



הַמִּזְרָחִי

HAMIZRACHI

PARSHA WEEKLY



PARSHAT SHEMINI - PARSHAT PARAH
5782 • 2022

ISRAEL
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INSIDE

TORAT MIZRACHI

-  Rabbi Doron Perez 2
-  Rabbi Reuven Taragin 4
-  Rabbanit Shani Taragin 5
-  Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon 6
-  Rabbanit Sharon Rimon 7
-  Sivan Rahav Meir & Yedidya Meir 8
-  Rabbi Danny Mirvis 9

PARSHAT HASHAVUA

-  Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l 10
-  Rabbi Hershel Schachter shlit"a 12
-  Rabbi Yisroel Reisman shlit"a 13
-  Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis 14
-  Rabbi Shalom Rosner 15
-  Michal Horowitz 16
-  Rabbi Menachem Leibtag 17
-  Rabbi Eli Mansour 18

INSPIRATION

-  Rabbi Moshe Weinberger 19
-  Rabbi YY Jacobson 20
-  Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi 21
-  Charlie Harary 22
-  Rabbi Judah Mischel 23
-  Mrs. Shira Smiles 24
- ISRAEL CONTENT**
-  Hebrew Language: David Curwin 25
-  Riddles: Reb Leor Broh 25

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Based in Jerusalem and with branches across the globe, Mizrahi – an acronym for *merkaz ruchani* (spiritual center) – was founded in 1902 by Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Reines, and is led today by Rabbi Doron Perez. Mizrahi's role was then and remains with vigor today, to be a proactive partner and to take personal responsibility in contributing to the collective destiny of *Klal Yisrael* through a commitment to Torah, the Land of Israel and the People of Israel.

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Four Qualities of Spiritual Greatness



Rabbi Doron Perez
Executive Chairman, World Mizrahi

At the heart of each of the four categories of korbanot lies a strong spiritual quality. To come close to G-d, which in Hebrew is the very meaning of the word "korban" - sacrifice - the spiritual quality must be internalized. To be successful in this most important of all spiritual endeavors, a spiritual curriculum must be established for success in all endeavors in life. What must a person do who wants to lead their life in the most inspiring and productive way? Let us take a look at these four categories of korbanot to see what each of them suggests.

It is interesting to note that at the beginning of this week's Parasha, Shemini, all four korbanot must be brought by the Cohen Gadol and the elders of the People. This is the culmination of the initiation process for the Cohanim, in which they bring the Korban Olah, Mincha, Chatat and Shelamim. All four categories must be brought at this critical point for the Presence of G-d to descend upon the participants and for them to be partners in bringing holiness to the world.

These are the very same categories of korbanot that we learn about in detail in the last two parshiot, both in the opening of Parashat Vayikra and Parashat Tzav. They are indeed the Korban Olah - the Elevation or Burnt Offering, the Korban Mincha - the Meal Offering, the Korban Chatat and Asham - the Sin and Guilt Offerings which are closely related, and finally the Korban Shelamim- the Peace Offering.

Korban Olah

As explained in last week's HaMizrachi Parsha Weekly, the essence of the Korban Olah is that it is offered entirely to Hashem. It is the only korban that is burned completely without any human participation. It is offered completely to G-d. To be successful in spiritual endeavors, one must be fully committed. We must put our heart and soul into everything we do, with determination, self-sacrifice, perseverance and commitment. A relationship or endeavor in which one is not fully committed cannot be successful, especially in difficult times. We must be fully passionately committed with everything we have.

Korban Mincha

The Meal Offering is also known as the poor person's offering. It is offered from the flour of wheat grains and is therefore also called the meal offering. Our Sages learn an important principle from the Korban Mincha. They state that whether we sacrifice an expensive bull that costs a hundred times more, or a few cheap grains, they are worth the same in the eyes of G-d.

"אחד המרבה ואחד הממעט ובלבד שיכוון לבו לשמים"

"Whether one gives a lot or a little is not important, the main thing is the purity of one's motives and intentions."

So many people are driven by their own unspoken agendas and approach their tasks without pure motives. G-d wants

us to have a pure heart and do the right thing for its own sake. We are not to use the cause to benefit ourselves, but to dedicate ourselves to benefit the cause.

Korban Chatat v'Asham

The Sin and Guilt Sacrifices are very similar and are related to taking personal responsibility for our shortcomings and mistakes. John C. Maxwell, one of the leading thinkers in the field of leadership, has written a book called "Failing Forward." In this book, he says that the difference between average people and great people is their attitude and reaction to failure. Leaders are tested not only in good times but especially in times of challenge. What do they do when they make a mistake and fail? Do they shift the responsibility to others or do they take full personal responsibility for the issues at hand? Leadership has to do with responsibility. Being responsible not only for our successes but also for our failures ultimately brings us closest to G-d. For this reason, vidui (confession)

and teshuvah are an essential part of serving G-d. When we can take ownership of all parts of our personality and actions, we can truly come close to G-d and lead our lives and those of our fellow human beings in the best possible way.



Leadership has to do with responsibility. Being responsible not only for our successes but also for our failures ultimately brings us closest to G-d.

Korban Shelamim

Successful people are not only people of truth but also people of "Shalom" - peace and harmony. This korban is known as the "Peace Offering" because everyone participates in it. A portion is burned on the altar to Heaven, the Cohanim receive a portion, and the one who offers

it receives a portion. Everyone is happy. Everyone participates in this offering and shares it. In interpersonal relationships, it is always important to strive to find a peaceful solution and not to insist on principles and stand on ceremonies. When we put principles above people, truth above peace, we often destroy relationships. We must always combine our truth, as we see it, with the need to get along with others for the sake of the greater good. Hashem seems to care less about whether we are right in relationships and more about whether we are able to get on with other people.

In short, it seems clear that these four qualities are the keys to spiritual success - Wholehearted passionate commitment, pure intention and motives, taking personal responsibility for our failures and seeking peace and harmony in all relationships. May Hashem bless us all to merit these qualities and live in His presence constantly.

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In Parshat Shemini, we finally arrive at the moment we have been waiting for. Since Parshat Teruma, we have been focused on the construction and inauguration of the Mishkan, all of which was meant to facilitate the Shechina residing within the Jewish people. Parshat Shemini begins with Moshe's announcement that the anticipated day has finally arrived.

Ziknei Yisrael and Nadav and Avihu

In order to perform the *avoda* that will generate Divine revelation, Moshe begins the parsha by calling "Aharon, his children, and the *Ziknei Yisrael* (Jewish elders)" to come to the *Mishkan*. His calling of the *Ziknei Yisrael* is surprising. Aharon and his children were needed to perform the *avoda*; why were the *zekeinim* summoned?

This mention of *Ziknei Yisrael* may be (at least part of) what inspired Chazal's linkage of Nadav and Avihu's punishment (described in the parsha's next perek) to their disrespect for their elders — Moshe and Aharon.

The simple interpretation of the *pesukim* seems to link their punishment to the fact that they introduced a foreign fire — one that Hashem had not commanded them to bring.¹ The end of Sefer Shemot repeatedly emphasized the need to construct the *Mishkan* as per the exact instructions given by Hashem to Moshe. Similarly, Sefer Vayikra begins by describing the details of the *korbanot* so that they too can be offered as per Hashem's directions. Parshat Shemini continues emphasizing this point through the many times it stresses that the day's *avoda* needed to be performed as Hashem had commanded. Nadav and Avihu were thus out of line by introducing a fire that was "foreign" to Hashem's command.

The Sifra², though, explains that Nadav and Avihu were punished for disrespecting Aharon and not seeking Moshe's advice. The Gemara (Eruvin 63) describes them as having been *moreh halacha bifnei rabam* — they determined halacha on their own despite being in the presence of their Rebbeim, Moshe and Aharon³. Chazal understood their sin to be not just **what** they did, but how they related to Moshe and Aharon.

Filling The Gaps

Moshe's summoning of the *Ziknei Yisrael* aimed to emphasize their central role in decision-making regarding the *avoda* in the *Mishkan*. Hashem's explicit instructions do not aim to cover all questions or scenarios that will inevitably arise. The *Ziknei Yisrael* are the ones meant to fill in these gaps.

The Sifra understood the end of Perek 9 as just such a situation. Despite having fulfilled the *avoda* as instructed by Moshe, Aharon was unsuccessful in causing the Shechina to appear and did not know how to rectify the situation. Heeding the implication of Moshe's summons of the *Ziknei Yisrael*, Aharon turned to Moshe to ask for his advice and assistance. Only once Moshe joined Aharon in prayer to Hashem did Hashem's fire appear. Aharon's *avoda* was not enough to bring the Shechina. He needed Moshe Rabbeinu's involvement as well. This is why, after beginning by emphasizing the importance of following Hashem's instructions, the parsha continues by emphasizing the need to heed those of Moshe Rabbeinu as well.

The **same** Sifra presents the background to Nadav and Avihu's sin in a very similar way.⁴ They too had been involved in the *avoda* and were trying to figure out how to get the Shechina to appear. The difference between them and their father Aharon is that they consulted no one. They decided that bringing their own fire was the right way forward and proceeded as such. The issue was not just what they did, but the fact that they did not consult with Moshe, Aharon, or the *Ziknei Yisrael*.

The results could not have been more different. After consulting with Moshe (and with his assistance), Aharon successfully brought Hashem's fire to consume the *korbanot*. Nadav and Avihu, who acted without first seeking guidance or assistance, were consumed by the same fire.

Parshat Shemini teaches us that we fulfill Hashem's will by following His commands and then filling in the missing details by consulting with *Ziknei Yisrael*. Commenting on Moshe's summons of the *Ziknei Yisrael*, the Medrash (Vayikra Rabba 11:8) compares the reliance of the Jewish people on their *zekeinim* to a bird's dependency on its wings. "Just as a bird cannot fly without its wings, so the Jewish people

cannot accomplish anything without their elders." Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook explains (Eder Hayakar 1:21.) that people naturally aim to fly, to transcend mundane life — but this is hard to accomplish. We look to our elders to provide inspiration and direction so that we can successfully take flight.

Our Generation

The need to seek direction from *Ziknei Yisrael* has always been important; it is even more important in our generation. First, the quickly-developing modern world raises many questions about what we should accept and integrate within Judaism and what we ought to avoid. Secondly, we live in a generation which has a natural aversion to authority figures. People have the mistaken impression that we should use our own sentiments about right or wrong to make decisions about Torah and *halacha*.

It is critical that we internalize Parshat Shemini's message of the importance of turning to *Ziknei Yisrael* for direction on how to serve Hashem.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky ztvk"l

Rav Chaim Kanievsky ztvk"l was just such a *zakein*. Hundreds of thousands of people attended his *levaya* partly because of the Torah, berachos, direction and advice he offered to individuals and organizations from all corners of Jewish society and from around the world over the past decades. His knowledge of *kol haTorah kulah* gave him unique insight as one of the *ziknei ha'dor*.

Our *loss* of such a *zakein* should motivate each one of us to reflect on the importance of strengthening our relationships with Torah personalities who can provide us with the Torah guidance we need to reach the heights to which we have the potential to fly.

● Transcribed by Yedidyah Rosenswasser.

1. Vayikra 10:1 with the commentary of the Or Hachayim, Rav Hirsch, and the Sefat Emet (641). See also Devarim 12 and 17:3 and Yirmiya 7:31. See also Netziv Vayikra 9:6.
2. Sifra, Shemini, Mechilta D'Miluim.
3. Other midrashim go even further in presenting their offering of *ketoret* as a rebellion against Moshe and Aharon, or an expression of being *mezalzel* Moshe and Aharon.
4. Note the similar language of the two pieces in the Sifra.

HAFTARAH - PARSHANUT ON THE PARSHA

PARAH: Soulful Purification & Salvation



Rabbanit Shani Taragin
Educational Director, World Mizrachi

This Shabbat we read the third of the four special parshiyot approaching the month of Nissan, known as “Parashat Parah.” The *maftir* is read from the beginning of Parashat Chukat, teaching the process of purification from the status of impurity caused by contact with a corpse. Purification from death is achieved through sprinkling special water with the ashes of a burned *parah adumah* (red heifer) “to remind Israel to purify themselves, in order that they may (be ready to) bring the Pesach sacrifice in purity” (Rashi, Megilla 29a). The corresponding haftarah (Yechezkel 36:18-38) reviews aspects of purity and impurity in explicating the reason for exiling the Jewish people from the Land of Israel: “When Bnei Yisrael dwelled in their land, they defiled it with their deeds; like the impurity of a *nidda* (menstruating woman) was their way before Me.” (17) Exile, however, impacts negatively on Hashem’s reputation – it is a “desecration of Hashem’s name” that will be rectified through G-d gathering us from the nations and returning us to our Land, but only through a process of purification: “And I will sprinkle over you waters of purification and you will be purified, from all your impurities and from all your idolatry I will purify you.” (25)

The haftarah presents a different type of impurity than presented in the Torah reading, thereby providing *parshanut* through this distinction! Rav Soloveitchik distinguished between the tumah (impurity) described in the parasha, caused by death (contracted through contact with a corpse or remaining under the same roof as a corpse) and all other forms of halachic impurity. Firstly, death requires complete separation of a kohen, even from his own spouse. Yechezkel

begins his prophecy by evoking the imagery of the *nidda* rather than death, to underscore that Hashem continues to dwell with Bnei Yisrael even in their defilement, as a husband, even if he is a *kohen*, remains with his wife throughout the period of separation. Secondly, in all cases, except for death, purification is achieved through self-immersion in a mikveh, not requiring the participation of others in the process. The *tamei met*, who has encountered death, however, may only be purified through the kohen sprinkling the water containing the red heifer’s ashes. This halachic singularity reflects the uniqueness of death as an existential threat and crisis that the human being cannot conquer on his or her own! Yechezkel therefore transitions from the impurity of *nidda* to the process of purification of a *tamei met*; he compares the defilement of the Jewish people caused by their sins to a state of impurity that leaves the people powerless, unable to extricate themselves from exile without the active assistance of Hashem!

Another evident difference is that while the parasha speaks of physical death and subsequent impurity of the body, Yechezkel 36 describes a symbolic, metaphoric impurity of the soul caused by sin, most notably idolatry and bloodshed. The common theme lies not in the impurity but rather in the process of purification - “And I will sprinkle over you waters of purification and you will be purified. And I will give you a new heart, and I will place within you a new spirit, and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and will give you a heart of flesh, and I will place My spirit within you and I will make you walk in My statutes” (25-27). This nurturing of a new heart does not deter one from exercising free will and responsibility (as described in Yechezkel

chapter 18); Hashem’s sprinkling of the purifying waters, enacting the model of *parah adumah*, asserts His absolute sovereignty. The knowledge and acceptance of Hashem as absolute sovereign who acts unilaterally, limits conviction of entitlement and encourages mortification at one’s sinfulness.

Herein lay many parallels with the first national redemption from Egypt. Yechezkel (chapter 20) described Bnei Yisrael as immersed in the idolatry and impurities of Egypt, requiring Hashem to reveal Himself and extricate them from Egypt while still in a state of impurity, and begin the process of purification after their redemption. Additionally, throughout the haftarah Yechezkel iterates Hashem’s motive in miraculously redeeming Bnei Yisrael - “and the nations will know that I am Hashem” (23), “And the nations that are left around you will know that I am Hashem” (36), concluding with the words: “And they will know that I am Hashem” (38), just as mentioned throughout the story of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*! Perhaps the underlying connection between the prophecy of the haftarah and the Torah reading read before Pesach is to remind us of the absolute sovereignty of G-d overtly manifest even in exile, requiring humility on our part. Parashat Parah concerns a “chok,” a statute, a law for which no reason is provided: “I have made a statute and decreed a decree” – as if we’re being told, (Bamidbar Rabba, Chukat 19) - “You wish to understand the meaning of exile and its explanation? Look at the (laws of the) red heifer: just as in that instance you are unable to descend to the secret of its meaning, so with regard to the painful exile (you will not understand).”

Halachic Q&A



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot

Question: If somebody who lives in Eretz Yisrael will be in chutz la'aretz for Pesach, can they do melacha in private on the second day?

Answer: The Shulchan Aruch (OH 496:3) implies that if you are in a place where the minhag is not to do melacha, and your minhag is different, if you have the intention to go back to your original location you can do melacha in private. However, the Mishna Brurah and Aruch Hashulchan disagree and say that even in private one should not be doing melacha. Many Achronim debate this topic, but the general opinion is to be stringent and not do melacha even in private. If there is a need, one can be a little lenient and do melacha for actions that can be done with a Shabbat timer. If there is an even greater need, there is room to be even more lenient, except for in areas of performing Torah prohibitions.

Question: Is one allowed to take a picture of a rainbow and show the picture of it to others?

Answer: The Shulchan Aruch (OH 229:1) explains the bracha that should be said when one sees a rainbow, and then continues to explain that one should not look at a rainbow for too long. However, this does not mean that it is prohibited to take a picture of a rainbow and then look at the picture, because when one stares at a picture of a rainbow, they are not looking at the rainbow in actual time. If the picture is not being taken for professional reasons, one should try not to spend so much time taking the picture, but rather quickly snap a few pictures and only afterwards choose the best one.

Question: Am I allowed to do exercise in the morning before I daven Shacharit? I technically can find time later in the day, but practically for many different reasons, it doesn't happen (because of the heat, or I'm not in a place where I can shower, etc.). It is much better for me to have a set schedule and exercise first thing in the morning. Is that allowed?

Answer: If there is no good time later in the day, (because things keep coming up during that time or because you won't be able to shower, and for other reasons), it is permitted to schedule your daily exercise before shacharit. However, the Rema adds that one should say Birkat Hashachar before you exercise.

The reason this is allowed is because exercise is necessary for one's health, and therefore it is not just any random enjoyable activity being done before tefillah.

Question: Do I need to put the plastic square covers of my tefillin in Geniza?

Answer: The Shulchan Aruch (154:4) explains that they do need to be put in geniza because they are considered Tashmishei Kedusha and not Tashmishei Mitzva.

Question: Being that dogs are muktzah on Shabbat, how is one supposed to walk their dog on Shabbat? Are they allowed to pull at the leash if need be?

Answer: The Shulchan Aruch (38:40 ט"ו) writes (based on Gemara Shabbat 128) that it is prohibited to move animals on Shabbat because they are muktzah. The Tosafot there (ה"ד"ה"ה"א) bring down the opinion of the Ree saying that it is permissible to move animals that are normally played with, (like dogs or parrots) because it is for our amusement. One who owns a dog, should certainly take care of his dog - take him for walks, pet him, etc. For others, it is best to be stringent and try not to walk someone else's dog on Shabbat, though he can pet the dog without moving it. Those who do move someone else's dog, has who to rely upon. For the dog's well being, when one does need to walk their dog on Shabbat, they should try not to pull at the leash, and let the dog walk on their own. These stringencies do not apply to the blind or disabled who use an aid dog to guide them.

● *Translated from Hebrew and abbreviated by Yaakov Panitch.*

תקציר לפרשת שמיני

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בעקבות נגיעתו בארון ה' שני הסיפורים עוסקים בסכנה הטמונה בהתקרבות יתירה אל השכינה, ללא שמירה על הכללים. דוד לא מוכן לקבל עליו את הדין ובעקבות המקרה מפסיק את ההעלאה של הארון לירושלים (וממשיך בה בשלב מאוחר יותר), לעומת זאת, משה ואהרון מקבלים את הדין וממשיכים בעבודה כרגיל.

קרבת ה' היא עוצמתית ומשמעותית, ולכן גם עלולה להיות מסוכנת. בני אדם שמתקרבים אל ה' לפי הכללים הנכונים, הולכים ומתעלים ומתקדשים. החיבור הוא הרצון הא-לוהי, והוא ממטרות הקב"ה בבריאת העולם ובציווי על בניית המשכן. אולם, עם כל זה, החיבור איננו פשוט ודורש עבודה מיוחדת וכללים מיוחדים. סטייה מהכללים מסוכנת, מאידך, קרבה על פי הכללים הינה חלק מהרצון הא-לוהי, והיא זו שנותנת עוצמה וקדושה באדם, מעלה אותו ומשלימתו.

כדי ששכינת ה' תוכל לשרות בעולם החומרי יש צורך בהכנות מיוחדות, ובהתקדשות של כל העם, אך יותר מכולם צריכים הכהנים להיות זהירים בכל פרט קטן. בזמן של קרבת א-לוהים גדולה כ"כ כל טעות קטנה היא קריטית. מעבר לכך, עצם השראת השכינה על בני אדם היא דבר פלאי והתקלה כמעט הכרחית באירוע כזה.

לאחר מות נדב ואביהו משה מצווה את אהרון ובניו שלא להתאבל ולהמשיך בעבודת הקודש, מפאת קדושת המעמד של חנוכת המשכן והשראת השכינה. אך גם לכך יש גבול - אהרון מרגיש שמצבו לא מאפשר לו לאכול את קרבן החטאת בצורה הראויה, ואף יותר מזה, אהרון סבור כי ה' לא רוצה שהוא יתעלם לגמרי ממות בניו, במיוחד לאור העובדה שהיתה סיבה מהותית למותם, והתעלמות מהמוות ומהגורמים לו היא עיוות.

בהפטרה אנו קוראים על אירוע דומה בימי דוד, בו עוזה מת במהלך העלאת ארון ה' לירושלים,

אחר שבעה ימים של הכנות, מגיע יום 'השיא' בו השכינה שורה על המשכן. דווקא אז מתרחשת הטרגדיה של מות נדב ואביהו. משה פונה לאהרון ומנחמו: "הוא אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר ה' לְאִמְרוֹ בְּקִרְבֵי אֶקְדָּשׁ" (י, ג). שתי נחמות בדבריו של משה, האחת היא שנדב ואביהו היו קרובים לה', השנייה היא שמותם גם לקידוש ה'. אהרון מתנחם ומקבל עליו את הדין בהשלמה: "וַיֵּדַם אֶהָרֹן" (שם). דבריו של משה מעידים על כך שמות נדב ואביהו נבע מגדולתם ומגדולת המעמד. ויתכן שאף יותר מכך - המדרש (תנחומא שמיני, סי' א) מסביר שמש קיבל בעבר רמז לכך שמישהו מה"מכובדים" ימות ביום הקמת המשכן: "וַיְנַעֲדְתִי שְׁמָה לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְדָּשׁ בְּכַבְדִּי" (שמות כ"ט, מג). במהלך היום השמיני משה ידע שעומד לקרות משהו נורא, אך לא ידע מה בדיוק יקרה. לכן צווה את אהרון ובניו להיזהר ביום זה. מדוע מותם של מקורבי ה' היה כמעט הכרחי ביום זה?

בסד

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Boundaries



Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir
World Mizrahi Scholars-in-Residence

Let's admit it. Lately, during this era of the coronavirus crisis, we do not exactly remember what day it is. Everything is out of control. Breakfast turns into lunch which is actually dinner. Even day and night get confused.

On Shabbat, we read the Torah portion of Shemini that sets boundaries for us. The parasha shows us the need to set clear boundaries in our lives between what is permissible and what is not. It begins with a warning not to enter the Mishkan when drunk and not to conduct the service in torn clothes since there is permitted and forbidden when it comes to the conduct of the Kohanim in the Temple sanctuary, which is the spiritual center of the nation. It continues with all the laws regarding kashrut. The parasha goes into great detail regarding which animals we are allowed to eat and which we are not.

It seems to me that this catalog of what is permitted and what is not is highly relevant to the present time. Although it would appear that discipline has weakened and the order has been breached in our lives and the lives of our children, we are still in real need of clear boundaries, fences and red lines that cannot be crossed. We still need to sit down quietly with ourselves and think about how we as individuals and as families can continue to remain diligent and learn to appreciate anew what boundaries are meant to be.



You haven't posted anything yet about the latest storm?

You haven't expressed your opinion yet about the newest news?

Why are you being silent?

Don't you have anything to say?!

We say and type and hear countless words a day. The incessant text, along with the near-immediate response, creates a reality in which it is suddenly no longer legitimate to say nothing.

Everyone's talking, and a lot! And you feel you have no choice, you've got to join in.

In this week's Torah portion, Shemini, a tragedy takes place. The two sons of Aharon die on the same day, during the dedication of the Tabernacle.

In the middle of this festive and happy event, centered around Aharon, he receives the news that his two sons have died.

Everyone must have been waiting to hear his reaction. But the Torah describes what happened next in two powerful words: "VaYidom Aharon" - "And Aharon was silent."

At this most tragic and traumatic moment- Aharon chooses silence.

Sometimes silence is more powerful than words.

Sometimes you need to take the time to turn inward, to fully absorb, to think.

Silence isn't a passive thing. On the contrary, you don't need any strength to talk. The words just roll out of your mouth, no problem.

To be silent requires strength.

Superficial online responses fill the world, but Aaron's echoing silence has continued to accompany us for thousands of years, long after many other words have been long forgotten.



כמו בפרשת נח, ראוי לשמור על נימוס. אבל כשצריך לתת הוראות ברורות ומדויקות, כשמדובר בפסיקה הלכה, בהבהרה חד משמעית מה כשר ומה לא כשר, צריך להשתמש במילים המפורשות: טהור וטמא. על החזיר למשל התורה כותבת "טמא הוא לך", בלי להתייפייף.

בקיצור, זה לא פשוט לדעת מה לומר ומתי. מצד אחד, אסור לפגוע סתם ולהשתמש במילים חריפות כשלא צריך. מצד שני, לפעמים צריך לשים גבולות ברורים ובהירים, בלי להיכנע למכבסת מילים, שעלולה לטשטש בסוף את ההבדל בין טהור לבין טמא.



למה בעצם ב-1 בספטמבר יש חגיגה לאומית, כששני מיליון תלמידים חוזרים לבתי הספר ולגנים, והיום זו לא הכותרת הראשית? ובכן, חופשת הפסח הסתיימה. מזל טוב. היה כיף, היה מתיש, היה מקסים, היה ארוך מדי. וכמה תודה והערכה מחדשת רבים מההורים ששים כעת כלפי אנשי מערכת החינוך.

פרשת השבוע, פרשת "שמיני", עוסקת במשהו שהתרופף במהלך החופשה: גבולות. "זאת החיה אשר תאכלו", נאמר בפרשה על החיות שמותר לאכול, ואחר כך נאמר: "אך את זה לא תאכלו", עם פירוט ארוך של מה כשר ומה לא כשר.

אחרי תקופה שבה הכללים והחוקים הקבועים הפכו גמישים, תקופה שבה שעות השינה והאכילה והמשחק לא היו לגמרי ברורות, הפרשה שבה כולם חוזרים לבית הספר עושה לנו סדר ומזכירה – בחיים האמיתיים יש מותר ויש אסור, יש טוב ויש רע. "להבדיל בין הטמא ובין הטהור", נכתב בפרשה, ורש"י מסביר שזו לא סתם הבדלה, אלא "שתהא יודע ומכיר ובקיא בהן".

חוזרים ללימודים, חוזרים לגבולות. בהצלחה.



Continued on next page

For the Shabbat Table



Rabbi Danny Mirvis
Deputy CEO, World Mizrahi
Rabbi at Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“**E**xcept this you shall not eat from those that bring up their cud or have split hooves: The camel, for it brings up its cud but it does not split its hoof - it is unclean to you. And the hyrax, for it brings up its cud but it will not split its hoof - it is unclean to you. And the hare, for it brings up its cud but it did not split its hoof - it is unclean to you. And the pig, for it splits its hoof, its hoof is completely separated, but it does not chew its cud - it is unclean to you” (Vayikra 11:4-7).

After stating that animals need to chew the cud and have split hooves in order to be kosher, the Torah lists four animals which only have one kosher sign - the camel, the hyrax and the hare, which chew the cud but do not have split hooves, and the pig, which has split hooves but does not chew the cud.

Interestingly, three different tenses are used when describing the hooves of the camel, the hyrax and the hare. With regards to the camel it says, "it does not split its hoof" in the present tense. For the hyrax it says, "it will not split its hoof" in the future tense, and concerning the hare

it says, "it did not split its hoof" in the past tense. Why are three different tenses used to describe this identical phenomenon of not having split hooves?



Who knows what potential and promise might lie within the person we disregard today?

According to Ramban (Vayikra 11:13, Devarim 14:3), eating animals with negative traits can have a negative impact on our behaviour. Therefore, all birds of prey are non-Kosher. Similarly, Ramban explains that no animals that both chew the cud and have split hooves are animals of prey and that is why animals with both these signs are Kosher.

Based on this connection between animal and human behaviour, many lessons can be learnt from what is considered Kosher for animals to what is "Kosher" - appropriate behaviour - for human beings. In our case, the lesson is not about how to

be "Kosher" ourselves, but how to judge the "Kashrut" of others.

When deeming the Kashrut of animals based on the external sign of split hooves, the Torah uses all three tenses in order to teach us that when reaching conclusions about the "Kashrut" of fellow people, we must look at all three tenses as well.

We cannot judge others based on the present alone, for we have no idea what trials, tribulations and pressures they may have overcome to be where they are today. We cannot judge others based on their background alone, for it is possible that the person before us today is a very different person to the one we once knew. Furthermore, as difficult as it is to know somebody's present and the full extent of their past, it is entirely impossible to know their future. Who knows what potential and promise might lie within the person we disregard today?

Until we know a person's past, present and future, we should make every effort to judge them favourably.

Shabbat Shalom

Continued from previous page

הטמאה", כדי לא לנקוט בלשון מעליבה ובוטה. עדיף לטרוח ולהאריך את התיאור, כדי לדבר באופן עדין יותר: "מכל הבהמה אשר לא טהורה". זה כמו לומר על מישהו "לא יפה" במקום "מכוער".

אבל בפרשת השבוע, פרשת "שמיני", כשלומדים על נושא הכשרות, פתאום התורה משתמשת שוב ושוב בביטוי "טהור" מול "טמא". למה פתאום אפשר לכתוב את המילה הזו, "טמא"? למה לא לדבר בעדינות? התשובה היא, שאם מדובר בסיפור מעשה,

"שהיה אהרון בוש וירא לגשת. אמר לו משה: למה אתה בוש? לך נבחרת!".

אהרון הכהן לא רואה בתפקידו משהו מובן מאליה. הוא ניגש אליו בחרדת קודש.



מה קרה לרעיון הנחמד מפרשת נח? בפרשת נח מסופר איך נכנסו לתיבה "מכל הבהמה הטהורה" וגם "מכל הבהמה אשר לא טהורה". פרשנים רבים מסבירים שבכוונה לא נכתב שם "מכל הבהמה

מעמד חגיגי. חנוכת המשכן. אבל פרשנים רבים מתעבים על פסוק שלכאורה לא חייב להופיע פה:

"ויאמר משה אל אהרון: קרב אל המזבח".

למה בכלל משה צריך להגיד לאהרון להתקרב למזבח ולהתחיל לעשות את עבודתו? למה צריך לומר לו ולזרוז אותו, הרי אהרון הוא כהן, לא? זאת עבודתו, קדימה.

רש"י מסביר זאת כך:

Fire: Holy and Unholy



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

The shock is immense. For several weeks and many chapters – the longest prelude in the Torah – we have read of the preparations for the moment at which G-d would bring His Presence to rest in the midst of the people. Five *parshiyot* (Terumah, Tetzaveh, Ki Tissa, Vayakhel and Pekudei) describe the instructions for building the Sanctuary. Two further *parshiyot* (Vayikra, Tzav) detail the sacrificial offerings to be brought there. All is now ready. For seven days the Priests (Aaron and his sons) have been consecrated into office. Now comes the eighth day when the service of the *Mishkan* will begin.

The entire people have played their part in constructing what will become the visible home of the Divine Presence on Earth. With a simple, moving verse the drama reaches its climax:

“Moses and Aaron went into the Tent of Meeting and when they came out, they blessed the people. G-d’s glory was then revealed to all the people.” (Lev. 9:23)

Just as we think the narrative has reached closure, a terrifying scene takes place:

Aaron’s sons, Nadav and Avihu, took their censers, put fire into them and added incense; and they offered unauthorised fire before G-d, which He had not instructed them to offer. Fire came forth from before G-d, and it consumed them so that they died before G-d. Moses then said to Aaron: “This is what G-d spoke of when He said: Among those who approach Me, I will show Myself holy; in the sight

of all the people I will be honoured.” (Lev. 10:1-3)

Celebration turned to tragedy with the death of Aaron’s two eldest sons. The Sages and commentators offer many explanations. Nadav and Avihu died because: they entered the holy of holies¹; they were not wearing the requisite clothes²; they took fire from the kitchen, not the altar³; they did not consult Moses and Aaron⁴; nor did they consult one another⁵. According to some they were guilty of hubris. They were impatient to assume leadership roles themselves⁶; and they did not marry, considering themselves above such things⁷. Yet others see their deaths as delayed punishment for an earlier sin, when, at Mount Sinai they “ate and drank” in the Presence of G-d (Ex. 24:9-11).

These interpretations represent close readings of the four places in the Torah which Nadav and Avihu’s death is mentioned (Lev. 10:2, Lev. 16:1, Num. 3:4, Num. 26:61), as well as the reference to their presence on Mount Sinai. Each is a profound meditation on the dangers of over-enthusiasm in the religious life. However, the simplest explanation is the one explicit in the Torah itself. Nadav and Avihu died because they offered unauthorised, literally “strange,” fire, meaning “that which was not commanded.” To understand the significance of this, we must go back to first principles and remind ourselves of the meaning of *kadosh*, “holy”, and thus of the *Mikdash* as the home of the holy.

The holy is that segment of time and space G-d has reserved for His Presence. *Creation involves concealment*. The word *olam*, universe, is semantically linked to the word *ne’elam*, “hidden”. To give humankind some of His own creative powers – the use of language to think, communicate, understand, imagine alternative futures and choose between them – G-d must do more than create *Homo sapiens*. He must efface Himself (what the Kabbalists called *tzimtzum*) to create space for human action. No single act more profoundly indicates the love and generosity implicit in creation. G-d as we encounter Him in the Torah is like a parent who knows they must hold back, let go, refrain from intervening, if their children are to become responsible and mature.

But there is a limit. To efface Himself entirely would be equivalent to abandoning the world, deserting His own children. That, G-d may not and will not do. How then does G-d leave a trace of His Presence on Earth?

The biblical answer is not philosophical. A philosophical answer (I am thinking here of the mainstream of Western philosophy, beginning in antiquity with Plato, in modernity with Descartes) would be one that applies universally – i.e., at all times, in all places. But there is no answer that applies to all times and places. *That is why philosophy cannot and never will understand the apparent contradiction between Divine creation and human freewill, or between Divine Presence and the empirical world in which we reflect, choose and act.*

Jewish thought is counter-philosophical. It insists that truths are embodied precisely in particular times and places. There are holy times (the seventh day, seventh month, seventh year, and the end of seven septennial cycles, the jubilee). There are holy people (the Children of Israel as a whole; within them, the Levi'im, and within them the Kohanim). And there is holy space (eventually, Israel; within that, Jerusalem; within that the Temple; in the desert, they were the *Mishkan*, the Holy, and the Holy of Holies).

The holy is that point of time and space in which the Presence of G-d is encountered by *tzimtzum* – self-renunciation – on the part of mankind. *Just as G-d makes space for man by an act of self-limitation, so man makes space for G-d by an act of self-limitation.* The holy is where G-d is experienced as absolute Presence. Not accidentally but essentially, this can only take place through the total renunciation of human will and initiative. That is not because G-d does not value human will and initiative. To the contrary: G-d has empowered mankind to use them to become His “partners in the work of creation”.

However, to be true to G-d's purposes, there must be times and places at which humanity experiences the reality of the Divine. Those times and places require absolute obedience. The most fundamental mistake – the mistake of Nadav and Avihu – is to take the powers that belong to man's encounter with the world, and apply them to man's encounter with the Divine. Had Nadav and Avihu used their own initiative to fight evil and injustice they would have been heroes. Because they used their own initiative in the arena of the holy, they erred. They asserted their own presence in the absolute Presence of G-d. That is a contradiction in terms. That is why they died.

We err if we think of G-d as capricious, jealous, angry: a myth spread by early Christianity in an attempt to define itself as the religion of love, superseding the cruel/harsh/retributive G-d of the “Old Testament”. When the Torah itself uses such language it “speaks in the language of humanity” (Brachot 31a) – that is to say, in terms people will understand.

In truth, Tanach is a love story through and through – the passionate love of the Creator for His creatures that survives all the disappointments and betrayals of human history. G-d needs us to encounter Him, not because He needs mankind but because we need Him. If civilisation is to be guided by love, justice, and respect for the integrity of creation, there must be moments in which we leave the “I” behind and encounter the fullness of being in all its glory.

That is the function of the holy – the point at which “I am” is silent in the overwhelming presence of “There is”. That is what Nadav and Avihu forgot – that to enter holy space or time requires ontological humility, the total renunciation of human initiative and desire.

The significance of this fact cannot be over-estimated. When we confuse G-d's will with our will, we turn the holy – the source of life – into something unholy and a source of death. The classic example of this is “holy war,” jihad, crusade – investing imperialism (the desire to rule over other people) with the cloak of sanctity as if conquest and forced conversion were G-d's will.

The story of Nadav and Avihu reminds us yet again of the warning first spelled out in the days of Cain and Abel. *The first act of worship led to the first murder.* Like nuclear fission, worship generates power, which can be benign but can also be profoundly dangerous.

The episode of Nadav and Avihu is written in three kinds of fire. First there is the fire from Heaven:

Fire came forth from before G-d and consumed the burnt offering. (Lev. 9:24)

This was the fire of favour, consummating the service of the Sanctuary. Then came the “unauthorised fire” offered by the two sons.

Aaron's sons, Nadav and Avihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorised fire before G-d, which He had not instructed them [to offer]. (Lev. 10:1)

Then there was the counter-fire from Heaven:

Fire came forth from before G-d, and it consumed them so that they died before G-d. (Lev. 10:2)

The message is simple and intensely serious: Religion is not what the European Enlightenment thought it would become: mute, marginal and mild. It is fire – and like fire, it warms but it also burns. And we are the guardians of the flame.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do you think Nadav and Avihu were punished so harshly?
- When is it dangerous to be creative in seeking out new ways to worship G-d?
- How do our laws remind us to protect what is holy?

1. Midrash Tanchuma (Buber), parshat Acharei Mot 7.
2. Leviticus Rabbah 20:9.
3. Midrash Tanchuma, ad loc.
4. Yalkut Shimoni, I:524.
5. Midrash Tanchuma, ad loc.
6. Aggadah (Buber), Vayikra 10.
7. Leviticus Rabbah 20:10.

Birchas Kohanim



Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

Aharon raised his hands toward the people and blessed them; then he descended from having performed the sin-offering, the elevation-offering, and the peace-offering. (Vayikra 9:22)

This passuk describes the first Birchas Kohanim. The Gemara in Sotah (38a) learns from this passuk that this mitzvah, colloquially referred to as “duchening,” takes place at the conclusion of the offering of the korbanos tzibbur. For this reason, Rav Ya’akov Emden (Mor U’Ketzi’ah) writes that nowadays, the mitzvah of duchening must be only rabbinic in nature, given the lack of a Beis HaMikdash in which to offer korbanos. The Mishnah Berurah (in a footnote to Orach Chaim 128:44) brings this opinion, but explains based on multiple sources in the Gemara and Midrash that duchening remains a mitzvah d’oraisa even nowadays. Similarly, the Keren Orah on the above-mentioned Gemara in Sotah, quoting the explanation of his older brother, the Mishkenos Ya’akov (Orach Chaim, Teshuvah 90), explains that duchening is a mitzvah d’oraisa nowadays, despite our inability to offer actual korbanos tzibbur.

Rav Soloveitchik expanded upon this theme in light of the berachah of Retzei in the Shemoneh Esrei. Retzei immediately follows Shema Koleinu, in which we ask that Hashem should accept our prayers with compassion and favor.

What, then, is added by our request in the beginning of the very next berachah, “Be favorable, Hashem our G-d, toward Your people Yisrael and their prayer,” which seems to be a restatement of our previous request? Rav Soloveitchik explained that the berachah of Retzei was recited by the Kohanim in the Beis HaMikdash after the sprinkling of the blood of the Korban Tamid, in order to ensure that the korban would be accepted with favor (Mishnah Tamid 5:1). Thus, the term “ritzui” is a technical term that, in the

vast majority of its usage in Tanach, appears in connection with korbanos.

The Ba’al HaTanya (Iggeres HaTeshuvah, perek 2) explains that the passuk “Can such be the fast I choose ... Do you call this a fast and a day of favor to Hashem?” (Yeshayah 58:5), uses the term “ritzui” in relation to a ta’anis because a fast day shares this element with the offering of korbanos. This is in line with the tefillah that Rav Sheshes added onto the conclusion of his Shemoneh Esrei when he observed a ta’anis: “May it be Your will to consider my fat and blood that have been decreased as if I had offered them before You on the mizbe’ach, and favor me” (Berachos 17a).

Thus, the innovation of Retzei is that in this berachah we add the request that Hashem consider our tefillos as if we had brought a korban. It is not only that our tefillos correspond to the korbanos, but that the tefillos themselves are considered to be as korbanos. The element that serves to convert the tefillah into a korban is the berachah of Retzei. Rav Soloveitchik continued that when one recites Retzei in his private Shemoneh Esrei, his tefillah is accepted by Hashem as if he had brought the korban yachid of the individual. When a shaliach tzibbur recites Retzei, the chazaras hashatz is now converted into the korban tzibbur of the community. This is because of the concept of תפילה הציבור, which is to be seen as distinct from תפילה בציבור. תפילה בציבור is when each individual recites his own silent Shemoneh Esrei at the same time as the other members of a minyan of ten men. However, תפילה הציבור is the chazaras hashatz, in which the chazan serves as the messenger of the tzibbur to offer one tefillah on behalf of the entire tzibbur as a whole. In this way, the chazan is comparable to the Kohen offering a korban tzibbur in the Beis HaMikdash – one korban on behalf of the entire tzibbur. The Shiltei HaGibborim (Rosh Hashanah, 12a in Dapei HaRif) writes that the shaliach tzibbur is able to discharge the tefillah obligation

of the עם שבשדות (people in the fields) who are unable to attend the tefillah in the shul, because of this relationship between tefillah and korban. This would not be the case for other obligations, such as teki’as shofar and krias haMegillah, which would require the people’s presence, as they would have to hear the shofar and the Megillah in order to discharge their obligation via the vehicle of shomei’ah ke’oneh (hearing from others is equivalent to answering oneself).

Based on this understanding of chazaras hashatz as serving as a תפילה הציבור, Rav Soloveitchik had the custom of remaining standing with his feet together during its recitation, as one would for the silent Shemoneh Esrei. Additionally, it would seem that the entire text of the Shemoneh Esrei of the tzibbur would have to be audible, including the pessukim תפתח ד' שפתי לרצון and יהיו לרצון, the entire Modim, and the ולוקינו אבותינו recited prior to Birchas Kohanim. [See Eretz HaTzvi, pp. 48-49.]

Rav Shlomo HaKohen (Av Beis Din of Vilna in the late 1800s and the magi’ah of the Vilna Shas) adds that this is the intent of the tefillah, “ותערב לפניך עתירתנו כעולה וכקרבן” – May our entreaty become pleasing before You as an olah-offering and as a sacrifice,” which is recited just prior to Birchas Kohanim on Yomim Tovim. Absent korbanos tzibbur, we are unable to engage in Birchas Kohanim. This is really the theme of the beginning of the berachah of Retzei as well; it is re-emphasized in ותערב because the transformation of our tefillos into korbanos is indispensable to Birchas Kohanim (Binyan Shlomo, Tikunim VeHosafos, siman 1).

We also understand the requirement for the Kohen to ascend to the duchan (platform) during the recitation of the berachah of Retzei in particular (Sotah 38b), since it is this berachah that establishes the chazaras hashatz as a korban tzibbur, which in turn makes it possible for the Kohen to duchen. Thus, when the shaliach tzibbur recites Retzei in the chazaras hashatz, the

Continued on next page

Beginning to Learn



Rabbi Yisroel Reisman
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Parshat Shemini has the tragic story of the death of Aharon's sons, נדב ואביהו. As the name of the Parsha indicates, this happened on the 8th and final day of inauguration of the Mishkan, the first real day of the חנוכת המשכן. After Nadav and Avihu die, Moshe calls the cousins of נדב ואביהו, and commands them that they should be the ones who carry the bodies of נדב ואביהו outside of the camp. Normally, he would have called their brothers, אלעזר ואיתמר, to be the ones to carry their bodies out, but instead Moshe specifically asked the cousins, who were not Kohanim, to be the ones to deal with the dead bodies of נדב ואביהו.

The Torat Kohanim, the Midrash on Sefer Vayikra, has a very interesting comment on this story, specifically on the part that Moshe asked the non-Kohen cousins to deal with the bodies as opposed to the Kohen brothers. The Midrash says that we learn from here that a Kohen cannot become impure by touching a dead body. The בעלי תוספות ask two very strong questions on this Midrash. The first is that seemingly, the prohibition for a Kohen to become impure by touching a dead person is an explicit Pasuk in Parshat Emor, so why is the Torat Kohanim only learning it out from this story of the bodies of נדב ואביהו. Furthermore, and perhaps even more difficult to understand, אלעזר ואיתמר were only standard Kohanim. Unlike a Kohen Gadol, the rule by standard Kohanim is that they are in fact supposed to become

impure when one of their 7 close relatives die. Therefore, even if Moshe was acting in accordance with the standard rule for Kohanim, he still should have been able to ask the Kohen brothers to deal with the bodies of נדב ואביהו, instead of having to go to the non-Kohen cousins.

The בעלי תוספות give a very fundamental answer, one that can teach us tremendous lessons in other aspects of life. The בעלי תוספות answer that the point of the Midrash is that we are learning from this story the first day that a standard Kohen works in the Mishkan, the day that he is inaugurated, he has the status of a Kohen Gadol. This is not the same rule that we learn in Parshat Emor, but a new rule that we learn specifically from this story, that all the rules of a Kohen Gadol apply to a standard Kohen on the first day that he does the Avodah in the Mishkan. This was the first day that אלעזר ואיתמר were worshiping in the Mishkan, and had the status of Kohanim Gadolim. Therefore, the same way a Kohen Gadol cannot become impure for anyone, so too they were not allowed to deal with the bodies of נדב ואביהו. The בעלי תוספות even go a step further and say that this is the meaning in the pasuk "וּמִפְתַּח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֹא תֵצֵאוּ, כִּי לֹא תִמְחוּ כִּי" שֶׁמֶן מִשְׁחַת ה' עָלֵיכֶם. Specifically because they were anointed today, and that it was their first day doing the Avodah, they were told not to leave the Mishkan.

The lesson from the בעלי תוספות is very important. Even if ultimately a standard Kohen is allowed to become impure for

his relatives, there is something extra important about starting off on the right foot. There is extra care given to the Kohen on the first day of his service, that on that day we go above and beyond and make sure that he is completely pure. When we are just beginning to learn, there is extra importance in making sure that the beginning stages are done with extra purity, so as to allow for long term success.

This same concept we find by another חנוכה, that of the story of Chanukah. On Chanukah we know that they could not find any pure oil, and only based on the miracle of finding one jug were they able to light the Menorah. The פני יהושע asks that seemingly, this miracle was not necessary, as when a majority of the nation is impure, then we apply the concept of טומאה הותרה בציבור, and they would have been allowed to use impure oil. The שפת אמת quotes his grandfather, the חידושי הר"ם as answering this question with the same principle that we mentioned above. In the story of Chanukah, the Greeks ruined the Menorah, and therefore they had to make a new one. This was going to be the first lighting of the new Menorah. Hence, even though ultimately we do allow for impure oil to be used in a case of טומאה הותרה בציבור, there was a special rule of starting everything off in the most pure way, and therefore only the purest of oil was able to be used in this first lighting of the Menorah.

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communal תפילה is transformed into a korban tzibbur. This occurs on the level of d'oraisa, allowing for Birchas Kohanim to be d'oraisa as well, even nowadays. Birchas Kohanim is, in fact, taking place at the

conclusion of korbanos tzibbur, as described in our parsha.

The Mishkenos Ya'akov adds that although tefillah on a daily basis may be only rabbinic in nature (according to the Ramban), if it is

a תפילה with chazaras hashatz to lead up to duchening, that tefillah would attain the status of a d'oraisa, similar to Birchas Kohanim itself.

● From 'Rav Schachter on the Parsha'.

Continued from previous page

The surprising value of self-doubt



Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

The surprising value of self-doubt

It may surprise you to know that if you think that you're not good enough, perhaps that's the very reason why you're the best person for the job. We learn this from Parshat Shemini. Hashem had elected Aharon to become the Kohen Gadol, the High Priest of our nation. All future kohanim, priests, would be descended from him to this day.

Hesitation

The people gathered around the tabernacle in the wilderness for a ceremony with him in which Aharon was to be inducted into high office. Everything was ready for the occasion, but there was hesitation. Moshe needed to say to his brother, "Krav el hamizbeach," – "Approach the altar," as if to suggest, "What are you waiting for?"

Rashi quotes the Torat Kohanim which explains that Aharon was hesitating because he was a man filled with fear of Hashem. He had deep humility and he feared that something might go wrong. He appreciated the enormous responsibility that he had. Moshe reassured him by stating, "Lechach nivcharta," – "It is for this reason that you've been chosen. Come forward."

The Sefer Panim Yafot explains that, "Lechach nivcharta," those words of Moshe to Aharon, should be translated

as, "It's because of this that you've been chosen." It's because you have great emunah, faith in Hashem, such deep humility – because you're nervous that something might go wrong. That's why you're the best person for this task.



It may surprise you to know that if you think that you're not good enough, perhaps that's the very reason why you're the best person for the job.

Responsibility

In the mid-19th century, Reb Yosroel Salanter was the rabbi of the Vilna Jewish Community. A man from a neighbouring town came to see him to be tested to become the shochet of that town. He did wonderfully well throughout the test but before Reb Yisroel actually gave him the result the man stopped him and said, "You know, Reb Yisroel, I don't think I should become the shochet. I'll go home now."

Surprised, Reb Yisroel said, "What do you mean?"

The man explained, "Well, you know, the responsibility is enormous! Every single

member of the community will be relying on me for the kashrut of their kitchens, for every morsel of food that will be upon their plate! I'm nervous that I could make mistakes!"

Reb Yisroel smiled as he said, "You've just proved to me that there could be no shochet better than you for this task. We don't want shochemim who are filled with arrogance, who don't believe that anything can ever go wrong, to be responsible for our food. Rather we want those who appreciate that they need to prove to the communities that they deserve the faith that has been put in them."

That's exactly what Moshe said to Aharon. Your sense of responsibility proves that there could be no leader better than you. Let each and every one of us remember that lesson with regard to the jobs, the vocations and the professions that we have.

Arrogance can, G-d forbid, drive us to failure but if we constantly go the extra mile filled with nervousness knowing that we need to show that we deserve the trust that has been placed in us, that will certainly contribute towards our success.

It Is Likely My Fault



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After the entire *avoda* was completed and the contributions of all members of the nation were collected, the *Mishkan* was built. Moshe and Aharon re-entered the Ohel Mo'ed then exited and blessed the nation, as it is stated:

ויבא משה ואהרן אל אהל מועד ויצאו ויברכו את העם וירא כבוד ה' אל כל העם. (ויקרא ט:כג)

And Moshe and Aharon went into the Ohel Mo'ed and came out, and blessed the people; and the glory of Hashem appeared unto all the people. (Vayikra 9:23).

Why did they re-enter Ohel Mo'ed? Rashi offers two suggestions. Rashi's second explanation is as follows: This was the apex. The *Mishkan* was finally completed, the required sacrifices had been offered, and all the necessary acts had been performed, yet the *Shekhina* still had not descended. Aharon was certain that it was his fault, that Hashem was still upset at him. Perhaps it was due to his perceived participation in Chet Ha'egel. Moshe then escorted Aharon into the Ohel Mo'ed, asked for mercy, and the *Shekhina* descended immediately.

What do we learn from Aharon's actions? The natural human inclination when something goes wrong is to blame others, to find fault with everyone else. Aharon could have done the same thing. He could have said that the Am Yisrael did not have the proper intentions when they brought their contributions to the *Mishkan*, that there must be some stolen goods, which are not viewed favorably by

Hashem. There were a million others to blame for Hashem not descending upon the nation. But unlike Adam, who blamed Chava, Aharon did not pass the buck. He assumed he was at fault.

Aharon knew of all the disputes among the people. He was known as the peacemaker among the people. He knew that they were not the most righteous of people. There were many others upon whom he could cast blame, but he did not do so. When Aharon recognized that the *Shekhina* had not descended upon the *Mishkan*, he said: "It's me!"



Great people point fingers at themselves before they point them in other directions.

This Rashi should remind us not to blame others automatically. We should first look in the mirror to determine our own faults. The blame game happens often when we're looking for something, like a set of keys, and cannot find it. We automatically think: "Someone took it! He took it! She took it!" Ultimately, we find it: "Oh, yes, I forgot, I put it down there..." How often does this happen? But our instinct it still to blame others. Aharon teaches us that this can be overcome. Great people point fingers at themselves before they point them in other directions.

Moshe exemplifies a similar characteristic in this parsha. He expressed his concern to Aharon that he and his sons did not complete their task as requested by not offering the necessary sacrifices. After Aharon explained to Moshe that He and his sons indeed offered the appropriate sacrifices, the Torah tells us that Moshe heard Aharon's explanation and accepted it. Rashi emphasizes:

הודה ולא בוש לומר לא שמעתי אלא אמר שמעתי ושכחתי.

Moshe admitted and was not embarrassed to say that he heard; he admitted, "I heard and forgot."

It is difficult for a person to admit that he previously heard something and forgot it. Moshe could have just accepted his answer and it could have been implied that he was unaware of the fact that Aharon indeed fulfilled his task and offered the appropriate sacrifices. The greater the person, the more difficult it is to admit to one's shortcomings. Dovid Hamelech also admitted to his transgression after Nasan HaNavi confronted him. Here, Moshe teaches us a tremendous lesson. When you make a mistake – live up to it. He had heard and forgot. That is human, and there is no reason to deny it. Moshe is known for his modesty, but this is one of his greatest attributes as well – admitting one's shortcomings. Moshe and Aharon both were willing to take responsibility for their perceived mistakes. Let's learn from their example, step up to the plate and take responsibility rather than blame others for our blunders.

Parshas Shemini: Lessons From The Birds



Michal Horowitz
Judaic Studies Teacher

In this week's *parsha*, *Parshas Shemini*, we read of permitted and forbidden animals - those which we may consume, and those which we may not consume.

We must sanctify and hallow ourselves, as a holy nation to G-d, for just as G-d is Holy, so too we must be holy. So far reaching are the *mitzvos* of the Torah, that even *what* we eat, *when* we eat, *how* we eat, *where* we eat, and *with whom* we eat are all commanded to us (in various places in the Torah).

R' Soloveitchik zt"l teaches, "It is interesting to note that there is only one verse in the Torah that mentions prayer (Devarim 11:13 with Rashi/Taanis 2a), but there are many chapters that deal with dietary laws. It is easier for man to pray than to withdraw from food he desires. Man is ready to serve G-d spiritually, but resents an interference with his eating habits, or with the manner in which he gratifies his physical or carnal needs.

"Modern man is willing to worship G-d and participate in cultic performances and ceremonials. Modern man does not object to singing hymns or to visiting the sanctuary, and never complains about the cost of cultic performance. At the same time, he resents being told that there are laws which guide him concerning behavior not of the spirit, but of his body. The Torah is of the opinion, however, that it is impossible to hallow and inspire the spirit without disciplining the body.

"These *mitzvos* belong to the category of discipline of the body and its sanctification. What is forbidden here is indulgence in satisfying human corporeal needs and drives. Judaism does not reject the body. The body is a part of man and so is the spirit, the soul. But the body should not be that of a savage; it should be a disciplined body, one capable of refraining and retreating from certain actions that promise much corporeal pleasure. The body must be sanctified and elevated.

"We have existed for almost two thousand years without a sanctuary, and the absence of its service has not affected the integrity of our people. If a Jewish community would reject *kashrus*, however, it would become assimilated in a few generations" (Chumash Masores HaRav, Vayikra, p.74-75).

The lessons of forbidden and permitted foods are many, and each comes to teach us something else, ensuring our physical and spiritual survival through the ages.

In the list of birds forbidden for consumption is the *chasidah* (11:19). About the *chasidah*, Rashi comments: This is the white *dayah*, And why is her name/why is she called *Chasidah* (from the root word *חסד* - kindness)? Because she does kindness with her friends with food (Rashi, *ibid*).

What is wrong with this bird? She performs *chessed*, acts of kindness, but *only with her kind* - to the exclusion of others who are not like her. This, the Torah tells us, is behavior not sanctioned by the Torah. For *chessed* is one of the pillars that holds up the world (Avos 1:2), and must be done to one and all.

R' Yisrael Meir Lau *shlita*, "Kindness is the purpose of creation and the basis of its construction. Our Sages teach that 'giving charity is greater than all sacrifices' (Succah 49b), and that 'kindness that we show each other is more beloved to G-d than the thousand burnt offerings of Shlomo' (Yalkut Shimoni)...

"If a person does not perform deeds of kindness, he removes the sole justification for his existence. *In the two instances in the Torah where total destruction at the hand of heaven was decreed* - the Flood and the destruction of Sodom and Amorah - *the reason was the deterioration of kindness*. 'The judgment against the generation of the flood was only sealed when they engaged in theft' (Sanhedrin 108a). Similarly, the inhabitants of Sodom and Amorah were condemned only after the

outcry of those whom they had tormented rose to the heavens.

"Acts of kindness may be expressed in countless ways: financial aid, visiting the sick, helping people get married, attending a funeral, comforting mourners, *pidyon she'vu'yim* (redeeming captives), *hachnasas orchim* (hosting guests), giving helpful advice, offering words of encouragement, or simply smiling at others...

"Because the avenues of kindness are so numerous, the Torah simply mentions the general obligation to treat others with a generous spirit and an open hand, summing up the matter in the command to '*love for your fellow what you love for yourself*' (Vayikra 19:18). Treat someone else with no less solicitude than you would desire for yourself. Help him, ease his burden, bring a ray of happiness into his life. It is no wonder that R' Akiva stated *hu klal gadol baTorah* - it is a great principle of Torah (*ibid* with Rashi), for an entire structure of *halachos* and caring for others is contained within its few words.

"In order to perform this *mitzvah* properly, a person must perfect his character. There can be no genuine kindness where jealous rages, hatred festers, and the ego admires itself. These must be replaced with generosity, love and empathy.

"Thus, Rambam refers to the performance of kind deeds as 'positive traits,' for a person can perform kind deeds properly only if he has worked assiduously on his character, bringing to that work the same care that a jeweler brings to cutting a stone" (R' Lau on Avos, Artscroll, p.25).

Let us ensure that the *chessed* we do for others is non-judgmental, accepting, and loving for all, for unlike the *chassidah*, our acts of kindness hold up the world. Let us recognize that all the laws of the Torah are meant to refine our personalities and perfect our characters, as we strive every day to become better people, and better Jews, holy in all that we do.

“Kedusha” in the ‘Seven Day’ Miluim Ceremony



Rabbi Menachem Leibtag

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In *Perek Chet*, there is something special about the *Mizbeach* and the Kohanim. Even though the sprinkling of the “*Shemen Hamishcha*” was sufficient to sanctify the *Mishkan* and its vessels, the *Mizbeach* and the Kohanim required an additional procedure. Furthermore, unlike the other vessels, the *Mizbeach* was anointed SEVEN times (see *Vayikra* 8:11). To understand why this additional procedure was necessary, we must note the use of the word “*L'kadesh*” in this ‘*Parshia*’. Note the Torah’s use of the word “*L'kadesh*” in *Vayikra* 8:10–12, 8:15, 8:30, 34–35 as well as *Shemot* 29:1, 34–37! Clearly, the purpose of these seven days was to sanctify – “*L'kadesh*” – the *Mishkan*.

The Hebrew word “*L'kadesh*” means ‘to set aside’ or ‘to designate’. For example, in *Breishit* 2:3, G-d sets aside the seventh day [“*Vayekadesh oto*”] to make it special, and in *Shemot* 13:1, G-d commands “*Kadesh Li Kol Bechor*” – set aside for Me every firstborn. Similarly, G-d is “*Kadosh*”, as He is set aside, divine.

Hence, the purpose of these procedures of the “*Miluim*” ceremony was to ‘designate’ (and hence sanctify) the *Mishkan* and its vessels for a Divine purpose. However, the *Mizbeach* and the Kohanim required a little ‘extra’ sanctification.

To explain why, we must realize that the *Mishkan* [= *Ohel Moed*, a tent of meeting] served as the place where *Bnei Yisrael* could ‘meet’ G-d. However, this ‘meeting’ was distanced, as each ‘partner’ had his special realm:

- The *Kodesh Kedoshim* – where the Aron is placed represents G-d’s presence in the *Mishkan*; and

- The *Mizbeach* – where the *Bnei Yisrael*’s *korbanot* are offered, represents *Am Yisrael*, and their attempt to serve Him.

However, in light of the events of “*Chet HaEgel*” it became apparent how *Bnei Yisrael* were barely worthy of this encounter. It was only G-d’s attributes of Mercy that allowed His “*Shechinah*” to dwell in the *Mishkan*. One could suggest that to emphasize this very point, an extra procedure is required specifically for the Kohanim and for the *Mizbeach*, for they represent *Bnei Yisrael* in this encounter.

[Note that immediately after *Matan Torah*, the *Mizbeach* is referred to as a “*Mizbeach ADAMah*” (see *Shemot* 20:21). This may relate to man’s name – “*Adam*” and his creation in *Gan Eden* “*Afar Min Ha’adamah*”. This is reflected in the Midrash that claims that this “*Afar*” was taken from *Har HaMoriah*, the site of the *Mizbeach* of the *Akedah*, and later to become the site of the Temple.]

Why Seven?

Why must this “*Hakdashah*” be repeated for seven days?

Whenever we find the number ‘seven’ in *Chumash*, it invariably relates to *Perek Aleph* in *Breishit*, i.e., the story of G-d’s creation of nature, in seven days.

G-d’s very first act of “*Kedusha*” was to ‘set aside’ the **seventh** day, to mark His completion of the Creation process (see *Br.* 2:1–4). By ‘resting’ on this day, man is constantly reminded of the divine purpose of His creation. Thus, the “*Kedusha*” of shabbat reflects this divine purpose of creation.

Similarly, any procedure that includes the number seven (be it seven items, seven times, seven days, seven weeks, seven years etc.) emphasizes man’s requirement

to recognize the purpose of his creation. By repeating this procedure of “*Kedushat Ha’Mizbayach v’Hakohanim*” for seven days, the purpose of the *Mizbeach* to become a vehicle through which man can come closer to G-d is emphasized.

[Once again, we find a connection between the function of the *Mishkan* and the purpose of the creation. This is supported by numerous Midrashim who view the construction of the *Mishkan* as the completion of Creation.]

With this background, we can suggest that the seven-day *Miluim* ceremony serves a double purpose, thus explaining why its details are found twice.

In *Sefer Shemot*, the “*Miluim*” service infuses the *Mishkan* and its vessels with the necessary “*Kedusha*”, and hence becomes an integral stage of the *Mishkan*’s **construction**. Therefore, its commandment is included in *Trumah/Tzaveh* together with all the other commandments to build the *Mishkan*.

In *Sefer Vayikra* it initiates the use of the *Mizbeach*, the primary **function** of the *Mishkan*. The *Korbanot* offered during the *Miluim* represent the basic categories of sacrifices that will be brought by man on the *Mizbeach*:

- the *Chatat* – “*the korban chova*”;
- the *Olah* – the “*korban nedava*”;
- the *Ayl Ha’Miluim* – the prototype of the “*korban Shelamim*”;

Therefore, this narrative that describes the offering of the *Korbanot* during this ceremony is included in *Sefer Vayikra* and juxtaposed to the laws of *Korbanot* (*Parshiyot Vayikra/Tzav*).

● Edited by Aron Lipczer

Sacrificing for Misvot



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Parashat Shemini tells of the events that took place "on the eighth day" – meaning, the day after the seven-day Miluim process during which Aharon and his sons were prepared to serve as Kohanim. On this eighth day, Aharon and his sons served as Kohanim in the Mishkan for the first time.

The Torah introduces this section with the words "Va'yehi Ba'yom Ha'shemini" ("It was on the eighth day"). The Gemara in Masechet Megilla comments that the word "Va'yehi" is an expression of "Sa'ar" ("anguish"), and is used as an indication of tragedy or distress. In this context, the Gemara comments, the word "Va'yehi" foreshadows the great tragedy that befell Beneh Yisrael on this day, as Nadab and Abihu – Aharon's two older sons – were killed by a heavenly fire after they brought an unwarranted offering. Although this day began as a very joyous and festive occasion, the Torah uses the word "Va'yehi" in reference to this day because of the tragedy that struck the nation.

The Or Ha'hayim (Rav Haim Ben-Attar, 1696-1743) offers another reason why the word "Va'yehi" – an expression of anguish – is used in this context. The Midrash teaches that Moshe Rabbenu was to have served as the Kohen Gadol. As the greatest human being who ever lived, Moshe was certainly capable of serving all the different roles – prophet, teacher, leader, guide and Kohen Gadol. However, this privilege was taken away from him as a punishment for his initial refusal to approach Pharaoh and demand that he free Beneh

Yisrael. When G-d first appeared to Moshe at the burning bush and instructed him to lead Beneh Yisrael to freedom, Moshe initially refused, and so he was punished by being denied the privilege of serving as Kohen Gadol. Thus, Or Ha'hayim writes, the Torah uses the word "Va'yehi" in reference to the day when Aharon began serving as Kohen Gadol. This was a day of great pain and anguish for Moshe Rabbenu, who understood the great importance and precious value of the service in the Mishkan and desperately wanted to serve as the nation's Kohen Gadol, but needed to instead send his brother to assume this lofty position. And thus the word "Va'yehi" expresses Moshe's distress as he relinquished the exalted position of Kohen Gadol to his brother.



Moshe was so selflessly committed to serving Hashem, to fulfilling his role without concern for his own feelings and interests, that he rushed to have Aharon serve in his place.

We can gain further insight into the significance of this verse – and the greatness of Moshe Rabbenu – by noting the other time in the Humash when we find the phrase "Ba'yom Ha'shemini" – "on the eighth day."

In next week's Parasha, Parashat Tazria, the Torah mentions the obligation to circumcise one's son on the boy's eighth day

of life: "U'ba'yom Ha'shemini Yimol Besar Orlato" – "and on the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be removed" (12:3). The commentators interpret the phrase "Ba'yom Ha'shemini" to mean that a Berit Mila should ideally be performed early in the morning on the eighth day, and not delayed until later in the day. If so, then the term "Ba'yom Ha'shemini" here in the beginning of Parashat Shemini should be understood the same way – as indicating that it was early in the morning on this day that Moshe summoned Aharon and his sons and had them offer sacrifices for the first time. As difficult as this process was for Moshe Rabbenu, he did not delay it one moment longer than necessary. At the crack of dawn on the eighth day, Moshe assembled the people and had the newly-appointed Kohanim begin to serve. Moshe was so selflessly committed to serving Hashem, to fulfilling his role without concern for his own feelings and interests, that he rushed to have Aharon serve in his place.

When it comes to performing Misvot, we must put our own interests and wishes to the side, and do what we are required to do. Moshe's inspiring example teaches us that sometimes we need to make difficult sacrifices for the sake of fulfilling Hashem's will, and we must be prepared to make these sacrifices. Even when fulfilling a Misva is challenging, we must embrace the challenge, as Moshe did, and devote ourselves selflessly to the faithful service of Hashem.

Calling a Spade a Spade



Rabbi Moshe Weinberger
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It is known that every year, when Parshas Shemini came, Reb Yisrael Salanter would sigh, and say “I wonder about those people who are so careful about what they put into their mouths but pay no attention to what comes out of their mouths.” The tzadikim in many places show us the connection between what we eat and קדושת הדיבור, sanctity of speech. In fact, the Rav Shlomo’le Radomsker, the Tiferes Shlomo, used to say that by guarding the sanctity of one’s speech, he fulfills the pasuk (Vayikra 6:9) “eat the matzos in a holy place.” The distinction between בהמות טהורות and בהמות טמאות, pure animals and impure animals is mentioned much earlier in the Torah, in parshas Noach. There (Bereishis 7:8), the Torah tells us that because of Hashem’s command, Noach took onto the ark “[seven sets of] pure animals and the [single set of] animals which are not pure.” Later on, it becomes clear why Hashem made a distinction between pure and impure animals when it tells us (Bereishis 8:20) “and Noach built an altar to Hashem and he took from every pure animal and from every pure bird and he offered elevation offerings on the altar.”

Based on the Torah’s distinction between pure and impure animals in parshas Noach, the Gemara (Pesachim 3a) derives the following lesson: “A person should never let an unrefined word escape his lips. Indeed the Torah went eight letters out of its way not to let an unrefined word escape its lips, as it says ‘from the pure animal and from the animal which is not pure.’” Rashi there explains that the Torah is extremely exacting in its use of language. And even though saying “הטמאה,” “impure,” is only 5 letters, the Torah wrote “אשר איננה טהורה,” “which is not pure,” which is 13 letters, in order to avoid using an unrefined word.

Rashi there asks a question on our Gemara. He points out that in our parsha, parshas Shemini, the Torah says “טמאים הם לכם,” “it is impure to you” multiple times, in virtually every pasuk. How does this comport with the Torah’s care in saying “which is not pure”

rather than “impure” in parshas Noach? He answers that the Torah only went out of its way to use an exceedingly refined expression once in order to teach the lesson that one must always seek out the most refined language possible, but then returned to the normal word, “impure,” once it had taught that lesson. Rashi’s answer is difficult, however, because the Gemara used the pasuk in parshas Noach to teach that one should “never” use unrefined language. If the Torah considers the use of the term “impure” to be unrefined, as we see in parshas Noach, how could it use the term at all in parshas Shemini?

In 1973, after the Yom Kippur war, many people were very upset that Henry Kissinger, who was Jewish, put so much pressure on Israel not to expand its defensive borders despite the surprise attack by the neighboring Arab countries. Rav Tzvi Yehuda wrote a strongly worded letter against Henry Kissinger which he insisted should be placed on the walls of every yeshiva and shul, and be published in all of the religious newspapers. He gave a copy of the letter to a student of his, Rav Chanan Porat to disseminate. When he read the letter, it was obvious that Rav Chanan found something disturbing, so Rav Tzvi Yehuda asked him what was bothering him. He answered that it was nothing, but Rav Tzvi Yehuda insisted that he tell him. So Rav Porat answered that if Rav Tzvi Yehuda really wanted to know, he thought that if the letter were worded more diplomatically, that it would be accepted by more people.

Rav Tzvi Yehuda smiled, and answered that he thought he would say that, so he brought with him a Gemara Pesachim. He pointed out the Gemara cited above, Rashi’s explanation, and pointed out the question regarding how the Torah could use the word “impure” so many times if, according to the Gemara, one should “never” use unrefined language. Rav Tzvi Yehuda explained that the context in each case is critical to understanding the difference. In parshas Noach, the Torah was telling about events that happened. In

such a case, it is appropriate to use the most refined words possible. In parshas Shemini, however, the Torah is telling us a פסק הלכה, a halachic rule. When the Torah defines what is right and what is wrong, what is pure and what is impure, what is forbidden and what is permitted, it must speak in the clearest language possible, even if such language is not the most refined or diplomatic.

Rav Tzvi Yehuda said that the Torah knew that if, with respect to pork, it merely said “which is not pure,” that some “wise man” would come along and infer that even though it may not be pure, it isn’t necessarily “impure” either. The Torah therefore used the clearest language possible, calling such animals “טמא,” unequivocally impure. He explained that if his letter contained more soft-spoken, diplomatic language about the pressure Henry Kissinger was exerting on the government in Eretz Yisroel, the message of right and wrong would not be clear. The difference between right and wrong must be sharp and absolutely clear. He therefore had to make it known that Kissinger was “טמא,” impure.

Today, the world is sorely lacking in this ability to “call a spade a spade.” When speaking to individuals, it is important to say things in a way that they will be heard, but there is a time, like in parshas Shemini, where one must be clear and honest, even when it is not pleasant or “politically correct.” In America today as well, it is now acceptable to white-wash the truth by “spinning” negative facts with a less damaging interpretation, using artful deception. When a politician is caught lying, he will say that he merely “misspoke,” or perhaps he will make a public statement, saying “I’m sorry if anyone misunderstood what I said,” even when no one misunderstood what he said because what he said was perfectly understandable - it was a lie! May we merit to fulfill the pasuk (Shmuel 1:15:29) a “the eternity of the Jewish people will not prove false,” and may we merit to see the day when the distinction between right and wrong is clear to all.

How Do You Know If You Are Alive?



Rabbi YY Jacobson
TheYeshiva.net

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.

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.

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.

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

Judaism teaches that the physical attributes of an animal reflect the distinct psychological and spiritual qualities of its soul.

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.

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.

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 a 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), 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?!"

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.

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.

My Brother



Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi
Popular Torah teacher and author

Chazal never interpreted silence the way they interpreted Aharon's silence after the death of his sons. Did he remain silent because he knew he was being punished for his involvement in the Golden Calf? Did he remain silent out of respect for Heaven? Did he remain silent out of despair?

The reason for his silence is probably less important. The terrible grief is for the death of the two sons of Aharon, but no less for the death of the speech of this man of words. "For the lips of a priest guard knowledge, and men seek rulings from his mouth; for he is a messenger of the LORD of Hosts." (Malachi 2:7)

Rashi, in his moving commentary on the parsha, describes how Moshe, slow on the uptake, tries to drown out his

grieving brother. After all, his brother was his spokesman! What would he do now without that speech? How could the man who loves "Shalom" the one who preceded "Shalom" for everyone, fall silent? How can couples return to each other's arms when there is no one to say, "He loves you so much!", "She misses you so much!"

Because if a living soul is a "fulfilling spirit", through speech, then Aaron is dead at this moment, in his silence! So, according to Rashi, Moshe tries, "Brother! Was it not said, sanctify yourself for My glory! Obviously, the true saints were your sons! " And Moshe continued, "Aharon, my brother, go to the Mizbae'ach, for this purpose you were created." And Aharon is silent, like death.

When a great man falls silent, when a great voice disappears and does not even say "Hello," we will not survive that silence without saying "Brother," without saying "My sister." We must make that voice heard to ourselves, forever: "Speak to your brother Aharon ... and he will not die!"

Do not die, my brother. Do not die on me, my sister. I am the one telling you "blessings and success" now, because no one else will. Come my sister, come my brother.

Only "your brothers" will fill the missing voice in the world now. "And your brothers, the whole house of Israel, will weep."



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Run and Return



Charlie Harary

This week's parsha contains one of the most confusing stories in the Torah, the story of Nadav and Avihu. It begins with Nadav and Avihu seemingly doing the right thing by offering the ketoret in the Mishkan in the presence of Hashem with holy intentions. However, they end up being killed for this act, as the Torah describes:

ויקרא (פרשת שמיני) פרק י פסוק א - ב

(א) ויקחו בני־אֶהֱרֹן נָדָב וְאַבְיָהוּא אִישׁ מִחֶתְתּוֹ וַיִּתְּנוּ בָהֶן אֵשׁ וַיִּשְׂמוּ עָלֶיהָ קֹטֶרֶת וַיִּקְרִיבוּ לִפְנֵי יְקֹנֶק אֵשׁ זָרָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוָּה אֹתָם:

(ב) וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי יְקֹנֶק וַתֹּאכַל אוֹתָם וַיָּמָתוּ לִפְנֵי יְקֹנֶק:

We do not know whether they were killed as punishment for one of their deeds or not. This is due to the fact that Moshe says the following to Aharon:

ויקרא (פרשת שמיני) פרק י פסוק ג

(ג) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־אֶהֱרֹן הוּא אֲשֶׁר־דָּבַר יְקֹנֶק | לֵאמֹר בְּקִרְבִּי אֶקְדֹּשׁ וְעַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָעָם אֶכְבֹּד וַיִּדַם אֶהֱרֹן:

Rashi explains that Moshe understood from Hashem that the Mishkan was to be consecrated by the holiest person, and that according to his knowledge this was to be either himself or Aharon. The fact that it was Nadav and Avihu shows that they were on an even higher level than Moshe and Aharon. The Orach Chaim also supports this idea:

כנס משה אצלו והיה מפייסו אמר לו אהרן אחי מסיני נאמר לי עתיד אני לקדש הבית באדם גדול והייתי אומר או בי או בך הבית מתקדש עכשו נמצאו בניך גדולים ממני וממך וכו' (10:3)

What is going on here? If they stood on such a high level that even Moshe recognized their greatness, why were they killed? Were they punished or sanctified as part of their greatness?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe has an incredible approach based on a pasuk in Yechezkel:

וְהַחַיִּוֹת רָצוּא וְשׁוֹב כְּמִרְאֵה הַבְּזֻק. יחזקאל א יד



Our task in this world is to remove the blocks of materialism to allow ourselves to elevate spirituality, but then to take that energy and use it to bring the world to a higher place.

In the famous vision of Navi, it is described that the Chayot ran and returned. What does this concept of running and returning mean? The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that we were created with one body and one soul. Our soul longs to return to its Lord, it longs for spirituality. Similar to the flame of a candle, the fire strives upward while the wick holds it down. The purpose of the fire is to burn the wick, but the fire itself wants to return home. So too, a soul wants to return home, to a state of spiritual ecstasy, to surrender completely to the Divine. However, Hashem created us in this world to use our soul to uplift the physical world. The wick is crucial because it enables the flame to exist in the world; a fire without a wick will not survive. Therefore, the process of humanity is ascending, longing, pushing, but returning to this world. They reach great heights of spirituality, but use them to increase the spiritual.

We see this in Judaism all the time. There are moments when we are focused on solemn prayer, but a second later we are back in the world, working or being with our families. There are moments on Yom

Kippur and there are moments on Purim, each has its place. Our task in this world is to remove the blocks of materialism to allow ourselves to elevate spirituality, but then to take that energy and use it to bring the world to a higher place.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that this was the "sin" of Nadav and Avihu. They reached such a high level of spirituality that at the holiest moment, in the holiest place, they brought a "foreign fire." This means that their spirituality was so overwhelming that they only reached the level of רצוא, but they refused to return to שׁוֹב. They were completely absorbed in spirituality and lost the desire to return to this world and bring down their spirituality to uplift this world. Their holiness was so great that they were unable to uplift the worldly. This unbridled holiness eventually led to their death.

The lesson for us is clear. On the one hand, we need to make sure that we have a healthy רצוא. The physical world should not overwhelm or distract us, but allow us to ascend to genuine moments of spiritual connection. Our mitzvot, tefila and learning must be real, we must feel the connection to Hashem in our רצוא moments. But then we need to return to our שׁוֹב-moments, to the mundane of our lives. We need to bring our ruchnius to our time with our families or when we are just doing "normal" things. רצוא ושׁוֹב is the way Hashem designed the world, and breaking this cycle was the "sin" of Nadav and Avihu.

● Edited by Ian Schwartz.

Full Immersion



Rabbi Judah Mischel

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The *heilige* Ribnitzer Rebbe, Reb Chaim Zanvil Abramowitz, zy'a, was an extraordinary tzadik and a legendary baal avodah, whose sacrifice for Yidishkeit and holiness engulfed all the different places he lived — Russia, Romania, Eretz Yisrael, Los Angeles and Monsey — bringing down blessings for petitioners across the globe. Describing the Ribnitzer's righteousness, Reb Shlomo Freifeld, zt'l, Rosh Yeshivah of Shor Yoshuv, said meeting him was like meeting a tzadik from the days of the Baal Shem Tov.

The Ribnitzer was known for his other worldly ascetic ways, fasting often and dedicated with *mesirus nefesh* to taharah, ritual purity. One Motzaei Shabbos while on a mid-winter trip to Eretz Yisrael, the Rebbe expressed his desire to *toivel*, to immerse in the mikvah. However, he was suffering from a bad cold, it was raining and late at night, and the nearest mikvah was a considerable distance away. Acknowledging the physical circumstances, yet determined to attain the highest levels of purity, he instructed the small group of chassidim accompanying him to stand together, hold hands and form a tight circle. He then entered the human ring and proceeded to crouch down then rise up several times, 'immersing himself' in their midst. The Rebbe finally recited the words *Mikveh Yisrael Hashem* (*Mishnah Yoma*, 8:9), literally "The hope of Israel is Hashem," and interpreted in different ways, including "Hashem longs for His children," "*HaKadosh Baruch Hu* purifies Yisrael," and *Mikveh Yisrael*, "a mikveh of Yidden"....

Having immersed in the luminous pool of pure Jewish souls, the Ribnitzer was joyous, and ready to continue on his way.



Our sedra addresses an array of elements required to live a life of holiness, including the uplifting and restorative power of a mikvah. The name and opening of our sedra refers to the consecration of the Mishkan

— itself an experience representing *tikun* and spiritual rejuvenation:

Vayehi bayom ha-shemini..., "On the eighth day" following seven days of inauguration of the Mishkan, Aharon haKohein and his sons begin to offer Korbanos, and the Shechinah, the Divine Presence dwelled in the Sanctuary....

וַיבֹא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל אֱהֱלֵ מוֹעֵד וַיִּצְאוּ וַיְבָרְכוּ
אֶת־הָעָם וַיֵּרָא כְבוֹד ה' אֶל כָּל הָעָם:

And Moshe and Aharon went into the Ohel Moed, then came out and blessed the people, and the Glory of Hashem appeared to the Nation.(9:23)

Rashi expands on the particular blessings they offered on this most special occasion:

ויצאו ויברכו את העם: אמרו ויהי נועם ה' אלינו עלינו, יהי רצון שתשרה שכניה במעשה ידיכם —

"May the pleasantness of Hashem be upon us; may it be God's will that the Shechinah rest on the work of your hands..."

Rashi explains that throughout all seven days of the *milu'im*, the ceremonial investitures of the Mishkan, Moshe performed the *avodah*, effortfully erecting and then dismantling the structure daily. During that week, continues Rashi, the Divine Presence was not revealed. The painful lack of the *Shechinah's* presence was 'humiliating', and the Jews cried out to Moshe:

כל הטורח שטרחנו, שתשרה שכניה
בינינו ונדע שנתכפר לנו עון העגל

"All the efforts we have taken were so that the Shechinah should dwell among us, so that we would know that we have been forgiven for the sin of the Golden Calf!"

Following the shameful episode of *Cheit haEigel*, a perceptual 'distance' and a state of 'impurity' had come between the People the Holy One, Blessed is He. Moshe led the nation in *teshuvah* and ascended to the upper worlds to petition Hashem in prayer. Midrash (*Pesikta Rabbasi*, 14) tells us that there, Moshe found the Ribbono shel Olam 'learning' the *parsha* of the *Parah Adumah*: *Zos*

chukas haTorah, "This is the law of the Torah which transcends logic..." Acknowledging Moshe, Hashem said, *Eini osek elah b'taharasan shel Yisrael*, "My only job is dealing with the purification of Israel." The completion of the Mishkan signaled the next stage of our peoplehood, the formal and public expression that our collective *teshuvah* had been accepted.

The day of the consecration of the Mishkan "was as joyous to the Ribbono Shel Olam as the day on which heaven and earth were created" (*Megillah*, 10b). It was a day when the *K'vod Hashem*, the honor and glory of God, was once again expressed in a revealed way through the Nation of Israel. The Divine Presence had 'returned', and 'entered' the Mishkan of Yisrael, 'immersing' as it were, in their midst — 'In the *mikveh Yisrael: Hashem.*' And then the Ribbono shel Olam was joyous and ready to 'continue on His way'.

There is no greater purifying force, no other way to ensure blessing or to reveal the Shechinah, than Jews coming together in *teshuvah*. On this "Parshas Parah", may we draw down the purifying power of *Mikveh Yisrael*, and together, celebrate the consecration of the Temple!

אָמַר רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אֲשֶׁר־יְכֶם יִשְׂרָאֵל.
לְפָנַי מִי אַתֶּם מְטַהְרִין וּמִי מְטַהֵר אֲתֶכֶם?
אֲבִיכֶם שְׁבַשְׁמַיִם שְׁנֵאמַר, וּזְרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מִיַּם טְהוֹרִים
וּטְהַרְתֶּם.

ואומר מקוה ישראל ה'

מה מְקַוֶּה מְטַהֵר אֶת הַטְּמֵאִים אֶף הַקְּדוֹשׁ
בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְטַהֵר אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Rabbi Akiva said: How fortunate are you, Israel; before Whom are you purified, and Who purifies you? It is your Father in Heaven, as it is stated: "And I will sprinkle purifying water upon you, and you shall be purified" (*Yechezkel*, 36:25). And it says: "The mikveh of Israel is Hashem" (*Yirmiyahu*, 17:13). Just as a ritual bath purifies the impure, so too, the Holy One, Blessed be He, purifies Israel.

Removing the Roadblock

Mrs. Shira Smiles

international lecturer and curriculum developer

In Parshat Shemini, Hashem commands Aharon and then Bnei Yisroel to bring the sacrifices, which signify the dedication of the Mishkan. But as all of Bnei Yisroel stands assembled, Moshe seems to warn them, “This is the thing that Hashem has commanded you to do; then the glory of Hashem will appear to you.” Moshe then continues speaking directly to Aharon, “Come near to the altar and perform your service.” If Bnei Yisroel were already assembled to do God’s bidding, asks Rabbi Bick, what did Moshe add with this admonition? What did he feel was still hindering Hashem’s appearance?

Befi Yeshorim points out that Moshe’s admonition is relevant for all generations for we are always standing before Hashem as Bnei Yisroel were at that moment. If we are to experience Hashem’s presence, we must remove the yetzer hara within ourselves. We must also do the mitzvot that will clear the path for Hashem to enter. What did Moshe feel was problematic? Rabbi Goldwicht explains that while we may experience mixed emotions in the performance of a mitzvah, the overriding reason for doing a mitzvah must be that it is Hashem’s command. Then the joy of His closeness will automatically follow. To maintain this focus says the Shemen Hatov, we preface the performance of each mitzvah with the blessing that “He has sanctified us with His mitzvot and commanded us...” Since our minds are limited to focusing on only one idea at a time, if we channel our thoughts to doing Hashem’s will, all other thoughts will disappear from our minds. Then the joy of our relationship with Hashem will return as a natural byproduct of doing His will. This was the problem Moshe observed among Bnei Yisroel. They anticipated the

joy of closeness to Hashem the korbanot would bring rather than concentrating on doing Hashem’s command.



Each of us has our own mission on this earth, our own way to create G-dliness, which the yetzer hara tries to thwart. By focusing on trying to do what Hashem commands us to do to the best of our ability, we can come closer to achieving our goal.

Rabbi Roberts points out that the yetzer hara first tries to prevent us from doing mitzvot. It also tries to blemish its performance by tainting them with extraneous motivations. If it does not succeed, it tries to undermine our performance post facto by filling us with arrogance. Pride will lead us to complacency and set the stage for future failure. Therefore we pray that Hashem removes the yetzer hara both from before us and from behind us, before and after doing a mitzvah. Perhaps what Moshe sensed was that the Jews had a feeling of pride in the status they had achieved among the nations and in their accomplishment of building the mishkan.

Each of us has our own mission on this earth, our own way to create G-dliness, which the yetzer hara tries to thwart. By focusing on trying to do what Hashem commands us to do to the best of our ability, we can come closer to achieving our goal. Meirosh Tzurim explains that the yetzer hara will always try to convince us that we do not have the skills or the wherewithal to accomplish much. If we keep saying, “If only I had the money,

the ability, the time, etc.,” we will never achieve anything, and the yetzer hara will win. Perhaps, as the Kotzker Rebbe suggests, Hashem wants us to overcome our challenges in order to do His will. One of the surest ways we can learn what Hashem wants us to work on is to see where the yetzer hara has placed the most obstacles. Find those areas which are your stumbling blocks and place them one on another to create steps to climb higher in your service to Hashem. Foil the yetzer hara by using his tools to elevate yourself.

This may be the intent of Moshe’s further urging Aharon to come near the altar and perform the service. Aharon hesitated, remembering that he had sinned with the golden calf. Moshe, therefore, urged him not to be afraid. The Imrei Emes points out Moshe’s deeper intent. If this is where the yetzer hara once succeeded in getting you to sin, you must now use that experience to elevate your soul by bringing the proper korbanot on the altar. This will repair the distance in your relationship with Hashem.

Rabbi Schachter in In All Your Ways gives us guidelines for life-based on the Mishnah. Which is the proper way for a man to follow? Whatever elicits beauty from the person. Act in a way that is pleasing both to you and to others. If one begins by focusing on doing what he knows to be right, Hashem will lead him on the path to fulfilling his mission.



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