

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI MORDECHAI WEISS**

### The Soul from Within

**W**hen 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 (gematriah) 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 has been involved in Jewish education for over four decades. He has served as Principal of various Hebrew Day Schools and as evaluator for Middle States Association. He has received numerous awards for his innovative programs and was chosen to receive the coveted "outstanding Principal" award from the National association of Private Schools. During his distinguished leadership as

**TORAS AISH IS A WEEKLY PARSHA  
NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTED VIA EMAIL  
AND THE WEB AT WWW.AISHDAS.ORG/TA.  
FOR MORE INFO EMAIL YITZW1@GMAIL.COM**

The material presented in this publication was collected from email subscriptions, computer archives and various websites. It is being presented with the permission of the respective authors. Toras Aish is an independent publication, and does not necessarily reflect the views of any synagogue or organization.

**TO DEDICATE THIS NEWSLETTER PLEASE CALL  
(973) 277-9062 OR EMAIL YITZW1@GMAIL.COM**

*Principal, his school received the sought-after "excellence in education" award given by the US Department of Education. He now resides in Israel and is available for speaking engagements. Contact him at [rvmordechai@aol.com](mailto:rvmordechai@aol.com).*

**RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

## **Covenant & Conversation**

**V**ayikra 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: chattat, the 'sin offering'. Four different cases are considered: the anointed priest (the High Priest), the assembly (the Sanhedrin or supreme court), the Prince (the 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 the 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.

The Abarbanel 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 Chabad 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 chattat.

Whichever explanation we follow, the chattat 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 Königsberg 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. *Covenant and Conversation 5777 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l ©2017 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org*

**RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## Shabbat Shalom

"**S**peak to the children of Israel, when any human being of you shall bring from yourselves a sacrifice to G-d from the cattle, from the herd or from the flock..." [Lev. 1:2] What does it mean to be a human being? Are we the "social animal" of Aristotle? The thinking being of Descartes ("cogito ergo sum" – I think therefore I am)? The Book of Leviticus presents us with a profound answer to this question that also enables us to better understand the

deeply misunderstood sacrificial system outlined in this third book of the Bible.

Leviticus begins with G-d calling to Moses: "Speak to the children of Israel, when any human being (Heb: "adam") of you shall bring from yourselves a sacrifice to G-d from the cattle, from the herd or from the flock..."

The use of the word "adam" is curious. Why does the Torah use the most universal term for a person, evoking the first human who ever lived and from whom every single person in existence is descended? Not only does "adam" seem out of place in this particular context, it is not even needed in order to understand the verse.

The Torah, in fact, long precedes Descartes' observation with the piercing insight, "I sacrifice, therefore I am." The Torah teaches that the essence of the human being, Jew and non-Jew alike, is his need – and his ability – to sacrifice.

Only the human being, among all of G-d's creatures, is aware of his own limitations, reflecting on his own mortality. And since "adam" is aware of the painful reality that no matter how strong, powerful or brilliant he may be, he will ultimately be vanquished by death, his only hope is to link himself to a being and a cause greater than he, which was there before he was born and which will be there after he dies.

Most people amass wealth and material goods in order to utilize them for themselves, to enjoy them in the here-and-now. But mortality reminds us that our material possessions do not really belong to us; one day we will be forced to leave them and the entire world behind.

Hence the real paradox: only those objects that we commit to a higher cause, which we give to G-d: to His Temple; to His study halls, synagogues, and schools; to His homes for the sick; to His havens for the poor – only these are truly ours, because they enable us to live beyond our limited lifetime, perhaps to all eternity. Only that which we sacrifice is really ours!

Jewish history, and the City of Jerusalem, emanate from this fundamental truth present in G-d's initial command to Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac on Mount Moriah, known as the Temple Mount in present-day Jerusalem. Isaac was the first olah – whole burnt offering. In effect, G-d was teaching Abraham that his new-found faith would only endure in history eternally if he, Abraham, were willing to commit to it his most beloved object, ironically, his very future.

In his willingness to make that sacrifice, Abraham secured his eternity. And by means of the seminal story of the Akeidah, the Bible teaches that the most significant sacrifices of all are not our material goods, but rather are our own selves, our time and our effort, our intellects and our unique abilities. A person must sacrifice "mikem," from yourselves.

Giving a child the gift of a check is hardly as

significant as giving a child the gift of our time, our thoughts and our interest. And this, too, G-d teaches Abraham. G-d ultimately instructs him not to slay Isaac, but to allow him to live, because the greatest sacrifice we can make is not in dying for G-d but is rather in living in accordance with His commands and desires. Isaac in life after he descends from the altar is called by our sages an olah temimah, a whole burnt offering.

Rashi (France, 11th century), suggests another reason for the seemingly superfluous "adam" in our text. The Biblical commentator par excellence teaches that just as Adam, the first human being, never sacrificed stolen goods, since everything in the world belonged to him, so are we prohibited from sacrificing anything which is stolen [Ibid., based on Vayikra Rabbah 2:7].

Perhaps Rashi is protecting us against an appealing danger inherent in the idealization of sacrifice. We can only sacrifice objects or characteristics that technically, if even in a limited sense, belong to us. We can only sacrifice in a manner, and for a cause, which He commands. Thus, in detailing the sacrifices in the Holy Temple, the Book of Leviticus helps us discover the deeper teaching of not only what it means to be a Jew, but also of what it means to be a human being. ©2017 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

#### **RABBI BEREL WEIN**

### **Wein Online**

**T**he Torah emphasizes in the opening words of this week's Torah reading that G-d, so to speak, called out to Moshe to instruct him in the laws and strictures of sacrifices in the Temple service. What is the significance of "calling out" – which always implies doing so by name, such as by parents naming their child – instead of the usual verses beginning that G-d, so to speak, "spoke" or "addressed" Moshe?

The answer lies in the exclusive nature of the word "vayikra." It denotes a personal message, a sense of privacy and intimacy between the caller and the one who is being called. One notices that this is the same word used in describing the Heavenly voice that called out to Moshe from the burning bush at the beginning of his eternal mission.

It connotes a relationship between the parties, a sense of personal uniqueness, with the absence of any possibility of randomness in the encounter between the two. Closeness to Heaven, a relationship to G-d and eternity, lies at the heart of Jewish tradition. It is what makes one feel special about being a Jew, the elusive spiritual component that we all wish to capture and experience.

We are reminded that simple faith is not so simple after all. To hear the Heavenly call, other noises in our lives have to be diminished. Heaven speaks to us in a small, still voice, in the sound of our parents' and

ancestors' voices, in the intimacy of family and purpose.

The idea of sacrifice is primarily exhibited and found in the entity of the family. The relationship in a marriage, of raising children, of honoring and caring for parents and others, all entail substantial personal sacrifice. For a person to feel noble and blessed in performing these sacrifices – as most are required on a constant and even grinding basis – one needs to feel a personal calling.

Love for another human being is such a calling. It enables us to perform immense sacrifices without a whimper of complaint. Love is really the calling out of one person to another person. It is the reflection of the constant echo of G-d, so to speak, calling out to us in our earthly lives. That calling transcends time and space, physical presence and material goods.

If left to our own base, selfish nature we can never get to the point of hearing and acting on our calling. We are left to be influenced by the thunderous noises that permeate our society and social environment. We must always strain to hear the still, small voice that speaks to us individually and personally.

Rashi points out that the voice that Moshe heard could only be heard in the holy place of the Tabernacle/Mishkan. Only in striving to create a holy place in our home, our workplace, our family and our society will we be privileged to realize that Heaven is calling to us. ©2017 *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](http://www.rabbiwein.com)*

#### **RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ**

### **Shabbat Shalom Weekly**

**T**he Torah states: "And if any person sins through error by his doing any of the commandments of the Lord that may not to be done, and he becomes guilty; or his sin be known to him, then he shall bring for his offering..." (Leviticus 4:27-28).

While at present we do not have the Temple in Jerusalem to aid in atoning for transgressions, what else do we have to help us atone?

Rabbi Yochanan was walking on the outskirts of Jerusalem and Rabbi Yehoshua was following him. When they saw the ruins of the Bais Hamikdosh (Holy Temple), Rabbi Yehoshua said, "Woe to us. The place that atoned for sins is destroyed."

"My son," said Rabbi Yochanan, "We still have another means of atonement that is equal to the Bais Hamikdosh: Chesed (acts of lovingkindness). As it is stated, 'Lovingkindness is what I [G-d] want...' (Hoshea 6:6)." (Avos D'Reb Noson, ch. 4). *Dvar Torah based on Love Your Neighbor by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin ©2017 Rabbi K. Packouz and aish.com*

RABBI AVI WEISS

## Shabbat Forshpeis

**T**he Book of Leviticus opens with the word Va-yikra, "and He [the Lord] called." (Leviticus 1:1) Rashi points out that va-yikra is a term of endearment.

The text tells us that G-d spoke to Moshe (Moses) from the Tent of Meeting. Rashi understands this to mean G-d's calling came from the two cherubs atop the Ark.

The Talmud explains that the cherubs were in the form of children embracing with wings at their sides lifting towards each other, heavenward. (Hagigah 13b) What is the significance of this image and what does it mean in light of the fact that it was the seat of G-d's endearing love?

The Haggadah, which is read at the seder a few days after reading the portion of Va-yikra, may offer the answer. On that night, we relate to G-d through two different types of love.

On the one hand, there is the love described in the book Shir Ha-Shirim, The Song of Songs, recited by many after the seder. It is the type of love of a lover for his beloved, reflective of G-d's intense love for the Jewish people. There is no love more powerful, there is no love more deep.

But even that intense love has its limits. Spousal relationships are humanly made and can also be terminated. In fact the Torah tells us that if a woman divorces and marries another, she can never return to her first husband. What would happen when the Jewish people rebel against G-d for other beliefs? If reconciliation is not possible, how can they reunite with the Lord?

Thus, in the Haggadah, another form of G-d's love emerges. It is the love of a parent to a child. This is the love accentuated at the outset of the seder through the presentation of the four children, the four questions and the telling of the Exodus story. Perhaps this love is not as passionate as spousal love, but it contains a quality that spousal love does not have, the element of eternity. It lasts forever. A parent-child relationship can never terminate. The love of parent to child expressed at the seder is a reflection of G-d interacting with his people as the parent par excellence.

This then can be the meaning of the cherubs, of the little children embracing. It is symbolic of two loves, the spousal love of embrace and the parent-child unbreakable love. Together, these two types of love lift one heavenward, much like the wings of the cherubs pointing to the sky.

The seder actually balances these two loves. Before the meal we emphasize parental love, which moves us to remember our past, as father and mother share the Passover story. After the meal we emphasize spousal love, the love of Shir Ha-Shirim, with all its trappings of bride and groom under the chupah with a dream of a beautiful future. We will be

praying for the time when we hear G-d's voice in the spirit of the cherubs, of va-yikra, the language of true, authentic endearment. ©2017 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

HARAV SHLOMO WOLBE ZT"L

## Bais Hamussar

**V**ayikra commences with the halachos of one who wishes to bring a voluntary korban. "If one's offering is an olah offering from the cattle he shall bring a perfect male, he shall bring it, voluntarily, to the entrance of the Ohel Moed" (Vayikra 1:3) Rashi asks that the superfluous "he shall bring it" implies that we force a

person to bring the korban, while the very next word of the pasuk "voluntarily" clearly indicates that the korban must be a product of one's free choice.

So do we force a person to bring a korban or must the korban originate from one's own desire? Rashi cites Chazal who explain that we use force to persuade a person to agree to bring a korban! The question is how can twisting one's arm behind his back be considered voluntarily?

The Rambam (Geirushin 2:20) writes, "One who's yetzer hara provokes him to do an aveirah or to refrain from performing a mitzvah, and he was beaten until he performs that which he is obligated; [halachically] we do not consider it as if he was forced. More accurately, he was forced by his wayward desires. Therefore, when a man does not wish to give his wife a get, since in reality he wants to be part of Bnei Yisrael and he wishes to fulfill all the mitzvos and refrain from all aveiros, it is evident that it is simply his yetzer hara that is precluding him from acting accordingly. Thus when he is beaten until his yetzer hara is weakened and he states that he wishes to give a get, he has willingly divorced his wife."

Rav Wolbe comments that people confuse who they really are with who they think they are. Every Jew truly wishes to fulfill his obligations to his Creator. The little voice inside that says "I don't want to" is not really "I" but a foreigner (the yetzer hara) who masquerades as the true "I". Once the yetzer hara is held in check, the true desire of a Jew becomes apparent.

Rav Wolbe continues that being physically assaulted is not the only way to uncover one's true self. Chazal assert that a single spiritual arousal



Take Control of  
**YOUR MONEY!**  
[tinyurl.com/fitness5](http://tinyurl.com/fitness5)

...probably the best personal  
finance training course I've seen! - CPA

accomplishes more than a hundred beatings (Brachos 7a). Open a mussar sefer and you will find out who you really are. You will be pleasantly surprised to discover that you have a tremendous desire to fulfill all the commandments of your Creator!

The Ramban (Vayikra 1:9) explains the concept of offering an animal as a sacrifice to Hashem. A korban takes an animal -- the object which epitomizes the physical -- and turns it into a spiritual entity. Thus, korbanos were the greatest form of connecting with Hashem, since they were the bridge from our physical world to the spiritual heavens.

Rav Wolbe writes that although we lack the Bais Hamikdosh and consequently the ability to bring korbanos, the concept of a korban is still very relevant in the twenty-first century. We are meant to take the physical and turn it into an expression of spirituality.

Bilam declared, "Who can count the [many] mitzvos] that Yaakov [performs] with dirt" (the dirt used in the ceremony of the Sotah, and the ashes of the parah adumah etc.). Bnei Yisrael's uniqueness is their ability to take plain dirt and connect it to the heavens.

This is an idea we should bear in mind as we prepare for the Yom Tov of Pesach. Much time is spent on cleaning the house and other seemingly menial tasks. Yet, truthfully this is yet another mitzvah that Bnei Yisrael perform with dirt (and crumbs). Think about this as you scrub and you will turn your cleaning rags into a korban to Hashem! ©2017 Rabbi S. Wolbe zt"l and The AishDas Society

**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 ZVI SOBOLOFSKY**

## TorahWeb

**E**ach letter in a sefer Torah teaches us countless lessons. The letter alef of the word "Vayikra" teaches us the significance of humility. According

to tradition, this letter is written smaller than other letters in a sefer Torah. Chazal explain that this is because Moshe was humble and would have preferred that the word have been "vayikar" rather than "Vayikra". What is the difference of meaning between these two words, and how does this distinction symbolize the trait of humility that characterized Moshe?

In contrast to Moshe, there was another navi who the word vayikar is used to describe Hashem speaking to him; Vayikar is how Hashem addresses Bilam. The word vayikar is related to the word mikra -- an event that "happens" to take place. Hashem does not speak to Bilam with regularity. Rather, whenever the need arises Bilam receives a prophecy. In contrast, Moshe is spoken to by Hashem all the time. Moshe even initiates conversation with Hashem several times when he needs guidance from Hashem about a particular halacha such as Pesach Sheini and the claim of benos Tzafchad.

Although Moshe and Bilam were both nevi'im, they related to their nevuah in radically different ways. Bilam constantly boasts of his role as a navi. He describes himself in glorious terms as one who hears the word of Hashem and who has knowledge of the Divine. He only eventually admits to Balak that "Oo'ly yikrah Hashem likrosi -- maybe Hashem will appear to me." Balak is elated when called upon to prophesize and he uses this gift to amass great personal wealth. In contrast, from the first time Hashem speaks to Moshe at the sneh he shies away from the nevu'ah. He sees himself as a kvad peh -- one who has difficulty speaking and not worthy of being a navi. Even when finally accepting his role as a navi, Moshe would rather be referred to as vayikar -- as one who is on a lower level of nevuah not meriting the constant word of Hashem.

It is precisely this difference between Moshe and Bilam that resulted in the very different culminations of their roles as nevi'im. Bilam, who constantly sought glory for his gift of nevu'ah, is ultimately humiliated; the nevu'ah that is granted to him blessing the Jewish People are the final words he speaks in the name of Hashem. Moshe, on the other hand, who was the humblest man ever to live, became the greatest of all nevi'im and merited the highest level of nevu'ah, i.e. conversing with Hashem "peh el peh". Bilam, who prided himself on his ability to see, eventually saw less than his donkey. Moshe became the one to see b'aspaklaria ha'me'irah, i.e. the clearest vision given to man.

The reason this fundamental lesson of humility is taught to us specifically at the beginning of sefer Vayikra which focuses on korbanos is that the offering of a korban is an expression of humility, since many korbanos are brought as a kapara for a cheit. The teshuva process which culminates with the offering of a korban is predicated on the ability to humble oneself

before Hashem, in contrast to the arrogant individual who cannot admit he made a mistake. The korbanos that are brought as an expression of thanks also require a sense of humility. How so? One who views his success as a result of his own accomplishments will not acknowledge that it is Hashem who really has bestowed upon him these gifts; he will feel no need to offer thanks. A korban of thanks to Hashem, by contrast, is the ultimate expression of the realization that we are humbled by the goodness He performs for us.

Bilam, who was the antithesis of humility, also offers korbanos. Throughout Parshas Balak he draws attention to these korbanos and prides himself on bringing them. He uses them as a way to demand that Hashem grant him nevu'ah. Rather than internalizing the lesson of humility signified by korbanos, he uses them to advance his arrogance as he attempts to further his personal status and wealth.

As we begin Sefer Vayikra, the very first word teaches us about the proper spirit that must accompany a korban. We look to Moshe as a role model of humility to guide us in how to use korbanos as a vehicle for teshuva and as an acknowledgement of our complete dependence on Hashem for the gifts He bestows upon us. ©2013 Rabbi Z. Sobolofsky and The TorahWeb Foundation

#### **RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND**

### **RavFrand**

*Transcribed by David Twersky*

*Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman*

**T**he first day of Nisan is a very important date in Jewish history. On that date the Mishkan (Tabernacle) was first set up. In truth, the entire construction of the Mishkan was finished on the 25th of Kislev. Moshe Rabbeinu came down from Mt. Sinai on Yom Kippur and announced that Hashem had forgiven the people for the sin of the Golden Calf. On the day after Yom Kippur -- 11 Tishrei -- Moshe gave Klal Yisrael the mitzvah to build the Mishkan. The building of the Mishkan was in fact the topic of the last five Parshiyos of Sefer Shmos -- Terumah, Tezaveh, Ki Tisa, Vayakhel and Pekudei. The process took place during the end of the month of Tishrei, throughout the month of Cheshvan and was ultimately completed on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev.

The Mishkan sat unassembled in its component parts during the end of Kislev, throughout Teves, Shvat, and Adar all the way until Rosh Chodesh Nisan. The Medrash Tanchuma comments on this delay in setting up the Mishkan: Rabbi Shmuel Bar Nachman states that the Mishkan was completed in less than 3 months, but sat unassembled for another three months. Why was this so? It is because G-d wanted to mix the simcha (rejoicing) of the day in which the Mishkan would first be set up with the simcha of the day in which

Yitzchak Avinu was born. Yitzchak Avinu was born on Rosh Chodesh Nisan!

The Medrash goes on to say that the scoffers of the generation were mocking and saying "Why is there such a delay? Why isn't the Mishkan being set up right away when it was completed?" (Some things never change -- the kibitzers always find something to focus on to express their cynicism.) The Medrash states about these scoffers "But they didn't know that the Almighty had a Master Plan". Concerning this plan King David said "For you have gladdened me, Hashem, with Your deeds; at the works of Your hands I sing glad song. How great are Your deeds, Hashem, exceedingly profound are Your thoughts." [Tehillim 92:5-6].

The Medrash interprets "For you have gladdened me, Hashem, with Your deeds" refers to the Tent of Meeting (Ohel Moed); "at the works of Your hands I sing" refers to the Beis HaMikdash; "How great are Your deeds, Hashem, exceedingly profound are Your thoughts" refers to the fact G-d planned to mix one joy with that of another (i.e. -- the setting up of the Tabernacle with the birthdate of Yitzchak). The next verse goes on to say: "A boor cannot know, nor can a fool understand this" [Tehillim 92:7]. The clueless did not get the great significance of the convergence of these two joyful dates. The scoffers who wanted to know why the Mishkan was not set up when it was first completed did not understand the Divine Thought Process which waited until Nisan 1 to first set it up. G-d had a plan -- to set up the Mishkan on the very day that the Patriarch Yitzchak was born.

Rav Dovid Kviat raises two difficulties with this Medrash: (1) The rule of thumb normally is that we do not mix one joyous event with another (ayn m'arvin simcha b'simcha). (2) What does the birth of Yitzchak have to do with putting up the Mishkan?

He suggests that Yitzchak is the "pillar of Avodah". He is the patriarch that represents Divine Service. Yitzchak himself was a "korban" -- he was about to be sacrificed. Not only was he "about to be sacrificed" against his will, he did it willingly! He did it joyfully (b'simcha). He set the tone of Divine Service performed with joy. Chazal tell us that he wanted to make sure that he would not be accidentally invalidated and asked his father to bind him tightly to make sure he did move and thereby make the sacrifice pasul (invalid).

When one is contemplating putting up a Mishkan -- which is all about korbonos, the Ribono shel Olam wanted the influence of Yitzchak Avinu and his joyful approach to Divine Service to be present as a segulah (fortuitous omen) for the initial erection of the Tabernacle.

In Judaism, as we all know, dates on the calendar are not merely commemorative. What happened on a particular day in history has impact on all future generations. The Yom Tov of Pessach is the Time of Freedom and every single year on Pesach

there are emanations of holiness and redemption that we can also take part in. When the Torah was given on Shavuos emanations of Torah learning potential are forever more present on that date which is the reason we make extra efforts to learn on Shavuos -- to seize those Heavenly emanations. Likewise, the fact that Yitzchak was born on Rosh Chodesh Nisan and b'simcha went to do the Avodah (Divine Service of Sacrifice) made an effect on the first day of Nisan for all future generations. Therefore when G-d established a Mishkan, he wanted that effect -- the "Yitzchak effect" to lend character to the Service that would take place in this Mishkan during all future generations.

So therefore even though the normal rule of thumb is that "ayn m'arvin simcha b'simcha" -- here there is no difficulty understanding why G-d decided to set aside this rule. The rule means we do not take two disparate reasons for rejoicing (e.g. -- rejoicing on a holiday and rejoicing over taking a new bride) and mix them by, for example, getting married during a Jewish holiday. But here we are talking about the same "simcha" -- the "simcha of Avodah" (joy of Divine Service). Here there is no conflict. On the contrary G-d wanted to take this Divine Influence which existed within creation (by virtue of Yitzchak's birth on Nisan 1) and place it within the Mishkan, so therefore the Mishkan was first erected on Rosh Chodesh Nisan, to mix one joy with another -- the joy of the new Tabernacle with the joy of the day in which Yitzchak was born. ©2017 Rabbi Y. Frand & torah.org

#### **RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER**

### **Weekly Dvar**

**P**arshat Vayikra includes instructions "if a leader has sinned" (4:22). The Talmud interprets "if" to be derived from the word "fortunate" (asher and ashrei), which would make the Passuk (verse) read, "fortunate is the leader that has sinned". How does that make any sense?

Rabbi Twerski explains in Living Each Week that it's referring to the generation being fortunate to have a leader that admits when they make a mistake. As Moshe exemplified, the Torah values truth over all else. Even though there might be ways to justify being less than truthful, Moshe resisted those temptations, and always spoke the truth, even to his possible detriment (Leviticus 10:20). If our leaders establish a precedent for truth, we would be fortunate to have them as our role models, and would not hesitate to admit when we're wrong. Truth really does set you free (to correct mistakes, that is).

©2010 Rabbi S. Ressler & LeLamed, Inc.

