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from: torahweb@torahweb.org
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date: Friday Mar 22, 2019, 11:28 AM

Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger
Only the Humble Can Lead

It had been planned for close to a year. The position, its requirements, and all of its detailed protocols had been studied and reviewed numerous times. Yet when the mishkan was fully ready and Aharon was about to begin his mishkan service, he resisted. Apparently, Aharon was so emotionally unready that Hashem himself had to intercede. According to Rashi (8:2) Moshe is told, "find the words to convince him and persuade him." This conversation, though cryptic and vague, is obviously important enough to be recorded and become part of what we transmit from generation to generation. Through various midrashim (Toras Kohanim, Shemini; Rashi 9:7) we can piece together the realities of the moment, the fears that were addressed, and the ideas that gave Aharon chizuk and courage. As Aharon was about to launch his kehuna career, he was overwhelmed with memories of the eigel hazohov. According to one record, as he looked at the mizbeach its square protruding corners morphed, in his mind, into the horns of a bull, like an eigel hazohov nightmare. We can only imagine how diminished and tortured Aharon must have felt. How could he now lead his people in the holiest of places? How could he, plagued with these memories, assume the highest tier of spiritual leadership with the sin of the eigel? Such is the heart, humility and self-awareness of genuine spiritual leadership.

Moshe, following Divine instruction does not give, declaring the words that have inspired many, לַכֹּהֵן בָּחַרְתָּ - for this you were chosen." Simply put, Moshe argues, "this is your purpose in life". Who turns down that kind of clarity? Would we not all want to have prophecy tell us our purpose and destiny in life? Interestingly, Mordechai's charge to the hesitant Esther, " מִי לֹכֵד אִם לַעֲתָה כְּזֹאת הַגִּיעָה לַמַּלְכוּת לֹכֵד נִצְרָתָה." seems to be largely another way of saying לֹכֵד נִצְרָתָה.

Yet, another way to read Moshe's argument has been suggested by several commentators, including Rav Zadok of Lublin. They read Moshe's encouragement as being, "for this humility, for this uncertainty, that is why you were chosen to be kohein gadol."

In addition to the sublime spirituality of Aharon and the profound dedication to every individual Jew, perhaps it was his ability to understand failure that prepared him for a life throughout which he would represent his people before Hashem. Possibly, his keen feelings of having disappointed all that is precious in life will help Aharon greet and raise every Jew who approaches him, even one approaching with the attendant guilt and remorse of a sin offering.

This charge to Aharon finds its way into the Purim story as well. It was the Imrei Emes, the Gerrer Rebbe who began to reestablish his chasidus in Israel immediately after the holocaust, who points to the medrashic descriptions of Esther's uncertainty. He records the account of Esther who, after being emboldened by Ruach Hakodesh to confront the king, suddenly feels robbed of that spiritual uplift. As she passed by the avoda zoro in the palace, and was apparently reminded of the past sins of her people, she became spiritually and practically weak kneed again. The Rebbe explains that at times of hester panim, feelings of spiritual diminution are indeed a call to action and leadership. Based on the Zohar, he saw them as deliberate and forceful voices from above demanding that we dig deep, find inspiration and moral compass from within, and as a result emerge to behold deservedly greater Divine assistance.

Looking for the updated version of Moshe's words to Aharon, I recall the manner in which Rav Yisroel Salanter compellingly responded to his close student, Rav Yitzchak Blazer. The teacher, impressed with the communal impact his student could have and the leadership he could offer, dispatched him to lead the Jews of St. Petersburg and become the chief rabbi of this capital city. Rav Yitzchak, untested and only twenty-five at the time, resisted and explained that he is afraid given his youth and the cosmopolitan nature of the community. To which Rav Yisroel is reported to have responded, "and who shall I send, someone who is not afraid?"

from: torahweb@torahweb.org to: weeklydt@torahweb.org date: **Mar 19, 2019, 11:21 AM** subject: TorahWeb low on cash

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from: **Rabbi Yochanan Zweig** <genesis@torah.org>

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date Mar 22, 2019, 7:38 AM

subject: Rabbi Zweig on the Parsha - Fit To Serve Parshas Tzav

Fit To Serve

"Moshe brought the sons of Aharon forward, he dressed them in tunics and girdled [each of] them with a belt and wrapped the turbans upon them..." (8:13)

Parshas Tzav details the seven day inaugural process prescribed for Aharon and his sons prior to their serving in the Mishkan. Moshe proceeds to bathe them in a mikveh and dress them in the Priestly vestments. The verse describes Moshe dressing them in "kutonos" – "tunics", girding them with their "avneit" – "belt" and wrapping their "migbaos" – "turbans" around their heads. The "kutonos" and "migbaos" are recorded in the plural form.

However, the “avneit” is listed in singular form. What prompts the Torah to make this distinction?

The Rambam records that the turban was sixteen amos long (between twenty-four and thirty-two feet). The belt was thirty-two amos long and was wrapped around the Kohein. Why does the Rambam not mention that the turban was also wrapped around the Kohein?

The Rambam is teaching us that it was necessary for the belt to be wrapped around the Kohein each time he put it on. However, it was required to wrap the turban only the first time, and once it fit the Kohein, he would continue to wear it without unwrapping and re-wrapping it. Therefore, the Rambam records the act of wrapping with the belt and not with the turban. Since the belt was wrapped each time, it was transferable from Kohein to Kohein, whereas the turban had to be fit to the head of the individual for whom it was first wrapped and could not be transferred from one Kohein to another. What is the Rambam’s source for this ruling?

When the Torah records the donning of the kuttonos and migbaos, these garments are listed in the plural form for they had to be tailor-made to fit each individual Kohein. By switching to the singular form for the avneit the Torah is revealing to us that it was not necessary to have a special avneit for each outfit, for it was transferable; each Kohein could wrap the thirty-two amah avneit to accommodate his girth. Whereas each Kohein needed his own tunic and turban, in theory only one avneit had to be made. The Rambam deduced that the reason the turban was not transferable was that it had to be permanently wrapped the first time worn, tailor-made to accommodate its wearer.

1. Yad Hil. Klei Mikdosh 8:19

The Jewish Problem

Come, let us deal wisely with them...” (1:10).

The Torah relates that the Mitzrim were afraid that Bnei Yisroel were becoming too numerous. Looming over their heads was the possibility that in the case of a war Bnei Yisroel would join forces with the enemy and drive the Mitzrim out of their land. Pharaoh and his advisors devised a course of action to prevent their worst fears from materializing.

The Ba'al Haggada states “vayarei'u osanu hamitzrim” – “the Mitzrim dealt with us in a malevolent manner”, as it is recorded in the Torah “havah nischakmah lo” – “come let us deal wisely with them”. Why is Pharaoh’s strategizing as to how to deal with a perceived threat viewed as a malicious act against Bnei Yisroel? His solution and the manner in which his orders were executed should be cited as examples of his evil behavior, not his desire to protect his nation’s security.

In contemporary society we search continuously for methods by which we can categorize different conditions and behaviors. By identifying and labeling a problem we gain a certain confidence that the problem can be corrected. Unfortunately, often in our haste to identify a situation which we are having difficulty controlling, we mislabel a condition and create a problem where no problem exists. Particularly when dealing with children, care must be taken to ensure that we, as parents and educators, do not label our children as “problems”. Even when the correct diagnosis has been made, we must proceed with caution to ensure that we do not transform a child with a problem into a “problem child”. The grossest injustice that can be done to a person is to label him as a problem. The damage caused to a child’s self-esteem due to the manner in which he is perceived by others and consequently comes to view himself, can be irreparable.

Whereas the harm which Bnei Yisroel suffered at the hands of the Mitzrim lasted only for the duration of time they spent in servitude and affected only those who were present, the perception created by Pharaoh that Jews are a public menace still haunts us today. The ultimate act of evil perpetrated against Bnei Yisroel by Pharaoh was labeling them as “the Jewish Problem”. 1.1:9,10

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...Parshas Tzav Using Up Merits by Rabbi Ozer Alport

... Tzav

"V'zot torat zevach hashelamim asher yakriv Lashem im al today yakrivenu." (Lev. 7:11-12) Parshas Tzav contains the laws governing the Korban Todah (Thanksgiving Offering). The Talmud (Berachos 54b) rules that a Korban Todah is brought by four groups of people to express their gratitude to God for being saved from potential danger. In the absence of the Temple, they instead publicly recite a blessing known as Birkas HaGomel. It is curious to note that after hearing somebody make a blessing we answer simply, "Amen," with one exception. After hearing a person say Birkas HaGomel, we respond, "Omein, mi shagamalcha kol tov Hu yigamelcha kol tov selah" - "He who has bestowed upon you all good should continue to bestow upon you all good." As this lengthy response is found nowhere else, it clearly needs an explanation.

In his introduction, the Shalmei Nedorim offers a beautiful insight based on a fascinating episode related by the Talmud (Shabbos 53b). The wife of a poor man passed away shortly after giving birth. The pauper lacked the means to hire a nurse-maid for his newborn, but the baby's life was saved when the man's body miraculously became capable of nursing the baby.

The Amora Rav Yosef praised the man, saying that he must have had great merits to have brought about such an open miracle. Abaye, on the other hand, remarked how lowly he must have been for needing a miracle performed on his behalf. The Shalmei Nedorim explains that Abaye's intent was not to say that the man was wicked. After all, he merited an extraordinary miracle to save his child's life. Rather, Abaye was lamenting that the miracle used up so many of his merits (see Rashi Bereishis 32:11).

In light of this insight, he explains that Birkas HaGomel is recited after a person has been saved from potential danger. While we are happy that he survived, we are also afraid that it may have come at the expense of his accumulated merits. As a result, a simple "Amen" won't suffice, and we add a special supplication requesting that his good fortune should continue and not be depleted through this miracle.

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date: Mar 22, 2019, 7:01 AM

subject: **Mei Marom** - Behind Every Olah, There is Yitzchok Avinu Mei Marom

By Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein

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Parshas Tzav

Behind Every Olah, There is Yitzchok Avinu

It is the olah on the place of burning on the altar all night.[2]

There is much more to the olah than meets the eye. The first indication is that, unlike the chatas, the asham, the todah, the Torah doesn't link it to any particular sin or event. It is all so mysterious.

Chazal, of course, do link it to a more sublime place than other offerings – namely, that it is meant to atone for something entirely internal. It atones not

for some action or speech, but for a flaw in the inner man, i.e. for thoughts of transgression.

The olah “works” by connecting a person with his Source, his root.

Connected there the person is changed not only in rectifying the past, but in addressing the future. It interrupts the cycle of one sin dragging along another in its wake. In doing so, it follows the lead of Yitzchok Avinu. When the avos were warned that HKBH was considering punishing the Jewish people for its iniquity, it was only Yitzchok who staved off tragedy. He first bargained down the outstanding bill by claiming that of the seventy years of a person’s life, many of them were not relevant to the accounting, leaving a much smaller outstanding obligation. He offered to split the smaller amount with HKBH. If He was unwilling, then “I will take all of it upon myself, because I already offered myself as a korban for them.”[3]

Let us examine what he meant. We generally recognize two sources of the aveiros of Klal Yisrael: the yetzer hora, and the collective toll of shibud malchiyos, of the oppressiveness of those who hold dominion over us, politically and culturally.

The first of these forces – the yetzer hora – is so destructive that Hashem is described as “regretting” every day that He unleashed it. Now, HKBH is actually incapable of “regret.” He makes no mistakes, and the future is always foreseen to Him. Depicting Him as entertaining regrets for what He created can only mean that He makes readily available to us a powerful kedushah that attenuates the strength of the yetzer hora.

The second force, shibud malchiyos, has a curious history. It was created by none other than Yitzchok himself, when he assigned a variable role to Esav. Yaakov would dominate not only Esav but all the nations, when he would live on the highest plane expected of him. When he would be that faithful to his mission, all other nations would gladly subordinate themselves to him. This would change only “when you [Esav] are aggrieved, [and] you will throw off his [i.e. Yaakov’s] yoke.”[4] When Esav could argue that he was an aggrieved party to the relationship – when he could point to a Klal Yisrael mired in sin, that therefore did not deserve to prevail over him – he would then be entitled to throw off Yaakov’s yoke. When he did that, he would overturn the previous rules of engagement, and he, Esav, would then rule over his brother. This, in effect, is the institution of shibud malchiyos.

The same Yitzchok Avinu was careful to hold that shibud in check, by offsetting the sins of Klal Yisrael with the zechus of his own sacrifice at the Akeidah. By doing so, he placed a limit on the depredations of Esav during the times of his dominion over Klal Yisrael.

The very pasuk that created the space for shibud malchiyos hints at this limit. “You will throw off his yoke.” On the plain level, “his” refers to Yaakov. But it can also refer to the yoke of HKBH. Esav’s success in dominating Yaakov would come at a dear price to him. Esav would throw off Yaakov’s yoke only by casting aside that of Hashem at the same time! Like the slave who enjoys his debased role because, being free of any restraints, the cheap and tawdry are readily available to him,[5] Esav would subjugate his brother only by discarding the holiness of Yaakov’s mission. Esav would so compromise himself, that when Yaakov would regain his previous stature, Esav would not be able to appreciate it.

That time will certainly come. It is alluded to in our pasuk. “It is the olah,” using the definite article. That most distinguished of all olos, the self-sacrifice of Yitzchok. Every olah connects with the Akeidah, the korban that assures that Klal Yisrael will have a “going up” to its Divinely ordained place.

1 Based on Mei Marom, Vayikra Maamar 5 ↑

2 Vayikra 6:9 ↑

3 Shabbos 89B ↑

4 Bereishis 27:40 ↑

5 Gittin 13A ↑

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date: Mar 22, 2019, 6:50 AM

subject: **Rav Frand - “Hoda’ah” and “Thank You!”**

Double Entendre in the Word “Hoda’ah”

Among the sacrifices mentioned in this week’s parsha is the Thanksgiving Offering. The Medrash says that in the future all the sacrifices will be nullified except the Thanksgiving Offering — because there is always need to give thanks.

Rav Hutner z”tl, makes a very interesting point. “Todah” [thanks] comes from the word “Hoda’ah,” meaning giving thanks. However, the word “Hoda’ah” also means to admit (as in the expression Hoda’as ba’al din k’meah edim dami – an admission of a litigant is like one hundred witnesses).

Rav Hutner says that it is no coincidence that the word for thanking and the word for admitting are one and the same. In order for a person to give thanks, he must be able to admit that he needed help. The first step in being grateful to someone for doing something for you is the admission that you needed help and that you are not all powerful. Therefore, the Hebrew word for thanks and for admission are the same.

How do we know whether an occurrence of the word “Hoda’ah” means admission or thanks? Rav Hutner says that we need to look at the preposition that comes after the word. The word “Hoda’ah” — meaning admission — is always followed by the Hebrew preposition “sheh...” [that]. The word “Hoda’ah” — meaning thanks — is always followed by the Hebrew word “al...” [for].

In davening [prayers], there is a Blessing of Modim, called the Blessing of “Hoda’ah”. How does it read? “Modim anachnu lach sheh...” This indicates that the first thing we must do is not thank G-d, but admit to G-d that we are dependent on Him. Once we come to that understanding, then we are ready for the end of the blessing where we say “Nodeh lecha... al...” — We thank You for... Birkas HaHoda’ah is thus a two-stage blessing. It begins with a Hoda’ah of admission and then climaxes with a Hoda’ah of thanking at the end.

We Can’t Appoint an Agent to Say ‘Thank-You’

I recently saw a beautiful insight in the Avudraham. When the Chazan says Modim, the congregation recites a prayer known as “The Rabbis’ Modim”. Why is that? We listen silently during most of the repetition of Shmoneh Esrei. Why is Modim different? The Avudraham says that for all blessings in the Shmoneh Esrei we can use the services of an agent. ‘Heal Us’ and ‘Bless Us with a Good Year’, and so forth have messengers — the Shliach Tzibbur can say the blessing for us. However, there is one thing that nobody else can say for us. We must say it for ourselves. That one thing is “Thank You”. Hoda’ah needs to come from ourselves. No one can be our agent to say ‘Thank You’.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington.

Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, Maryland.

from: Aish.com <newsletterserver@aish.com> via em.secureserver.net to: internetparshasheet@gmail.com date: Mar 20, 2019, 5:31 PM subject: Advanced Parsha - Tzav

Destructive and Self-Destructive Tzav (Leviticus 6-8) Mar 17, 2019 by **Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**

Destructive and Self-Destructive

This sedra, speaking about sacrifices, prohibits the eating of blood: Wherever you live, you must not eat the blood of any bird or animal. If anyone eats blood, that person must be cut off from his people. (Lev. 7:26-27)

This is not just one prohibition among others. The ban on eating blood is fundamental to the Torah. For example, it occupies a central place in the covenant God makes with Noah - and through him, all of humanity - after the Flood: "But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it" (Gen.

9:4). So too, Moses returns to the subject in his great closing addresses in the book of Deuteronomy:

But be sure you do not eat the blood, because the blood is the life, and you must not eat the life with the meat. You must not eat the blood; pour it out on the ground like water. Do not eat it, so that it may go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is right in the eyes of the Lord. (Deut. 12:23-25)

What is so wrong about eating blood? Maimonides and Nahmanides offer conflicting interpretations. For Maimonides - consistent with his programme throughout *The Guide for the Perplexed* - it is forbidden as part of the Torah's extended battle against idolatry. He notes that the Torah uses identical language about idolatry and eating blood:

I will set My face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from his people. (Lev. 17:10)

I will set My face against that man [who engages in Moloch worship] and his family and will cut him off from his people. (Lev. 20:5)

In no context other than blood and idolatry is the expression "set My face against" used. Idolaters, says Maimonides, believed that blood was the food of the spirits, and that by eating it, they would have "something in common with the spirits." Eating blood is forbidden because of its association with idolatry.[1]

Nahmanides says, contrariwise, that the ban has to do with human nature. We are affected by what we eat:

If one were to eat the life of all flesh, and it would then attach itself to one's own blood, and they would become united in one's heart, and the result would be a thickening and coarseness of the human soul so that it would closely approach the nature of the animal soul which resided in what he ate... Eating blood, implies Nahmanides, makes us cruel, bestial, animal-like.[2]

Which explanation is correct? We now have copious evidence, through archaeology and anthropology, that both are. Maimonides was quite right to see the eating of blood as an idolatrous rite. Human sacrifice was widespread in the ancient world. Among the Greeks, for example, the god Kronos required human victims. The Maenads, female worshippers of Dionysus, were said to tear living victims apart with their hands and eat them. The Aztecs of South America practised human sacrifice on a vast scale, believing that without its meals of human blood, the sun would die: "Convinced that in order to avoid the final cataclysm it was necessary to fortify the sun, they undertook for themselves the mission of furnishing it with the vital energy found only in the precious liquid which keeps man alive."

Barbara Ehrenreich, from whose book *Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War*,[3] these facts come, argues that one of the most formative experiences of the first human beings must have been the terror of being attacked by an animal predator. They knew that the likely outcome was that one of the group, usually an outsider, an invalid, a child, or perhaps an animal, would fall as prey, giving the others a chance to escape. It was this embedded memory that became the basis of subsequent sacrificial rites.

Ehrenreich's thesis is that "the sacrificial ritual in many ways mimics the crisis of a predator's attack. An animal or perhaps a human member of the group is singled out for slaughter, often in a spectacularly bloody manner." The eating of the victim and his or its blood temporarily occupies the predator, allowing the rest of the group to escape in safety. That is why blood is offered to the gods. As Mircea Eliade noted, "the divine beings who play a part in initiation ceremonies are usually imagined as beasts of prey - lions and leopards (initiatory animals par excellence) in Africa, jaguars in South America, crocodiles and marine monsters in Oceania." [4] Blood sacrifice appears when human beings are sufficiently well organised in groups to make the transition from prey to predator. They then relive their fears of being attacked and eaten.

Ehrenreich does not end there, however. Her view is that this emotional reaction - fear and guilt - survives to the present as part of our genetic endowment from earlier times. It leaves two legacies: one, the human tendency to band together in the face of an external threat; the other, the

willingness to risk self-sacrifice for the sake of the group. These emotions appear at times of war. They are not the cause of war, but they invest it with "the profound feelings - dread, awe, and the willingness to sacrifice - that make it 'sacred' to us." They help explain why it is so easy to mobilise people by conjuring up the spectre of an external enemy.

War is a destructive and self-destructive activity. Why then does it persist? Ehrenreich's insight suggests an answer. It is the dysfunctional survival of instincts, profoundly necessary in an age of hunter-gatherers, into an era in which such responses are no longer necessary. Human beings still thrill at the prospect of shedding blood.

Maimonides was right to see in the blood sacrifice a central idolatrous practice. Nahmanides was equally correct to see it as a symptom of human cruelty. We now sense the profound wisdom of the law forbidding the eating of blood. Only thus could human beings be gradually cured of the deeply ingrained instinct, deriving from a world of predators and prey, in which the key choice is to kill or be killed.

Evolutionary psychology has taught us about these genetic residues from earlier times which - because they are not rational - cannot be cured by reason alone, but only by ritual, strict prohibition, and habituation. The contemporary world continues to be scarred by violence and terror. Sadly, the ban against blood sacrifice is still relevant. The instinct against which it is a protest - sacrificing life to exorcise fear - still lives on.

Where there is fear, it is easy to turn against those we see as "the other" and learn to hate them. Which is why each of us, especially we leaders, have to take a stand against the instinct to fear, and against the corrosive power of hate. All it takes for evil to flourish is for good people to do nothing.

Shabbat shalom.

NOTES

1. Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, III:46. 2. Nahmanides, *Commentary to Leviticus 17:13*. 3. Barbara Ehrenreich, *Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War* (New York: Metropolitan, 1997). 4. Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1994).

From: Aish.com <newsletterserver@aish.com> via em.secureserver.net to: internetparshasheet@gmail.com date: Mar 20, 2019, 5:31 PM subject:

Aish.com Parsha - Tzav

Would God Approve? Tzav (Leviticus 6-8) Mar 17, 2019 by **Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis A"H**

The last chapter of this parashah contains a puzzling passage, "This is the thing that God commanded to be done...", [1] which refers to the commandment to inaugurate the Tabernacle. We suggest that the previous verse sheds light on what is needed to sanctify the Tabernacle and Jewish life in general. God instructed Moses to gather the entire assembly of the Jewish people "to the entrance to the Tent of the Meeting," and herein lies the explanation, which, in and of itself, is paradoxical. Although the area at the entrance was very small and could not contain many people, nevertheless, miraculously, there was ample room for everyone.

Through this phenomenon, the Torah teaches us a lesson that speaks for all time: When true love prevails among people, no room, no place is too small. On the other hand, when contention and animosity fill hearts, then no space is big enough. The most majestic palace cannot accommodate those who are not at peace with one another. Thus, the meaning of the passage becomes clear: "This is the thing that God commanded to be done" - to reach out with love, kindness, and understanding. If we do so, then even the smallest, most limited space will miraculously expand. That is the power of love. But where love is missing, even a palatial villa will not suffice.

WOULD GOD APPROVE?

Later in the parashah, we find yet another dimension to this concept of fulfilling the will of God that we would all do well to remember and act upon. Aaron asks a question that it behooves us all to ask: "Would God approve?" [2]

Normally, when performing a mitzvah, the paramount question to ask is, "Am I performing this mitzvah in accordance with halachah, according to the letter of the law?" But Aaron, the High Priest, went yet a step further. He understood that not only must we fulfill the mitzvah according to God's Law, but we must do so in a manner that will be pleasing to our Creator. This teaching applies to every aspect of our lives. Before making decisions, before taking any steps, ask yourself that simple, but piercing question, Would God approve? Is this the way God would want me to live? Would He be pleased with my actions? Would He approve of my words?

If we learn to do this, then our relationship with God will not be based strictly on obligation, but rather, on love. A child who truly loves his parents desires to please them and give them nachas. Should we not desire to give our Heavenly Father nachas? Should we not express our love for Him?

So if we wish to connect with God, if we wish to download miracles and have His glory bless us, we need only follow His commandments, fulfill them as He proscribed, go the extra mile and ask, "Is the manner in which I am performing the mitzvos pleasing to my Creator, my God?"

THREE LITTLE WORDS

Our mother, Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis, often relates the story of the Maggid of Kelm - the electrifying inspirational preacher of the shtetl of Kelm who lived in Lithuania in the 19th century. One day he challenged his congregation with amazing questions. "If, by some miracle, God allowed all those who are buried in the cemetery of Kelm to get up for half an hour, what do you think they would do? Where would they go? What would they say?"

Consider these questions, ponder them, and ask yourself, What would I do? Where would I go? What would I say if I had just half an hour in this world? And what if, instead of half an hour, you were told that your wife or your husband had just six months to live. How would you relate to her or him?

On 9/11 we found out. For perhaps the first time in history, we have audio messages from multitudes of people who were trapped in the Twin Towers and knew that their last moments were near. Miraculously, these tragic victims were able to get through on their cell phones and call their families. What do you think they said? What was their last will and testament?

Amazingly, not one of them spoke about business, money, or any other such matters ... but they each said three little words: "I love you." "I love you, my husband"; "I love you, my wife"; "I love you, my children"; "I love you, Mom"; "I love you, Dad"; "I love you, Grandma"; "I love you, Grandpa" ... "I love you."

So, if we have more than half an hour on this planet, should we not say I love you before it's too late?

When you study Torah, you learn to value the preciousness of time and try to live each day as if it was your last. You learn to appreciate and safeguard the simple gifts with which God has endowed you, gifts like love, gifts that you come to realize are not so simple after all.

NOTES 1. Leviticus 8:5. 2. Ibid. 10:14.

from: Chabad.org <learntorah@chabad.org> reply-to: feedback@chabad.org date: Mar 20, 2019, 12:21 PM subject: **TORAH STUDIES: Parshat Tzav**

Adapted by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks; From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Continuing the theme of Vayikra, the **Rebbe** traces further parallels between the Sanctuary that was built by the Israelites in the wilderness, and the Sanctuary which every Jew has within himself. This Sidra mentions the continual fire that was to be kept burning on the outer altar. What is its importance? What is it a defense against?

1. Continual Fire

"Fire shall be kept burning upon the altar continually; it shall not go out."¹ On this verse the Jerusalem Talmud comments, "continually—even on Shabbat; continually—even in a state of impurity."²

As has been mentioned before,³ every aspect of the physical Sanctuary has its counterpart in the inward Sanctuary within the soul of the Jew.

His heart is the altar. And corresponding to the two altars of the Sanctuary, the outer and the inner, are the outer and inner levels of the heart, its surface personality and its essential core.⁴

The altar on which the continual fire was to be set was the outer one. And for the Jew this means that the fire of his love for G-d must be outward, open and revealed. It is not a private possession, to be cherished subconsciously. It must show in the face he sets towards the world.

2. The Withdrawn and the Separated

The concept of Shabbat is that of rest and withdrawal from the weekday world. Everyday acts are forbidden. But Shabbat is not only a day of the week. It is a state of mind. It is, in the dimensions of the soul, the state of contemplation and understanding. Its connection with Shabbat lies in the verse,⁵ "And you shall call the Shabbat a delight." On Shabbat, the perception of G-d is more intense, more open. And this leads the mind to a withdrawal from the secular and the mundane.

But to reach this level is to become prone to a temptation. One might think that to have reached so far in perceiving the presence of G-d is to have passed beyond passion to the realm of impassive contemplation. The mind asserts its superiority over the emotions. He has, he tells himself, no need for the fire of love. This is the man to whom the Talmud says, the fire "shall not go out—even on Shabbat."

There is an opposite extreme: The man who has traveled so far on the path of separation that he feels he has now no link with G-d. To him the Talmud says, "it shall not go out—even in a state of impurity." For the fire does not go out. A spark always burns in the recesses of the heart. It can be fanned into flame. And if it is fed with the fuel of love, it will burn continually. The Maggid of Mezeritch said⁶ that instead of reading the phrase, "It shall not be put out," we can read it, "It will put out the 'not.'" The fire of love extinguishes the negative. It takes the Jew past the threshold of commitment where he stands in hesitation and says "No."

3. Coldness

The remark of the Maggid stresses the fact that to put out the "No," the fire must be continual. It must be fed by a constant attachment to Torah and to Mitzvot. "Once" or "occasionally" or "not long ago" are not enough. The fire dies down, coldness supersedes, and the "No" is given its dominion.

This explains the commandment:⁷ "Remember what Amalek did to you by the way as you came out of Egypt: How he met you (korcha) on the way...."⁸ Amalek is the symbol of coldness in the religious life. "Korcha," as well as meaning "he met you" also means "he made you cold." The historical Amalek "smote the hindmost of you, all those who were enfeebled in your rear, when you were faint and weary: And he did not fear G-d." The Amalek within the Jew attempts to do the same. It is the voice which says "No" when the love of G-d grows faint and weary. It is the voice which does not fear G-d. And we are commanded every day to remember Amalek. That is, never to let coldness enter and take hold of the heart. And that means that the fire of love must never be allowed to die down.

4. Fire From Below and Fire From Above

The continual fire, which was man-made, was the preparation in the Sanctuary for the fire which descended from Heaven. On this the Talmud⁹ says: "Although fire comes down from Heaven, it is a commandment also for man to bring fire." It was the awakening from below that brought an answering response from G-d. But it brought this response only when the fire was perfect, without defect.

This is made clear in this and next week's Sidrot. During the days when the Sanctuary was consecrated, it and its vessels were ready, Moses and Aaron were present, and sacrifices were being offered. But the Divine presence did not descend on it. A lingering trace of the sin of the Golden Calf remained. Only on the eighth day, when the continual fire was perfected, was the sin effaced, the "No" extinguished, "fire came forth from before the L-rd"¹⁰ and "the glory of the L-rd appeared to all the people."¹¹

What was this fire from Heaven? Why did it require the perfection of the earthly fire?

Man is a created being. He is finite. And there are limits to what he can achieve on his own. His acts are bounded by time. To become eternal, something Divine must intervene.

This is why, during the seven days of consecration, the Sanctuary was continually being constructed and taken apart. As the work of man, it could not be lasting. But on the eighth day the Divine presence descended, and only then did it become permanent.

The seven days were a week, the measure of earthly time. The eighth was the day beyond human time, the number which signifies eternity. And hence it was the day of the heavenly fire, which was the response of an infinite G-d.¹²

5. Limits

Although man cannot aspire to infinity himself, the fire of infinity descends upon him. But only when he has perfected his own fire, and gone to the limits of his spiritual possibilities. Man is answered by G-d, not when he resigns himself to passivity or despair, but when he has reached the frontier of his own capabilities.

This is suggested by the word “continual” in the description of the fire. What is continual is infinite, for it has no end in time. Time, though, is composed of finite parts, seconds, minutes, hours. And even an infinite succession of them is still limited to a single dimension.¹³ But by the perfection of our timebounded lives we join ourselves to the timelessness of G-d, so that time itself becomes eternal. And nature itself becomes supernatural. Because the reward of our service to G-d is the blessing of a success within the natural world which goes beyond the natural order.

6. Fire in the Service of Man

The essential implication of this is that every Jew constitutes a Sanctuary to G-d. And even if he learns Torah and fulfills the commandments, if the continual fire is missing, the Divine presence will not dwell within him. For his service is without life. And a trace of that distant sin of the Golden Calf may remain: The “No” which is the voice of coldness.

The Jew must bring life, involvement, fire, to the three aspects of his religious existence: Torah, service and the practice of charity.¹⁴

Learning should not be something done merely to discharge an obligation, and kept to the minimum required. Words of Torah should never leave the mouth of a Jew. And they should be words spoken with fire. It is told in the Talmud¹⁵ that “Beruriah once discovered a student who was learning in an undertone. Rebuking him she said: Is it not written, ‘Ordered in all things and sure.’ If it (the Torah) is ‘ordered’ in your two hundred and forty-eight limbs, it will be ‘sure.’ Otherwise it will not.” In other words, Torah should penetrate every facet of his being until he can say: “All my bones shall say, L-rd, who is like You?”¹⁶

Service means prayer and of this Pirkei Avot says, “Do not regard your prayer as a fixed mechanical task, but as an appeal for mercy and grace before the All-Present.”¹⁷

The practice of charity includes the fulfillment of the commandments. And these again are not to be performed merely out of conscientiousness, but with an inner warmth that manifests itself outwardly in a desire to fulfill them with as much beauty as possible.

These are the places where the fire is lit. And this human fire brings down the fire from heaven. It brings G-d into the world, and draws infinity into the dimensions of the finite.

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. I pp. 217-219)

FOOTNOTES 1. Vayikra 6:6. 2. Yoma, 4:6. 3. Cf. supra, pp. 151-2. 4. Likkutei Torah, Devarim, 78d. 5. Isaiah 58:13. 6. Quoted in Hayom Yom, 20-21 Adar Sheni. 7. Shulchan Aruch Harav, Orach Chaim, 60:4. 8. Devarim 25:17-18. 9. Yoma, 21b. 10. Vayikra 9:24. 11. Ibid. v. 23 and cf. Rashi, ad loc. 12. Responsa, Rashba, pt. 1, ch. 9. Also, Maamar Vayehi Bayom Hashemini, 5704. 13. Derech Mitzvotcha, Mitzvat Haamanat Elokut, ch. 11. 14. Pirkei Avot, 1:2. 15. Eruvin, 54a. 16. Psalms 35:10. Cf. also Tanya, Part I, beg. of ch. 37. 17. 2:13.

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Weekly Parsha TZAV

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The daily permanent sacrifice that was offered in the Temple in Jerusalem and previously in the Tabernacle in the desert was called ‘olah.’ It was an offering that went completely to Heaven, so to speak, and was offered every morning and evening of each day of the year. It differed from other types of sacrifices in that it was consumed completely on the altar and no human being, not the priest who was the officiant or the person who, in certain cases, donated the sacrifice, had any direct physical benefit from the offering.

The public sacrifice that was brought twice a day came from public funds while the Torah allowed individuals who wished to, to donate this type of sacrifice. But the outstanding feature of this type of sacrifice was that no human being derived any physical benefit. Even when performing a positive commandment of the Torah, there always is an element of benefit and pleasure that accrues to the one performing the act.

Even though the Talmud discusses whether physical pleasures are allowed to be derived from performing commandments of the Torah, it is understood that when it comes to the offering of the sacrifice of the olah, even abstract pleasure and benefit is somehow not present. This type of sacrifice represents the ultimate in human service to the Divine without it being tarnished by personal gain and benefit.

The Torah is aware of the difficulty of coercing altruism on the part of human beings. Physically, spiritually and psychologically, we always have factors that influence us even when we are engaged in doing noble deeds and fulfilling positive commandments. The Torah comes to channel these factors but not to deny or to pretend that they are not part of the human makeup. As such, we see that in all other types of sacrifices that were offered in the Temple, there was some sort of physical human benefit, whether to the priest who officiated in bringing the sacrifice and even to the donor whose dollars brought the sacrifice to the Temple.

There were strict and detailed instructions as to what benefit could be had and in what state of purity the person who benefited from it had to be. This is always the pattern in the Torah, when it gives instructions as to how to conduct oneself in the physical world. We humans get practice in the necessary restraint that makes us special and not just another form of the animal kingdom. However, the public sacrifices that were to be brought twice daily and would represent the Jewish people to its Creator, were meant to create an aura of altruism that would endow the Jewish public generally and the Temple service particularly with the required measure of holiness and devotion. And this could be achieved only by the constant repetition of offering the sacrifice of the olah.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

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Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Tzav (Leviticus 6:1- 8:36)

By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – “And the Lord spoke to Moses saying: ‘Command Aaron and his sons, saying, this is the law of the burnt offering...’” (Leviticus 6:1–2)

When first encountering the concept of animal sacrifices in the book of Leviticus, we explored in depth the views of Maimonides and Nahmanides. Maimonides, in his classic work, Guide for the Perplexed, explained that the purpose of these sacrifices was in order to distance the Jewish people from idolatry.

After all, having just emerged from Egypt, it was natural that their spirits remained chained to an idolatrous system of sacrificial worship. Hence Maimonides argues that the Israelites were so accustomed to the practice of

animal sacrifices and the burning of incense that when the time arrived to create a new model of worship, out of necessity God based it on the Egyptian system which they had known.

Because it is impossible to move suddenly from one extreme to the other... divine wisdom... could not command that [the Israelites] leave all of those ways of worship, depart from them and nullify them. For such [a demand] would have been something that no human mind could expect, given the nature of the human being who is always drawn to that to which he is accustomed." Therefore God retained the sacrificial acts, but transformed them into means rather than ends, declaring that they must become the implements for directing all such energies and activities into the worship of the one true God of the Universe." Guide for the Perplexed, Part iii, Chap. 32

Perhaps another way of interpreting the Maimonidean position can be extracted from a striking Talmudic passage in Tractate Yoma. There we are told how the Jewish people complain to the Almighty that the inclination of idolatry has destroyed the Temple, burned down the Sanctuary, killed all the righteous, exiled the Israelites from their land, and – to add insult to injury – "...it is still dancing amongst us." They request that it be vanquished. The Almighty accedes to their desire, and after a fast of three days and three nights, God allows them to destroy the evil inclination towards idolatry. And what is the object they destroyed? "He came forth in the image of a lion of fire emerging from the Holy of Holies" (Yoma 69b).

What a strange description for the evil inclination of idolatry, "a lion of fire emerging from the Holy of Holies!" The famous interpreter of Aggadot (Talmudic legends) Rabbi Shmuel Eidels (1555–1631), known as the Maharsha, apparently troubled by what appears to be such a positive image of evil idolatry, explains that this refers to the zodiac sign Leo (the lion), which rules the heavens during Av (August) when the holy Temple was destroyed. And indeed, the first Temple was destroyed largely because of the idolatrous practices of the Israelites.

The Hassidic master Rabbi Zadok Hakohen of Lublin is likewise surprised by the Talmudic description. After all, the lion is a most respected Jewish symbol, representing the majesty of Judah who is thrice identified with a lion in Jacob's blessings: "Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up. He stooped down, he crouched as a lion, and as a lioness; who shall raise him?" (Genesis 49:9)

The lion is also an aspect of the divine merkava (chariot) in the vision of Ezekiel, and is generally depicted on the ark curtains (parokhet) guarding the Torah. Moreover, the Holy of Holies would hardly be a proper home for the evil inclination of idolatry.

And so he suggests that the message of the Talmudic passage is that every aspect of creation – including idolatry – has its roots in sanctity. When we reflect upon the various gods of the ancient world – the Sun and the Moon, Herculean strength, Zeusian power and Aphroditian beauty – they are all aspects of the physical world and the instinctive drives which are fundamental to the world around us even today.

One response to these physical and human drives is the ascetic option, denigrating and attempting to root out all physicality because of the dangers which can follow from uncontrolled addiction to their urges. This, however, has never been the Jewish response.

After all, the Almighty did not create us as disembodied spirits or ethereal intellects. The physical side of our beings must have value if it was created by God. The challenge is to direct – or sublimate – our instinctive drives properly, to see them as means and not ends, not to deny them but to ennoble them, and to utilize them in the service of the divine. This may well be the true meaning of Maimonides' words.

When the Jews left Egypt, they still carried with them the imprint of Egyptian idolatries, the myriad of gods including manifestations of nature (the sun) and beasts, which they held up as ideals. According to Maimonides, Leviticus is the history of how God redirected these idolatrous energies, teaching the Jews to build a Sanctuary as a means toward divine

service, to sanctify sexual energy within the context of marriage and family, to utilize strength and power in order to recreate society in the divine kingship.

The fact of the matter is that what was true at the time when the Jews left Egypt has not necessarily changed to this day, and quite likely may never change. And therefore the Maimonidean position regarding the animal sacrifices – to wean the Israelites away from their previous Egyptian passions – is not a temporary solution for a particular generation; we are still in need of the directed discipline which will enable us to direct and ennoble our drives and passions to the service of the God of compassion and justice. Textual evidence for this can be found at the end of the Talmudic passage we quoted earlier. The prophet cleverly warns the Israelites, after the evil instinct was given over into their hands: "Remember, if you kill him, the world will be destroyed" (Ibid). And so we read how they imprisoned the evil desire, and after three days not one egg could be found in the Land of Israel; apparently, without the sexual attraction between male and female, creation cannot exist. Indeed, the evil instinct is a "lion of fire" which can destroy or purify, depending upon how this natural force is utilized.

It may very well be that what Maimonides understood about the generation which left Egypt may turn out to be an eternal law of human nature: Our passions are not to be destroyed but are to be properly directed, are not to be consumed but are to be consecrated.

Shabbat Shalom!

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Holy Battlefield; Readers Write

Mishpacha Magazine

The first Gemara lesson: You can't say whatever you want

By now, I'm sure that every Mishpacha reader has seen at least one story, and probably many, about the fascination of South Koreans with Talmud study. South Koreans assume that somehow the key to Jewish intellectual success lies in our learning of Talmud and are eager to provide their offspring with an educational boost by teaching them to emulate the methodology of traditional Gemara learning.

Well, it turns out that South Koreans are not the only ones fascinated by the Talmud, though they have been bitten hardest by Talmud fever. Last week, I was invited by Rabbi Yosef Chevroni, Rosh Yeshivas Chevron, to lead a group of about 40 senior education officials from 12 advanced countries — who were in Israel for a conference on educational methodology — on a tour of Chevron Yeshiva.

The tour consisted primarily of standing in the ezras nashim and looking down on the action below in the packed beis medrash. I introduced myself as a graduate of two of the world's leading universities in order to give credibility to the comparisons that I would be making between the animated learning they were watching and traditional academic studies.

To begin, I shared with them a vignette that has stuck with me for three decades. My chavrusa and I were learning in the main Mirrer beis medrash, when suddenly a pair of young chavrusas, probably not out of their teens, jumped up and started screaming at one another and gesticulating forcefully. An outside observer would have been perfectly entitled to assume that they were about to come to fisticuffs.

My chavrusa and I, who were more than a decade older than they and who had done most of our studying at their age in university libraries where even a sneeze was likely to earn a dirty stare, looked on in fascination. Suddenly, I understood the vast chasm between their Gemara learning and my own studies at their age: Much of my learning consisted of the passive reception of information; theirs was almost entirely active.

Every time one offers a hypothesis, every time one reaches some tentative conclusion, he can count on his reasoning being subjected to close scrutiny

by his chavrusa and subjected to vigorous attack if found wanting. The "wars of Torah" is a not inaccurate term to describe that process. And it explains the intellectual acuity of those who hone their minds on Gemara learning. (I always envied those who were so confident of the truth of their positions and so devoted to them that they could shout at their chavrusas, "Am I speaking to a bar daas?" or the like. But every time I imitated them, it always turned out that I had made an embarrassing error.)

I also spoke to the educators about the rigorous logic of the Gemara and how the Gemara might, for instance, test a particular proposition by examining its contrapositive. Professor Harry Wolfson of Harvard, much of whose first quarter century was spent in Slabodka Yeshivah, used to refer to Talmud study as the scientific method applied to texts.

But what is gained from Gemara learning goes far beyond intellectual rigor. An exposure to Gemara offers a curative to many of the regnant intellectual fallacies of this generation — e.g., there is no such thing as Truth, just my truth and your truth; trust your emotions, your feelings are the only reliable guide.

The first lesson one absorbs in Gemara learning is that you cannot say whatever you want. Rather, you must prove your point. And that means, inter alia, accounting for all the facts. True, as the Ramban writes in his introduction to his Milchemes Hashem, there is no such thing as a perfect proof in Talmudic study. But each Rishon, for instance, in staking out his position on a particular issue, must account for every relevant statement and case in the Gemara. None can be dismissed out of hand as wrongly decided. And any other Rishon who disputes that position must somehow account for all the relevant statements and cases as well.

And if someone disagrees with your pshat in the Gemara, feeling hurt is not one of the options: Either argue back or suck it up. What a far cry from today's campuses where the first sniff of disagreement is considered an emotional assault.

As we were talking, another great benefit that Talmud learning confers occurred to me. One of the impending challenges facing mankind is: What will people do when artificial intelligence and robots have taken over many of the tasks now performed by human beings? Aldous Huxley's 1931 dystopia Brave New World, in which a large percentage of the population spends its days blissed out on a soothing, happiness-producing drug, no longer seems completely futuristic, especially as marijuana legalization is fast gathering the momentum that we witnessed with same-gender marriage. Increased leisure can either be a blessing or a curse: It all depends on whether one has something to do with that time. There is, after all, only so much time one can spend watching inane fare on TV or staring mindlessly at a screen playing solitaire (though that time period, from my observation, appears to be longer than a transatlantic flight).

But for us, the greatest blessing would be that all the melachah would be done by others, while we'd be free to plumb the depths of Gemara or other Torah study. We will never lack for ways to use our time.

The assembled educators remained transfixed throughout this discussion and asked many questions. But I think I was the greatest beneficiary. For contemplating, if briefly, how blessed we are to have received the Torah, proved a perfect prelude for its reacceptance on Purim.

Readers Write

Two readers took sharp exception, in nearly identical e-mails, to something I wrote last week. The first's subject line read: "This week I'm sad." Why sad? Because one of his favorite writers — that would be me — had wittingly or unwittingly perpetuated an easily refuted but persistent historical myth. What was my sin? I had written, without qualification, that after the Holocaust the gedolim directed every talmid toward long-term, full-time Torah learning.

Both letter writers expressed themselves eloquently, albeit sharply, to say that nearly three-quarters of New York City yeshivah graduates from the late '40s through the early '80s went to college, usually Brooklyn College or

CCNY at night, even as many of them received semichah in their respective yeshivos.

One can establish that fact by a visit to any neighborhood in Brooklyn and Queens today, "literally crawling with 45–85-year-old frum professionals: physicians, attorneys, accountants, teachers, engineers, professors, and more."

In truth, I was primarily thinking about Eretz Yisrael, which has been my home for nearly 40 years. As applied to the Chazon Ish, the leader of postwar chareidi Jewry in Eretz Yisrael, my statement was fully accurate. And the Chazon Ish did not have to oppose a preexisting status quo. The old yishuv of Jerusalem had always been hostile to any secular learning. And what I wrote would certainly have been accurate with respect to Rav Aharon Kotler in America, and most of the yeshivos established by his talmidim. In the late '40s, Reb Aharon strenuously and successfully opposed a plan by two of the leading New York yeshivos to create a college. Yet, I should have known that the situation in America was not as I portrayed it from my research on the biography of Rabbi Moshe Sherer. Rabbi Sherer devoted great effort to convincing Brooklyn College to give maximum credits for yeshivah studies and to minimize the requirements on yeshivah students in the '70s. And the large number of yeshivah students in Brooklyn College gave him leverage in those negotiations. Why did things change? Partly, as one of my correspondents put it, because the earlier generation achieved in the professions and business "a level of affluence that their parents could only have dreamed of" and which allowed them to support sons and sons-in-law in long-term learning. And as the model of going to Eretz Yisrael, after two or three years in beis medrash, and returning to Beth Medrash Govoha, became entrenched, the ethos of both penetrated the yeshivah community to an ever-greater degree. History is always a bit more complicated than we might wish.

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Purim: "Go Gather All The Jews"

Rav Kook Torah

Rav Kook wrote the following article in HaTor (the weekly periodical of the Mizrahi) in 1934, during the rise of Nazism in Germany.

During these days of Purim, in this difficult time, we are besieged by many troubles from without, sufferings that afflict the entire Jewish people. But our greatest pain comes from our troubles within. We lack unity, shalom bayit in the House of Israel. Let us recall the days and events recorded in the Scroll of Esther, written with prophetic inspiration. For God's spirit transcends the passage of time and transient ideologies. Esther's eternal words - "Go gather all of the Jews" - must rejuvenate us and elevate us from our lowly state.

Is Unity Possible?

One may ask: Is it really possible nowadays to gather all of the Jews together? Is it possible to unite all of the different factions and parties? How will the bones, scattered across the vast valley of exile - both material and spiritual - once again form that entity known as Klal Yisrael, and set forth its demands for renewal and redemption?

The answer is that there is a place where this dispersion, both physical and spiritual, cannot rule over us. But you object: We see with our own eyes the terrible internal strife. Jews rise up against Jews, brothers turn against each other like wolves and snakes. How can we say, "Go gather all of the Jews"? Whoever thinks that Haman erred when he said, "There is one nation scattered and divided" (Esther 3:8), is mistaken. Indeed, the Jewish people is scattered and divided. But, nevertheless, it is one nation. You may wonder how a nation may be simultaneously united and divided. The world is full of wonders. This nation, whose very survival throughout history is replete with

wonders and miracles, demonstrates by its very existence that it is, in its essence, one nation, despite its dispersion and disunity.

True, the afflictions of exile have divided us. But “the Eternal One of Israel will not lie.” The exile and all of its horrors must come to an end. The wind has begun to blow from the four corners of the earth, from the troubles surrounding us, and from the spiritual revelation which stirs us to return and be rebuilt in our homeland. Now we are nearing the realization that there is a cure for the malady of our dispersion and division. In the final analysis, we are, and will always be, a united nation. Israel shall once again rise to the eternal words, “Go gather all of the Jews.”

Our Hidden Spirit

Yet the difficult barrier obstructing the path of redemption remains: the divisive discord that consumes us. The answer is that a person has two aspects. Medical procedures utilize the body’s inner resources of vitality and health. This inner spirit is so hidden that even the patient is unaware of its existence.

Spiritual maladies and their physical manifestations only infect our lower aspect, the side which we see. But our hidden, unknown side always bursts with energy. It is brimming with life and strength. This hidden repository of health has the power to heal the outer self, which can mislead us into thinking that we are sick and feeble, when in fact we possess a healthy soul, full of life and vigor.

That which is true for the individual applies to a much greater degree to the entire collective. Klal Yisrael in particular is truly one nation: “And who is like Your people, Israel, one nation in the land?” (I Sam. 15:19) We must admit our error in identifying ourselves, the essence of Israel, with the nation’s superficial appearance, with its outer, baser side. This self-image makes us cringe and tremble. We judge ourselves solely on the basis of our dispersion and inner strife.

The Hamans of every generation strike at us with their venom and hatred. Especially in this period of transition, they perceive our weak side, for it is visible and recognizable. But precisely through these tribulations we will come to the realization that we possess a previously unknown, collective soul - a great national spirit whose existence we had forgotten. It abounds with vitality; it has the strength to renew our lives as of old, and repel all of the Amalekites who wish to assault our weak and feeble.

This hidden Judaism, unknown even to ourselves, this great soul of a great nation, bearing both the suffering and the light of the world within it, will become known to us during these portentous times. The blessing of “Go gather all of the Jews” will emerge from its hidden place inside the nation’s soul. Every Purim we must appreciate the great inner repository of our blessedness and our essential trait of unity, which will vanquish our divided side.

From a state of being unable to “distinguish between cursed Haman and blessed Mordechai” we will attain a higher awareness: the ability to uncover the hidden traits of Israel within us. Fellow Jews will recognize one another and join hands. And a mighty voice will be heard, “Let us rise up and ascend to Zion, to the house of our God” (Jer. 31:5).

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subject **Drasha - Room for a Broom**

This week’s portion begins with Hashem telling Moshe to teach Ahron and his children a few laws. Hashem does not tell Moshe to speak to Ahron, He does not even tell Moshe to teach Ahron. He tells Moshe “Tzav es Ahron.” Command Ahron.

“Tzav,” Rashi explains, “is a very powerful word. It means command with a charge that is to be executed with speed and diligence. The word tzav,” Rashi continues, “is also used only for situations that have eternal ramifications.” If we analyze the next few commands, we may be left wondering: why do those charges need the powerful preface Tzav?

The next verse is about the Korban Olah. A Korban Olah is a sacrifice that is committed entirely to Hashem, no part of the animal, save the skin, is left for human benefit or consumption. The person who brings it wants to make sure that it is offered within the highest standards of Halacha. The admonition, tzav surely is appropriate. However, the Torah only spends one verse on the Olah. It proceeds to tell us about the daily cleaning of the ashes of the altar. A Kohen must wear linen vestments, remove the ashes, and place them near the altar.

Why is this menial job mentioned together with the holy Olah? To what end does it merit the powerful command, tzav?

The **Steipler Gaon**, Rabbi Yisrael Yaakov Kanievski, was a paradigm of holiness. The stories about his sanctity were well known throughout the Torah community. At seventeen, he had already survived the Russian army without compromising Shabbos or Kashrut.

The Steipler was not known for lengthy conversation. He had lost his hearing standing as a sentry on freezing Siberian nights during his tenure in the Czar’s army. People would write questions to him or beseech him to pray on behalf of the sick or unfortunate. The Steipler would read the note, hardly lift his eyes from the large volume on his old table, and would start to pray. He would often condense his advice into one or two sentences, but it would be potent. People asked, and he gave answers. Within days miraculous salvation came. And so did the people. They stood in lines outside his modest home, and the very old man would find the time to see anyone who walked in with the problems of the world bearing down on his or her shoulder.

An aspiring young man, whose quest was to be as great a scholar as the Steipler himself, came with a problem. The young man felt that this particular predicament was impeding his spiritual growth and surely a man like Rabbi Kanievski, who persevered in the face of life-threatening problems, could relate to his!

The young man had written the situation in detail for the Steipler to grasp its severity. “Every Friday,” wrote the young man, “I come home from Yeshiva, and the scene in the house leads me to despair. The table is not set, the kitchen is hardly clean, and the children are not bathed! What should I do? How can I concentrate on my studies when I have such problems?” The aspiring scholar expected the Steipler to advise him how to deal with a wife that was not keeping to his standard.

The Steipler looked up from the paper and made a grave face. The young man smiled. The Steipler must have realized the severity of the situation. Then he spoke in his heavy Russian-accented Yiddish. “You really want to know what to do?” The young man nodded eagerly. The Steipler looked austere.

“TAKE A BROOM!”

Rabbeinu Yonah of Gironde (1180-1263) explains the juxtaposition of the command to sweep ashes with that of the Korban Olah. A person must realize that sometimes what is considered menial work in human eyes merits the highest accord in Hashem’s eyes. The mitzvah of sweeping the Altar is prefaced with the word tzav and placed next to the Korban Olah. One must realize that the little, unglorified acts also yield great sanctity. In the quest for spirituality, one must never demean the simple chores. For no matter how holy one is, there is always room for a broom.

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