



BS"D

To: parsha@groups.io
From: cshulman@gmail.com

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON SHMINI - 5783

parsha@groups.io / www.parsha.net - in our 28th year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to parsha+subscribe@groups.io Please also copy me at cshulman@gmail.com A complete archive of previous issues is now available at <http://www.parsha.net> It is also fully searchable.

Sponsored in memory of **Chaim Yissachar z"l** ben Yecheiel Zaydel Dov

To sponsor a parsha sheet contact cshulman@parsha.net (proceeds to tzedaka)

**This is a Sefira reminder for Friday evening, April 14.
The count is: 9**

from: **Ira Zlotowitz** <Iraz@klalgovoah.org>

date: Apr 13, 2023, 9:01 PM

subject: **Tidbits • Parshas Shemini**

In memory of **Rav Meir Zlotowitz ZTL**

Reminders

This week is Shabbos Mevorchim Chodesh Iyar. Rosh Chodesh is on Friday and Shabbos, April 21st-22nd. The molad is Thursday afternoon 2:08 PM and 13 chalakim.

Tachanun is not recited until after Rosh Chodesh Iyar; the Yehi Ratzons following Kerias Hatorah are also omitted during this time. In spite of Mevorchim HaChodesh, Av Harachamim is recited in most Shuls, due to the sefirah mourning period. Tzidkascha is omitted at Minchah on Shabbos.

For this Shabbos, the Shabbos following Pesach, some have the custom to bake a Shlissel Challah, a challah in the shape of a key or with an actual key baked within it.

Daf Yomi - Erev Shabbos: Bavli: Sotah 16. Daf Yerushalmi: Pe'ah 58. Mishnah Yomis: Pesachim 7:13-8:1.

Make sure to call your parents, in-laws, grandparents and Rabbi to wish them a good Shabbos. If you didn't speak to your kids

today, make sure to do the same!

Summary

SHEMINI: The offerings on the eighth day, after the Seven Days of Inauguration • Moshe and Aharon bless the people • Hashem's glory is revealed • Nadav and Avihu offer unauthorized incense; their neshamos leave them as Hashem's fire enters their nostrils • Moshe comforts Aharon, Aharon remains silent • Aharon and his surviving sons are instructed not to show signs of mourning • Kohanim may not serve - and no Jew may render a halachic decision - after drinking wine • Moshe instructs Aharon and his sons to eat of the day's offerings • The Chatas of Rosh Chodesh is completely burned, Moshe is angered that it was not eaten • Aharon explains his rationale for burning that Korban; Moshe admits that Aharon is correct • Laws of kosher and non-kosher animals, fish, birds and insects • Various forms of tumah

Haftarah: The parashah and haftarah (Shmuel II 6:1-7:17) discuss the holiness of the Beis Hamikdash and its vessels, and the reverence warranted for its sanctity. The sons of Aharon Hakohen, as well as Uza in this haftarah, erred in their interactions with holiness and passed away immediately.

Taryag Mitzvos

Parashas Shemini • 91 Pesukim • 6 Obligations • 11 Prohibitions

1) A Kohen may not enter the Mikdash with long hair. 2) A Kohen may not enter the Mikdash with torn clothes. 3) A Kohen may not leave the Mikdash while in the midst of avodah. 4) A Kohen may not enter the Mikdash after drinking wine. 5) Do not eat non-kosher animals. 6) Check animals for signs of kashrus. 7) Check fish for signs of kashrus. 8) Do not eat non-kosher fish. 9) Do not eat non-kosher birds. 10) Check for the signs of kashrus of creeping creatures. 11) Tumah of the eight dead sheratzim. 12) Tumah regarding foods. 13) Tumah of a neveilah (dead animal). 14) Do not eat crawling sheratzim. 15) Do not eat sheratzim that originate from plants. 16) Do not eat amphibious sheratzim. 17) Do not eat maggots.

Mitzvah Highlight: The Sefer HaChinuch explains that the Torah forbids certain foods due to their harmful effects on the nefesh. Just as we would never second-guess a doctor's advice without fully understanding the workings of the human body, so too we cannot doubt the negative impact of forbidden foods, as we cannot comprehend the lofty nature and holiness of the Jewish nefesh.

For the Shabbos Table

“These shall you abominate from among the fowl...the chasidah” (Vayikra 11:19)

The Sefer Hachinuch explains that non-kosher birds are forbidden because they engage in negative behavior, and these instincts can influence the person who consumes them. Among the forbidden species is a bird called chasidah. Rashi explains that the chasidah earned its name from its characteristic of

doing chessed by sharing its food with friends. This seems to be a praiseworthy characteristic; if so, why is the chasidah forbidden?

The Chiddushei HaRim explains that while the chasidah engages in chessed, it does so only for its friends, and only those in its own circle benefit from the kindness. This discriminatory behavior makes the chasidah unfit for Jewish consumption, as the Torah wants us to give freely without discrimination against “outsiders”. A Jew is responsible for a fellow Jew's needs - even for those far from himself, whether literally or figuratively. Additionally, a Jew must do chessed simply because he is commanded to do so by Hashem, and not only when he is sympathetic to the cause or the recipient.

Ira Zlotowitz - Founder | iraz@gpacency.com | 917.597.2197
Ahron Dicker - Editor | adicker@klalgovoah.org | 732.581.5830

http://torahweb.org/torah/2022/parsha/rneu_shmini.html
From 2022

Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger **The Greatest Gift**

It must have been one of the most profoundly frustrating moments recorded in the Torah. We had all responded so very generously and were so dedicated to the mission. Indeed, the outpouring was so pervasive that the capital campaign for the mishkan was complete, and any further dedication of funds or materials was discouraged. The artisans completed their work in record time long before construction would be scheduled. Kilseiv turns to Chesvan to Teves to Shevat to Adar and as Adar winds down construction starts. The anticipation was over the top and the added delays were puzzling. The forgiveness for the eigel was going to be memorialized forever by the mishkan and the destiny of that generation and its place in history was to be back on track.

All of this to see the mishkan, with its daily dedicatory avoda in place, unvisited and seemingly ignored by G-d and subsequently dismantled day by day. Seven days go by this way. All of the avoda and still no shechina. No sign that all of their outpouring and anticipation would yield anything but a severe joke to be repeated by generations with all of its dark teachings.

One pasuk (9:23) changes the trajectory: "ויבא משה ואהרן אל אהל" "מועד ויצאו ויברכו את העם וירא כבוד יהוה אל כל העם". Moshe and Aharon went inside of Ohel moed. They came out, blessed the people, and the presence of Hashem descended to the people. "And you will make for me a mikdash and I will dwell among you" finally happened. What turned the switch? What finally impressed the Ribono Shel Olam to accept His own invitation? Why the wait? Rashi (9:23) quotes the backstory that Chazal have transmitted to us:

When Aaron perceived that they had offered all the korbonos

and all the rites had been duly performed and nevertheless the Shechinah did not descend, [as the heavenly fire had not consumed the sacrifice] he was terribly upset and thought "The Almighty is angry with me and I am responsible for the Shechinah's absence." He said to Moshe: "My brother Moshe, That is what you do to me? Shame me? At once, Moshe entered with him and they asked for rachamim - compassion - and the Shechinah descended for Israel (Sifra, Shemini, Mechilta d'Miluim 2 18).

Should it not concern us that all of the remorse and all of the anticipation and the widespread generosity was all for naught, had they not prayed for compassion - for rachamim? Apparently, Hashem was waiting for that prayer to impress upon us that there is little we could do to actually deserve to have Hashem's presence close by; to merit the tangible evidence of His existence which in turn supports our faith consistently; to earn the ongoing expression of His interest in our relationship.

Truth be told, we say this every day just before the morning kriyas shema. "You have loved us with great love ... and have had excessive and enormous compassion for us... And you taught us the laws of life..." It is quite easy to imagine that giving us the Shabbos, the seder night, tefillin, the codes of kindness, the requirements of living with refined mannerisms and a balanced view of materialism, and vastly more, indicates Hashem's love for us. However, that it all indicates extreme compassion for us is harder to appreciate.

Yet the authors of the aforementioned beracha want us to ponder, each and every morning, a life devoid of the blessings of Hashem's unyielding discipline and routine, a life lacking His insistence on integrity, a life without Shabbos and without the confidence of the power of prayer. And this is but a nano-sample of our regal life. Indeed, were it not for the extreme rachmonus of the Almighty we could not dream of it all belonging to us. This is something that we should be pondering en route to kriyas shema.

from: The Rabbi Sacks Legacy <info@rabbisacks.org>

date: Apr 13, 2023, 8:30 PM

subject: The Dangers of Enthusiasm ✨ (Shemini)

COVENANT & CONVERSATION

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ZTL

The Dangers of Enthusiasm

SHEMINI

Excavating the history of words can sometimes be as revealing as excavating the ruins of an ancient city. Take the English word “enthusiasm”. Today we see this as something positive. One dictionary defines it as “a feeling of energetic interest in a particular subject or activity and an eagerness to be involved in it.” People with enthusiasm have passion, zest and excitement,

and this can be contagious. It is one of the gifts of a great teacher or leader. People follow people of passion. If you want to influence others, cultivate enthusiasm.

But the word did not always have a favourable connotation. Originally it referred to someone possessed by a spirit or demon. In the seventeenth century England, it came to refer to extreme and revolutionary Protestant sects, and more generally to the Puritans who fought the English Civil War. It became a synonym for religious extremism, zealotry and fanaticism. It was looked on as irrational, volatile and dangerous.

David Hume (1711-1776), the Scottish philosopher, wrote a fascinating essay on the subject.[1] He begins by noting that “the corruption of the best things produces the worst”, and that is especially true of religion. There are, he says, two ways in which religion can go wrong: through superstition, and through enthusiasm. These are quite different phenomena.

Superstition is driven by ignorance and fear. We can sometimes have irrational anxieties and terrors, and we deal with them by resorting to equally irrational remedies. Enthusiasm is the opposite. It is the result of over-confidence. The enthusiast, in a state of high religious rapture, comes to believe that he is being inspired by God himself, and is thus empowered to disregard reason and restraint.

Enthusiasm “thinks itself sufficiently qualified to approach the Divinity, without any human mediator.” The person in its grip is so full of what he takes to be holy rapture that he feels able to override the rules by which priestly conduct is normally governed. “The fanatic consecrates himself and bestows on his own person a sacred character, much superior to what forms and ceremonious institutions can confer on any other.” Rules and regulations, thinks the enthusiast, are for ordinary people, not for us. We, inspired by God, know better. That, said Hume, can be very dangerous indeed.

We now have a precise description of the sin for which Nadav and Avihu, the two elder sons of Aaron, died. Clearly the Torah regards their death as highly significant because it refers to it on no less than four occasions (Lev. 10:1-2, 16:1, Num. 3:4, 26:61). It was a shocking tragedy, occurring as it did on the day of the inauguration of the service of the Mishkan, a moment that should have been one of the great celebrations in Jewish history.

The Sages themselves were puzzled by the episode. The text itself merely says that “they offered unauthorised fire [esh zarah] before the Lord, that He had not commanded. So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.” Evidently the Sages felt that there must have been something else, some further sin or character flaw, to justify so dire and drastic a punishment.

Putting together clues in the biblical text, some speculated that they were guilty of entering the Holy of Holies[2]; that they had given a ruling of their own accord without consulting Moses or

Aaron; that they had become intoxicated; that they were not properly robed; that they had not purified themselves with water from the laver; that they were so self-important that they had not married, thinking no woman was good enough for them; or that they were impatient for Moses and Aaron to die so they could become the leaders of Israel.

Some speculated that the sin for which they were punished did not happen on that day at all. It had occurred months earlier at Mount Sinai. The text says that Nadav and Avihu along with seventy elders ascended the mountain and “saw the God of Israel” (Ex. 24:10). God “did not raise his hand against the leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank” (Ex. 24:11). The implication is that they deserved punishment then for not averting their eyes, or for eating and drinking at so sacred an encounter. But God delayed the punishment so as not to cause grief on the day He made a covenant with the people.[3]

These are all midrashic interpretations: true, valid and important but not the plain sense of the verse. The text is clear. On each of the three occasions where their death is mentioned, the Torah says merely that they offered “unauthorised fire”. The sin was that they did something that had not been commanded. They did so, surely, for the highest motives. Moses said to Aaron immediately after they died that this is what God had meant when he said, “Among those who are near me I will be sanctified” (Lev. 10:3). A Midrash says that Moses was comforting his brother by saying, “They were closer to God than you or me.”[4]

The history of the word “enthusiasm”, though, helps us understand the episode. Nadav and Avihu were “enthusiasts”, not in the contemporary sense but in the sense in which the word was used in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Enthusiasts were people who, full of religious passion, believed that God was inspiring them to do deeds in defiance of law and convention. They were very holy but they were also potentially very dangerous. David Hume in particular saw that enthusiasm in this sense is diametrically opposed to the mindset of priesthood. In his words, “all enthusiasts have been free from the yoke of ecclesiastics, and have expressed great independence of devotion; with a contempt of forms, ceremonies, and traditions.”

Priests understand the power, and thus the potential danger, of the sacred. That is why holy places, times and rituals must be guarded with rules, the way a nuclear power station must be protected by the most careful insulation. Think of the accidents that have occurred when this has failed: Chernobyl, for example, or Fukushima in Japan in 2011. The results can be devastating and lasting.

To bring unauthorised fire to the Tabernacle might seem a small offence, but a single unauthorised act in the realm of the holy causes a breach in the laws around the sacred that can

grow in time to a gaping hole. Enthusiasm, harmless though it might be in some of its manifestations, can quickly become extremism, fanaticism and religiously motivated violence. That is what happened in Europe during the wars of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and it is happening in some religions today. As David Hume observed: “Human reason and even morality are rejected [by enthusiasts] as fallacious guides, and the fanatic madman delivers himself over blindly” to what he believes to be Divine inspiration, but what may in fact be overheated self-importance or frenzied rage.

We now understand in detail that the human brain contains two different systems, what Daniel Kahneman calls “thinking fast and slow”. The fast brain, the limbic system, gives rise to emotions, particularly in response to fear. The slow brain, the prefrontal cortex, is rational, deliberative, and capable of thinking through the long term consequences of alternative courses of action. It is no accident that we have both systems. Without instinctive responses triggered by danger we would not survive. But without the slower, deliberative brain we would find ourselves time and again engaging in destructive and self-destructive behaviour. Individual happiness and the survival of civilisation depend on striking a delicate balance between the two.

Precisely because it gives rise to such intense passions, the religious life in particular needs the constraints of law and ritual, the entire intricate minuet of worship, so that the fire of faith is contained, giving light and a glimpse of the glory of God. Otherwise it can eventually become a raging inferno, spreading destruction and claiming lives. After many centuries in the West, we have tamed enthusiasm to the point where we can think of it as a positive force. We should never forget, however, that it was not always so. That is why Judaism contains so many laws and so much attention to detail – and the closer we come to God, the more we need.

[1] David Hume, “Of Superstition and Enthusiasm,” in *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary* (1742-1754).

[2] This is based on the statement in Lev. 16:1, that the two sons of Aaron died when “they drew near before the Lord,” implying that they had come too close, i.e. they had entered the Holy of Holies.

[3] The seventy elders were punished later. See Rashi to Ex, 24:10.

[4] Midrash Aggadah (Buber) ad loc.

Parsha SHMINI

Rabbi Berel Wein's Weekly Blog

The Torah itself records the reaction of Moshe to the tragic deaths of the sons of Aharon. Moshe tells his grieving brother that the Lord had informed him, “that I will sanctify My name through those who are nearest to Me.” Even though the harsh judgment against Aharon – the dramatic and unexpected deaths

of his two elder sons, Nadav and Avihu – dominates the mood of the moment, there is a subtle message of consolation and explanation that Moshe offers to his brother.

And that perhaps is one of the reasons that Aharon remained silent in acceptance of the fate that befell him and his family. Aharon apparently realized that there was a higher purpose also involved in these events – the sanctification of God's name and a warning against tampering with the ritual services of the Tabernacle/Temple/Mishkan – and this realization motivated his silence.

It is very difficult for us ordinary mortals to appreciate the nature of this means of sanctification. We tremble at having to think of God's sanctification and the ennobling of God's name in the world when we are forced always to think of death and human tragedy. We much prefer to think of God's greatness in terms of charity, compassion, comfort and consolation.

Yet, as mortals who possess an eternal soul, we all realize that death and tragedy are all part of life – unavoidable parts of life that we all experience and must deal with. Thus Moshe's words to his brother regarding death and tragedy are really addressed to all of us. That is the reason they appear in the Torah, whose words are directed to all humans for all time.

Those who are closest to God in their physical lifetime are treated specially and uniquely by Heaven for good or for better. This is a partial insight into the overall pattern of challenge and difficulty that is the leitmotif of Jewish history. The Jewish people are special and being special carries with it great burdens and responsibilities. Even small errors of judgment or weakness and deviation of behavior can carry with it grave and lasting consequences.

As such, all Jews should feel that every action and pattern of behavior that becomes part of their lives is scrutinized, judged and brings forth reaction from God and humans. Nothing that happens in God's world is ignored or even forgotten. We are held to high standards. We are tight-rope walkers and there is no real safety net stretched out beneath us.

We all realize that a hurt inflicted upon us by a family member or close friend pains us much more deeply than from a similar hurt suffered by us from a stranger or even an enemy. Those who are closest to us are the ones that can hurt us the most. And that also is part of the message that Moshe told his brother. Since we are so close to God, Heaven is more pained, so to speak, by our shortcomings, insults and deviations from His path of instruction for us.

So our relationship to God is one of particular favor but also one of great challenge and responsibility. Simply by realizing this do we enhance our own holiness and help sanctify God's name.

Shabat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

<https://torah.org/torah-portion/ravfrand-5783-shemini/>
We Are All “Survivors”

Parshas Shemini

Posted on April 11, 2023 (5783)

By Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1287 – Oops! I Spoke After Netilas Yadayim – Now What? Good Shabbos!

Parshas Shemini contains a most unfortunate incident (at the beginning of the tenth perek). It is an incredible story. As the Mishkan was being dedicated, the inaugural korbanos were being offered on Rosh Chodesh Nissan. Then Aharon’s two eldest sons – Nadav and Avihu – brought a “foreign fire” and they were struck down from Heaven, then and there in the Mishkan.

Following this incident, the pasuk records: “And Moshe spoke to Aharon, and to Elazar and to Isamar, his sons that remained (hanosarim)...” (Vayikra 10:12). Rashi comments on the word “hanosarim” – this teaches that the death penalty was also decreed upon them (Elazar and Isamar). Literally, the pasuk means that Moshe spoke to Elazar and Isamar “the surviving sons.” Rashi indicates that these two sons should have been swept away in the heavenly decree as well, not because of what happened in the Mishkan on that inaugural day, but because of Aharon’s participation in the sin of the Egel haZahav (Golden Calf). This is alluded to by the pasuk “Moreover, the L-rd was very angry with Aharon to have destroyed him...(l’hashmido)” (Devarim 9:20). Both here and in Parshas Ekev, Rashi explains (based on Amos 2:9) that the Hebrew word l’hashmido indicates the eradication of children.

So, in truth, these two younger sons were supposed to die as well, but Moshe’s prayer for Aharon after the incident of the Egel haZahav was effective in cancelling half the decree, as it is written “...and I prayed also for Aharon at that time” (Devarim 9:20). That is why Elazar and Isamar are referred to here as the “remaining” or the “surviving” sons.

I once saw a very poignant observation from the Shemen haTov (Rav Dov Ze’ev Weinberger). The terminology “survivors” that we use today has a special connotation. The word “survivors” refers to people who survived the Holocaust. In other words, “survivors” are people who were in Europe and either were in the camps and survived or somehow managed to hide during that period. They are “survivors.” However, people who were in America – they are not “survivors.” They did not experience the horrors of what happened in Europe during World War II. Rav Weinberger writes that this is a mistake. Of course, people in America did not experience the horrors, but nonetheless, we still all need to look at ourselves as survivors. Had Hitler, yemach shemo, had his way, there would not be any Jews left anywhere on the face of the Earth. Had Hitler been victorious,

and had he defeated the Allies, he would have gone after the Jews no matter where they were. He was out to make us an extinct race. So, whether we or our parents happened to be in Europe or wherever they may have been – we see from this Rashi “hanosarim” that someone is called a survivor if he was “supposed to have died” and for some reason, by Hashem’s mercy, he did not die.

The practical lesson behind this is that just as survivors feel a certain responsibility, which may change their lives and make them feel like they now have a mission – we all need to feel like that. If someone is a survivor, he feels that he was saved for a reason. We see this often. People who survive a plane crash or some other near-death experience often walk away and say, “I survived this; therefore, I need to do something different with my life. I cannot go on living ‘as is.’”

This is the point of the Shemen HaTov. We need to all look at ourselves as survivors and implement the implications that this implies. If not for the mercy of Hashem that we happened to be in America or that our parents or grandparents happened to be in America, or that Baruch Hashem, Hitler was defeated (that was also part of the ‘Yad HaShem’), we too could have been swept away by the Holocaust.

Admitting Errors Demonstrates Greatness

The next part of the parsha begins with the pesukim: “And Moshe diligently inquired after the goat of the sin-offering, and behold, it was burnt and he was angry with Elazar and with Isamar, the sons of Aharon that were left, saying: Why have you not eaten the sin-offering in the place of the sanctuary, seeing it is most holy, and He has given it you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before Hashem.” (Vayikra 10:16-17)

This is a difficult parshato to understand. The Gemara (Zevachim 101b) explains what was going on over here: On that day of the inaugural setting up of the Mishkan, three korbanos were brought – (1) the goat of Rosh Chodesh; (2) the korban of Nachshon ben Aminadav (the first of the nessiyim (tribal princes), who each brought their own korban on each of the first twelve days of the Mishkan’s dedication); (3) a sin offering brought in conjunction with the inauguration of the Mishkan (Chatas haMiluim).

The halacha is that an onen (a person who has just lost a close relative) is forbidden from eating kodoshim (sacrificial meat). Moshe Rabbeinu came to Aharon and said “Listen, Aharon, you and your sons are now onenim by virtue of the fact that you just lost your brothers and sons. An onen is normally forbidden to eat kodoshim, but the Ribono shel Olam told me that this is an exception to the rule! In this situation, I am telling you in the name of Hashem that you may eat these korbanos, in spite of the fact that you are onenim.

Moshe Rabbeinu therefore expected that these three korbanos should all be eaten. Moshe noticed that one of these three

offerings had not been consumed but was rather burnt – namely the goat of Rosh Chodesh. He therefore criticized his brother and nephews for this negligence: Aharon responded to Moshe that his own understanding was that this special exception that Hashem made only applied to the two special korbanos that were brought in conjunction with the inauguration of the Mishkan (namely korbanos #2 & #3 above). However, it should not apply to the standard goat of Rosh Chodesh offering, which was in no way connected with the inaugural service, but was merely brought on that day because the inauguration happened to coincide with Rosh Chodesh. Therefore, regarding that korban, there was no exception, and since they were onenim, they felt it necessary to burn the korban rather than eat it.

In other words, Aharon was telling his younger brother “Rav Moshe, you are wrong. You made a mistake in your assumption!” That is the discussion that is going on between Aharon and Moshe.

The Torah comments: When Moshe heard Aharon’s argument, he was pleased (Vayikra 10:20). Rashi here, based on the Gemara in Zevachim cited above, comments “He admitted his mistake and was not embarrassed. He did not say ‘I never heard this,’ but rather ‘I heard this but made a mistake.’”

Rashi is saying that Moshe had a decision to make. He recognized that Aharon was right and he was wrong. He could have said one of two things: He could have said, “Aharon, I didn’t hear that, I didn’t know that; but I hear what you are saying – it makes sense. I believe you are correct.” Moshe Rabbeinu did not say that. Rather, he said “Aharon, you are right and I am wrong. I heard that and I forgot!” He admitted his mistake and was not embarrassed to do so.

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz says that if any of us would be in that situation, our natural instinct would be to say “I never heard that.” It is extremely hard to say the words “I heard that and I forgot.” By saying those words, Moshe Rabbeinu was opening himself up to the charge that the entire Torah and our entire tradition could go down the drain! Once Moshe Rabbeinu said “I heard that and I forgot” the immediate reaction might be “Well, what else did you forget?” By saying that, Moshe risked losing his credibility. People might ask “How can we ever trust you again?”

Moshe could have rationalized that he wasn’t protecting his ego, but rather he was trying to preserve the integrity of the entire Mesorah of Torah. And yet, he openly said, “I made a mistake.” There are no exceptions to the rule “Distance yourself from falsehood...” (Shemos 23:7) It took tremendous fortitude and strength of character for Moshe to say “I heard it and I forgot!”

As I pointed out on other occasions, by us, the sign of a true leader is the ability to say “I made a mistake,” the ability to say “I’m wrong,” the ability to say “I’m sorry.” This goes all the

way back to Parshas Vayechi. When the pasuk says that Yaakov Avinu chose Yehudah to become the monarch (Bereshis 49:8), Targum Yonoson explains that Yehudah was chosen as the source of the monarchy because he had the character and integrity to admit by Tamar, “She is more righteous than I” (Bereshis 38:26).

When Rav Chaim Soloveitchik became the Rosh Yeshiva in Volozhin, he had a revolutionary way of analyzing Talmud which did not sit well with many of the “powers that be.” People claimed that the only reason Rav Chaim got his job was because he married the granddaughter of the Rosh Yeshiva, the Netziv (Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin). People claimed that he was really not fit to be given such a prominent role in the Yeshiva. So, they convened a Beis Din. Rav Chaim was asked to say a shiur in front of several of the Gedolim of 19th century European Jewry (including Reb Reuven Duenaburger, the Rabbi of Dvinsk, Reb Yitzhak Elchanan Spektor, the Rabbi of Kovno, and Rav Yehoshua Yitzchak Shapira, known as Rav Eizele Charif).

Rav Chaim gave the shiur. It was a brilliant shiur, which wowed the entire Beis Medrash. In the middle of the shiur, Rav Chaim remembered that there was a Peirush HaRambam on the Mishna somewhere that demolished the entire intellectual structure that he had constructed. He closed his Gemara and said, “I’m sorry I made a mistake. I am wrong” and sat down. Remember that this was his ‘Shabbas Proba’ (rabbinic audition) in front of some of the greatest Eastern European Rabbonim of the time. The Gedolim who were there proclaimed, “Rav Chaim is worthy to be the Rosh Yeshiva in Volozhin.” Someone who possesses such striving for truth that allows him to accept personal embarrassment in order to achieve the truth is qualified to become a Rosh Yeshiva. The capacity to say, “I made a mistake. I apologize. I’m wrong.” qualifies a person for the monarchy. It qualified Moshe to be Moshe Rabbeinu.

Strange Sentence Syntax Suggests Subservient Service for Selective Statutes (i.e., Chukim)

HilchosKashrus– which animals are kosher, which birds are kosher, and which fish are kosher – appears for the first time in the Torah here in Parshas Shemini. The very last pasuk in the parsha reads: “to make a difference between the unclean and the clean and between the living things that may be eaten and the living things that shall not be eaten (u’bein haChaya ha’ne’echeles u’bein haChaya asher lo sei’achel).” (Vayira 11:47).

Someone who is sensitive to Hebrew grammar will notice an anomaly when studying this pasuk. If we were to write the end of this pasuk, we would write “u’bein haChaya ha’ne’echeles u’bein haChaya asher eino ne’echeles.” This would be a parallel statement, using the same tense and construction for the positive and negative parts of the statement. Alternatively, we

would write “u’bein haChaya asher sei’achel u’bein haChaya asher lo sei’achel.” That too would have provided appropriate grammatical symmetry between the positive and negative parts of the statement.

However, the pasuk switches grammatical constructs in the middle of a sentence – between the animal that can be eaten and the animal that you shall not eat. This seems awkward. Why does the Torah do this? My son, Yakov, told me that he once heard the following observation from Rav Yochanan Zweig:

There are different indications throughout Chazal of what a person’s attitude should be towards fulfillment of mitzvos and abstention from Torah prohibitions. In other words, should my inclination be that I am anyway going to do or not do certain activities, leaving the fact that Hashem told me to do or not do these specific activities as somewhat of an afterthought – as if the person is expressing “full agreement” with Hashem’s mitzvos? Or, should a person’s attitude be “If I had my preference, I would certainly do X, Y, Z (against what the Torah instructs); except Hashem told me not to do it, and therefore I am complying.

Is the proper hashkafa to observe Torah because it makes sense to you and you agree with it, or is the proper hashkafa to feel that you are forced to observe something against your inclination because you are being loyal to Hashem’s instructions? Which is the preferable approach to mitzvah observance?

The Rambam, in his Shemoneh Perakim, gives us a guideline to answer this question: He says it depends on what type of mitzvah it is. It depends whether it is a mitzvah Sichlee (a logical, rational mitzvah) or not. Do not steal is a logical mitzvah. Everyone knows that we cannot endure in a society that steals. The Torah says to honor our parents. This is a rational mitzvah. Our parents brought us into this world, they raised us, they fed us, etc.

Other mitzvos are not rational. They are called chukim. We do not understand the reason behind them. Examples of chukim are the mitzvos at the end of Parshas Shemini – forbidden foods. Kashrus is not “logical.” Logically, there should not be a difference between eating a piece of beef and eating a piece of pork. What is the difference? What is wrong with pig? A large portion of the world eats pork and bacon.

What is wrong with shell fish? People who were chozer b’teshuva often say that the thing they miss most from their previous lifestyle is eating shell fish! The State of Maryland is the state of the Blue Crab. People come to Baltimore just to eat crab from the Chesapeake Bay! When I smell crab, I run the other way, but I am sure that if I was raised with crab and was fed crab as a child, I would also like crab. I know goyim who, when they smell Gefilte fish, run the other way! I like Gefilte fish because that is the way I was raised.

But what should my hashkafa be? The Rambam says that it depends. A person should not say “I hate pig. I hate shellfish.” He should say “I would want to eat pork. I would want to eat crab. I would want to taste a cheese burger. I would want to have a sirloin steak or porter house steak, or all such things... But what can I do? The Ribono shel Olam told me not to do it!” If that is the case, the pasuk makes beautiful sense. “Between the animal that can be eaten and between the animal that ‘You shall not eat.’” We are not talking about an animal “that is not eaten.” These forbidden animals (pigs, crabs, birds of prey, etc.) are very much eaten and I would enjoy eating them, but they are animals about which I have been commanded “You SHALL NOT eat” and therefore I don’t eat them! That is why the Torah formulates the statement in this syntax.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem
DavidATwersky@gmail.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org This week’s write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.

Pshuto Shel Mikra in Shemini

Rav Immanuel Bernstein

<ravbernstein@journeysintorah.com>

Thu, Apr 13, 7:00 AM (18 hours ago)

PSHUTO SHEL MIKRA

From the Teachings of Rav Yehuda Copperman zt"l

PARSHAT SHEMINI

“Before and After” in the Teachings of the Seforno—

Maachalot Asurim

זאת החזקה אשר תאכלו

These are the living creatures that you may eat (Vayikra 11:2)

A “General” Mitzvah in Torat Kohanim The topic of Maachalot Asurim — forbidden foods — is the first mitzvah mentioned in Chumash Vayikra that has no direct connection to matters of korbanot. The idea of “general mitzvot” being mentioned in connection with the Mishkan should not come as a surprise, seeing as one of the primary roles of the Mishkan was that of a place where Hashem could transmit mitzvot to Moshe. This role is explicitly mentioned in the pasuk where Hashem says that He will communicate with Moshe “from between the two Keruvim” (Shemot 25:22).

There is a fundamental machloket among the Tannaim (Zevachim 115a) as to how to understand what was transmitted in the Mishkan relative to what had been transmitted at Har Sinai. According to R’ Akiva, the taryag mitzvot along with all their details were transmitted at Sinai, and were transmitted again in the Mishkan. According to R’ Yishmael, the general

principles of the mitzvot were transmitted at Sinai, while the details were transmitted in the Mishkan. Nevertheless, the role of the Mishkan as part of the process of Matan Torah is agreed upon by all opinions in Chazal.

Moreover, the transmission of Torah was not a peripheral aspect of the Mishkan, but rather, along with the offering of korbanot, it was one of its primary functions. In this respect the Mishkan differed greatly from the Batei Mikdash, whose function revolved entirely around matters pertaining to korbanot and Avodah, with no element of Matan Torah present at all. For indeed, after the period in the Midbar, no mitzvot could subsequently be added on to the Torah. It is interesting to note in this regard that the first specific item mentioned in connection with the Mishkan was the Aron (Shemot 25:10), underscoring the primacy of Matan Torah within the overall function of the Mishkan. In contrast, when the Rambam discusses the Beit Hamikdash in his Mishneh Torah (Hilchot Beit HaBechirah) — which he introduces as “a place where korbanot can be offered and the people can assemble three times a year” — the first component he mentions is the Mizbeach, upon which korbanot are offered.

The Seforno’s Approach Returning to the topic of maachalot asurim, a most noteworthy approach among the mefarshim regarding the location of this mitzvah in Chumash Vayikra can be found in the writings of the Seforno (Vayikra 11:2, s.v. zot hachayah). As we will see, his approach goes beyond the specific mitzvah of Maachalot Asurim and addresses the general question of the locations of different mitzvot throughout the Chumashim:

After Yisrael were stripped of their spiritual ornaments which they had attained at the time of Matan Torah[1] and through which they were deemed worthy that the Shechinah would dwell in their midst without the need for an intermediary, as it says (Shemot 20:21), “בְּכֹל הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֶזְכֵּר אֶת שְׁמִי אָבוֹא אֵלֶיךָ — In every place where I allow My Name to be mentioned I will come to you and bless you,” [and which will again pertain in the future, as it says, (Vayikra 26:11) “וְנִתְתִּי מִשְׁכְּנִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם — I will place My dwelling among you,”] Hashem refused to have the Shechinah dwell among them at all,[2] as it says (Shemot 33:3) “כִּי לֹא אֶעֱלֶה בְּקִרְבְּךָ — For I will not ascend in your midst.” Through his tefillah, Moshe Rabbeinu achieved a partial rectification that the Shechinah would reside among them through the medium of the Mishkan, its vessels, its attendants (servants), and offerings,[3] so that they merited and attained (the level described as) “וַיֵּרָא כְבוֹד ה' אֶל כָּל הָעָם — Hashem’s Glory appeared unto the People” (Vayikra 9:23), and to the fire descending from Heaven (ibid., pasuk 24). Therefore,[4] (Hashem) saw fit to rectify their (bodily) constitution so that it would be able to be illuminated with the light of everlasting life. This would be through the regulation of foods they may consume and the laws regarding procreation.[5]

Therefore, Hashem forbade foods which defile the soul in terms of behavioral traits and ideas, as it says (11:43) “וְלֹא תִטְמְאוּ בָהֶם וְנִטְמַתֶּם בָּם — Do not contaminate yourselves through them, lest you become contaminated through them.”

In Parshat Noach[6] we saw how, according to the Seforno, certain major sins affected the nature of mankind generally. In our parsha we see that he adopts the same approach regarding B’nei Yisrael specifically. According to the Seforno, the reason why Maachalot Asurim appear in the Torah after the parshiyot dealing with the Mishkan is because they are part of the same process — rectifying the state of B’nei Yisrael which resulted from the Chet Ha’Egel!

Chazal state that “ישראל אורייתא וקודשא בריך הוא חד — Yisrael, the Torah, and Hashem are one.”[7] Therefore, a significant change in the fundamental makeup of B’nei Yisrael will bring about a corresponding change in the mitzvot which allow them connect with Hashem.

According to the Seforno, the process of the transmission of taryag mitzvot began with Har Sinai, continued through the period of the Ohel Moed, and culminated in Arvat Moav.[8] It was only at the end of those three formative stages, when all taryag mitzvot had been transmitted, that we invoke the idea that no more mitzvot can be added to the mitzvot of the Torah, neither an entire mitzvah nor a detail thereof.

The approach of the Seforno, which we refer to as “Before and After,” is one which we will discuss again in several later chapters.[9] It is worthwhile noting already at this stage that this approach of the Seforno appears to be in direct conflict with the opinions of the Tannaim mentioned in the beginning of the chapter. Both R’ Akiva and R’ Yishmael concur that all taryag mitzvot were given to Moshe at Sinai, with the only difference between them being whether the details of those mitzvot were also transmitted at Sinai, or just their general principles. The approach of the Seforno, on the other hand, seems to be that certain mitzvot were not yet appropriate for B’nei Yisrael in the state that they were in at Har Sinai, and only became so later on in the Midbar. This question is certainly in need of an answer, and is one that we will discuss b’eizrat Hashem in a later chapter.[10]

[1] See Shemot 33:1, “ויתנצלו בני ישראל את עדים.” These ornaments reflected the lofty spiritual level that Yisrael had attained at Matan Torah. [2] As a result of the Chet Ha’Egel. [3] In this regard, the Seforno concurs with Rashi who understands that Hashem’s command to Moshe regarding the construction of the Mishkan (mentioned in Parshat Terumah) occurred after the Chet Ha’Egel (which is mentioned in Parshat Ki Tisa). As the Seforno writes, prior to the Chet Ha’Egel the Mishkan wasn’t necessary to provide a means through which the Shechinah would dwell among B’nei Yisrael. See Parshat Beshalach, Chapter 40. [4] I.e., in addition to requiring B’nei Yisrael to construct a Mishkan through which the Shechinah

would dwell in their midst, Hashem also commanded that they avoid foods which would render them incapable of “absorbing” the Shechinah. [5] These latter laws are mentioned in the beginning of Parshat Tazria and the end of Parshat Metzora. [6] Chapter 5. [7] Zohar Hakadosh Parshas Acharei Mos. [8] The Plains of Moav, where Chumash Devarim was transmitted by Moshe to B’nei Yisrael. [9] See Parshat Acharei-Mot, Chapter 67; Parshat Shelach, Chapter 83; and Parshat Pinchas, Chapter 92. [10] See Parshat Shelach, Chapter 83. An alternative approach would be to say that these mitzvot were given at Sinai in anticipation of Bnei Yisrael subsequently entering a state which made these mitzvot necessary and appropriate. This approach would touch on the question of reconciling Hashem’s foreknowledge (which in this instance found expression in the form of transmitting certain mitzvot to Moshe) and people’s free will. IMPORTANT NOTE REGARDING THIS EMAIL In case there might be any confusion, you received this message as a result of a scheduled send which was configured before Yomtif. Copyright © 2023 Journeys in Torah, All rights reserved. You’re receiving this email either because you signed up on the website or you requested to be added.

<http://www.journeysintorah.com>

Not subscribed? Do so on our website or directly here:

<http://eepurl.com/c7-DOT> Our mailing address is: Journeys in Torah 2/4 Rechov Yitzhok ben Nachum Bayit Vegan 90045 Israel

<https://www.theyeshiva.net/jewish/856/essay-reeh-shmini-how-do-you-know-if-you-are-alive?print=1>

How Do You Know If You Are Alive?

Rabbi YY Jacobson

How To Become a Kosher Human Being: Do You Have Standards? Do You Challenge Yourself?

David Goldberg bumps into somebody in the street who looks like his old friend Jack.

"Jack," he says. "You've put on weight and your hair has turned gray. You seem a few inches shorter than I recall and your cheeks are puffy. Plus, you're walking differently and even sound different. Jack, what's happened to you?"

"I'm not Jack," the other gentleman tells him. "My name is Sam!"

"Wow! You even changed your name," David says.

Two Signs

Land animals that are permitted, or kosher, for Jews to consume are identified in this week's Torah portion by two distinct characteristics.

Firstly, the animal must bring up its cud and chew it. This means that after swallowing its food, the animal must regurgitate it from the first stomach to the mouth to be chewed again. This regurgitated food is called "cud."

Second, the animal must have completely cloven hooves[1].

For example, the cow, goat, sheep, and gazelle possess both these characteristics and are thus kosher. The donkey and the horse, on the other hand, which lack both of these features, are defined as non-kosher animals. The pig, which has split hooves but does not chew its cud, and the camel, which chews its cud but has no split hooves, are non-kosher animals[2].

Why do these particular characteristics cause an animal to become kosher?

The Power of Food

Judaism teaches that the physical attributes of an animal reflect the distinct psychological and spiritual qualities of its soul[3]. Another point expounded by Judaism is that the food a person consumes has a profound effect on one's psyche. When a person eats the flesh of a particular animal, the "personality" of this animal affects, to some degree, the identity of the human consumer[4].

The split hooves and the chewing of the cud represent two qualities of the soul of these animals that are crucially necessary for the healthy development of the human character. When the Jew consumes the substance of these animals, he becomes a more "kosher" and refined human being[5].

Moral Self-Discipline

Cloven hooves -- the division existing in the coverings on an animal's feet -- are symbolic of the notion that one's movement in life (reflected by the moving legs) is governed by a division between "right" and "left," between right and wrong, between the permissible and the prohibited. A split hoof represents the human capacity to accept that there are things to be embraced and things to be rebuffed.

This process of moral self-discipline is the hallmark of living a wholesome life, physically, psychologically, and spiritually. A violin can produce its exquisite music only when its cords are tied, not when they are loose and "free." Similarly, a human being who allows himself to do whatever he wants, whenever he wants, wherever he wants and with whomever he wants, robs himself of the opportunity to experience the inner music of his soul.

And when we have no clear differentiation between right and wrong, in a short time we tend to lose the very foundation of civil life. Nothing is a given, nothing is important, nothing is sacred, because nothing is even real. We end up in an endless wasteland, trying to numb our pain and anxiety through every possible distraction. The very core of the "I" gets lost in world where nothing matters besides the fact that nothing matters. Semantics, rather than conviction, becomes the stuff our soul is carved of.

Rabbi Adin Even Yisroel-Shteinsaltz (1937-2020), one of the luminaries of our generation, once shared a story about a philosophy professor in Israel who asked one of his students to make a presentation. The student began by saying, "I speculate that ..." The professor interrupted him: "Please, before you

continue, define the meaning of the word "I." The student attempted thrice to define the word "I," but the teacher refuted every definition. The student gave up and sat down.

The professor stood up and said: "How many times did I instruct you guys not to use terms which you cannot define?!"

Challenge Yourself

The second quality that characterizes a "kosher" human being is that he or she always chews their cud.

Even after a person "swallows" and integrates into his life certain values, attitudes, and behaviors, he must never become totally self-assured and smug about them. The spiritual human being needs to continually regurgitate his ideas to be chewed and reflected upon again.

Man must never allow himself to become fully content in his own orbit. Contentment breeds smugness; smugness breeds boredom, arrogance, and judgementalism. A person ought always - till his last breath - challenge himself, examine his behavior, and refine his character.[6]

Or as Rabbi Adin Even Yisroel--Shteinsaltz once said: How do you know if you are alive or dead? If something hurts you, it means you are alive.

[1] Leviticus 11: 1-7. [2] Leviticus ibid. Deuteronomy 14: 4-8.

[3] For examples, see Likkutei Levi Yitzchak Igros Kodesh p. 334. [4] See Nachmanidies Leviticus 11:13; Tanya chapter 8.

Cf. Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah Section 81. [5] Likkutei Sichos vol. 1 pp. 223-224. [6] This essay is based on an address by the Lubavitcher Rebbe in 1956 (Likkutei Sichos ibid. pp. 222-226. Cf. Likkutei Sichos vol. 2 p. 378.) My gratitude to Shmuel Levin for his editorial assistance.

from: Chabad.org <learntorah@chabad.org>

Shemini Adapted by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks; From the

teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe The name of our Sidra, Shemini, ("the eighth") refers to the day on which Aaron and his sons were inducted as the priests of the Sanctuary. It was also the day on which the presence of G-d was revealed. But why was it called the eighth day? It followed the seven days during which the Sanctuary was consecrated. But it hardly seemed a continuation of them. For they were the days which represented man's effort to draw near to G-d by consecrating himself and his world; whereas the eighth day was the moment when G-d answered his efforts by revealing Himself. And surely there is no comparison between man's efforts and G-d's response. The one is finite, the other infinite. So how can we talk of the eighth day as if it were a mere continuation of the previous seven? Starting from this problem, the Rebbe explores the relation between human endeavor and Divine revelation, as exemplified in the Sanctuary, the Shabbat, circumcision, and the counting of the Omer.

1. On The Eighth Day

Our Sidra begins with the words, "And it came to pass on the eighth day. . . ." The Kli Yakar, in his commentary to the Torah, asks why this day, which followed the seven days of consecration of the Sanctuary, was called the "eighth day." For this implies that it was a natural continuation of the previous days. But in fact the consecration was limited to seven days: "And you shall not go out from the door of the tent of meeting for seven days, until the days of your consecration be fulfilled; for He shall consecrate you seven days." During that time the altar was dedicated. And the following day was quite separate: It was set aside for the induction of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood.

The answer which the Kli Yakar gives is that it is called the eighth day to emphasize its extraordinary character. For it is written shortly afterwards, "Today the L-rd appears to you." And to explain why it was then that the L-rd appeared, and not during the actual days of consecration, the Torah tells us that it was because it was the eighth day. Seven is the number of the days of the week, the measure of earthly time, a symbol of the human dimension. Eight signifies the more-than-human; it is the symbol of holiness.

This is why a circumcision can be performed on Shabbat. For circumcision takes place on the eighth day from birth, and Shabbat is the seventh day. In other words, Shabbat belongs to human time, but circumcision belongs to the realm of the Holy, the supernatural. And the claims of the spiritual override those of the physical.

2. Degrees of Holiness

To say that seven is the span of the week does not mean that it is the symbol of the weekday world, the secular. Because Shabbat is itself one of those seven days, and it is a day of holiness. But nonetheless it is reckoned as one of the seven days of creation, and thus belongs to the created order. Whereas the number eight expresses the idea of being beyond the normal confines of time, and thus of being wholly united with G-d as He is in Himself, rather than as He is related to the world. The Kli Yakar cites an example of this significance of the number eight, namely that the harp which will be used in the Temple of the Messianic Era will have eight strings. The harp which was played in the Sanctuary had only seven. It was holy. But less so than the harp of Messianic times.

The Torah itself is holy. But compared to the way in which it will be learned and revealed in the Messianic Age, our own response to it is called, in the Midrash, "a vanity."

There are, in other words, degrees of holiness. There is the holiness of this world, which is symbolized by the number seven, which is confined to the limits of human capabilities.

And there is the holiness which goes beyond the world, beyond the idea that G-d and the world are two distinct entities, which is expressed in the number eight.

3. Gifts and Reward

Curiously, the answer which the Kli Yakar gives to his own question does not appear to answer it. Instead it seems to make the question more forceful.

If the eighth day stands for the state of absolute unity with G-d, then it signifies something supernatural. If so, then it surely has no connection with the previous seven days of consecration, which represented human activity, the sanctification of the natural order, and earthly time. Whereas the clear implication of the phrase "the eighth day" is that it was a continuation of the previous seven.

The answer is that supernatural revelation depends on our human efforts. The Messianic Age will be brought about by our acts of worship and of service of G-d. Our efforts to consecrate the world during the seven days of human time are the gestures of faithfulness which will produce the Divine response of the eighth day-the day of the Messiah. So that although the Messianic Age will be of an altogether higher level of holiness than we can evoke with our Divine Service in the present, it will not be a sudden break in the history of Jewish consciousness. It will be the outcome of what we do now. It will be the "eighth day" in the sense that it continues and completes the perfection after which we now strive, after we have done all of which we are capable.

To draw an analogy: Shabbat, which is the seventh day, has two aspects. Firstly it is one of the days of the week, holier than the other six, but still a part of human time. There is a significant phrase in the command: "And the children of Israel shall keep the Shabbat, to make (usually translated, 'to observe') the Shabbat throughout their generations." Shabbat is something we make. It is a Sanctuary within the week which we construct by our own service. But secondly the Shabbat is "a semblance of the World to Come," a glimpse of the Messianic Age. This aspect of the Shabbat is not something we can achieve ourselves. It is something we receive as a gift from G-d. It is this of which the Talmud says, "The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses, I have a precious gift in My treasure house, and it is called the Shabbat."

There is a difference between a gift and a reward: A reward is something which the recipient has earned, a gift is something he receives only through the grace of his benefactor. And this facet of Shabbat, this glimpse of the future revelation, belongs entirely to the grace of G-d. It has a holiness which goes beyond human limitations.

Yet, even though it is a gift, we must work for it. The Rabbis say, "If the recipient had not given some pleasure (to the donor of the gift) he would not have given it to him." That is, if we do not give pleasure to G-d by our actions, we will not receive His gift. Whereas "he who labors on the eve of Shabbat will eat on Shabbat." Because of our labors we are given a Divine gift which far outweighs the worth of our work.

The same is true about the revelation within the Sanctuary on the eighth day. Although it was not earned by the human activity of consecration on the previous seven days, it was only when this consecration was completed that the Divine response came. G-d gives His gift to man only after man has done all within his power to consecrate himself to G-d. This is why it is called the "eighth day"-the day of Divine grace which answers the seven days of man's own initiative in drawing close to G-d.

4. The Counting of the Omer

In many years, the Sidra of Shemini is read immediately after Pesach, near the beginning of the seven week period of the counting of the Omer. What is the connection between the two? The Torah says about the Omer, "You shall count for fifty days." And yet in fact we count only forty-nine days. Why? In the seven weeks we remove ourselves step by step from the forty-nine "gates of impurity" and pass through the forty-nine "gates of understanding." The fiftieth, the ultimate level of understanding, is beyond us. But it is only when we have reached by our efforts the forty-ninth, that the fiftieth comes to us as a gift of G-d.

The seven weeks of the Omer are like the seven days of consecration. They represent the spiritual achievement of man. The fiftieth day of the Omer is like the eighth day of the Sanctuary: It is the revelation which breaks in on us from the outside, the answer of G-d to our endeavors. The fiftieth day is Shavuot, the day when the Torah was revealed on Mt. Sinai. And that day was a foretaste of the revelation of the Messianic Age.

5. Past and Future Redemption

The counting of the Omer was not only a preparation for the Giving of the Torah. It is also a preparation for the Messianic revelation itself.

In Michah it is written, "As on the days of your coming out of Egypt, I will show him wonders." But the Exodus from Egypt took place on one day, the 15th of Nissan. The previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, explained: the redemption from Egypt will only be complete when the future redemption has come. Until then we are still captives in a metaphorical Egypt, namely the limitations and constraints of our human situation, from which we must liberate ourselves. The historical exodus, in the year 2448, was only the beginning of a continuous process of self-liberation. This will only be complete in the Messianic Age, when we will finally reach the stage where no spiritual heights are beyond the scope of man. If there seem to be dark ages where this process is halted or even reversed, where we seem to be regressing spiritually, this is only because new achievements need sometimes to be preceded by a time of darkness, in which new reserves of strength are discovered. They are not true regressions, for they serve to bring man to new heights of religious understanding. They are

part of the Divine plan, stages in the continual ascent of man.
(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. III pp. 973-977)