary day school education, followed by high school was mandatory, and then off to work.) Upon his graduation from school, followed by marriage, this young man's father gave him start-up money to open his own business to provide for his family. He chose to enter the Styrofoam /plastic cup business. Apparently, everyone seemed to be earning a living in this field. The problem was the competition. The larger, more successful companies sold packaged multi-color cups, while his were standard white or clear. The markup was not much; one had to sell high volume in order to do well in this business.

The standard package was 150 cups per box. Due to the heavy competition, he was forced to lower his prices just to remain in business. This, of course, lowered his profit margin. One day, an idea dawned on him: if he would put 149 cups in the box instead of the 150, no one would notice. People did not open the package to count the cups. The altered weight was so minimal that no one took note. His profit margin was steadily rising. That one cup made quite a difference. After three months, he realized that one more cup (148) would not make a difference. No one noticed anyway. One year after his package “altering” scheme began, he was selling 146 cups at the price of 150 and realizing a healthy profit margin.

One year later, business was still good, but nothing like he had expected. His primary profit margin was a lie, as he was selling 146 cups for the price of 150. His family was unaware of his dishonesty.

What people did not know did not hurt them – so he thought. Life was changing in his Jewish community. People were actually moving towards the right, towards greater religious commitment and observance. His children's school upgraded their Jewish studies program, as did their synagogue. Now there were adult outreach classes in which attendance was in vogue. Their children were doing well; in fact, the entire family became much more traditional. Their son asked to have his *bar mitzvah* celebrated in *Eretz Yisrael*. The parents were not adverse to moving to the right. It was change, but they felt that change was for the better. The father attended *minyán* daily, and the mother attended Torah classes. They decided to make their pilgrimage to *Eretz Yisrael* in honor of their son's *bar mitzvah*. This would be a trip with religious meaning. Everything seemed to be moving in the right direction (religiously). There still was one issue that gnawed at the father: The cups he had been selling all of these years. His financial success was based upon fraud. As he moved toward greater religious commitment, he could no longer live with this lie. To this end, on the last day of their trip, he asked the rabbi leading their tour if he could arrange a meeting with a leading *posek*, *halachic* arbiter. He had a question of serious *halachic* significance for which he required guidance.

An appointment was made with the *posek*, preeminent *posek* of the generation, *Horav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, zl*. He sat before *Rav Elyashiv* and related his business dealings of the last years, how he had cheated his customers. What could he do to repent? "I am aware that my customers are gentiles, but stealing is stealing, regardless of the religion of the victim." The *Rav* did not immediately reply. He sat for a few moments ruminating over the question. During this time, the questioner felt like digging a hole in the ground below him and climbing in, so shameful and anxious was he. *Rav Elyashiv* finally looked up and said, "What you did was wrong. From now on, instead of putting 150 cups in the package, you are to put 154 cups."

The response troubled him; after all, who is to say that the next customer was one of those who had earlier been a victim? The tour director told him that one does not question *Rav Elyashiv's* decision. He accepted it and made up his mind that as soon as he returned, he would insert four extra cups in every package. He knew quite well that in the future he would be taking a loss on every package of cups. On the other hand, he realized that he was essentially returning the profit he had illicitly made over the years. Four cups multiplied by 10,000 packages equals 40,000 cups, which was a hefty sum. This is what he was about to lose.

His accountant could not figure out why, despite brisk sales, the company was losing money. He obviously had no clue that they were putting in four extra cups (when, in the past, they were excluding four cups). The situation was becoming increasingly more serious, to the point that one morning, following *Shacharis*, he broke down in bitter weeping over his financial concerns. He did not go to work that day, and instead he relied on his general manager to attend to the orders. At 11:00 in the morning, Joe, his manager called him and asked, "Where are you celebrating?" "What are you talking about?" he asked. "What am I celebrating?" "You mean that you really do not know?" Joe asked. "You must come to the office immediately. Regardless of your physical condition, drive or take a taxi, but come down right away." He had no desire to leave the comfortable depression of his home. He wanted to sulk all day and not speak with anyone, but Joe had insisted. He could not refuse him.

He trudged into his office like one going to his own funeral. He was not in a very good mood. Joe sat with the daily newspaper. He held up an article which he wanted his boss to read. The article was an expose of the plastic cup industry, in which the author wrote that just about everyone was not supplying the correct amount of cups. Some were missing one cup; others, two; with some excluding up to seven cups. The one exception to this rule was Mr. Jacobs (our hero's name), who was exceptionally accommodating to his customers. He was adding four cups to each package! He would rather give extra than be short!

The rest of the story is to be expected. As a result of the newspaper article (and *Rav Elyashiv's* advice), business quadrupled. Everyone bought only "Jacobs' cups." His business grew exponentially, spreading to other products. Today, his children study in the finest *yeshivos*. His home is strictly kosher. *Tznius*, modesty, and *chesed*, acts of lovingkindness, are the hallmarks of his home, all because he followed the advice of the *gadol hador*. His repentance was sincere. His restitution was in accordance with the *psak* of the *gadol hador*. He had erred, and repented. Hashem had accepted his restitution.

**ואם נפש אחת תחטא בשגגה מעם הארץ**

**If an individual person from among the people of the land shall sin unintentionally. (4:27)**

The sin-offering of a *yachid*, individual, which is brought for an inadvertent sin (for a *mitzvah* whose intentional prohibition carries the punishment of Heavenly excision, *kares*), is always a beast (female goat or sheep) and does not vary up and down (*oleh v'yoreid*) according to the wealth or poverty of the one who sinned. The *Sefer HaChinuch* explains the *shoresh ha'mitzvah*, root of the commandment, as in all *korbanos*, to abase and bring the sinner to humility over the sin which he committed. As *Shlomo HaMelech* says in *Mishlei* (16:18), "Pride precedes destruction, and arrogance comes before failure." Humility is the greatest safeguard from downfall. After all, when one holds himself to be low, he cannot fall very far.

Sin brings one to humility. When *Aharon HaKohen* approached the *Mizbayach*, Altar, and the opportunity to represent *Klal Yisrael* in performing the service of the Golden Calf (from the corners of the *Mizbayach*, *keren* – corner, *keren* – horn), the image frightened and subdued him, because he had played a role in creating the Golden Calf. It was certainly inadvertent and meant to save the people, but, nonetheless, he felt responsible, and, as a result, inadequate to represent the nation.

*Moshe Rabbeinu* took note of *Aharon's* reluctance. He understood the reason he was demurring. He heartened and emboldened him, when he said, "Approach the Altar. Hashem designated you (specifically), due to your reluctance, born of humility." One who is truly humble is best suited to serve Hashem, to ascend the ladder of distinction. It was precisely because of *Aharon's* unpretentiousness that he was chosen to serve. Hashem does not want a leader who is arrogant. A leader who is full of himself has no room for his people.

Genuine spirituality can only flourish in a setting of humility. The *Baal Shem Tov* teaches that when one is meek, deferential, submissive – when he is not obsessed with himself - he will more easily recognize and acknowledge that his existence is fragile and that, without Hashem, he has absolutely no chance of survival. Whatever success he might ever enjoy will always be attributed to Hashem, because he knows that he alone is nothing. Humility leads one to prayer, because without Hashem, he cannot make it. Humility is authentic, or it is not humility. It is an approach to living as a Jew, with the constant awareness that one submits himself to a Higher Authority. *Aharon HaKohen* felt himself imperfect. Thus, he was the perfect person to become *Klal Yisrael's* representative in the *Mishkan*.

Being aware of one's fragility – both physical and spiritual - sparks one to serve Hashem with greater sincerity and trust. Everything that he does is genuine and meaningful. The *Rav HaKollel*, Chief Rabbi of New York, *Horav Yaakov Yosef, zl*, was a *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, whose brilliance and erudition catapulted him above all other candidates for the position of Chief Rabbi. At the time, he was the *de-facto Rav* of Vilna. Sadly, his tenure was marred by much strife, since not all of the fifteen most prominent *shuls* to have originally supported him could maintain harmony with regard to their selection. Indeed, *Rav Yosef* was accorded great honor only twice during his tenure: When he arrived, to the outstanding welcome of 100,000 people, and fourteen years later at his funeral, which was attended by an estimated 120,000 people.

During his last year, the Chief Rabbi spent most of his time in seclusion, suffering from depression, as a result of the merciless diatribe fomented

by his antagonists and the early onset of Alzheimer's disease. He was only fifty-nine years old. On *Shabbos Shuvah* of that year (1902), he asked to deliver the traditional *drasha*, lecture, which focused on repentance, character refinement and *mitzvah* observance as a prerequisite for the *yemei ha'din*, days of judgment. Having been out of the public eye for some time, the announcement of his first public *drasha* brought out a huge crowd to the *Bais Medrash HaGadol* of the Lower East Side. He donned his *tallis* (a tradition before delivering the *drasha*), ascended to the *bimah*, lectern, and began with the opening words: "The Rambam in *Hilchos Teshuvah*..." He stopped, as the greatest fear (of any speaker) was realized: he forgot what he wanted to say. Here stood before them one of the most brilliant minds of the generation, a man who once had the entire *Talmud* and Codes at his fingertips, who was well-versed in all areas of Torah scholarship, and he could not remember what he wanted to say.

The Chief Rabbi waited a few (long) moments, composed himself and began to speak. "*Morai v'Rabbotai*, the *drasha* which I had planned to deliver has sadly slipped my mind. However, there is one thought I would like to share with you. The *Mishnah* says, "When Rabbi Yehudah HaNassi died, *anavah*, humility, passed (with him). There was no one who was so humble as Rebbe). Rav Yosef said, 'This is not true, for I am still alive!' (In other words, Rav Yosef said, concerning himself, 'I am still alive, and I will wear the mantle of humility.'")

"Is this humility, for Rav Yosef to declare concerning himself that he is humble? We must keep in mind the fact that Rav Yosef, who was the leader of the generation, and the *Rebbe* of *Rava* and *Abaya*, became blind during his old age and forgot his learning. His students, *Rava* and *Abaya*, were constantly reminding him of his teachings. Thus, Rav Yosef was intimating that, as long as he was alive, he was a living example of why a person should never be arrogant about his self-worth. For what is man? A frail, sad, helpless mortal, who, at any moment can lose everything, when his physical and/or mental faculties cease to function.

"How can a human being think that he is 'something'? Humility has passed? Take one look at me. I forgot my *drasha*! Is there any more compelling and poignant *drasha* than this? When one looks at me, he sees the frailty and fragility of a human being!"  
Need we say more?

### ***Va'ani Tefillah***

תתהי לרצון תמיד עבודת ישראל עמך

***U'sehi Pratzon tamid avodas Yisrael Amecha***

***May the service of Your People Yisrael always be favorable to You.***

In this context, *avodah*, service, does not refer to the *korbanos*, offerings, that comprised the service in the *Bais HaMikdash*. *Horav Shimon Schwab*, ז"ל, explains that we substitute our *tefillos*, prayers (*U'neshalmah parim sefaseinu*, "Let our life substitute for bulls," *Hoshea* 14:3.) We ask Hashem that He fully accept our humble prayers. We do not understand the esoteric nature of *korbanos*, nor are the sanctuaries in which we pray in any way comparable to the *kedushah*, sanctity of the *Bais HaMikdash*. Nonetheless, we ask Hashem that He accept *avodas Yisrael*, our *tefillah* for the return of *Kiddush Hashem* to the world. Only a return of *Kiddush Hashem* will dissipate and remove the *chillul Hashem* that prevails presently in the world. In order for this to occur, we / all of *Klal Yisrael* must first recognize His Name. Once that takes place, the rest of the world will follow our example. After all, we really cannot expect the current morally bankrupt society in which we live to accept what so many of our co-religionists refuse to acknowledge. So, we pray for them and for us. That's what brothers do.

*In memory of our beloved parents*

*Rabbi Dr. Avrohom Yitzchok Wolf Rebbetzin Anna Moses*

*Sruly and Chaya Wolf and Family*

*Ari and Rivky Wolf and Family*

*Abba and Sarah Spero and Family*

*Pesach and Esther Ostroy and Family*

*Sruly and Chaya Wolf and Family*

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*prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum*

First of all,

period of the omer, keeping the second day of Yom Tov and other aspects of many people answered the e-mail I sent out last week including some of my perspectives on the current situation. I apologize personally to each of you who responded for not being able to answer the many communications I have received.

Second of all, there are a number of articles on the laws of the Seder, chometz, kitniyos, Yom Tov, the mourning Pesach on the website RabbiKaganoff.com. Try using the search words chometz, kitniyos, matzoh, Pesach, sefirah or Yom Tov for the appropriate topics. They worked for me.

Third of all, I planned this article for the week of Rosh Chodesh Nisan way before I realized that most of us will probably not be able to be guests at other people's homes for Pesach. The article still has a lot of value.

### **Being a Good Guest**

#### **Or The Halachic Etiquette when Visiting Someone's House**

**By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff**

Since many of us will be guests at other people's houses for the Seder or for some other time during Pesach, it seems like an opportune time to discuss the laws pertaining to being a guest in someone else's house.

Some of these rules are fairly self-explanatory. For example, a guest should not bring another guest with him (*Bava Basra* 98b).

A guest should feel that whatever the host serves and prepares is in his honor. The Gemara explains, "What does a good guest say? How hard the host worked for me! How much meat he brought! How much wine he served! How many dainty dishes he prepared! And all this he prepared for me!"

On the other hand, what does a bad guest say? "Did the host work for me? I ate only one roll and one piece of meat and drank only one cup of wine. All the work he did was done for his wife and children!"

#### **A STRANGE CONVERSATION**

In the context of learning proper etiquette, the Gemara (*Pesachim* 86b) records the following unusual story. Rav Huna the son of Rav Nosson visited the house of Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak, where apparently Rav Huna was not known. His hosts asked Rav Huna, "What is your name," to which he replied "Rav Huna."

They then offered him to sit on the couch, although everyone else was sitting either on the floor or on benches, and the couch was reserved for special guests. Rav Huna did not decline the honor and sat on the couch. Subsequently, they brought him a kiddush-sized cup full of wine, which he immediately accepted and drank in front of them, but he paused once in the middle of drinking.

Rav Nachman's household, which included talmidei chachamim, felt that Rav Huna's responses to their invitations were inappropriate. They proceeded to pepper him with questions about his behavior. (Since he had identified himself as a talmid chacham, all of his acts could teach a halachic lesson. However, they felt that he had not acted correctly; it was therefore appropriate to ask him to explain his behavior.) The conversation that ensued is the source of many halachos.

"Why did you introduce yourself as 'Rav Huna?'" they first asked. Is this an appropriate way to identify oneself?

Rav Huna responded: "That is my name."

"Why did you sit on the couch, when we offered?" They felt that it would have been proper for him to refuse the honor, politely, and to sit on the floor with everyone else (*Tosafos*).

Rav Huna retorted by quoting the now famous halachic adage, "Whatever the host asks you to do, you should do (see *Mesechta Derech Eretz Rabbah* 6:1)."

The hosts continued, "When we offered you the cup, why did you accept it the first time we offered it?"

To which Rav Huna replied, "One may refuse a small person, but one should not refuse the request of a great person."

The hosts then inquired, "Why did you drink the small cup of wine we gave you in two gulps, rather than drink it all at once?"

Rav Huna countered, "The earlier authorities taught us that only a guzzler drinks a whole cup of wine at once, and that arrogant people drink a cup with three sips. The proper way to drink a cup of wine is in two swallows (*Mesechta Derech Eretz Rabbah* 8)."

Finally, his hosts asked, "Why did you not turn your face when drinking?" in their opinion, a talmid chacham should not eat or drink in the presence of many people (*Gemara* and *Rashi*, *Bechoros* 44b). To this Rav Huna replied that only a bride should be so modest; for anyone else, this is not considered modesty (*Rashi*, *Pesachim* 86b).

#### **WHAT DID THEY MEAN?**

In the course of this perplexing conversation, Rav Huna taught his hosts (and us) several halachos germane to proper etiquette that need to be understood properly.

We will now dissect the conversation between these scholars to understand its underlying lessons.

1. He identified himself as “Rav Huna.” Isn’t this a conceited way of introducing oneself? Why would Rav Huna, a great Torah scholar and tzadik, have done this? The source of this halacha (Nedarim 62a) reads as follows:

Rava pointed out that two verses seem to contradict one another. In one verse, Ovadiah says to Eliyahu, Your servant has feared Hashem from his youth (Melachim I 18:12), implying that it is appropriate to make a true statement about one’s spiritual accomplishments. On the other hand, Mishlei (27:2) declares, Someone else should praise you, but not your mouth. Rava explains that the pasuk in Mishlei applies when there are people present who can notify others that this person is a talmid chacham. Since the members of Rav Nachman’s household were unaware that Rav Huna was a talmid chacham, it was appropriate for him to bring this to their attention (Meiri; Maharsha). By doing so, he receives the benefits that he deserves, and people will not be punished for treating him disrespectfully because they did not realize that he is a talmid chacham (Rosh, Nedarim 62a).

It is noteworthy that when Rav Huna explained why he had identified himself as Rav Huna, the Gemara quotes him as saying baal hashem ani, which Rashi seems to explain as meaning, this was always my name. However, this is not the usual way in either Hebrew or Aramaic of telling someone one’s name or appellation. Alternatively, the words baal hashem ani can be interpreted as meaning, I am well known by that name, which implies that he was a well-known personage, although he was apparently unknown by the members of Rav Nachman’s household (see Meiri). Thus, he was responsible to inform them who he was, so that they not treat him disrespectfully.

#### WHY NOT SIT ON THE COUCH?

2. The hosts proceeded to inquire about his next act:

“Why did you sit on the couch when we invited you?” Apparently, they felt that it was inappropriate for him to sit on the couch, and he should have politely refused the honor. To this inquiry Rav Huna replied, “Whatever the host asks you to do, you should do.”

Did the hosts indeed want him to sit in the finest seat in the house, or were they simply being polite? Is the host’s offer genuine, or does he really prefer that I refuse the offer? It is not unusual to face this type of predicament.

Rav Huna answers that when the host’s intent is unclear, one should assume that his offer is sincere and do as he suggests.

There is a clear exception to this rule. When one suspects that the host cannot afford his offer and is only making it out of embarrassment, one should not accept his offer. This is referred to as a seudah she’ainah maspekes lebaalah, lit., a meal insufficient for its host (Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah 4:4; also see Chullin 7b and Rashi).

#### DO WHAT THE HOST ASKS

Why should one do whatever the host requests?

Here are two interpretations to explain the reason for this statement of Chazal:

A. A nonpaying guest should do whatever the host asks him to do, since this is a form of payment for services rendered. In return for free accommodations, the guest should reciprocate by performing the tasks and errands the host requests (Bach, Orach Chayim 170).

In a sense, this parallels the modern practice of presenting the host with a gift. (One can find halachic sources for this practice in the Sefer Orach Meisharim 18:2.) The gift reciprocates the host’s kindness. However, the host often prefers different favors, such as babysitting, rather than a box of chocolates that his waistline can do without, or an additional bouquet of flowers that will soon wilt. Therefore, one’s reciprocation can consist of doing appropriate favors for the host.

In a similar vein, if one has the opportunity to reciprocate hospitality, one should do so (Orach Meisharim 18:2). However, neither host nor guest may specify in advance that the hosting will be reciprocal because of concerns of ribbis, prohibited paying and receiving interest on a loan (Rema, Orach Chayim 170:13), since the one who hosts first has, in essence, extended his hospitality as a loan to the other!

#### A DIFFERENT APPROACH

B. Courtesy dictates that a guest in someone’s house should respect his host and fulfill his requests as master of the house (Levush). Rav Huna ruled that not honoring the host’s desire to honor his guest challenges the host’s authority. By sitting on the couch and accepting the honor, the guest affirms his host’s authority to honor whomever he wishes in his home. In many societies, turning down a host’s offer of a cup of tea or coffee is considered insulting. If one is unaware of local custom, one should follow Chazal’s instructions as Rav Huna did.

#### IF THE HOST HAS DIFFERENT KASHRUS STANDARDS

What happens if the host and the guest interpret the laws of kashrus in different ways? Must the guest follow the host’s request to join him for a meal?

If the guest follows a stricter halachic opinion than the host, the guest should apprise the host. The host may not serve the guest food that does not meet the guest’s standard, unless the food is obviously something he may not eat (Shach,

Yoreh Deah 119:20). For example, if the guest observes cholov yisroel fully and the host follows the poskim who permit unsupervised milk when you can assume that it is cow’s milk, the host may not cook anything that does not meet the guest’s standards without telling him. However, he may place food on the table that is obviously not cholov yisroel. Similarly, if the guest notifies the host that he uses only food with a specific hechsher, the host may not serve him food that violates this standard.

Once a halacha-abiding host knows his guest’s standards, the guest may assume that the host is accommodating his standards and may eat whatever is served without further questions (Shach, Yoreh Deah 119:20). This is included in Chazal’s adage, whatever the host asks you to do, you should do, since it is offensive to question the host’s standards. Offending people is always halachically reprehensible, and certainly when they are doing you a favor.

#### PERSONAL CHUMROS

On the other hand, if the guest has a personal halachic stringency that he would rather not divulge, he should not violate his chumrah and he is not required to divulge it (Shaarei Teshuvah 170:6; Ben Yehoyada).

Generally, one should be modest when it comes to any chumrah (Birkei Yosef, Orach Chayim 170:6). One should also always be aware that taking on personal chumros may not be a good idea, and one should discuss the matter with a gadol prior to observing a chumrah. (See the important discussion on this point in Michtav Mei’Eliyahu Volume 3 pg. 294.)

#### EXCEPT LEAVE

Our editions of the Gemara Pesachim 86b have two Hebrew words appended to the end of the statement, whatever the host asks you to do, you should do. The additional words are, chutz mi’tzei, except leave, and therefore the passage reads, whatever the host asks you to do, you should do, except leave. It is unclear if these words are an authentic part of the text; they are not mentioned in Mesechta Derech Eretz, the source of the original statement. Some authoritative commentators (Meiri) take exception to it, and both the Tur and the Shulchan Aruch omit it. The Meiri reports that these words are an incorrect textual emendation added by scoffers and should be disregarded.

Nevertheless, other authorities (Bach, Magen Avraham, Ben Yehoyada) accept these words as part of the text and grapple with different possible interpretations.

What does this text mean? I found numerous interpretations of this text, including six different interpretations in one sefer (Ben Yehoyada) alone! Several of these approaches assume that performing whatever the host requests means reciprocating his favors, the first approach I mentioned above. According to these approaches, the words chutz mitzei mean that the guest is not expected to perform any inappropriate activity for the host. This would include the host asking the guest to run an errand for him outside the house. Since it is unacceptable to ask someone to run an errand in a city with which he or she is unfamiliar, the guest may refrain from doing so (Bach, Orach Chayim 170).

Nevertheless, if the host requests the guest to do something that he would ordinarily not do because it is beneath his dignity, he should perform it anyway (Birkei Yosef, Orach Chayim 170:5).

#### THE STRANGE CONVERSATION

We now revert to explaining the original conversation that transpired between Rav Huna and his hosts.

3. The hosts continued, “When we offered you the cup, why did you accept it the first time we offered it?”

To which Rav Huna replied, “One may refuse a small person, but one should not refuse the request of a great person.”

#### THE INCONSISTENT ANGELS

This particular rule of etiquette is based on a passage in parshas Vayeira. When Avraham Avinu invited the angels to dinner, they immediately accepted, whereas when his nephew Lot invited them, they initially turned him down. Only after he begged them repeatedly did they accept his invitation (Breishis 15:1-5, 16:1-3). Why did they accept Avraham’s invitation immediately and initially turn down Lot’s offer? The Gemara (Bava Metzia 86b) answers because of this rule -- one may refuse a small person, but one should not refuse a great person.

This halacha has ramifications for other, non-guest situations. When someone is asked to lead the services in shul (usually called to daven before the amud), he should initially decline the offer, as a sign of humility. However, if a great person, such as the rav of the shul, asks one to lead the services, one should immediately agree.

#### TWO GULPS?

4. The hosts now inquired, “Why did you drink the small cup of wine we gave you in two gulps, rather than drink it all at once?”

Rav Huna countered, “The earlier authorities taught us that only a guzzler drinks a whole cup of wine at once, and arrogant people drink a cup with three sips. The proper way to drink a cup of wine is in two swallows” (Mesechta Derech Eretz Rabbah 8).

A reviis-size cup of wine, which is about three ounces, should be drunk in two sips; not all at once, and not in more than two sips. It is preferable to drink about half the cup each time, rather than to drink most of it and leave just a small sip for

afterwards (Magen Avraham 170:12). If the cup is smaller, the wine is very sweet, or the person drinking is very obese, one may drink the entire cup at one time (Pesachim 86b, as understood by Magen Avraham 170:13). When drinking beer, one may drink a greater amount in each gulp, since beer is less intoxicating than wine; and this is certainly true when drinking non-alcoholic beverages (Magen Avraham 170:13). On the other hand, if the drink is very strong, one may drink it much more slowly (Aruch Hashulchan 170:9). Thus, it is appropriate to take small sips of whiskey or other strongly intoxicating beverages.

#### TURNING YOUR FACE?

5. Finally, his hosts asked, "Why did you not turn your face when drinking?" To this, Rav Huna replied that only a bride should be so modest. What is this exchange about?

A talmid chacham should not eat or drink in the presence of many people (Gemara and Rashi, Bechoros 44b). The hosts felt that Rav Huna should not have eaten in their presence without turning to the side, so that they could not see him eat. Rav Huna held that the halacha that a talmid chacham should not eat or drink in the presence of many people does not apply when one is eating a meal together with other people. However, a bride should not eat in a way that other people see her eating, even if they are all participating together in a festive meal (Tosafos, Bechoros 44b s.v. ve'ein). Therefore, Rav Huna replied that only a bride should be so modest; for anyone else, this is not considered modesty (Rashi, Pesachim 86b).

The halacha is that one should not eat in the street or marketplace (Kiddushin 40b); on the other hand, one should not stare at someone who is eating or at the food that he is eating, because it embarrasses him or her (Rambam, Hilchos Brachos 7:6; Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 170:4).

As we see, Chazal had tremendous concern that a person act appropriately in all circumstances, and even more so when we are a guest in someone else's home. Certainly, these are lessons that we should always apply in our daily lives.

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## CORONA CRISIS

### Baruch Rabinowitz

Two of our children asked a very good question over the last couple of days...What would Zeidy a"h have said about that which we are all living through now – the locking down of schools and shuls and stores, the staying in our homes. My wife Miryam put things in perspective as she contemplated our current situation through the eyes of her father, Rav Akiva Eiger Schlusel zt"l, an einikel of Rav Dovid the Av Bais Din of Munkacz and son of Reb Chaim Yechezkel the Rosh Hakohol. He was in Munkacz during the war and spent 3 months hiding in a bunker and many months "on the run".

What might he say if he was here today??

You are restricted where to go and how many people can congregare but you can stay at home and be in your own bed?? No bunker?? No ghetto?? No sleeping with animals in a barn?

You can go to sleep at night and expect to find yourself and your family in the same place in the morning?

You have enough food in your home weeks to survive for a few?? No rationing of a few grains of barely per person per day??

You have water- fresh water to drink and don't need to limit it?? You don't have to boil it first?

You can go to a bathroom and flush away and don't need to use a pail in a corner with other people around??

You can go outside to get food and there is food to be gotten??

You can go outside to get food and you won't be shot dead if discovered??

You can take a shower??? With soap?? Warm water too?

You have Tallis and Tfillin and could daven as long and as loud as you want and not be afraid of being discovered?

You can gather on your own porches and sing Kabbolas Shabbos and let it fill the whole street?

You can have a Shabbos seuda and have real chicken soup - not a little salt in water and leave the rest to imagination??

Real fish??? Fresh???

Challah and bread..... soft and chewy, not hard and moldy?? White and not coarse black??

You can get more than one slice a day?? You don't have to hide it from other people?

You can think about making plans for next month or even next year and have a reasonable chance of keeping those plans?

Heat??? You can feel your fingers and toes when you wake up?

You have air conditioning? You don't feel suffocated by the heat and stench?

You have shoes??? No holes?? More than one pair?? Really?

You have seforim to learn from?? All types of seforim?? So you can be locked up for weeks and months won't die of boredom....?!?

You have access to shiurim by phone and/or by computer??

You have a way to keep in touch with the outside world and at least know that there is an outside world?

You can actually know what is happening out there??

You can be in touch with family and see how they are doing??

You never think that maybe you are from the last ones alive??

If you need medicines, you can really get them??

You are planning to make a seder with real wine and real Matza? Shmura??? You have a choice of bakeries??? Regular or Whole wheat?? Spelt?? Oat?

You have enough kzaysim for whatever shiur you desire?? For each person?

You have marror?? Regular or Pre- checked? Enough for each?

You have chicken? Meat too?

Fresh Veggies?? Non moldy potatoes? Potato peels with something inside?

Wine?? Dry, semi, sweet? 4 cups for each?? Large cups? Grape juice too?? Mevushal and non?? Choice of wines by regions and country?

There's nothing to complain about. All is ok...

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לע"נ

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה  
ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה