

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

Have you ever felt inadequate to a task you have been assigned or a job you have been given? Do you sometimes feel that other people have too high an estimate of your abilities? Has there been a moment when you felt like a faker, a fraud, and that at some time you would be found out and discovered to be the weak, fallible, imperfect human being you know in your heart you are?

If so, according to Rashi on this week's parsha, you are in very good company indeed. Here is the setting: The Mishkan, the Sanctuary, was finally complete. For seven days Moses had consecrated Aaron and his sons to serve as priests. Now the time had come for them to begin their service. Moses gives them various instructions. Then he says the following words to Aaron: "Come near to the altar and offer your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and the people; sacrifice the offering that is for the people and make atonement for them, as the Lord has commanded." (Lev. 9:7)

The sages were puzzled by the instruction, "Come near." This seems to imply that Aaron had until then kept a distance from the altar. Why so? Rashi gives the following explanation: Aaron was ashamed and fearful of approaching the altar. Moses said to him: "Why are you ashamed? It was for this that you were chosen."

There is a name for this syndrome, coined in 1978 by two clinical psychologists, Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes. They called it the imposter syndrome. People who suffer from it feel that they do not deserve the success they have achieved. They attribute it not to their effort and ability but to luck, or timing, or to the fact that they have deceived others into thinking that they are better than they actually are. It turns out to be surprisingly widespread, and particularly so among high achievers. Research has shown that around 40 per cent of successful people do not believe they deserve their success, and that as many as 70 per cent have felt this way at some time or other.

However, as one might imagine, Rashi is telling us something deeper. Aaron was not simply someone lacking in self-confidence. There was something specific that he must have had in mind on that day that he was inducted into the role of High Priest. For Aaron

had been left in charge of the people while Moses was up the mountain receiving the Torah. That was when the sin of the Golden Calf took place.

Reading that narrative, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that it was Aaron's weakness that allowed it to happen. It was he who suggested that the people give him their gold ornaments, he who fashioned them into a calf, and he who built an altar before it (Ex. 32:1-6). When Moses saw the Golden Calf and challenged Aaron -- "What did these people do to you, that you brought upon them this great sin?" -- he replied, evasively, "They gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!"

This was a man profoundly (and rightly) uncomfortable with his role in one of the most disastrous episodes in the Torah, and now he was being called to atone not only for himself but for the entire people. Was this not hypocrisy? Was he not himself a sinner? How could he stand before God and the people and assume the role of the holiest of men? No wonder he felt like an imposter and was ashamed and fearful of approaching the altar.

Moses, however, did not simply say something that would boost his self-confidence. He said something much more radical and life-changing: "It was for this that you were chosen." The task of a High Priest is to atone for people's sins. It was his role, on Yom Kippur, to confess his wrongs and failings, then those of his household, then those of the people as a whole (Lev. 16:11-17). It was his responsibility to plead for forgiveness.

"That," implied Moses, "is why you were chosen. You know what sin is like. You know what it is to feel guilt. You more than anyone else understand the need for repentance and atonement. You have felt the cry of your soul to be cleansed, purified and wiped free of the stain of transgression. What you think of as your greatest weakness will become, in this role you are about to assume, your greatest strength."

How did Moses know this? Because he had experienced something similar himself. When God told



Take Control of
YOUR MONEY!
ffitness47.com

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

**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**

him to confront Pharaoh and lead the Israelites to freedom, he repeatedly insisted that he could not do so. Reread his response to God's call to lead the Israelites out of Egypt (Ex. chapters 3-4), and they sound like someone radically convinced of his inadequacies. "Who am I?" "They won't believe in me." Above all, he kept repeating that he could not speak before a crowd, something absolutely necessary in a leader. He was not an orator. He did not have the voice of command: Then Moses said to the Lord, "Please, my Lord, I am not a man of words, not yesterday, not the day before and not since You have spoken to Your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue." (Ex. 4:10) Moses said to the Lord, "Look, the Israelites do not listen to me. How then will Pharaoh listen to me? Besides, I have uncircumcised lips." (Ex. 6:12).

Moses had a speech defect. To him that was a supreme disqualification from being a mouthpiece for the Divine word. What he did not yet understand is that this was one of the reasons God chose him. When Moses spoke the words of God, people knew he was not speaking his own words in his own voice. Someone else was speaking through him. This seems to have been the case for Isaiah and Jeremiah, both of whom were doubtful of their ability to speak and who became among the most eloquent of prophets.

(There is a striking secular example: Winston Churchill had both a lisp and a stutter and though he fought against both, they persisted long into adulthood. Because of this, he had to think carefully in advance about his major speeches. He was fastidious in writing or dictating them beforehand, rewriting key phrases until the last moment. He used short words wherever possible, made dramatic use of pauses and silences, and developed an almost poetic use of rhythm. The result was not only that he became a great speaker. His speeches, especially over the radio during the Second World War, were a major factor in rousing the spirit of the nation. In the words of Edward Murrow he "mobilised the English language and sent it into battle.")

The people who can sway crowds with their oratory are generally speaking not prophets. Often they are, or become, dictators and tyrants. They use their power of speech to acquire more dangerous forms of power. God does not choose people who speak with

their own voice, telling the crowds what they want to hear. He chooses people who are fully aware of their inadequacies, who stammer literally or metaphorically, who speak not because they want to but because they have to, and who tell people what they do not want to hear, but what they must hear if they are to save themselves from catastrophe. What Moses thought was his greatest weakness was, in fact, one of his greatest strengths.

The point here is not a simple "I'm OK, You're OK" acceptance of weakness. That is not what Judaism is about. The point is the struggle. Moses and Aaron in their different ways had to wrestle with themselves. Moses was not a natural leader. Aaron was not a natural priest. Moses had to accept that one of his most important qualifications was what nowadays we would call his low self image, but what, operating from a completely different mindset, the Torah calls his humility. Aaron had to understand that his own experience of sin and failure made him the ideal representative of a people conscious of their own sin and failure. Feelings of inadequacy -- the imposter syndrome -- can be bad news or good news depending on what you do with them. Do they lead you to depression and despair? Or do they lead you to work at your weaknesses and turn them into strengths?

The key, according to Rashi in this week's parsha, is the role Moses played at this critical juncture in Aaron's life. He had faith in Aaron even when Aaron lacked faith in himself. That is the role God Himself played, more than once, in Moses' life. And that is the role God plays in all our lives if we are truly open to Him. I have often said that the mystery at the heart of Judaism is not our faith in God. It is God's faith in us.

This then is the life-changing idea: what we think of as our greatest weakness can become, if we wrestle with it, our greatest strength. Think of those who have suffered tragedy and then devote their lives to alleviating the suffering of others. Think of those who, conscious of their failings, use that consciousness to help others overcome their own sense of failure.

What makes Tanakh so special is its total candour about humanity. Its heroes -- Moses, Aaron, Isaiah, Jeremiah -- all knew times when they felt like failures, "imposters." They had their moments of dark despair. But they kept going. They refused to be defeated. They knew that a sense of inadequacy can bring us closer to God, as King David said: "My sacrifice [i.e. what I bring as an offering to You] O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise" (Ps. 51:19).

Better by far to know you are imperfect than to believe you are perfect. God loves us and believes in us despite, and sometimes because of, our imperfections. Our weaknesses make us human; wrestling with them makes us strong. *Covenant and Conversation 5778 is kindly supported by the Maurice*

Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l ©2018 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

And when Moses heard [Aaron's argument] it found favor in his eyes' (Leviticus 10:19). Our biblical portion opens with the exalting and exultant ceremonies of the consecration of the desert sanctuary, closely followed by a description of the tragic death of Aaron's two eldest sons. These events lead to a fascinating halachic discussion between Moses and Aaron which has important ramifications for our religious attitudes today.

The sin-offering of the New Moon was brought on the first day of Nisan, which was also the eighth day of the consecration, the banner day on which the sanctuary stood erect and completed. It was also the day of the tragic death of Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu. After seeing to the removal of their bodies, Moses immediately inquired after the meat of the New Moon offering. Hearing that it had been burned rather than consumed by Aaron and his two remaining children, he "became angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the remaining sons of Aaron. Why did you not eat the sin offering in the sacred area? After all, it is the holy of the holies, and it was given to you [to eat] so that you might bear the sin of the congregation, and bring them forgiveness before the Lord" (Lev. 10:16, 17).

Aaron countered, "Behold this day they [Eleazar and Ithamar] have brought their sin offering and whole-burned offering before the Lord, and then such [tragic things] have befallen us; had I eaten the [New Moon] sin offering today, would it have been pleasing in the eyes of the Lord?" (ibid 19).

Moses and Aaron both understood that despite the great loss of his sons Nadab and Abihu, the High Priest and his remaining sons must continue to fulfill their priestly duties, especially during this period of consecration. Their mourning must go on in silence ("And Aaron was silent" 10:3) and their public functions must continue uninterrupted. Despite their personal sorrow, they are public servants whose service to the nation must continue unabated.

And so Moses commands them: "Do not dishevel [the hair on] your heads and do not tear your garments lest you die and anger strikes the entire community... You must not go outside the entrance to the Tent of Meeting lest you die, for the Lord's anointing oil is upon you" (Lev. 10:6, 7). They cannot ritually defile themselves by attending a funeral or a burial; they cannot express any outward signs of mourning. They must remain within the sanctuary, and see to the proper functioning of the ritual.

Moses understood that the divine law, which prohibited them from outward mourning and demanded

that they continue to officiate in the sanctuary, included not only the requirement of bringing the sacrifices, but also their consumption. Hence, when Moses sees that although they offered the New Moon offering, they burned the meat instead of eating it, he becomes angry with them. He chides the remaining sons, so as not to embarrass his elder brother, but his displeasure is directed at all three.

Aaron responds forthrightly and even a bit sharply (the verb *vayedaber* is used to refer to strong and even harsh speech), insisting that they brought all of the commanded sacrifices that day, thereby fulfilling all their obligations. However, he reminds his brother that their family was also struck by an unspeakable tragedy that day. Would God who took the two boys have approved of their father and brothers demonstrating all the requisite rejoicing engendered by eating a sacrifice from "the table of the most high," in the fellowship of the divine? Moses himself referred to the boys as "those near to God, through whom God is to be sanctified" (10:3).

Aaron contends that although in the face of tragedy, we must continue performing our official duties, we cannot be expected to celebrate with God as well. "And Moses heard, and [Aaron's words] were pleasing in his eyes." Rashi cites the midrash "Moses accepted Aaron's argument, and was not ashamed to say that indeed, he had not received a divine directive compelling the mourning high priest to partake of the sacrificial meal" (Lev. 10:19, 20, Rashi ad loc). Aaron's argument that the law also takes into account human feelings and emotions is accepted.

Perhaps it is on this basis that my revered teacher Rav Soloveitchik was wont to explain the halachot of an *onen* (one whose parent, sibling, child or spouse has died, during the period between death and burial). He suggested that such a person is forbidden to perform the commandments (pray, make blessings before eating, etc.); not only because "one who is occupied with a *mitzva* (in this case, burying the dead) is not obligated to perform another *mitzva* at the same time," but also because God gives the mourner an opportunity to be angry at Him. God removes from him the obligation to serve Him with the usual commandments when he has been struck by the death of a close and beloved relative in a world which is not yet redeemed. ©2018 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

Tziduk Hadin

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

On the day following the holiday of Pesach (Isru chag) we do not recite the prayer of Tachnun (in fact this applies to the entire month of Nissan). We also don't recite the Tziduk Hadin in memory of the deceased. However in the Encyclopedia Talmudit it is

written that "Tziduk Hadin after the deceased is recited together but not in a eulogizing format". Thus there are two ways of reciting the "Tziduk Hadin"; either one person saying it and then everyone repeats it (which is not permitted) or when everyone recites it together which is permissible.

It would seem that as the generations passed, people were unaware of these two ways of reciting this prayer. Therefore in the Sefer Haigur and the Beit Yosef it states that "It is the custom to recite it while alone and not in public". This is the reason we do not say the prayer of "Zidkatcha Tzedek" at Mincha on Shabbat during the entire month of Nissan for this is in essence the "Tziduk Hadin" for our teacher Moshe who died on Shabbat at Mincha time. Since reciting "Zidkatcha Tzedek" is in essence Tziduk Hadin, we refrain from saying it in public.

In our portion the two sons of Aharon died and the reaction of Aharon was silence (Vayidom Aharon). Perhaps the "Tziduk Hadin" was accomplished during that silence and perhaps the silence was generated because it was the month of Nissan. ©2017 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

How are we to view and deal with the unavoidable tragedies that occur to all of us in our lifetimes? No one really escapes unscathed and untroubled from life in this world. The nature of human beings is that we are all mortal and therefore sadness and tragedy are always waiting for us in the wings. As such, the story of the death of the two elder sons of Aaron as recorded for us in this week's Torah reading has personal relevance to all of us.

In fact, all of Torah deals with our current lives and circumstances, even if perhaps it is not visible to our limited eyes and minds. But this startling narrative of tragedy and death striking the great family of Aaron and Moshe suddenly and without warning, marring the great day of anticipated celebration at the dedication of the holy Mishkan/Tabernacle, strikes us as being particularly poignant and depressing.

This is especially true because the tragic events were so unexpected and, to a great extent, remained inexplicable at least in ordinary human terms and understanding. There is an obvious lesson that the incense offering that had the power to arrest plague and save lives also had the ability to be lethal if used incorrectly and without Godly command and instruction. But the deeper, transcendent and overriding message of understanding the heavenly system of justice in the world, both on an individual and national basis, certainly escapes our understanding and thinking.

But what can certainly be learned from the words of the Torah is the reaction of Aaron to this shocking tragedy. The Torah records for us that Aaron

remained silent. Jewish tradition holds that this type of reaction to tragedy is a correct and worthy one.

I have written often about the value of silence as exemplified in Jewish life and tradition. But here in the face of tragedy and unequalled personal pain, silence is perhaps the only reaction for human beings. Truth be told, there is really nothing that can be said to explain the judgments of Heaven.

This is one of the reasons that in visiting the house of a mourner, one should not speak unless and until the mourner has spoken. People should avoid saying things that are banal and trite for they bring little comfort and consolation to those who are bereaved. The entire book of Iyov teaches us the futility of railing against Heaven or of attempting to explain rationally what is essentially irrational and beyond the scope of our understanding.

It is interesting to note that throughout the world hospitals contain signs that ask for silence. This is not only for the comfort of the patients but is also a reminder that there is really nothing significant to say. Sympathy comes from the heart and not from the tongue. The greatest comfort one can bring to another human being many times is merely one's own presence without having to express any words. ©2018 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

The Torah in this week's portion mandates that for animals to be kosher they must possess two characteristics--cloven hooves and chew the cud. (Leviticus 11:3) In contemporary times there is much ado about the impact of food on physical health. My doctors keep telling me for example, to keep the fat and cholesterol down. Is it possible that food could similarly impact on one's spiritual well-being? This in fact is the position of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch in his explanation of kashrut (the dietary laws).

The characteristics of kosher animals point to their being more passive in nature. In Hirsch's words: "If we look at the signs for clean animals they appear plant-like. As they chew the cud, the food consumed passes through two stomachs, is driven up the gullet again and chewed for the second time. Thus, these animals spend a great deal of time in the absorption of food. The cloven hooves of the permitted animals also seem to have been created more for the mere purpose of standing than for being used as weapons or tools."

The same is true concerning fish. To be kosher, fish must have fins and scales. (Leviticus 11:9) Not coincidentally, fish that have these characteristics are by and large more peaceful in nature. The more

aggressive fish fall into the category of the prohibited. Moreover, birds of prey are by and large enjoined. The rule holds fast. The more aggressive animals and fowl are prohibited. The more passive are permitted.

Of course, not everyone who consumes kosher food leads a life of inner peace. There are troubled people who eat kosher, just as there are fine people who do not eat kosher. Nonetheless, the ritual of kashrut may help us become more conscious of our responsibilities to live ethical lives.

The balance between outer action and inner feelings is especially discernible in the laws of forbidden and permitted animals. Note, that chewing the cud is an internal characteristic as it deals with the inner digestive system. In contrast, cloven hooves are an external characteristic. One merely has to look at an animal's foot to detect whether this criterion has been met. Perhaps, just perhaps this teaches that to be kosher one's behavior must not only be correct, but inwardly pure.

Whether these rationales are satisfactory or not, the prohibited foods teach us discipline. They remind us that in the end, God is the arbiter of right and wrong. Notwithstanding, the kashrut laws carry powerful ethical lessons--lessons that can help ennoble and sanctify our lives. ©2018 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

RABBI DAVID S. LEVIN

Compassion & Kindness

One of the aspects of Torah study is the search for patterns of words. Patterns are very important to the understanding of the Torah and the nuances that are often found within it. They give us an insight which would be missed if we were to disregard them. The hidden meaning of a passage can enlighten us to other aspects of that passage. These patterns can only be detected by our continued study of the Torah in Hebrew as they are often indiscernible in translation. Recognizing these patterns also is a product of our own memory or on previous scholars who have noted them and commented. The recognition of these patterns also helps us to understand the way in which Hashem designed the Torah. These words or phrases throughout the Torah are Hashem's way of eliciting questions from us which will help us to understand His messages to us more clearly. Remember, the Torah is a two-way conversation between Hashem and us. It is Hashem's way of speaking directly to us. We must be open to hear His voice and answer.

Such an opportunity occurs at the beginning of our parasha and there is a difference of opinion among the Rabbis as to the meaning which the pattern of the words indicates. The Torah tells us "Vay'hi, and it was

on the eighth day that Moshe called to Aharon and to his sons and to the elders of Yisrael." Our Rabbis center their focus on the word "vay'hi, and it was". The Or HaChayim brings both opinions as to the meaning of the use of the word vay'hi, beginning with the Gemara Megillah which refers to the beginning of Megillat Esther, "vay'hi, and it was in the days of Ahasuerus." Rebbe Levi says, "there is a tradition in our hands from the Men of the Great Assembly that all places where it is written vay'hi it is a place of trouble (sadness)." According to the Or HaChayim it is the death of Nadav and Avihu, the sons of Aharon, who die on that day because they brought a "strange fire" into the Holy. The second reason given for this sadness was that this was the last time that Moshe would offer the sacrifices and now this service was turned over to Aharon and the Kohanim. According to the S'fas Emes, the sadness was that Aharon and not Moshe was made the Kohein Gadol. Moshe had been reluctant to lead the Jews when Hashem approached him at the Burning Bush and this caused Hashem to give the priesthood to Aharon instead. Though we might think that Moshe would now be jealous of his brother in that Aharon would now serve Hashem in the only capacity through which the B'nei Yisrael could receive forgiveness, we find the opposite to be true of Moshe's reaction. Moshe was samei'ach, joyous, in the elevation of his brother to such a high position. This was the same simcha, joy, with which Aharon greeted Moshe upon his return to Egypt to lead the people out of Egypt. Aharon could have been jealous that his younger brother had been chosen for this task in his stead, yet we find this same simcha exhibited when he greeted Moshe.

This brings us to the second interpretation for the term vay'hi. The Or HaChayim explains that the eighth day was also a time of great joy and the term vay'hi also comes to introduce a time of joy and simcha. "We learn that same day was a joy before the Holy One Blessed is He like the day of the creation of the Heavens and the Earth; it is written here vay'hi and it is written there vay'hi, 'and it was evening and it was day....'" The Gemara in Megillah (10b) quotes many examples of simcha following the word vay'hi. We are left then with a contradiction of Rebbe Levi's statement that "every place where it says 'vay'hi' it is the language of trouble (sadness)." The Gemara continues by finding a compromise. Each case where we find the words "vay'hi, and it was in the days of", we are speaking of sadness, but if it only says the word vay'hi it can be a joy or sadness.

HaRav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch explains that the number eight is found in many of our laws and customs. Our first encounter with the number eight is the day after the conclusion of the creation of the world. The creation itself took only six days but was not truly complete until the seventh day of rest, Shabbat. The eighth day then marked a renewal, a new beginning

and the promise of another week. Hirsch explains that, "by such a counting of seven days, the condition of a previous period is entirely closed, and with the eighth day a new beginning is made, similar to the octave in music, on a higher level." We see this also relevant to the brit milah, the circumcision on the eighth day. The young boy now receives a name, a mark of a new soul, and the beginning of his life as a Jew. The Kohanim now also undergo a unique change in their lives, from life as an individual to life led for the community. "With the eighth day they step into the new elevated character of a life dedicated to belong to Hashem and to the Nation."

We see from the arguments above that each time this word is used it could be a time of sadness or joy. What, then, is the determining factor which guides the meaning of this word? The meaning of the word changes with our perspective. Moshe was presented with a punishment and yet his focus was on the simcha of seeing his brother achieve recognition and honor. When it came to seeing Aharon rise to such a high position in his service of Hashem, Moshe was totally in simcha. If we examine the case of vay'hi biy'mei Achashveirosh, and it was in the days of Achashveirosh, we might also discover a way to find a positive outcome, too. Even though the days of Ahasuerus almost spelled the end of the Jewish people, we learned from this time that Hashem had not abandoned us in exile and would always be there for us. This led us to reaccept the Torah and the Oral Law. Even the death of Nadav and Avihu clarified for us the importance of adapting the Halacha only through the appropriate process and advice of learned authorities. Their death was a result of not consulting and accepting the authority of their teachers before performing the act. There is a simcha in knowing what our limits are and that there is some flexibility within those limits.

We are challenged daily with the problem of perspective. We choose to see things in a positive and a negative light. We must learn to channel our perspective to live a life seeing simcha, for then our lives will be lives of simcha. We have that power, just as Moshe did. May we realize that it truly is a "mitzvah g'dolah lih'yot b'simcha, it is a great commandment to live one's life in joy." ©2018 Rabbi D.S. Levin

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

As the Parsha relates the joyous time when the Jews finally started the long-awaited service in the Mishkan, Parshat Shemini abruptly interrupts that with the disturbing death of Aaron's 2 oldest sons (Nadav and Avihu). Their sin was that they wanted to show their love for G-d so much that they took it upon themselves to take incense and burn it on their own. The Torah then relates that a fire "came out from before

Hashem and consumed them." It seems strange that the same fire that 2 Pessukim (verses) ago came down to burn the offerings was the same fire that came down to kill Aaron's 2 sons. Why did they specifically die with fire, which is the very method they tried to use to serve G-d?

The Rashbam helps us understand the sons' mistake by explaining that they weren't authorized to bring the offering, and that their bringing it minimized the miracle of the fire coming down from the sky. However, although they died, the verse says they died "before G-d," which commentaries explain to mean that they at least tried to do a good thing, and were worthy of dying before G-d. Trying to preempt G-d's commandments by burning things themselves minimized the very essence of those commandments. We too have to follow the guidelines of the Torah, not because they make sense to us and we'd do them anyway, but because G-d wants us to do things a certain way. The point of the fire was to show us that G-d would use fire for us, unless we make Him use that very fire against us by altering the "recipe." The critical take-away from all of this is to observe the commandments correctly, so that we may strengthen the fire within us. ©2018 Rabbi S. Ressler and LeLamed, Inc.

RABBI ELIAKIM KOENIGSBERG

TorahWeb

Toward the end of the Maggid section of the haggadah, we mention a dispute among the Tannaim as to how many plagues the Mitzrim suffered at the Yam Suf. What does this have to do with the mitzvah of retelling the story of yetzias Mitzrayim? In fact, the Rambam omits this section in his version of the haggadah. Rav Soloveitchik explained that this follows the Rambam's opinion (Hilchos Chametz U'Matzah 7:1) that on the night of the seder we are commanded to recount only the miracles that Klal Yisrael experienced in Mitzrayim and while leaving Mitzrayim, but not the miracles that occurred after yetzias Mitzrayim. Apparently, the author of the haggadah disagrees. He understands that even the miracles at the splitting of the sea are relevant to sippur yetzias Mitzrayim.

The Magen Avraham (67:1) takes this idea even further. He claims that one can fulfill the daily obligation to remember yetzias Mitzrayim by reciting the shiras hayam, the song that Klal Yisrael sang after the splitting of the sea. Both the Chasam Sofer and Rav Akiva Eiger (in their glosses to the Shulchan Aruch there) are troubled by this statement. After all, the possuk explicitly states that one is required to remember "the day that you left Mitzrayim (Devarim 16:3)" which implies that simply reciting the shiras hayam is insufficient. How can the Magen Avraham claim that just by mentioning the splitting of the sea one

can fulfill the daily mitzvah of zechiras yetzias Mitzrayim?

The Talmud Yerushalmi (Pesachim 10:6) comments that although there is an obligation to sing shirah whenever Hakadosh Boruch Hu performs miracles for Klal Yisrael, nevertheless Klal Yisrael did not sing shirah when they left Mitzrayim because that was still only the beginning of their redemption. They did not experience a complete redemption until the splitting of the sea. Similarly, Rabbenu Bachya (Vaeira 6:6) writes that the phrase, "And I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgements" is a reference to kriyas Yam Suf since that is when Klal Yisrael achieved a complete redemption.

This idea is also hinted to in the fact that we do not recite a full Hallel nor do we say the bracha of shehechyanu on the seventh day of Pesach. It is quite different from Shemini Atzeres, the last day of Sukkos, which is "a holiday of its own." (Sukkah 47a) Some explain that we do not recite a full hallel on the seventh day of Pesach because it would be inappropriate to sing a complete shirah for the splitting of the sea since that miracle also caused the drowning of the Mitzrim, and the possuk says, "When your enemy falls, do not rejoice (Mishlei 24:17)." But the Gemara (Arachin 10a) suggests a different reason why we do not recite a full Hallel on the last day of Pesach, and that is because it has no special korban musaf. Since its korban is the same as that of the first day of Pesach, it is not considered an independent yom tov, so it does not get a full Hallel of its own, and for the same reason we do not say the

bracha of shehechyanu. These halachos highlight the idea that the seventh day of Pesach, which commemorates the splitting of the sea, is not considered a separate celebration. But rather, it is viewed as the culmination of the celebration of yetzias Mitzrayim since kriyas Yam Suf was the time when Klal Yisrael achieved a full redemption.

What happened at the Yam Suf that made the redemption of Klal Yisrael complete? Rabbeinu Bachya explains that until the Mitzrim were drowned at the sea, Klal Yisrael were concerned that their former masters would chase after them and enslave them once again. But after the Mitzrim were eliminated at the Yam Suf, Klal Yisrael finally felt a complete sense of freedom since they no longer feared that they would be forced to return to Mitzrayim.

The Vilna Gaon (quoted in Kol Eliyahu, Parshas Bo) adds that the ge'ulah was not complete until kriyas Yam Suf when the Mitzrim were punished in the water, middah k'neged middah, in return for the evil they perpetrated against Klal Yisrael when they decreed that every Jewish newborn male child should be thrown into the river. The Netziv (Ha'amek Davar, Shemos 14:31) suggests that a similar idea is alluded to by the possuk, "And Klal Yisrael saw the great hand

that Hashem used against Mitzrayim, and the people feared Hashem." This refers to how Hakadosh Boruch Hu meted out precise punishments for each and every Egyptian, corresponding to the pain and suffering that each one inflicted on the Jewish people in Mitzrayim. Rashi (Shemos 15:5) quotes the Midrash that the most wicked of the Egyptians were tossed around in the Yam Suf like straw, the average ones fell like stones, and the relatively decent ones sank immediately like lead. Each one received a punishment that was commensurate to his actions against Klal Yisrael.

After kriyas Yam Suf it says, "And they believed in Hashem and Moshe his servant. (Shemos 14:31)" Until then, the people could have deluded themselves into thinking that Moshe Rabbeinu had magically orchestrated the ten plagues and yetzias Mitzrayim. But when the people saw how precise the Divine punishment was, they had complete emunah in Hashem, and they realized that Moshe was only Hashem's agent in bringing about yetzias Mitzrayim.

That is why the redemption was incomplete until kriyas Yam Suf because one of the purposes of yetzias Mitzrayim was to instill in the hearts of Klal Yisrael a strong sense of emunah in the Ribbono Shel Olam. The ten plagues were designed to strengthen Klal Yisrael's belief in the existence of Hashem, Divine providence and omnipotence, and the concept of reward and punishment (see Maharal, Gur Aryeh, Vaeira 9:14). At the Yam Suf, this process reached its climax when Klal Yisrael saw the element of middah k'neged middah in the punishment of the Mitzrim. At that moment, they totally believed in Hashem and His power, and they appreciated His sense of justice. That was when Klal Yisrael achieved a complete redemption. (see Yarei'ach L'Moadim 67, for further elaboration)

It is no wonder that the author of our version of the haggadah includes the miracles of kriyas Yam Suf in the text of the haggadah, because it was only at the Yam Suf that one of the primary goals of yetzias Mitzrayim -- namely developing a complete trust in the Ribbono Shel Olam -- was finally achieved. This perhaps is also why the Magen Avraham rules that if one recites the shiras hayam he has fulfilled his daily obligation to remember yetzias Mitzrayim, because the miracles of kriyas Yam Suf, which are described in the shirah, were the catalyst that completed the process of yetzias Mitzrayim. ©2018 Rabbi E. Koenigsberg and TorahWeb.org

RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ

Shabbat Shalom Weekly

The Torah states: "The sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, each took his fire-pan, put fire in them and placed incense upon it; and they brought before God an alien fire that He had not commanded them" (Lev. 10:1).

Rashi cites the statement of Reb Yishmael in the Talmud that the transgression of Nadab and Abihu was that they drank wine before entering the Sanctuary. This statement appears remarkable. The Torah explicitly says that their sin was they brought an "alien fire". How and why does Reb Yishmael give another reason, which seems to contradict the Scripture?

Nadab and Abihu were extraordinarily great men, so much so that Moshe said that he considered them greater than himself and Aaron (Rashi, Lev. 1:3). If they drank wine before entering the Sanctuary, it was not because they were out partying. Rather, they knew that in the Sanctuary they would have a spiritual experience. They believed that by drinking wine they would attain a state of mind more conducive to a spiritual experience. After all, the Psalmist says, "Wine makes glad the heart of man" (Psalm 104:15). By relieving a person's tension, wine enables one to have greater joy, and joy can enhance a spiritual experience. It was for the intensification of the spiritual experience that they drank wine.

Why, then, were they so severely punished? Because one should not seek to enhance a spiritual experience by artificial means. Intense spiritual experiences should come as a result of prayer, Torah study, meditation with contemplation on the Infinite -- and doing the mitzvos -- not by altering the metabolism of the brain with a chemical. Nadab and Abihu's attempt to enhance the experience by drinking wine was introducing "an alien fire" into the Divine service. *Dvar Torah from Twerski on Chumash by Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, M.D. ©2018 Rabbi K. Packouz and aish.com*

SHLOMO KATZ

Hama'ayan

"He said to Aharon, 'Take for yourself a young bull for a Chatat / sin-offering and a ram for an Olah / elevation-offering -- unblemished -- and offer [them] before Hashem.'" (9:2)

"A fire went forth from before Hashem and consumed upon the Altar the Olah and the fats [of the Chatat]..." (9:24)

"Moshe... was angry with Elazar and Itamar, Aharon's remaining sons, saying, 'Why did you not eat the Chatat...?'" (10:16-17)

"Aharon spoke to Moshe, 'Was it they who this day offered their Chatat and their Olah before Hashem?'" (10:19)

"Moshe heard and he approved." (10:20)

Why is the Chatat mentioned before the Olah in verse 2, but after the Olah in verse 24? And, what was the nature of the debate between Moshe and Aharon?

R' Zalman Ze'ev z"l (1789-1867; "R' Velvele, the Maggid of Vilna") explains: Midrashim teach that Aharon was afraid to approach the Altar because he was ashamed of having made the golden calf. His fears

were strengthened by the command in verse 2 to take an animal for a Chatat before taking an animal for an Olah. The reason a Chatat ordinarily precedes an Olah is that the former atones for sins, while the latter is a "gift." Before one can bring a gift -- a sign of friendship -- to a king, one must obtain the king's forgiveness for any wrong done him. Aharon reasoned, therefore: From the fact that Hashem commanded that the Chatat be taken before the Olah, I infer that He is still angry at me! And, Aharon concluded that it was his own sin that had caused the deaths of two of his sons, Nadav and Avihu. In that case, he should not have been performing the Avodah / sacrificial service and should not eat the Chatat.

However, verse 24 states that the fire consumed the Olah before the Chatat. This means, Moshe argued, that Hashem was not angry with Aharon and Aharon was not responsible for the death of his sons. Therefore, Aharon could perform the Avodah and could eat the Chatat.

Aharon responded: Granted the fire consumed the Olah first to show that I have been forgiven. Nevertheless, at the time the sacrifices were offered, Hashem was still angry at me, as demonstrated by the fact that He commanded that the Chatat precede the Olah. And Moshe agreed.

The Maggid adds: In the expanded version of the blessing of "Retzei" that the Chazzan recites on Yom Tov before Birkat Kohanim, the Olah is mentioned before the Chatat. The reason is that an Olah is meant to be burnt entirely on the Altar; since it is all for Hashem, it can be replaced with prayer alone. In contrast, a Chatat does not provide full atonement until the Kohanim eat from it. Therefore, mentioning the Chatat in our prayers provides only partial atonement. (Drashot Me'onei Arayot ch.11) ©2018 S. Katz and torah.org

