

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

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## Daf HaShavua

by Rabbi Alan Plancey

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**H**istory has shown that there is, indeed, no other nation in the world whose survival has demanded so many sacrifices. What is, however, even more surprising, is the way in which we have emerged from our trials, troubles and suffering. We live in a world that has not learned from its mistakes, a world in which we continue to see discrimination against minority groups.

The survival of the Jewish people could be attributed to the example shown by its leaders, teachers and the strong influence of the home.

The word used to convey the responsibility of the Cohanim for their service in the Sanctuary is Tzav—a language of urgency and a duty to impart not only the knowledge, but also the correct procedure in the order of sacrifices. That same urgency should apply to each and every one of us in the preservation of Torah values. We live in a changing world where values are transient and volatile, and where respect is often influenced by wealth rather than virtue. The sacrifices remind us that honour is due to G-d and those who by their life style honour him.

According to Rav Lord Jakobovits z'l, our lifestyle can be characterised by the names given to the 5 books of Moses, both in Hebrew and in English.

The first book is referred to as Genesis—it records the life of individuals who were the patriarchs and matriarchs of our family. They were the roots of the future generations who would eventually be born and become the nations of the world. It is imperative that we remember at all times who we are and where we come from, who we represent and who, eventually, will represent us.

Shemot is known as Exodus, although its true translation is Names. We all ultimately leave home with the challenge of building our future and establishing a good name for ourselves. We must always remember who we are and where we emanate from.

Vayikra (Leviticus) is a book of sacrifices. Survival both physically and spiritually is dependant on the choices we make. The reputation we gain can also be affected.

Bemidbar is commonly referred to as Numbers. Its literal translation is Wilderness.

Depending on our deeds and actions and the sacrifices we are prepared to make, and being influenced by our teachers to build a good reputation, we can be considered numbered within the family of the Jewish people. However if we sadly make no effort to accept the discipline of tradition and are content to sever our connection with the past we could end up in a spiritual wilderness.

Devarim is referred to as the Mishneh Torah, a repetition of all the other books. If we require proof that we have achieved our goals in life, this can be seen through future generations who will emulate our example and preserve the true teachings of Torah.

In this turbulent world, the word Tzav is as pertinent today as it has ever been. If we wish to see a healthy and vibrant future, the urgency is there for parents, teachers and leaders to influence the next generation not just by words, but by example as well.

### THE HAFTARAH

by Rabbi Boruch Davis, Chigwell Synagogue

We conclude the silent Amidah with the opening words of today's haftarah, from the prophet Malachi: "Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasing to G-d as in days of old and in former years" (kimei olam ucheshanim kadmoniot).

The commentator Metzudat David explains that "kimei olam," in days of old, refers to the time of Moses and "shanim kadmoniyot," former years, refers to the early days of Solomon's Temple. Those were (rare) days of grace when G-d sent fire from heaven to consume the sacrifices on the altar.

The day will yet come when we shall again enjoy Divine favour. This encouraging message is the very last in the age of prophecy, and needs to last us a long time. Meanwhile, we see much apparent injustice around us. One person recently said to me: "Perhaps I should not have been such an observant person. Look at how people break the Torah laws and prosper!" Malachi himself mentions these very words in chapter 3 verses 13-16: "You have said, 'It is pointless to serve G-d, and what have we gained by keeping his laws? Let us praise the evildoers who have tested G-d and survived!'"

What will the response of the righteous be? "Then the G-d fearing people will speak amongst themselves". Perhaps they are giving encouragement to each other. Maybe they realise that G-d's laws have

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intrinsic value, regardless of reward. The prophet continues, "and Hashem will listen and preserve the comments of those who revere Him and respect His name." (3:16)

Rashi explains that the reward for the righteous will ultimately come. Malachi concludes his words with the promise of the coming of Elijah the Prophet who will declare the "Great and Awesome Day of G-d", most fitting for the Shabbat just before the festival of our first redemption. © 2006 Produced by the Rabbinical Council of the United Synagogue - London (O) Editor Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, emailed by Rafael Salasnik

#### **RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## **Shabbat Shalom**

One of the most delightful parts of the seder is the portion concerning the four children: the wise child, the wicked child, the simple or naive child and the child who does not know what to ask. In my former life as the Rabbi of a West Side Manhattan Congregation, where I conducted a community Seder each year, I took what almost bordered on sadistic pleasure in doling out each of these four reading to choice members of our Synagogue-and sometimes suffered consequences as a result. At our present family and extended family seder-children, grandchildren, in-law-mahatunim and students which make for 50 plus participants-I merely ask for volunteers to explicate the personal or contemporary significance of which ever one of the four children-questioners, the participant would feel most comfortable with. To my perennial surprise, the "wicked child" gets the most raised hands!

Let us explore the question and answer which the author of the Haggadah ascribes to the "wicked child." "What does the wicked child say? 'What is this service to you?'-to you, and not to him. And because he has taken himself out of the category (of Israel), he has denied the basic principle (of Judaism). You must then soften (with warmth) his sharp teeth (or tongue), and say to him: 'Because of this (service) did G-d do (all these miracles) for me when I came out of Egypt'-for me and not for him; Had he been there, he would not have been redeemed!"

It is fascinating to note that although the exact words of this question is derived from the Biblical text

itself, ("And it shall be when you come to the land (of Israel)... and you observe this service (of the Paschal Sacrifice), and then, when your children shall say to you, 'What is this service to you,' you shall say to them, 'It is a Paschal (Passover or love) Sacrifice to the Lord, who has passed over (or loved) the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when He brought plague (of the death of the first-born) upon Egypt, and He saved our homes" (Exodus 12:25,26), the Bible gives no hint of any pejorative attitude towards the question or the questioner, and the author of the Haggadah does not cite the Biblical response to the question in content. Indeed, the answer given in the Haggadah also appears in the Bible, but only one chapter later: "Why you shall tell (Vehigadeta, haggadah) to your children on that day (of the Festival of matzot), "Because of this service did G-d do (all the these miracles) for me when I came out of Egypt" (Ex 13:8). Why does the author of the haggadah cite the question negatively and why does he change the Biblical response?

Apparently, the author of the Haggadah is struck first and foremost not by the words of the question-"What is this service to you?"-but rather by the music! Generally the Bible precedes a question with "And when your child will ask you" (as in Exodus 13:14); here, however, the Bible states, "And when your children shall say to you." The wise child asks his parents; the wicked child tells, informs, his parents. And if the music is off, the author of the Haggadah then takes the liberty of interpreting the words in a negative and even supercilious fashion. This child is not trying to honestly understand the significance of the Passover ritual to the parents so that he can internalize and incorporate it into his own life; he is rather addressing the ritual in a derogatory way, "What possible meaning can this difficult, detailed and bothersome work have for you!" (See Jerusalem Talmud, Arvei Pesachim, in which text the wicked child speaks of tirha-toil-rather than avodah-service).

Hence the author of the Haggadah suggests that parent soften the sharp cynicism with the kind of fire which softens the hard edges of iron (Ecclesiastes 10:10, Kehah), with the warmth of familial love and the passion of the parents' personal identification with Jewish history in general and the exodus from Egypt in particular. And therefore the author of the Haggadah finds the generic substance of the "telling to the child" more fitting: "It is because of this ritual, and the lessons it can teach one about resisting slavery, helping the underdog and striving to form a free and productive society, that the Lord took me out of Egypt."

In effect, the Haggadah is teaching the parent how to react to a negative and cynical child: with love and warmth and with all of the passion and commitment which marks the Jew who defines his personal and existential being by the special times and events which have shaped his family-nation.

But then how do we account for the end of that segment, which seems to be so negative: "Had he (this child) been (in Egypt), he would not have been redeemed." In the first instance, it is a fact of Jewish life: those who see themselves as being outside of the Jewish family, who do not at least feel part of Jewish people hood, will not be privileged to share in Jewish destiny.

There is yet one more point, however, which might better explain what appear to be the closing words of rebuff. A strange change of person appears in the text of the haggadah: "... And you shall say to him, 'Because of this (service) did G-d do (all these miracles) for me...' -for me, and not for him; had he been there, he would not have been redeemed." Now this last exchange is what the parent is to say to the wicked child; the Haggadah text ought then read:

"And you shall say to him... for me, and not for you. Had you been there, you would not have been redeemed." Why does the author of the Haggadah have the parent speak to the child at the seder in the third person, as if were not there!?

I would therefore suggest that indeed, the wicked child is not there. He said his piece and checked out; he spoke and ran-before the main reading of the Haggadah and before the meal. He couldn't wait to join his friends at the local pub or disco. And I would further suggest that this interpretation sheds new light on our opening of the door for Elijah the Prophet. If Elijah can make it to every single seder all over the Jewish world-and many at the very same time-he doesn't need the door to be opened for him. I believe that we open the door not to let Elijah in, but rather to send the parents out. If Elijah's message is to restore the hearts of the parents to the children and the hearts of the children to the parents, then the parents must find the wicked child-wherever he may have gone-and bring him back into the seder, with warm acceptance and parental unconditional love. © 2006 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

**RABBI DOV KRAMER**

## Taking a Closer Look

“**C**ommand Aharon and his sons, saying.” (Vayikra 6:2) Usually, the Torah would say "speak to Aharon and his sons" or "say to Aharon and his sons." Using the word "command" instead (along with there being no direct action requested following these words) prompts Rashi (quoting the Sifra on this verse) to explain the significance of the word. "Command" is always used as an expression of encouragement (i.e. to motivate to act with zeal) immediately and for generations. Adds Rabbi Shimon, 'the verse needs to encourage even more so when there is a financial loss.'"

We would have therefore expected the subject matter that follows this "encouragement" to cause a

financial loss to Aharon and his sons (i.e. the kohanim, who performed the service in the Mishkan and the Temple). However, the paragraphs that follow are further details of the offerings brought, which are either donated by individuals or come from the coffers of the Mishkan or Temple. How can Rabbi Shimon say that the word "command" is used here because of the financial loss incurred, if those the "commandment" is directed towards incur no out-of-pocket expenses? Even the type of offering described immediately after this "encouragement," the "karban olah" (the burnt offering which has all of its meat put on the altar so that none is left for anyone to eat, not even the kohain) doesn't cost the kohain anything, and he keeps the animal's skin (so there is a net gain). What loss is Rabbi Shimon referring to?

Another aspect that deserves a closer look is the language of the Sifra that Rashi quotes. By placing the verb "says" before Rabbi Shimon's name ("amar Rabbi Shimon"), the Sifra is indicating that Rabbi Shimon is not arguing with the previous statement (that "command" implies encouragement immediately and for generations), but elaborating on it (explaining or adding to it). Yet, in the Sifray (at the beginning of Bamidbar, see also Bamidbar Rabbah 7:6), the verb "says" comes *after* Rabbi Shimon's name ("Rabbi Shimon omair"), indicating that he disagrees with the previous statement. Which one is it? Does he disagree or is he just adding onto the concept of "command" implying encouragement immediately and for generations? Why does the Sifra indicate one way and the Sifray the other?

Much has been written to answer the first question; by examining some of the answers given, we may be able to explain the second problem.

The Maharal (on Rashi) suggests that even though there is no out-of-pocket cost for the kohain when he performs the service, the loss of potential gains is considered a "financial loss." This is especially true of the "karban olah" where the kohain receives even less than other offerings (see Taz), and even more applicable to the "karban tamid" described, since having to get up so early to prepare for it prevents getting enough sleep at night, eliminating the possibility of doing anything after performing this early-morning service (see Pa'aneach Razah). This could be applied to another part of the service discussed regarding this offering (6:3-4), the removal of the ashes done prior to bringing the morning "tamid." There is even less monetary benefit (i.e. no skin) while requiring the kohain to get up extra early and lose any potential monetary gain he could have had if he was able to go to work instead.

The Bechor Shor (printed in the back of the Oz ve'Hadar editions of the Talmud on Kiddushin 29a) says that because the kohain that brought the incense offering became rich, no kohain did it twice, giving other

kohanim the chance (see Yuma 26a). He adds (based on Tosfos) that even though a kohain can perform other services more than once, after performing *any* service on a given day, a kohain didn't perform any other service that day, in order to give the others the opportunity. Therefore, the kohain that removed the ashes from the previous day's offerings not only didn't get to bring an offering that day that included a fleishig meal, or even the skin, but he lost out on the chance to bring the incense, and thereby become rich. In order to encourage kohanim to do this service despite the "financial loss" of being ineligible for the incense offering, the Torah uses the term "command" before describing this aspect of the service.

Rabbi Peretz Steinberg, Shlita, (Pri Eitz Hachayim, Vayikra 6:2) points out that included in the service of removing the ashes is wearing the white linen garments (6:3). Even though they will likely become soiled in the process, other clothing cannot be substituted. This, he suggests, may be the "financial loss" Rabbi Shimon is referring to.

These three approaches are not mutually exclusive, and could all be part of the "financial loss" incurred by kohanim following the commandment included in this "encouragement." They also have a common denominator; none of these issues were relevant in the desert.

Although a kohain could not be out making money elsewhere while performing the services in the Temple, there was no "work" to go to in the desert. The daily bread was provided for by G-d (the mun), and the nation already had riches from what they took out of Egypt (and the Yam Suf). What "financial loss" was being incurred in a setting where all needs were provided for, and there was no opportunity to work elsewhere? This "loss," and the encouragement necessary to overcome it, only applied later, when there was work that was missed due to performing the service.

Similarly, the need to take turns performing the service couldn't apply when there were only 5 (and then 3) kohanim. Once the children of Elazar and Isamar, and then their grandchildren, etc. joined the ranks of the kohanim, the need arose to share the privilege of performing the service, including bringing the incense (although obviously not into the "kodesh hakodashim"). Here too, the encouragement to perform the service of removing the ashes, despite losing out on the opportunity to do anything else, was not relevant until later generations.

Dirty clothing was not an issue in the desert either, as the "clouds of glory" washed their clothes and kept them clean (see Devarim 8:4). The concern about replacing the garments soiled during the removal of the ashes, and therefore the need for encouragement, didn't apply until at least after Aharon's death during the 40th year in the desert.

It is therefore possible that even though Rabbi Shimon disagrees with the opinion that every time the word "command" is used it must be to maintain the same level of zeal generations later, regarding the financial loss alluded to at the beginning of our Parasha, it only applies to *future* generations. For this reason, when adding his opinion on our verse's use of the word "command," the Sifra worded it as an *addition* to the first opinion, not a difference of opinion. © 2006 Rabbi D. Kramer

**RABBI AVI WEISS**

## Shabbat Forshpeis

**T**his week's portion continues the theme of the sacrificial service. There are many suggestions as to the reasoning behind this enigmatic, yet important element of our tradition.

Ramban understands the Mishkan (tabernacle) as a kind of portable Mt. Sinai. Mt. Sinai was a physical mountain through which the Jewish people were able to feel G-d's presence more powerfully. This was also the purpose of the Mishkan, where G-d's presence was integrated into human souls.

There are many similarities between Mt. Sinai and the Mishkan. As Am Yisrael (the people of Israel) surrounded Mt. Sinai, the place from where the voice of G-d was heard, so too, did Israel encamp around the Mishkan from where the presence of G-d was especially felt. In this sense, the Mishkan was a constant ratification of the covenant at Mt. Sinai between G-d and the Jewish people that was validated at Mt. Sinai. The covenant is reaffirmed through the tabernacle.

With this concept of the Mishkan in mind, the sacrifices can be understood. The two major covenants in the Torah - the covenant of the pieces and the covenant at Sinai are accompanied by sacrifice. (Genesis 15:9,10; Exodus 24:5) Indeed, as G-d appears at Mt. Sinai, the covenant reaches its crescendo when the Jewish people eat and drink. (Exodus 24:11)

The presence of a sacrifice in these covenantal experiences can be looked upon as a celebration of this glorious moment of meeting between G-d and his people. Much like a seuda (a lavish meal) celebrates our relationship with G-d on Shabbat or Yom Tov, so too the korban (sacrifice) celebrates the covenant. The covenant is eternalized through rituals associated with the sacrificial service.

In his book "The Temple," Rabbi Joshua Berman notes that salt was always used on the korban and is called brit melach. (Leviticus 2:13) As salt gives sharpness and longer life to food, so too is the covenant blessed with eternity. In Rabbi Berman's words, the salt marks "the eternal nature of the covenant...[it is] a statement about the lasting duration of the covenantal bond."

Flour (mincha) and wine (nesachim), which are also often associated with sacrifices, teach the message of the importance of tradition coupled with freshness. The best wine is the wine that is old, wine that is rooted in the past. Flour, on the other hand is edible if it is new, if it is fresh. Continuity in the sacrificial service depends upon the bridging of the past with the present forging a new and profound future.

While we do not celebrate the covenant with sacrifices today, we must constantly see to it that the covenant seems new and fresh. While maintaining the tradition of the past, it should always be a creative, stirring, and exciting shir chadash (new song) - otherwise the love with G-d becomes stale.

The korbanot offered in the Mishkan, together with its fine ingredients, are glorious reminders of our endless love of the Ruler of Rulers. It is the ultimate State Dinner. But this time, the honoree is truly worthy - it is, after all, G-d Himself. © 2006 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

#### **RABBI BEREL WEIN**

### **Wein Online**

One of the artifacts of any synagogue is its ner tamid - the eternal light placed near the Holy Ark that contains the scrolls of the Torah. The origin of the ner tamid is found in this week's parsha of Tzav. Here the Jewish people are commanded by G-d to have an eternal flame constantly burning on the altar of the Mishkan and later in the temple in Jerusalem. The Midrash teaches us that the flame on the altar resembles a crouching lion and was miraculous in the fact that even when the altar was covered with its protective cloth, while being transported in the desert, the flame was not extinguished nor did it burn the cloth.

This miraculous permanent flame is a further symbol of G-d's eternal presence amongst Israel. But the flame symbolizes more than that. It is the symbol of the light of the Torah and the warmth that traditional Jewish life always represents. It teaches the lesson of eternity - of the long view of life and events, and of the unquenchable love between G-d and His people and of the Jewish people and their Torah. King Solomon in Shir Hashirim describes it: "[Even} the great waters cannot quench [the fire of] love" that exists between G-d and Israel and Israel and the Torah. That fire is a crouching lion always ready to burst forth and pounce on the opportunity to show its love and tenacity regarding G-d and His Torah. It is truly the fire of eternity that has preserved Israel till this very day.

The kohanim -the priests, the descendants of Aharon - were responsible for the maintenance of the eternal fire. Today, we are all responsible for the preservation of that eternal flame within our families,

communities and the Jewish people as a whole There is no doubt that we are aided in this task by the Divine Will that has always fueled that eternal flame. But Heaven's aid in no way diminishes our responsibility towards the preservation of that flame. The rabbis of the Talmud long ago warned us that ein somchin al haness - it is forbidden to rely upon miracles to save and preserve us. It is our tenacity to tradition and Torah that creates the miracles, so to speak, which guarantee our continued survival, creativity and vitality.

The eternal flame marches with us through all of our history. It has the great quality of warming and comforting us and yet does not burn or singe us. The Torah emphatically warns us lo tichbeh - do not allow that fire to be extinguished. Study, Torah education, observance, moral behavior, and an optimistic view are all the means to preserve this fire and not allow it to be extinguished. In a world that contains vast patches of darkness and despair, the crouching lion flame of Jewish tradition lights our way towards a better future and a more meaningful present. Our success in preserving this flame and passing it on to future generations is the true challenge and test of our generation. We cannot in any way fail this test. © 2006 Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory](http://www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory).

#### **YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

### **Virtual Beit Medrash**

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT"A

“G”od spoke to Moshe, saying: Command Aharon and his sons, saying, This is the teaching of the burnt offering: it is the burnt offering which shall burn upon the altar all night until the morning, and the fire of the altar shall burn within it. And the kohen shall wear his linen garment, and shall wear his linen pants upon his flesh, and he shall take up the ashes which the fire shall consume with the burnt offering upon the altar, and place them beside the altar. And he shall remove his garments and put on other garments, and he shall remove the ashes to outside of the camp, to a clean place. And the fire upon the altar shall remain burning on it; it shall not be extinguished.” (Vayikra 6:1-6)

At first glance, the opening verses of parashat Tzav seem very strange. Usually, the structure of a parasha discussing some sort of sacrifice is that first the Torah establishes the reason for bringing the sacrifice, and then details the process by means of which the person achieves atonement. For example, in parashat Metzora we are told: "This is the teaching concerning the metzora on the day of his purification" (Vayikra 14:2). Furthermore, the Torah generally details

the entire sacrificial process in the order in which it is performed. But in our parasha, the Torah starts by saying, "This is the teaching concerning the burnt offering"-and then suddenly introduces the process of taking up the ashes, rather than the process involved in bringing a burnt offering. What is the meaning of this?

We may say that the burnt offering (korban ola) serves two functions. On the one hand, the burnt offering is part of the general framework of sacrifices and, as such, is there to serve man. In other words, a person has a problem, and the burnt offering functions as the solution to his problem. But on the other hand, the verses reveal that this sacrifice also has another role: it serves the altar. "It is the burnt sacrifice that burns upon the altar... and the fire upon the altar shall continue to burn within it; it shall not be extinguished." The purpose of the burnt offering is to ensure a perpetual fire upon the altar. Thus, at the beginning of parashat Tzav, the Torah chooses to present first the function of the burnt offering as serving the altar, rather than as serving man, unlike the format in all the other sacrifices.

As we know, the burnt offering is the first sacrifice offered every morning upon the altar, and it was preceded by clearing the altar from the ashes of the previous evening's sacrifice, the service known as "raising up the ashes" (terumat ha-deshen). The verses teach us that the kohen who took up the ashes then had to change his clothing, because the work involved made him dirty; it could not be performed in the uniform required for sacrificial service, but rather required "work clothes." (These were not street clothes, but rather priestly garments of lesser quality.) The Gemara (Yoma 23b) teaches that the reason for the change of clothing is that one does not wear the same clothes to pour a drink for one's master as one wears to boil a pot for his master. Nevertheless, despite the fact that these are two different jobs, the Gemara (Yoma 22a) teaches that a kohen who is not prepared to clean out the ashes is not permitted to perform the sacrificial service, either.

These laws may be hinting at an important message. A person who wants to engage in Divine service, to serve in G-d's world, cannot put his own personal interests before the requirements of the task. A person who is not prepared to carry out the unglamorous, tedious, taxing, dirty work of cleaning out the ashes is not worthy of serving in the exalted capacity of offering the sacrificial service. For this reason, it may be that when the Torah defines the purpose of the burnt offering, it starts by telling us about the aspect of serving the altar; it presents G-d's "needs," as it were, before man's needs. A person who is prepared to pour a drink but is not prepared to boil the pot is not a true servant, and therefore he is not worthy of pouring the drink.

We may apply this idea to our own reality and say that a person who wants to live a life of sanctity, in

the shadow of G-d, must leave his own personal interests behind general ones-whether G-dly or communal. What defines us as servants of G-d is our ability to put our personal desires aside when they collide with higher values. This is what differentiates a person who is a servant of G-d from a person who is a servant of himself. (*This sicha was delivered at seuda shelishit, Shabbat parashat Tzav 5762 [2002].*)

#### RABBI YEHUDAH PRERO

## Ordering Priorities

The shul was filled to capacity. Both men and women came en masse to hear the famous rabbi known for captivating his audience with his oratorical skills. The speeches were always filled with lessons on self improvement, designed to elicit emotion, to deliver a powerful message yet in the most gentle of ways.

The rabbi began this particular lecture describing a man. This man desired to spiritually elevate himself, to further sanctify himself to the service of G-d. So what did this man do? He decided that he needed to fast, to deprive himself of all sustenance. After all, the Talmud writes (Ta'anis 11a) that one who sits and fasts is called "holy." He began his day with impassioned prayer, asking for forgiveness and the ability to come closer to G-d. He then sat down to spend the rest of the day engrossed in Torah study. However, as the day progressed, he found himself growing weaker and weaker, and his ability to concentrate severely decreased. He actually had to stop learning, as he could not accomplish anything in his weakened state. After quickly reciting the requisite afternoon and evening prayers, he rushed home, eagerly awaiting the sumptuous meal his wife prepared for the occasion.

He arrived home to no such meal. In fact, his wife had totally forgotten about her husband's fast and that he would be home earlier than usual. Even the regular dinner she prepared was not yet ready. The man was livid. "How could you do this to me!" he bellowed. "Don't you have any respect for your husband? Don't you care at all? Don't you realize what I put myself through today?" he screamed. His anger totally consumed him: any feelings of holiness that had been present earlier in the day were most definitely gone.

The rabbi then delivered his message. "Look at this man: he wanted to engage in an activity that would lead to holiness. But what happened? Instead, he squandered away a day of Torah study. Not only did he not respect his wife properly, but he denigrated her and lost his temper! Our Sages have told us that those who lose their temper are like idol worshippers-and those who sin against their fellow man-even Yom Kippur cannot atone for those transgressions! This man, who thought that by engaging in a totally optional behavior,

was doing something praiseworthy, ended his day by transgressing basic Torah precepts! Had he just studied Torah properly and kept his anger and haughtiness in check, he would have reached much greater heights than by engaging in a futile fast."

The rabbi continued to speak to an enraptured crowd. Upon the conclusion of the lecture, a man approached the rabbi and kissed him. He told the rabbi "You speak the truth-the words of G-d are in your mouth! The illustration you gave of the man who fasted-that is exactly what happened to me! I cannot tell you how glad I am to have heard your words. You have opened my eyes as to what is truly a priority in life. I now have to always remember that the most important things have to come first-that it is silly and counter-productive to engage in optional, laudatory practices if the result is going to be the transgression of basic Torah precepts."

Rabi Avraham Dayan of Aleppo notes that the Pesach celebration at the evening meal is called the "Seder." "Seder" means "order." We are supposed to learn from this order. After we have recited the main liturgy of the evening during the step of Magid, we then come to three different "eatings:" Matzo, Maror and Korech. The order of these three steps, Rabi Dayan states, is noteworthy. First, we consume the matzo. The consumption of the matzo is biblical in origin, a Mitzvah D'Oraisa. Next, we consume maror. The consumption of maror is rabbinic in origin, a Mitzvah D'Rabanan. Last, we consume Korech, the maror sandwich. Doing such is a "custom," albeit one we have accepted upon ourselves as obligatory ages ago. We see how we are to view mitzvos from the order of the Seder: Those precepts contained in the Torah are our top priority. Then, we must be concerned with those precepts of rabbinic origin. Only once we have fulfilled these two mandatory levels can we engage in "custom," those practices that are not obligatory. The failure to keep these practices in their proper prioritization, as seen from the parable offered by Rabi Dayan, can have disastrous effects. That is the lesson of Matzo, Maror, and Korech. © 2006 Rabbi Y. Prero & torah.org

#### **RABBI LABEL LAM**

### **Dvar Torah**

**R**aban Gamliel would say, "Anyone who does not mention these three things has not fulfilled his obligation and these are they: Pesach, Matzah, and Marror!" (Pesachim 116A)

Matzah is the center stage feature on Seder Night! What is the super-significance of this flat unadorned poor-man's bread? Why and how does it signify our ticket to freedom? How did this holiday with the most dietary restrictions come to be known as "the time of our great freedom"? What's so free about not being able to eat what we want?

I once challenged a group of Jewish kids in public junior high school to formulate together as a committee a definition of freedom. I was shocked by their answer as the foreman of the jury read aloud, "Freedom means: Doing whatever you want to whoever you want, whenever you want!" I certainly don't want to be in the direct line of that freedom fire! What they described can be categorized as freedom "from"-freedom from responsibility. What they failed to include was any mention of what in the world freedom is "for"!

Imagine now a budding young pianist practicing laboriously his scales for hours on end while his friends frolic outside. Who seems freer? Years later though, this young fellow, by virtue of having trained his hands to move accordingly, is now able to release the musician within. Expressive emotions flow with seemingly magical ease through his agile fingers.

Even as I write this, many holy women and some good husbands too are on their knees looking for the ultra-contraband we call Chometz so that it should not be seen or found in their possession on Pesach? The primary ingredient for real deal Chometz are the five grains, wheat, oats, spelt, barley, and rye. Once they come into contact with water the eighteen minute clock starts and before you know it skull-cross and bones appear on the container and all are warned to stay away. This stuff is poison on Pesach for the Jewish Soul.

You might think that if Chometz is so ruinous on Pesach then we should beg away from anything associated with those five grains and thereby avoid any possibility of coming into contact with the enemy. Ironically, the one food we are compelled to eat on Pesach is not gefilte fish, no it's Matzah. Matzah can only be made of the same raw ingredients as Chometz; the five grains. What then is the difference between Matzah and Chometz? If the kneading and baking occur within the eighteen minute window then we have qualified and certified Matzah. If that time-line is crossed then the same stuff becomes Chometz. What is Chometz? It is undisciplined Matzah. What is Matzah? It is disciplined Chometz?

The Sefas Emes, quoting the Zohar, defines the word "PESACH" as a contraction of two words, "Peh"-Mouth/ "Sach"-Speaks-The mouth that speaks! He says that for the Jew the mouth is in exile. We are shy and intimidated to express what is really deep inside. Through the exercise of telling more and more about the Exodus we become more articulate and expressive (with the help of four glasses of wine) until we are singing Hallel with full mouths and hearts.

One of the keys to lasting freedom is self-discipline. We are not avoiding confrontation with negativity in pursuit of freedom. That would be freedom "from" to escape the chains of responsible living. Rather we are compelled through the Mitzvah to eat Matzah to engage in the more refined art of pursuing

freedom "for". By arresting our appetites and practicing self-control we can hope to say temporarily "no" to a lower-lesser urge in order to gain the ability to express a higher "yes". © 2006 Rabbi L. Lam & torah.org

### RABBI SHLOMO KATZ

## Hama'ayan

**T**his week's parashah continues the laws of the korbanot / sacrifices. R' Elazar M. Shach z"l observes that we pray daily for the return of the sacrificial service. Yet, the haftarah for our parashah seems to downplay the importance of korbanot! We read (Yirmiyah 7:22-23): "For I did not speak with your forefathers nor did I command them on the day I took them out of the land of Egypt concerning olah-offerings or shelamim-offerings. Rather, I commanded them only regarding this matter, saying, 'Hear My voice that I may be a G-d unto you and you will be a people unto Me...' "[Note: Most, though not all, congregations will not read this haftarah today but will replace it with the haftarah for Shabbat Ha'gadol.]

Why does the prophet downplay the importance of the sacrifices? Moreover, what is the significance of the fact that Hashem did not command our forefathers "on the day [He] took them out of the land of Egypt" concerning the sacrifices? Didn't He command them regarding the sacrifices when He gave the Torah? R' Shach explains: The purpose of the Exodus was to make us Hashem's nation. Thus we read (Shmot 19:4): "You have seen what I did to Egypt and that I have borne you on the wings of eagles and brought you to Me." As a result of the Exodus, we are charged with coming close to Hashem and with maintaining that closeness.

The Torah's laws, including the laws of the sacrifices, are the tools that Hashem gave us to bring us close to Him. While we are not free to substitute other tools for Hashem's Torah-in any case, no other tools will work- we also should not confuse the tools-the mitzvot-with the goal- being close to Hashem. This is the prophet's message: "Do not confuse the sacrifices, which are the means, with the end." Our sages teach that the Bet Hamikdash was destroyed because our ancestors studied Torah without reciting a blessing, i.e., as a subject rather than as the word of G-d. Mitzvot must be performed with religious feeling, not by rote. This is the lesson of the above verses and the purpose of the Exodus. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Avi Ezri p.14)

"If he shall offer it as a todah / thanksgiving-offering, he shall offer with the todah unleavened loaves... With loaves of leavened bread shall he bring his offering." (7:12-13) The above verses teach that a todah / thanksgiving-offering must be accompanied by loaves of both chametz and matzah. R' Don Yitzchak Abarbanel z"l (15th century) asks: Since the Korban Pesach seems to be, in essence, an offering brought in

thanksgiving for the Exodus, why is it not accompanied by both chametz and matzah?

R' Avraham Shmuel Binyamin Sofer z"l (the "Ketav Sofer"; 19th century) answers that the Korban Pesach is not a todah-offering. Rather, it is more like another set of sacrifices described in our parashah-the inaugural sacrifices brought at the dedication of the mishkan. Those sacrifices were accompanied by matzah, but not by chametz. He explains further: Chazal instructed that when we relate the story of the Exodus at the Seder, we should begin with disgrace, with the fact that our ancestors were idolators, and conclude with praise. Why? This may be understood through a parable: When one gives a garment to a laundry in order to have a stain removed, the laundry applies soaps and chemicals which first make the garment dirtier than it was before. Of course, when the customer pays the laundry, he does not intend to pay for the labor that was expended in dirtying the garment; he intends to pay for the cleaning of the garment.

Similarly, we do not praise Hashem at the Seder for redeeming us from Egypt. Who asked Him to take us to Egypt in the first place? Rather, we praise Hashem because He cleansed the stain of idolatry from our souls. Just as the laundry cleanses the garment with vile chemicals, the process by which Hashem cleansed us was our enslavement in Egypt. It follows, that we do not owe Hashem a debt of gratitude for the Exodus, and the Korban Pesach is not a todah offering. Rather, the Korban Pesach is a sacrifice brought upon our inauguration into Hashem's service. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Ketav Sofer p.18a)

"Take Aharon and his sons with him... Hakhel/Gather the entire assembly to the entrance of the ohel mo'ed / Tent of Meeting." (8:2-3) Rashi writes: "Take Aharon with persuasive words." R' Baruch Sorotzkin z"l (1917-1979; rosh yeshiva of Telz in Cleveland) explains as follows: Being Kohen Gadol means giving up all semblance of a "normal" life. This is a tremendous commitment to ask of a person, even a person of the caliber of Aharon. One has to be persuaded that being Kohen Gadol is the greatest fortune possible, notwithstanding the inconveniences involved. Therefore Moshe had to "take Aharon with persuasive words." To ease Aharon's transition, he was appointed be'hakhel / in an assembly of the entire congregation. Very few mitzvot had to be done be'hakhel, but Aharon's appointment was done before all of the Jewish people so that he would see that they accepted him. A leader who is not accepted by a segment of the people cannot influence the people. (For similar reasons, Pirkei Avot teaches, "Make for yourself a teacher." Only if you accept the teacher upon yourself can he influence you.) (Ha'binah Ve'ha'berachah pp. 216 & 204) © 2006 Rabbi S. Katz & torah.org