

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI MORDECHAI WEISS

The Soul From Within

When analyzing the book of Vayikra, one is faced with perplexing and disturbing questions. Besides the obvious questions as to why the torah devotes so much space to describing these Karbanot (sacrifices) and yet for the past two thousand years these laws have little application or meaning to a practicing Jew- there is also a question of priorities. One only needs to look at the pomp and beauty of the Mishkan (tabernacle) and later the Holy Temples built by King Solomon and later by Ezra and beatified by King Herod, to ask the question; doesn't this gaudiness and pageantry border on arrogance? Do we need a Mishkan made of gold and silver and fine linens to serve G-d? Isn't this display the antitheses of the way a Jew is supposed to live his life?

In the portion of Tizaveh the name of our teacher Moses is not found. Our sages ask the obvious; why wasn't Moshe's name included in this parsha? Many answers are presented. Some say that it is because when praying to G-d for forgiveness for the Jewish people in building the golden calf, Moshe said to G-d that if he won't forgive the Jewish people then G-d should "erase my name from the Torah". Moshe's name is missing because G-d was contemplating these remarks and temporarily deleted his name.

I would like to posit that perhaps the reason that Moshe's name did not appear in the portion of Tizaveh was because for Moshe, the spectacle and the outward appearance of haughtiness demonstrated by the dress of the Kohanim (priests) was foreign and distasteful to him. Moshe was always described as a humble person, one who had no part in conceit or superiority. Perhaps this is why his name is not found. For him all this was objectionable.

Obviously there is a reason for this showiness. Rashi states that it is not for our sake as much as it is to glorify almighty G-d. "Zeh Keli Vanvehu" This is my G-d and I will extol him".

But gold and silver alone can never exalt the name of G-d. There must be longing and a love- a neshama -that is also part of the picture. When the Torah states "Vasu li Mikdash vshachanti bitocham," "and I will make for you a sanctuary and I will dwell amongst you" our sages note the disparity in the language. Grammatically it should have written "I will

make for you a Sanctuary and I will dwell within it? Why does it say that I will dwell "within them?"

Our Sages respond that the language brings home the point that the sanctuary alone has no meaning unless it dwells within each person. We must have the Proper Kavannah (intent and thoughts) and soul for the Sanctuary to have any meaning. It must be "betocham" within us! Often the prophets rebuke the Jewish people by saying "Why do I need your sacrifices saith the L-rd". For if there is no intent then one's sacrifices are worthless!

The Jewish home is also called a Sanctuary. On the outside it must appear beautiful and special. But if there is no warmth and love, if there is no caring and sensitivity on the inside, then it can be equated to an empty shell.

Interestingly, if we take the numerical value (gemmatiah) of the word "Mikdash"(sanctuary) we will come to a value of 444 (Mem=40 + Kuf=100 + Daled=4 + Shin=300). If we take the value of the letters in the word "Bayit" (house) we will come up to the numerical value of 412 (Bet=2 + Yud=10 + Taf=400). The difference between the two words is 32. Thirty two is the numerical value of the word "Lev" heart (Lamed=30 + Bet=2). It is also the first and last letters of our Torah (Bet in Bereshit and Lamed in Yisrael).

The message that perhaps is indicated is that our homes are also a sanctuary. However, it is of little value and importance unless we infuse it with heart and sensitivity (lev) and the words and the dictums of our Holy Torah (the bet and the Lamed). Then we will be successful in imparting to the next generation the beauty of our traditions.

The pageantry and the beauty of the Mishkan and the Temple were only effective if the hearts of the Jewish people were bound up in sincerity. And the pageantry and the beauty of our homes are only meaningful if it reflects the depth and splendor of our hearts and souls. © Copyright 2009. Rabbi Mordechai Weiss is the Principal of the Bess and Paul Sigel Hebrew Academy of Greater Hartford. Any comments may be emailed to him at Ravmordechai@aol.com.

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

When we last left Moshe, at the end of Parashas Pekuday, he wasn't able to get into the Mishkan because G-d's divine presence had filled it

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(Shemos 40:35). As I discussed last week, there are two basic approaches as to why Moshe was unable to enter the Mishkan. Some Midrashim (e.g. Tanchuma Vayikra 1) and commentators (e.g. Rabbeinu Avraham ben HaRambam) explain that although Moshe was physically able to enter the Mishkan even when G-d's presence was there, he was so full of awe that he was afraid to go in. Others (see Rashi and Rashbam, as well as numerous others) maintain that it was physically impossible for Moshe to enter while the cloud that contained G-d's divine presence was there. We know that Moshe eventually did get in (see Bamidbar 7:89), either because he overcame his fear (after G-d's cajoling) or because G-d vacated the part of the Mishkan that Moshe entered. Parashas Vayikra begins with this transition from Moshe being unable to enter the Mishkan to his being inside. "And He called to Moshe, and G-d spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting (a.k.a. the Mishkan), saying" (Vayikra 1:1).

If Moshe's inability to enter was based on his fear of entering (and not that he was literally unable to), the transition is simple: G-d "calls" to Moshe, tells him that it's okay for him to come in, and Moshe does.

If the reason Moshe couldn't enter was because he couldn't do so while G-d's divine presence was there, this "calling" could simply be G-d letting Moshe know that it was okay to come in now, a sort of "all clear." As the Rashbam puts it, "because it is written above, at the end of the book (of Shemos), 'and Moshe was unable to enter the Tent of Meeting,' therefore G-d called to him from inside the Tent of Meeting. And this is how to understand the verse: 'And He called to Moshe from the Tent of Meeting and He spoke to him saying,' [with] 'from the Tent [of Meeting]' going on 'and He called,' similar to 'and G-d called to him from the mountain saying' (Shemos 19:3), [and similar to] 'and he heard the voice speaking to him from upon the Kapores (the covering of the Ark)' (Bamidbar 7:89), [i.e.] from above the Kapores he heard the voice. Here too, he heard the voice from the Tent [of Meeting], similar to 'And G-d called to him from inside the bush' (Shemos 3:4)."

It seems rather straightforward; Moshe can't get in because G-d is there, so G-d limits Himself to the "kodesh hakadashim," clearing the way for Moshe to be able to enter the "kodesh." Once He has made room for

Moshe, G-d calls him in, telling him that it's now okay to enter. Since Rashi had given a similar explanation as to why Moshe couldn't get in and how he was eventually able to enter, we would have expected a similar explanation for the transition as well. However, Rashi's comments on the first verse in Vayikra preclude that.

For one thing, Rashi says that nobody but Moshe heard G-d's voice, since it did not travel outside the Mishkan. If so, Moshe must have already been inside to have heard what G-d was saying, leaving us wondering how Moshe knew it was okay to enter. Also, Rashi had previously told us (Shemos 25:22), and will tell us again later (Bamidbar 7:89), that the expression "Tent of Meeting" (at least in regards to where Moshe heard G-d's voice) refers specifically to the "kodesh," not the "kodesh hakadashim." If G-d spoke to Moshe "from the Tent of Meeting," His presence must have still been there, making it impossible for Moshe to enter (yet). How could G-d be telling Moshe that it was okay to come in inside if (a) His voice didn't travel outside the Mishkan and/or (b) G-d's divine presence was still there?

There is one more issue that must be addressed before we try to understand the way Rashi understood this verse. Besides telling us that not even Aharon was able to hear G-d when He spoke to Moshe (even when we are told that G-d spoke to both Moshe and Aharon, as in these instances too only Moshe heard it before telling it to Aharon in G-d's name), Rashi tells us that no one heard G-d call to Moshe, and then tells us again that no one could hear G-d speak to Moshe since His voice never left the Mishkan. Why did Rashi need to tell us this twice? If G-d's voice never traveled outside the Mishkan, obviously nobody outside the Mishkan could hear it.

Much has been written on Rashi's commentary on the first verse in Vayikra, including trying to address these issues. There would seem to be a very straightforward way to understand Rashi, and Baruch Hashem several of the commentaries on Rashi either say so explicitly (see Levush Ha'orah) or strongly imply it (see Maskil Ledovid, Nachalas Yaakov and Tzaidah Laderech). Unlike the Rashbam, Rashi understood our verse to have two separate parts. First G-d "called to Moshe," a calling that Rashi tells us was a sign of G-d's affection for Moshe, one that preceded every "speech" that G-d said to him. This "calling," with G-d saying "Moshe, Moshe," was how Moshe knew that G-d wanted to speak to him, and was his signal to go to the Mishkan. This was true throughout the years in the desert, but especially true now, when G-d called Moshe and told him that it was okay to enter despite his being unable to do so until now. Moshe was outside the Mishkan, and was called into it. But, as Rashi tells us, even though Moshe heard G-d call to him while outside the Mishkan, no one else was able to hear this calling.

These first three words were the transition, when Moshe was called into the Mishkan from outside.

Once Moshe was inside, the actual "dibur," message that G-d wanted to tell Moshe, began. G-d's voice originated from above the Kapores, but Moshe heard it while standing in the "kodesh" (as Rashi says explicitly on Shemos 25:22 and Bamidbar 7:89). The sound of G-d's voice was loud and powerful, but miraculously stopped at the doorway of the Mishkan, so that no one outside the Mishkan could hear it. No one could hear when G-d called Moshe when he was outside the Mishkan, and no one heard G-d's powerful voice when He was giving Moshe commandments inside the Mishkan.

We have our transition (G-d calling Moshe in) and no repetition (G-d speaking to Moshe after he comes in), all in one verse. © 2009 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“When the President shall sin... atonement must be made and he shall be forgiven" (Lev 4:22,26)

A story is told about a teenager from a secular American family who, after a number of years of living in Israel and growing more and more fascinated with the law and lore of hassidim, decided to become observant. Although the family had been living in Israel for nearly five years, the boy's mother still prepared a stuffed-turkey dinner replete with pumpkin pie and cranberry sauce in honor of the American Thanksgiving holiday.

Wanting to honor his parents as well as keep the laws of the Torah, our enthusiastic baal tshuvah approached his Meah Shearim trained, tenth-generation Jerusalemite Rebbe: "I'm sorry," the boy stammered "and perhaps my question is out of place, but am I required to recite the ya'ale ve'yavo prayer on Thanksgiving if I am celebrating it with my family?" The Rebbe looked confused. "What is Thanksgiving?" he asked his new-found hassid. The young man decided to seek his answer elsewhere, and so he returned to the government secular high school he'd recently attended and approached a very knowledgeable history teacher, a teacher whose classes had once been the highlight of his day, partly because he had an advanced degree from America and was an expert in American culture. "I'm sorry," the young man asked, "but might you know if one must say the ya'ale veyavo prayers on Thanksgiving?" The amused instructor, who had come to expect virtually anything from his former enthusiastic and irrepressible student, was confused by the Hebrew term. "What's ya'ale ve'yavo?," he asked. The student was frustrated but not deterred. A government minister who lived in his town just happened to be arriving home from the Knesset. Our student breathlessly ran up to him, almost poking his body-guard in the eye, "I'm

sorry," he began, "but perhaps someone as important as you might know. Do observant Jews say ya'ale ve'yavo on Thanksgiving?' The Israeli minister seemed perplexed. Scratching his forehead, he asked, "What's 'I'm sorry'?"

For those of us who live in Israel this story is too close to home to be amusing. It has been almost four years since we forced the good and brave pioneers of Gush Katif to leave their homes and jobs for the sake of the peace which our unilateral disengagement from Gaza was supposed to have brought us - and all we got was Hamas, Al Qaeda, Kassam rockets in Sderot and Ashkelon, and thousands of still homeless and unemployed Israeli citizens. And still no Israeli politician has said, "I'm sorry." The highest office in the land appointed and/or retained incompetent ministers and military leadership which led to the first war we lost since 1948 - but still no word of apology. Scandal and sexual corruption has been found in our most exalted offices - but no one admits his guilt.

And as usual, the timeless and timely festivals and Biblical portions of the week cry out with a message to which everyone must pay heed - especially our "leaders."

Obviously, admission of guilt, an honest confrontation with oneself, is painfully difficult. Were it not so, confession would not count as the very definition of repentance (Maimonides, Laws of Repentance, 1,1). But only after the individual honestly faces his weaknesses and hypocrisies can the process of healing and repair actually begin. And this is what emerges from this week's portion of Vayikra. In Biblical times the individual would bring special sin offerings if he transgressed - but a sin offering without individual heart-felt repentance was not only meaningless but considered an abomination by G-d. In fact, what distinguished Judaism from all its 'competitors' were the prophets' declarations that ritual punctiliousness without moral rectitude were useless acts beneath contempt (Isaiah 1).

After the Bible sets the stage by informing us that human beings will -- of necessity-sin (Lev. 4:1,2), (it's built into the complex animal-angel nature of the human personality), the very first sinner to be singled out is the High-Priest himself, the most exalted religious personality in Israel, the guardian of the Holy Temple.

Apparently, our Bible does not recognize one scintilla of "papal infallibility;" the Bible even emphasizes that "if the High Priest will sin, it is a transgression upon the whole nation," a sacrilegious blotch on our national escutcheon (4:3, Rashi as loc.). On the great white fast of the Day of Forgiveness (Yom Kippur), the first individual to confess his guilt and request purification is the High Priest. Indeed, the first word to escape the mouth of our most sacred and exalted human being on the most sacred and exalted

day of the year is "Anna," please, oh, woe, a cry of personal and human anguish (as explained by my revered teacher, R. Joseph Dov Soloveitchik).

The next in line for admission of guilt is the Sanhedrin, the Highest Court in the land, the Keepers of the Divine law. When the lawmakers sin in judgment, all of Israel automatically sins, because they-the-judges- are entrusted with seeing that justice is done throughout society. The elders of the congregation as well as the High Priest must share in the guilt of the Sanhedrin, because they should have prevented the travesty of an unfit judiciary (Lev. 4:13,15,16)

And the third person to be singled out for confession and atonement is the Prince (Nasi), the Ruler, the President, the Prime Minister. Amazingly, whereas the Bible uses the word "if" (Hebrew im) regarding the transgression of the High Priest and the Sanhedrin, it uses the word "when" (Hebrew asher) regarding the Nasi, the President, the Prime Minister. Why is the number-one wielder of power most likely to fall prey to sin? Is it because he comes to believe that he is above the law, that what is good for him is automatically good for the State? Is it because he must rely on popular support, so he may fall prey to giving the people not what they need but what they want, to acting not in accordance with what is right but in accordance with the latest opinion poll (Meshekh Hakhma, ad loc)? The Bible doesn't quite tell us, but it does say that he is the most vulnerable.

A fascinating difference in the behavior of two leaders can be discerned from events described in the Book of Samuel. On a particular occasion King Saul does not wait for Samuel, the great judge and prophet of his generation, to begin the public sacrifice, and ends up losing his kingdom (1 Samuel 13). King David commits adultery and then sends Bathsheba's husband to the front lines of battle to die, yet lives to become the progenitor of the messianic line of the Davidic dynasty. (2 Samuel 12). Why?

Saul attempted to justify himself and blame the nation, whereas King David admitted his guilt and wept before the prophet and G-d. Rashi (Lev. 4:22) links the Hebrew "asher" ("when" the nasi sins) to the Hebrew "ashrei," fortunate: "fortunate is the generation whose nasi puts his heart and mind towards seeking forgiveness for his sins." Those in high office who are too high and mighty to seek forgiveness certainly ought to be brought down a few notches by those very laws they seem to have haughtily disregarded. © 2009 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

There is very little narrative present in the entire chumash of Vayikra which we begin to read publicly in the synagogue this Shabat. The

chumash of Vayikra is also called Torat Kohanim because of the laws of the Mishkan/Temple service, the duties of the kohanim, the laws of ritual purity and impurity, and the detailed descriptions of the sacrifices offered in the Mishkan/Temple.

To many people these laws and details are anachronistic if not even completely not understandable in the context of our present world and its society. Yet all of the words of the Torah are eternal and all have value to everyone at any given moment in human time.

Therefore I think that it becomes obvious that the Torah here shows us that there is a world that requires sacrifices and is influenced somehow by the offering of those sacrifices. It is also a world where ritual purity and impurity matter greatly and have profound influence over human life and society.

In this alternative world that we sense exists, and we are sometimes able to have a glimpse of, the chumash of Vayikra reigns supreme. In that basically unseen world all of the laws of Vayikra matter greatly.

The chumash of Vayikra comes to remind us of our limitations, both mental and spiritual, and that we must be able to accept the fact that we cannot always fathom G-d's motives in commanding us to behave or not to behave in a certain fashion. The chumash of Vayikra is not meant to confuse and unnerve us. Rather, it is meant to humble us.

Human beings always wish to be in control. But life blindsides at unexpected moments and in unpredictable ways. The experiences of life only reveal to us how powerless and irrational we really are. There is very little that we are actually able to control.

Therefore human beings always long for solutions and answers that emanate from the occult - from another world of being, the existence of which we are only dimly aware. So here we have the rub. The Torah is unalterably opposed to magic, superstitions, and appeals to spirits. So how do we square that strict approach with the presence of all of these laws in Vayikra that obviously rely for their relevance and strength of purpose on the existence of another unseen world?

The answer lies in our understanding that all of the words of the Torah are to be first taken at face value and that the ultimate reason for obedience to those Torah laws is the fact that we were commanded to do so. Many times the correct answer to the ubiquitous question of "Why?" is "Because!"

All parents apply this rule of life at numerous times while attempting to raise their children in a proper fashion. The Lord for His own reasons, so to speak, employs this same method when dealing with the Jewish people who had already previously pledged allegiance to the Torah and its values. The chumash Vayikra is a prime example of this axiom of Jewish life. © 2009 *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*

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RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Our parsha informs us that the priests' first task of the day was to remove the ashes from the offering sacrificed the previous day. (Leviticus 6:3) Is there any significance to this being the priests first order of business with which to start the day?

Samson Raphael Hirsch suggests that this mandate serves as a constant reminder that service of the new day is connected to the service of the previous day. After all, it was the ashes from the remains of yesterday's sacrifice that had to be removed. In one word: even as we move forward in time and deal with new situations and conditions it is crucial to remember that all that is being done is anchored in a past steeped with religious significance and commitment.

Another theme comes to mind. Just as a small portion of every food grown in Israel must be given to the priest (terumah), so is the priest responsible to remove the last remains of the sacrificial service (terumat ha-deshen). Thus, the entire eating and sacrificial experience is sanctified through a beginning or ending ritual. Terumah elevates the food as we give its first portion to the priest; terumat ha-deshen elevates the sacrifice as the kohen maintains contact even with the remains of the sacrificial parts. Not coincidentally, the portion given to the priest and the ashes removed by the priest are given similar names-terumah and terumat ha-deshen-as the word terumah comes from the word ruam, to lift.

One last thought. The priest begins the day by removing the ashes to illustrate the importance of his remaining involved with the mundane. Too often, those who rise to important lofty positions, separate themselves from the people and withdraw from the everyday menial tasks. The Torah through the laws of terumat ha-deshen insists it shouldn't be this way.

A story reflects this point. A few years ago a husband and wife appeared before Rabbi Gifter, Rosh Yeshiva of Tels, asking him to rule on a family dispute. The husband, a member of Rabbi Gifter's kollel (an all day Torah learning program) felt that as one who studied Torah it was beneath his dignity to take out the garbage. His wife felt otherwise. Rabbi Gifter concluded that while the husband should in fact help his wife he had not religio-legal obligation to remove the refuse.

The next morning, before the early services, the Rosh Yeshiva knocked at the door of the young couple. Startled, the young man asked Rabbi Gifter in. No, responded Rabbi Gifter, I've not come to socialize but to take out your garbage. You may believe it's beneath your dignity, but it's not beneath mine.

And that may be the deepest message of terumat ha-deshen. © 2009 Hebrrew 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 DOVID SIEGEL

Haftorah

This week's haftorah displays Hashem's unbelievable compassion for the Jewish people.

The prophet Yeshaya begins by characterizing the Jewish people as the nation created to sing the praises of Hashem. Yeshaya continues and says in the name of Hashem, (43:22) "And you didn't even include Me for you were too tired for My service." The Yalkut Shimoni (as loc) explains this passage to refer to our inappropriate attitude towards the service of Hashem.

Chazal (our Sages) say that one exerts enormous energies throughout the day in pursuit of self advancement and yet he is unwilling to exert even minimal energy for the sake of Hashem. One returns home after a long tiresome day of work and neglects attending davening with the "valid" excuse that he's too tired. Hashem says that I wasn't even included in your plans. Energies were available for everything besides My service, the purpose for which you were created.

The prophet continues to reprimand the Jewish people, and says, "You did not bring Me your sheep for burnt offerings and you didn't honor Me with your sacrifices. I didn't overwork you with a meal offering and didn't exhaust you with frankincense spice." Chazal (ibid) elaborated on this passage and explained that all Hashem ever demanded from the Jewish people on a daily basis was the Tamid sacrifice consisting of two sheep. In fact, even the easiest of all offerings, the meal offering was not an obligation but rather a special opportunity to serve Hashem if one so desired. And yet the Jewish people refused to participate in these services. The Radak (ad loc) notes that in the days of King Achaz there were altars in every corner of Yerushalayim for the purpose of idolatry. But the Bais Hamikdash doors were intentionally closed and Hashem was totally excluded from the Jewish services. The Jews were just too tired to serve Hashem although energy was available for every other form of service.

The prophet suddenly shifts gears and begins to address the Jewish people with love and affection. He says, (42:1) "And listen now, My servant Yaakov whom I chose as Yisroel...for as I pour water on the thirsty and flowing waters on the dry land so will I pour My spirit on your children and My blessing on your offspring." Radak (ad loc) explains that the prophet is now speaking to the Jewish people in Babylonia. They had already suffered severe pains of exile and rejection by Hashem and had now reconsidered their previous ways. They thirsted to drink from the long lost waters of prophecy which had ended many years before. Hashem told them that they would once again merit the word of Hashem. Although they had turned their back

to Hashem and totally rejected His service Hashem did not forsake His people. The Jewish people would always remain His chosen nation and Hashem would patiently await their return. Our eternal relationship with Hashem can never be severed or even affected and when the proper moment will arrive Hashem will reestablish direct contact with His beloved people. Even words of prophecy coming directly from Hashem will become a daily experience. Hashem's love for His people extends all bounds. Even after all we have done against Hashem He remains right there waiting for us.

Yeshaya concludes and says (44:22) "As the wind blows away the clouds so will I erase your rebellious acts and unintentional sins, return to me for I have redeemed you." The Malbim (ad loc) shares with us a beautiful insight and explains that as far as Hashem is concerned our redemption already happened. From His perspective everything has been set in motion; all that remains is for us to repent and return. May we merit in this month, the month of redemption, the fulfillment of these beautiful visions.
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MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Yehoshua Shapira, Rosh Yeshivat Ramat Gan; Translated by Moshe Goldberg

For many generations the custom has been to begin teaching young children with the first verses of the Torah portion of Vayikra: "Let the pure ones come and be involved with pure matters." Some educators are not happy with this because they feel that there is a great par between the world of the sacrifices and the world of children. As far as they are concerned, even when the children are older this study is often problematic, why should the study of the Torah begin with these concepts?

However, wherever the suggestion of the Midrash is observed in a simple way the process has been very successful. It turns out that the children are very fond of these passages. The questions and difficulties that grownups might feel do not seem to trouble them at all. They tend to be enthralled by the details of the service in the Temple and by the high spiritual level achieved by the nation of Yisrael at the height of its glory. Their hearts light up when they learn about the pilgrims to Jerusalem who come to see and be seen at the holy site, while also paying attention to the flesh and blood involved in the visit. All of these elements become deeply engraved in their very souls.

The purity of the sacrifices stems from the fact that they provide a full and complete expression of attachment of the nation of Yisrael to the Almighty. Flesh and blood, exemplified by such sacrifices as the Toda, the Chatat, and the Asham, are a combination of the material and the spiritual, at a time of enhanced spirit as well as at a time of downfall. On the other

hand, the purity of Yisrael is a consequence of their deep-felt and general attachment to the purity of the Temple and the sacrifices.

The sages showed their appreciation for Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Gamla, who established Torah schools in the nation, specifically because he started the project in Jerusalem, based on the verse, "Torah will emanate from Zion and the word of G-d from Jerusalem" [Yeshayahu 2:3]. As Tosafot added, "Because he would see a great holiness in the involvement of the Kohanim in the service, the child could turn towards the fear of heaven and the study of Torah."

The foundation of Yisrael's purity and the fear of heaven, the cornerstones of the study of Torah and the observation of the mitzvot, are based on the relationship to the holiness of the Kohanim who perform the holy service. As adults, we have already been exposed to all types of foreign influences, and we have therefore moved away from this wonderful world against our will, but our children do not yet suffer from this problem. Their souls are still wide open, their basic purity has not yet been defiled by the complexities of adult life. They have something that we do not have, in that we find it difficult to study this material in a simple way. But they can study these passages and be struck by their basic charm.

Therefore, what is really important is to fulfill the verse, "from the mouths of the very young and the suckling children You have established the power" [Tehillim 8:3]. We must put our questions aside and purify ourselves before we begin our involvement with the pure children and their study of purity. We must believe with our entire heart in the ability of the holy breath of those who have not sinned to link the past and the future, to develop a brand of Torah that will renew our glory and our splendor as in the days of old. Let the purity of the children help lead us to a higher level of purity of our own.

RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ

Shabbat Shalom Weekly

The Torah gives instructions for offering various types of flour offerings prepared in different manners: "And if you bring near a flour offering baked in the oven... and if your offering is a flour offering baked in a pan... and if your offering is a flour offering baked in a pot..." (Leviticus 2:4,5,7).

What is the deeper meaning behind each of these different offerings?

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains: The Mincha, flour offering, expresses our appreciation to the Almighty for our happiness in life. Minchat solet, the fine flour offering, has many forms of preparations to focus us on appreciating from the basic necessities of life to the wonderful "extras" with which we have been blessed.

The offerings are baked in an oven, a pan and a pot corresponding to bread, cake and specially prepared dishes. Bread (ma'afeh tanur) is ordinary food, a necessity for happy daily life. Cake (machavat) signifies the extra enjoyment, the historically unusual condition of luxury. The specially prepared dish (marcheset) is for a special occasion, the temporary, passing moment of a unique joy. Our lesson: focus and appreciate each and every thing in our lives as a gift from the Almighty, Who loves us and cares for us! *based on Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin © 2009 Rabbi K. Packouz and aish.com*

RABBI JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

Vayikra is about sacrifices, and though these laws have been inoperative for almost 2000 years since the destruction of the Temple, the moral principles they embody are still challenging.

One set of sacrifices, set out in detail in this week's sedra, warrants particular attention: hattat, the 'sin offering'. Four different cases are considered: the anointed priest (=high priest), the assembly (=the Sanhedrin or supreme court), the Prince (=King), and an ordinary individual. Because their roles in the community were different, so too was the form of their atonement.

The sin offering was to be brought only for major sins, those that carried the penalty of karet, 'being cut off'; and only if they were committed unintentionally or inadvertently (be-shogeg). This could happen in one of two ways, either [a] because the person concerned did not know the law (for example, that cooking is forbidden on Sabbath) or [b] he or she did not know the facts (for instance, that today is the Sabbath).

Unintentional sins stand midway between intentional sins (where you knew what you were doing was wrong) and involuntary action (ones, where you were not acting freely at all: it was a reflex action, or someone was pointing a gun at your head). Intentional sins cannot be atoned for by sacrifice. Involuntary actions do not need atonement. Thus, the sin offering is confined to a middle range of cases, where you did wrong, but you didn't know you were doing wrong.

The question is obvious: Why should unintentional sins require atonement at all? What guilt is involved? The sinner did not mean to sin. The requisite intent (mens rea) was lacking. Had the offender known the facts and the law at the time, he would not have done what he did. Why then does he have to undergo a process of atonement? To this, the commentators gave a variety of answers.

R. Samson Raphael Hirsch and R. David Zvi Hoffman give the most straightforward explanation. Ignorance - whether of the facts or the law - is a form of negligence. We should know the law, especially in the

most serious cases. We should also exercise vigilance: we should know what we are doing. That is a fundamental obligation, especially in relation to the most serious areas of conduct.

Abrabanel argues that the sin offering was less a punishment for what had been done, than a solemn warning against sin in the future. The bringing of a sacrifice, involving considerable effort and expense, was a vivid reminder to the individual to be more careful in the future.

Nahmanides suggests that the sin offering was brought not because of what led to the act, but rather because of what followed from it. Sin, even without intention, defiles. 'The reason for the offerings for the erring soul is that all sins [even if committed unwittingly] produce a "stain" on the soul and constitute a blemish in it, and the soul is only worthy to be received by its Creator when it is pure of all sin.'

The late Lubavitcher Rebbe, following midrashic tradition, offered a fourth interpretation. Even inadvertent sins testify to something wrong on the part of the person concerned. Bad things do not come about through good people. The sages said that G-d does not allow even the animals of the righteous to do wrong; how much more so does He protect the righteous themselves from error and mishap (see Yevamot 99b; Ketubot 28b). There must therefore have been something wrong with the individual for the mishap to have taken place.

This view - characteristic of the Habad approach, with its emphasis on the psychology of the religious life - shares more than a passing similarity with Sigmund Freud's analysis of the unconscious, which gave rise to the phrase, 'a Freudian slip'. Remarks or acts that seem unintentional often betray unconscious desires or motives. Indeed, we can often glimpse the unconscious more readily at such moments than when the person is acting in full knowledge and deliberation. Inadvertent sins suggest something amiss in the soul of the sinner. It is this fault, which may lie beneath the threshold of consciousness, which is atoned for by the hattat.

Whichever explanation we follow, the hattat represents an idea familiar in law but strangely unfamiliar in Western ethics. Our acts make a difference to the world.

Under the influence of Immanuel Kant, we have come to think that all that matters as far as morality is concerned is the will. If our will is good, then we are good, regardless of what we actually do. We are judged by our intentions, not our deeds. Judaism does recognise the difference between good will and bad. That is why deliberate sins cannot be atoned for by a sacrifice, whereas unintentional ones can.

Yet the very fact that unintentional sins require atonement tells us that we cannot dissociate ourselves from our actions by saying: 'I didn't mean to do it.'

Wrong was done - and it was done by us. Therefore we must perform an act that signals our contrition. We cannot just walk away as if the act had nothing to do with us.

Many years ago a secular Jewish novelist said to me: 'Isn't Judaism full of guilt?' To which I replied, 'Yes, but it is also full of forgiveness.' The entire institution of the sin offering is about forgiveness. However, Judaism makes a serious moral statement when it refuses to split the human person into two entities - body and soul, act and intention, objective and subjective, the world 'out there' and the world 'in here'. Kant did just that. All that matters morally, he argued, is what happens 'in here', in the soul.

Is it entirely accidental that the culture most influenced by Kant was also the one that gave rise to the Holocaust? I do not mean - Heaven forbid - that the sage of Konigsberg was in any way responsible for that tragedy. Yet it remains the case that many good and decent people did nothing to protest the single greatest crime of man against man while it was taking place. Many of them surely thought that it had nothing to do with them. If they bore the Jews no particular ill will, why should they feel guilty? Yet the result of their action or inaction had real consequences in the physical world. A culture that confines morality to the mind is one that lacks an adequate defence against harmful behaviour.

The sin offering reminds us that the wrong we do, or let happen, even if we did not intend it, still requires atonement. Unfashionable though this is, a morality that speaks about action, not just intention - about what happens through us even if we didn't mean to do it - is more compelling, more true to the human situation, than one that speaks of intention alone.
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RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

The very first Passuk in Sefer Vayikra (Leviticus) describes G-d calling Moshe to tell him about all the different offerings that needed to be brought, and how they should be done. The last letter in the word "Vayikra" (which means "called") was written smaller than the rest (the Alef). Why is this letter shrunk? Furthermore, why is the whole book called Vayikra, "And He called"?

Most commentaries explain that Moshe didn't want to make a big deal out of the fact that G-d called him and no one else, and therefore wanted to use the same word without the last letter, which would still have the same meaning, but wouldn't be as affectionate a greeting. This shows us the great sensitivity and humility that Moshe had. Rabeinu Yonah offers us an insight into humility and human nature, by explaining that some people who feel that they are lacking in a quality or in knowledge often compensate for it by

lowering others, thereby making themselves seem like they're better by comparison. Moshe was the greatest prophet, but he was also the humblest because he was confident in himself and in his abilities, and didn't need to lower others, even indirectly.

But there's an even more blatant message Moshe is sending us: The one letter he chose to shrink was the "Alef", which is the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet...The very FIRST thing we have to realize is that even though Moshe was a great person, he sought to downplay it by shrinking that letter. But there's yet ANOTHER hidden hint for us in this word: The letter that's shrunk, Alef, actually has a meaning as a word! It means "to teach". The message being taught to us is clear... The first and most important lesson in life is to recognize our egos, and work on not letting it control us. Whenever we get angry, it's because our ego is telling us that we deserve something. The second lesson is that instead of lowering others to make us LOOK better, we should raise our own standards, and BECOME better. And finally, the last lesson is to take these lessons and teach and share them with someone else. © 2009 by Rabbi S. Ressler & LeLamed, Inc.

RABBI SHLOMO KATZ

Hama'ayan

“Baruch Ha'Makom!" / "Blessed is the Omnipresent! Blessed is He! Blessed is the One Who has given the Torah to His people, Yisrael! Blessed is He! Concerning four sons does the Torah speak..." (From the Pesach Haggadah)

Why does the Haggadah introduce the passage about the "Four Sons" with a blessing over the gift of Torah? R' Moshe Yisrael Feldman z"l (rabbi of Dragomiresti, Hungary; killed in the Holocaust) explains: The mishnah (Eduyot Ch. 2) teaches that wisdom is hereditary. If so, how is it possible for one person to have four sons like the Four Sons of the Haggadah: a wise son, a wicked son, a simple son, and a son who does not know how to ask? The answer may be found in the teaching of the gemara (Nedarim 81a):

"Why is it rare for Torah scholars to have sons who are Torah scholars? Because they do not recite the blessings over the Torah first thing [in the morning]." [The Mefarsh / Anonymous Commentary on Nedarim explains that the Torah scholars referred to are in such a hurry to return to their studies when they awaken that they neglect to recite the blessings, including the prayer, "May we and our descendants... be students of Your Torah."]

Says R' Feldman: Now, as we are about to speak of the Four Sons, we remind ourselves to recite the blessings over the Torah, lest our sons grow up to be as different as these four. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Shem Yisrael) © 2002 by Rabbi S. Katz & Project Genesis, Inc.