

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

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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. © 2009 Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

**TORAS AISH IS A WEEKLY PARSHA
NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTED VIA EMAIL
AND THE WEB AT WWW.AISHDAS.ORG/TA.
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RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

Leaders make mistakes. That is inevitable. So, strikingly, our parsha implies. The real issue is how he or she responds to those mistakes.

The point is made by the Torah in a very subtle way. Our parsha deals with sin offerings to be brought when people have made mistakes. The technical term for this is shegagah, meaning inadvertent wrongdoing. (Lev 4:1-35) You did something, not knowing it was forbidden, either because you forgot or did not know the law, or because you were unaware of certain facts. You may, for instance, have carried something in a public place on Shabbat, either because you did not know it was forbidden to carry, or because you forgot it was Shabbat.

The Torah prescribes different sin offerings, depending on who made the mistake. It enumerates four categories. First is the High Priest, second is "the whole community" (understood to mean the great Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court), a third is "the leader" (nasi), and the fourth is an ordinary individual.

In three of the four cases, the law is introduced by the word im, "if" -- if such a person commits a sin. In the case of the leader, however, the law is prefaced by the word asher, "when." It is possible that a High Priest, the Supreme Court or an individual may err. But in the case of a leader, it is probable or even certain. Leaders make mistakes. It is the occupational hazard of their role. Talking about the sin of a nasi, the Torah uses the word "when," not "if."

Nasi is the generic word for a leader: a ruler, king, judge, elder or prince. Usually it refers to the

holder of political power. In Mishnaic times, the Nasi, the most famous of whom were leaders from the family of Hillel, had a quasi-governmental role as representative of the Jewish people to the Roman government. Rabbi Moses Sofer (Bratislava, 1762-1839) in one of his responsa (Orach Chayyim, 12) examines the question of why, when positions of Torah leadership are never dynastic, passed from father to son, the role of Nasi was an exception. Often it did pass from father to son. The answer he gives, and it is historically insightful, is that with the decline of monarchy in the Second Temple period and thereafter, the Nasi took on many of the roles of a king. His role, internally and externally, was as much political and diplomatic as religious. That in general is what is meant by the word Nasi.

Why does the Torah consider this type of leadership particularly prone to error? The commentators offer three possible explanations. R. Ovadiah Sforno cites the phrase "But Yeshurun waxed fat, and kicked" (Deut. 32:15). Those who have advantages over others, whether of wealth or power, can lose their moral sense. Rabbenu Bachya agrees, suggesting that rulers tend to become arrogant and haughty. Implicit in these commentators -- it is in fact a major theme of Tenakh as a whole -- is the idea later stated by Lord Acton in the aphorism, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." (This famous phrase comes from a letter written by Lord Acton in 1887. See Martin H. Manser, and Rosalind Fergusson, *The Facts on File Dictionary of Proverbs*, New York, Facts on File, 2002, 225.)

R. Elie Munk, citing the Zohar, offers a second explanation. The High Priest and the Sanhedrin were in constant contact with the holy. They lived in a world of ideals. The king or political ruler, by contrast, was involved in secular affairs: war and peace, the administration of government, and international relations. He was more likely to sin because his day to day concerns were not religious but pragmatic. (R. Elie Munk, *The Call of the Torah, Vayikra*, New York, Mesorah, 1992, 33)

R. Meir Simcha ha-Cohen of Dvinsk (Meshekh Chokhmah to Lev. 4:21-22) points out that a king was especially vulnerable to being led astray by popular sentiment. Neither a priest nor a judge in the Sanhedrin were answerable to the people. The king, however, relied on popular support. Without that he could be deposed. But this is laden with risk. Doing what the people want is not always doing what G-d wants. That, R. Meir Simcha argues, is what led David to order a census (2 Samuel 24), and Zedekiah to ignore the advice of Jeremiah and rebel against the king of Babylon (2 Chronicles 36). Thus, for a whole series of reasons, a political leader is more exposed to temptation and error than a priest or judge.

There are further reasons. (This, needless to say, is not the plain sense of the text. The sins for which

leaders brought an offering were spiritual offences, not errors of political judgment.) One is that politics is an arena of conflict. It deals in matters -- specifically wealth and power -- that are in the short term zero-sum games. The more I have, the less you have. Seeking to maximise the benefits to myself or my group, I come into conflict with others who seek to maximise benefits to themselves or their group. The politics of free societies is always conflict-ridden. The only societies where there is no conflict are tyrannical or totalitarian ones in which dissenting voices are suppressed -- and Judaism is a standing protest against tyranny. So in a free society, whatever course a politician takes, it will please some and anger others. From this, there is no escape.

Politics involves difficult judgements. A leader must balance competing claims, and will sometimes get it wrong. One example -- one of the most fateful in Jewish history -- occurred after the death of King Solomon. People came to his son and successor, Rehoboam, complaining that Solomon had imposed unsustainable burdens on the population, particularly during the building of the Temple. Led by Jeroboam, they asked the new king to reduce the burden. Rehoboam asked his father's counsellors for advice. They told him to concede to the people's demand. Serve them, they said, and they will serve you. Rehoboam however turned to his own friends, who told him the opposite. Reject the request. Show the people you are a strong leader who cannot be intimidated. (1 Kings 12:1-15)

It was disastrous advice, and the result was tragic. The kingdom split in two, the ten northern tribes following Jeroboam, leaving only the southern tribes, generically known as "Judah," loyal to the king. For Israel as a people in its own land, it was the beginning of the end. Always a small people surrounded by large and powerful empires, it needed unity, high morale and a strong sense of destiny to survive. Divided, it was only a matter of time before both nations, Israel in the north, Judah in the south, fell to other powers.

The reason leaders -- as opposed to judges and priests -- cannot avoid making mistakes is that there is no textbook that infallibly teaches you how to lead. Priests and judges follow laws. For leadership there are no laws because every situation is unique. As Isaiah Berlin put it in his essay, 'Political Judgement,' (The Sense of Reality, Chatto and Windus, 1996, 40-53) in the realm of political action, there are few laws and what is needed instead is skill in reading a situation. Successful statesmen 'do not think in general terms.' Instead 'they grasp the unique combination of characteristics that constitute this particular situation -- this and no other.' Berlin compares this to the gift possessed by great novelists like Tolstoy and Proust.

(Incidentally, this answers the point made by political philosopher Michael Walzer in his book on the politics of the Bible, In G-d's Shadow. He is undeniably

right to point out that political theory, so significant in ancient Greece, is almost completely absent from the Hebrew Bible. I would argue, and so surely would Isaiah Berlin, that there is a reason for this. In politics there are few general laws, and the Hebrew Bible is interested in laws. But when it comes to politics -- to Israel's kings for example -- it does not give laws but instead tells stories.)

Applying inflexible rules to a constantly shifting political landscape destroys societies. Communism was like that. In free societies, people change, culture changes, the world beyond a nation's borders does not stand still. So a politician will find that what worked a decade or a century ago does not work now. In politics it is easy to get it wrong, hard to get it right.

There is one more reason why leadership is so challenging. It is alluded to by the mishnaic sage, R. Nehemiah, commenting on the verse, "My son, if you have put up security for your neighbour, if you have struck your hand in pledge for another" (Proverbs 6:1):

"So long as a man is an associate [i.e. concerned only with personal piety], he need not be concerned with the community and is not punished on account of it. But once a man has been placed at the head and has donned the cloak of office, he may not say: I have to look after my welfare, I am not concerned with the community. Instead, the whole burden of communal affairs rests on him. If he sees a man doing violence to his fellow, or committing a transgression, and does not seek to prevent him, he is punished on account of him, and the holy spirit cries out: "My son, if you have put up security for your neighbour" -- meaning, you are responsible for him.. You have entered the gladiatorial arena, and he who enters the arena is either conquered or conquers." (Exodus Rabbah, 27:9)

A private individual is responsible only for his own sins. A leader is held responsible for the sins of the people he leads: at least those he might have prevented. "Whoever can prevent the members of his household from sinning and does not, is seized for the sins of his household. If he can prevent his fellow citizens and does not, he is seized for the sins of his fellow citizens. If he can prevent the whole world from sinning, and does not, he is seized for the sins of the whole world" (Shabbat 54b). With power comes responsibility: the greater the power, the greater the responsibility.

There are no universal rules, there is no failsafe textbook, for leadership. Every situation is different and each age brings its own challenges. A ruler, in the best interests of his or her people, may sometimes have to take decisions that a conscientious individual would shrink from doing in private life. He may have to decide to wage a war, knowing that some will die. He may have to levy taxes, knowing that this will leave some impoverished. Only after the event will the leader know whether the decision was justified, and it may depend on factors beyond his control.

The Jewish approach to leadership is thus an unusual combination of realism and idealism -- realism in its acknowledgement that leaders inevitably make mistakes, idealism in its constant subordination of politics to ethics, power to responsibility, pragmatism to the demands of conscience. What matters is not that leaders never get it wrong -- that is inevitable, given the nature of leadership -- but that they are always exposed to prophetic critique and that they constantly study Torah to remind themselves of transcendent standards and ultimate aims. The most important thing from a Torah perspective is that a leader is sufficiently honest to admit his mistakes. Hence the significance of the sin offering.

Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai summed it up with a brilliant double-entendre on the word *asher*, "When a leader sins." He relates it to the word *ashrei*, "happy," and says: "Happy is the generation whose leader is willing to bring a sin offering for his mistakes." (Tosefta Baba Kamma, 7:5)

Leadership demands two kinds of courage: the strength to take a risk, and the humility to admit when a risk fails. ©2014 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"When a human being (adam) brings from amongst you a sacrificial offering to the Lord..." (Leviticus 1:1-2) The Book of Leviticus is known throughout our Midrashic literature as *Torat Kohanim*, The Teachings of Kohen - Priests. A great part of this third book of the Pentateuch is dedicated to the laws of sacrificial offerings. From the opening words of the book, two questions emerge.

Firstly, since these specific sacrifices are unique to the Israelites and since sacrificial offerings have been foreign to most of enlightened civilization for almost two millennia, is it not strange that the opening words of the book are, "when a human being (the generic and universal "adam") brings . . .", rather than the more usual and specific word "Israelite"?

Secondly, the Kohen - Priest is strongly identified with love: the progenitor of the Kohen "clan" was Aaron who was distinguished by his love of humanity and pursuit of peace, (*Avot* 1:12). The Kohen is commanded to bless the nation "with love"; and the major vocation of the Kohen is the teaching of Torah, which our tradition identifies with sweetness, peace and love (see our prayer when returning the Torah to the Ark - *Proverbs* 3:17 and the second blessing before reciting the *Shema*). What have the sacrificial offerings to do with love?

In order to answer these questions, allow me a brief excursus into our mystical tradition, the Kabbalah, and specifically the concept of *tzimtzum*, the "contraction" of the Divine. Rabbi Haim Vital (1543-1620) asked two fundamental theological questions:

Why did the perfect G-d create a world with human beings? And how did a world with darkness and evil emanate from a G-d of pure light and consummate goodness? ("The creator of light and maker of darkness, the maker of peace and creator of evil, I am the Lord, maker of all these things" *Isaiah* 45:7)?

Rabbi Vital explains that the truest definition of the Divine which humans can grasp is love. When Moses asked the Almighty "Show me now your glory", reveal to me the essence of your being, G-d responds, "Y-HVH, Y-HVH, a G-d of Compassion and Freely-Given Grace, Long-suffering, with much Loving-kindness and Truth..." (*Ex* 33:18, 34:6-7). The four letter, ineffable Name of G-d which appeared twice in this verse is interpreted by the Talmudic Sages to mean the attributes of love. Our Sages further explain the repetition of this name to mean that G-d loves us before and after we sin - G-d loves us unconditionally. It may even be possible to say that the root letters *heh vav heh as* in Y-HVH are identical to root letters *heh, vet, heh* in *ahava*, love.

Love cannot exist in a vacuum; one must have another to love. This idea is built into the two letter verb which is the basis of the Hebrew words *ahava*, love and *hav*, give: A lover must give to his/her beloved. And that "other" must be a "free" being who is not controlled by the lover, for if the beloved is completely dominated, then the beloved is merely an extension of the lover, and the lover is only loving himself!

Hence, G-d "had to" create human beings who would be different from and independent of Him; human beings created in His Image with free will, with the capacity to choose to make independent choices even disobeying G-d. (See *Gen*1:26, *Seforno ad loc.*). Only then, would G-d have true others to love, partners and not puppets or pawns.

But alas, there is a tremendous price to pay for such free-will partners and this can even lead to the possibility of Auschwitz and Treblinka. Evil must perforce enter the world if the partners make wrong choices. And just as a spouse must leave room for his / her life's partner to express themselves - even if it be against their self-interest, and a wise and loving parent must relinquish control over their children in order to allow them to develop into free and independent adults, so G-d chose to "contract" Himself, as it were, and limit His Divine omnipotence in order to make room for His truly beloved and therefore free partners.

Indeed, G-d gives us only three guarantees: the seed of Abraham will never disappear, the Jews will eventually return to their homeland, Israel (*Lev.* 26:42, 44-45) and all of the nations of the world will ultimately learn from us the ideal of ethical monotheism and world peace (*Isaiah* 2, *Micah* 4).

The road to redemption is long and arduous; the secret which eventually allow it to happen is love. G-d's love for humanity was predicated upon His sacrificing some of His omnipotence. Human love for other people

necessitates one individual to give of his space and material possessions to another; and the possibility of good overcoming evil demands individual sacrifice of time and even one's own life for higher ideals. G-d shows the way through tzimtzum. Sacrifice is borne out of love, and since humanity is created in the image of the Divine, then to be human is to have the capacity to sacrifice.

Descartes said, "I think therefore I am." Aristotle said, "I communicate, therefore I am." Rav Soloveitchik taught, "I have the capacity to sacrifice, therefore I am." ©2014 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

Though this parsha, like much of the rest of the book of Vayikra, is replete with difficult detail regarding very esoteric, spiritual and even mystical topics of Temple service and animal sacrifices, there is a basic and important message that the Torah wishes to communicate to us amidst this welter of detail. And, I feel that this message is the recognition that sin is a constant part of human life.

We are taught: "...that there is no righteous person who lives on this earth without sin." It is one of the weaknesses that we inherited from Adam and Eve and therefore is part of the DNA of human existence. In recognizing this fact, the Torah, as is its usual wont, deals with the reality of human existence and not with an imagined perfection of human behavior that has never existed in human history and will never exist.

Unlike other monotheistic faiths, Judaism does not allow for pie-in-the-sky, super angelic portrayals of human life. As King Solomon states: "What was is what will be, and there is really nothing new as far as human behavior is concerned under the sun." So the Torah in this week's parsha takes it as a given that people will sin... and do so pretty regularly. Therefore an antidote to sin must be created so that people will eventually improve and find forgiveness for their sins from a benevolent Creator.

I think that the entire Temple service as described for us in the book of Vayikra is meant to emphasize to human beings our innate weakness and to the omnipresence of sin in our lives. Knowing that we have sinned is the beginning of redemption and holiness.

I believe that this is part of the great message of Yom Kippur and why this holy day retains its vibrancy and relevance even to Jews who are otherwise far distant from Torah observance and meaningful Jewish life. Deep down within us we are all aware that as human beings, not only are we prone to sin but, again in the words of the Torah: "Sin crouches at our doorstep."

The Temple building itself, the priesthood and the Temple service of animal sacrifices, all combine to

make the realization of sin a constant factor in Jewish life. In order for this to be effective, the Jewish people had to be aware of what lay behind the edifice, pomp, ritual, meat and wine that was generated by the Temple and its services.

It is this point that the prophets of Israel stress in their condemnation of the shallowness of understanding regarding the Temple service that so characterized the kingdom of Judah in First Temple times. Being unaware of the underlying message regarding the constant vulnerability to sin and the necessity to counteract it, and merely concentrating on the antidote of forgiveness, which the Temple represented, was shortsighted and eventually led to the disappearance of the Temple itself. The Torah wanted us to attempt to eradicate the source of pain and not merely become addicted to pain killers. I believe this to be the subtle message of this week's parsha and of the entire book of Vayikra. ©2014 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. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Having completed the portions describing the building of the Mishkan (tabernacle), the Torah now presents the order of sacrifices that were offered there. Although they are certainly more esoteric than other parts of the Torah, the portions dealing with Temple sacrifice have much to teach.

Consider the opening thought of this week's portion. It speaks in an introductory fashion about an individual offering a sacrifice to the Lord. The term used for individual is Adam, (Leviticus 1:2) a strange word, as the Torah most often in such circumstances uses the term ish or isha (man or woman). Several thoughts come to mind as to the reason for this unusual choice of words.

Adam, unlike all others, was fashioned by G-d Himself. The name evokes the imagery of this first human being who was intimately connected to the Lord. The use of Adam here appears in order to express the hope that, through the sacrificial service, the individual comes close to Hashem.

Rashi suggests another solution. Just as the first Adam was able to take advantage of all the world had to offer without concern that it belonged to others (for he was alone in the world), so must every person who brings a sacrifice be certain that the offering to G-d be solely his or hers. It must not be stolen for in the process of serving G-d one must never violate interpersonal ethics.

Another thought comes to mind. Adam evokes the imagery of Adam who was pure in the garden of Eden. In time, Adam, together with Eve, violated G-d's

command. When an individual brings a sacrifice, he/she is attempting to return to the pristine state of Eden, a fixed Eden without sin – an Eden of complete innocence. Thus, when bringing the sacrifice, the individual is called Adam as the korban is about the quest to right a wrong and to achieve the state of "Paradise Regained."

Still another thought. While it is true that the sacrificial service outlined in our portions deals specifically with the Jewish people, the use of the term Adam speaks to the universal dimension of the Temple. Adam was the parent of all humankind. From him, all human beings emerged. The term Adam by its very definition embraces the whole world. Perhaps the Torah uses the term Adam to remind us that ultimately the Temple in which sacrifices are brought, is a place where all humankind will one day come to worship the Lord. (beit tefillah le-khol ha-amim).

It would be erroneous to think that the term Adam only applies to a man. According to the Midrash, Adam was both male and female. Chava (Eve) comes into being through a bifurcation of Adam into separate male and female entities. Indeed, the term Adam used here sends the message that the korban (sacrifice) applies equally to men and women - both can approach and come close to G-d.

We are taught that every little word in the Torah is there to teach us something significant. The use of the word Adam confirms this idea as it teaches us so much about how G-d wants us to act toward one another and to view the world.

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RABBI YISROEL CINER

Parsha Insights

This week we start the Sefer {Book} of Vayikra. The Ramban explains that Shmos, the Sefer of Exile and Redemption, concluded with the Shchinah {Hashem's Presence} filling the Mishkan {Sanctuary}. Vayikra begins with Hashem calling to Moshe from the Mishkan, instructing him to instruct Bnei Yisroel {the Children of Israel}.

"And He called to Moshe and Hashem spoke to him from the Ohel Mo'ed {the Tent of Meeting}. [1:1]" Rashi explains that the voice of Hashem only reached Moshe's ears -- past the Ohel Mo'ed the voice wasn't heard. (This is as opposed to Sinai where the entire nation heard Hashem speak.) One might mistakenly

assume that Hashem's voice was low and therefore didn't extend past the Ohel Mo'ed, but the passuk {verse} in T'hillim leaves no room to misunderstand the nature of Hashem's voice: "The voice of Hashem is powerful, the voice of Hashem is full of majesty, the voice of Hashem breaks cedars... [Psalms 29:5]" We therefore see that the full, resounding power of Hashem's voice reached Moshe, yet it came to a complete stop at the perimeter of the Ohel Mo'ed.

Why did Hashem miraculously make His voice stop and not be heard outside the Ohel Mo'ed?

Rav Yaakov Naiman, z"l, in Darchei Mussar, explains that it actually wasn't a miracle at all. We live in a world filled with radio waves. The more powerful the equipment, the greater the ability to detect more delicate signals. The voice of Hashem resounded (and resounds) throughout the world. The voice didn't stop but no one heard it. Physical ears in materialistic places don't hear that voice. Moshe had spiritually uplifted his physical body to the point that when he was in the Ohel Mo'ed, his ears were able to tune-in to the voice of Hashem.

Rabi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Each and every day, a heavenly voice emanates from Mount Chorev, proclaiming: Woe to the creations that the Torah is so disgraced. [Mishna Avos 6:2]

He heard it every day and worked at minimizing that disgrace. We don't hear a thing and keep going on our merry way.

The Sages teach that thunder was created in order to "straighten out the crookedness of the heart." One can hear thunder and one can hear thunder. It all depends on the level of sensitivity -- how attuned that person is to Hashem and His messages. The message can be so powerful and we can be so oblivious.

When the Torah discusses a person being put to death by Beis Din {the halachic court} it says that others will hear and will be frightened. A person will take life more carefully and more seriously. The Talmud teaches that a beis din that kills every seven years is called murderous. There is an explanation offered that once every seventy years is also considered murderous. [Makkos 7A] When a person's ears were open, such an event would be taken as a message, as a wake-up call. The effects lasted anywhere between seven and seventy years.

But we can be so oblivious. We hear about a ten-month-old baby targeted and killed by a hell-bound coward-sniper but we don't listen. We hear about two terrorist bomb blasts in one day but the effect lasts anywhere between seven and seventy seconds.

Time doesn't pass by -- rather it is we who move through the cycles of time. Each time period contains its particular potential, its energy. We are now in the month of Nissan -- the time designated for redemption. We must open our ears. We must 'hear' the message of these jarring events and take life and our responsibilities more seriously. The redemption

must begin on a personal level.

The Talmud [Sotah 49B], when discussing the period immediately before the Moshiach {Messiah}, teaches that we'll reach a state where there will be no other source of security -- we will have no one to lean and depend upon besides Avinu {our Father} in the heavens. That realization will come about and the impact of that realization and the resulting changes in our focus will bring the geulah {redemption}.

But we have to hear it. ©2014 Rabbi Y. Ciner & torah.org

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

"**A**nd He (G-d) called to Moshe" (Vayikra 1:1). "The 'aleph' of 'and He called' is small because Moshe wanted to write 'and He happened upon' (which has the same letters as 'and He called' without the 'aleph'), the way it's said [regarding G-d's communication] with Bilam (Bamidbar 23:4 and 23:16), [to make it seem] as if [G-d] only appeared to [Moshe] indirectly, [but] G-d told him to write the 'aleph' too, [so] he wrote it smaller." This explanation, put forth by the Ba'al HaTurim, raises several issues, some of which I discussed several years ago (<http://rabbidmk.wordpress.com/2011/03/09/parashas-vayikra-5771/>). I would like to discuss one of those issues further, adding another layer to it.

This is not the first time G-d called to Moshe (see Sh'mos 3:4, 19:3, 19:20 and 24:16). Why didn't Moshe try to make the "aleph" of the word "and He called" smaller earlier? The source of the Ba'al HaTurim's explanation, Midrash Rabbi Akiva ben Yosef al Osiyos K'tanos v'Ta'ameihen (Batay Midrashos II, pg. 478), says that the reason Moshe wanted to drop the "aleph" (and eventually made it smaller) was to differentiate between the way the angels are called and the way he was called. How did Moshe know the manner in which G-d called the angels? Spending 40 days and 40 nights atop Mt. Sinai, where he "ascended to the heavens" (see Shabbos 88b), Moshe was able to witness it happen first hand. After seeing that the angels were "called" by G-d, he decided he didn't want the way G-d initiated communication with him to be described the same way.

There was much communication between G-d and Moshe before he ascended Mt. Sinai for 40 days and nights (and was able to see how G-d communicated with the angels). If anything, the communication between G-d and Moshe was on a much lower level then, yet is still described as "and He called" (with an "aleph"). When explaining what "The Book of the Covenant" (Sh'mos 24:7), which Moshe had written down and read to the people (24:4), was, Rashi (in both places) tells us it was the Torah "from the 'beginning' (i.e. creation) until the point where the Torah was given." When did Moshe write this down? Before

Moshe spent 40 days and 40 nights atop Mt. Sinai (see Rashi on 24:1). In other words, when Moshe wrote the narrative that included those earlier communications down, he was not yet aware that G-d "called" the angels, so had no reason to protest against the communication between G-d and himself being described the same way.

This explanation works for the earlier instances of "and He called." However, when Moshe was "called" to ascend Mt. Sinai for the public revelation (19:20), as well as when he was "called" to ascend for 40 days and nights (24:16), although they also occurred before Moshe was aware that the angels were "called," they weren't written down until afterwards. Nevertheless, his level of communication with G-d was certainly not worse in those two instances than those described earlier, so it would be inappropriate to differentiate between his earlier communication with G-d (including the one that had occurred just days earlier) and those. However, the first communication that took place in the newly dedicated Mishkan, which was a prototype for all subsequent communication (see Rashi on Vayikra 1:1) and is therefore purposely described the same way as G-d's communication with the angels (ibid), provided Moshe with the opportunity to let everyone know that it was not exactly the same as it is with angels. Even though G-d didn't let him leave off the "aleph" completely (since Moshe's level of communication was so far above that of Bilam), He did allow him to make it a small one, thereby differentiating between the cherished way he was "called" and the cherished way the angels are "called." ©2014 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ

Shabbat Shalom Weekly

The Torah states, "Every meal offering that you offer to the Almighty do not make it chometz (leavened); for you shall burn no yeast, nor any honey, in any offering of the Almighty made by fire. With all your offerings you shall offer salt" (Leviticus 2:11-13).

Yeast and honey were not permitted in the offering on the altar. Yeast makes the dough rise higher, but it is an external additive. Honey makes things taste sweet, but it is also an external additive. Salt, on the other hand, brings out the flavor of the food, but only the flavor that is already there. This, says Rabbi Mordechai Gifter, symbolizes a basic principle in spiritual matters.

When serving the Almighty you should follow the model of salt. That is, utilize all the abilities and talents that you have to serve Him. Do not be like yeast that causes distortion of what is there. Do not be like honey that is very sweet, but is something borrowed from the outside. Be yourself, but make every effort to be all that you can be. Based on Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin ©2014 Rabbi D. Siegel & torah.org

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 at 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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SHLOMO KATZ

Hama'ayan

Our parashah opens (after an introductory verse), "When an adam / man among you brings an offering to Hashem..." R' Yeshayah Halevi Horowitz z"l (the Shelah Ha'kadosh; died 1635) comments: Know, that if Adam Ha'rishon had not sinned, there would have been no need for a separate holy place [the mishkan], since the entire world would have been Gan Eden. This is the meaning of the verse (Yirmiyahu 3:16), which speaks of future times [which will be like the brief period before Adam's sin], "In those days, says Hashem, they will not say, 'The Ark of the Covenant of Hashem,' and it will not come to mind; they will not mention it and will not recall it." Rashi z"l explains that every assembly of Jews will be holy and Hashem will rest upon it, as if it was the Aron.

The Shelah Ha'kadosh continues: Likewise, if Adam had not sinned, there would no need for some people (i.e., kohanim) to be distinguished from others to serve Hashem. Rather, everyone would have been part of the "kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation" [in the words of Shmot 19:6].

Furthermore, the Shelah continues, there would have been no times that are holier than other times. Rather, all times would have been equal, just as the future will be "a world which is all Shabbat" [paraphrasing what we recite in Birkat Ha'mazon on Shabbat].

In that world, the Shelah concludes, man would not have needed to offer an offering to Hashem, for man himself would have been an offering, just as now we are taught that man's soul is offered on an altar above after his death. To allude to this, the Book of Vayikra, which deals with sacrificial offerings, begins with mentioning "adam." (Shnei Luchot Ha'brit) © 2012 S. Katz & torah.org