

# Toras



# Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI BEREL WEIN**

### Wein Online

**T**he third book of the Chumash, Vayikra, is called "Torat Kohanim" - the law of the priests - in rabbinic literature. This is undoubtedly because most of the book is occupied with the laws of the specific sacrifices and the duties of the kohanim in the Temple. However, there is another, broader and more universal aspect to the name of the book of Vayikra/Torat Kohanim. For implicit in the title is the realization that Kohanim are to behave and live up to a certain standard set for them by the Torah. It is not only the offering that is brought to the Temple that is important and vital. It is also the Kohain who is charged with treating that offering properly and respectfully that is important and vital for successful Temple worship. It is therefore no coincidence that this book of Vayikra/Torat Kohanim contains within it entire sections that deal with moral laws and disciplined human behavior. A dishonest Kohain is not allowed to be a representative of God's Temple, just as a physically deformed Kohain was also excluded from performing Temple service.

The Talmud explicitly teaches us that only if a Kohain somehow resembles an angel of God in his behavior and deportment, would people come to study Torah from his mouth and sense the true holiness of the Temple. The task that was placed on the Kohanim was not one of mere rote service in the Temple. It was rather the challenge to be exemplary in behavior, a role model for others, and a teacher of Torah to Israel by deed as well as by word, which would define the true Kohain. The Rabbis in Pirkei Avot described the father of all Kohanim, the great Aharon, as a lover of peace, a pursuer of peace, a lover of his fellow human beings and someone who was able to bring people closer to Torah values, study and observance.

I feel that this description was not merely meant to be an obituary of Aharon. Rather, it is meant as a blueprint as to what a true Kohain should be - what he should represent and what image he should reflect to those who come to him for counsel, aid, instruction and Temple service. We may not have a Temple in our midst as of yet today, but we are sorely in need of Kohanim - religious leaders cut from the cloth of Aharon and his value system and life style. The book of Vayikra is the guide for all those who aspire to religious

leadership and influence in the Jewish world. It is truly the book of Torat Kohanim. © 2004 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory](http://www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory).

**RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

### Shabbat Shalom

**“A**soul that sinned... denying before his colleague regarding a deposit... or theft... must restore the stolen object which he stole... and bring before the Lord his sin offering" (Leviticus 5:21-25).

The sin-offering was understandably one of the staple features of the sacrificial ritual, with many educational, social and theological ramifications. Only one who sins inadvertently (due to his lack of awareness that he was committing a crime) may receive expiation through the bringing of a sacrifice; a purposeful act of sin requires paying one's penalty before the law and can never be expunged by a ritual sacrifice. Even inadvertent transgression—whether it be by an individual, a King, a Religious Court or an entire community—requires confession, repentance and restitution (wherever possible) in order for the ritual sacrifice to be effective. Judaism believes that the individual has the ability to rise above sin and can redeem himself. But he must take responsibility for his actions! This is underscored in the Biblical verse: "Parents shall not be put to death because of [the sins of] their children, and children shall not be put to death because of [the sins of] their parents; each individual shall die because of his/her sin" (Deuteronomy 24:16).

I find this lesson especially meaningful after viewing Mel Gibson's wildly successful and heatedly controversial Passion movie. No, I did not find this film particularly anti-Semitic—at least, no more anti-Semitic than the gospel according to Matthew, written some five decades after the crucifixion of Jesus and clearly attempting to whitewash Pontius Pilate and the Romans (whom the early Christians were trying to win over to the Jesus faith) and to vilify the Pharisee Jewish establishment (who had largely denied Jesus as divine Messiah).

Hence Matthew presents a non-historical account of a trial in front of the High Priest (the Talmud as well as Josephus record that the Jews at that time

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were not permitted by the Romans to hold such a trial) as well as a non-existent right of the Jews to free one condemned convict before Passover. When the Roman Governor asks the Jews to free Jesus and the mob screams for Jesus' blood, Matthew makes Pontius Pilate an unwilling executioner (all historical accounts portray him as cruelly bloodthirsty) and sets the stage for anti-Semitic riots throughout history by having the Jews cry out, "Let his blood be on us and on our children" (Matthew 27:25).

If anything, Mel Gibson mitigates Matthew's message by deleting this last exclamation of the Jews from the English sub-titles, by emphasizing the heinous sadism of the Roman captors throughout the 'passion', and by depicting the very Jewish origins of Christianity; in the film, Jesus and all of the Jews speak Aramaic-Hebrew (Jesus calls G-d 'Abba'), the 'Last Supper' is clearly a Passover Seder replete with matzot, wine and ritual washing of the hands, and Jesus is often referred to by his followers as 'Rabbi.'

My objections to the movie—which I found indescribably difficult to sit through—were from a Christian theological and universalistic perspective, especially within the context of present-day world events. The film depicted almost continuous blood and gore from beginning to end, even to the extent of the fluids spurting from all the pores of Jesus' wracked body, including the whites of his eyes. I do not believe the intent had anything to do with sado-masochism, as some reviewers have charged; I do believe that it had everything to do with a glorification of martyrdom, almost a celebration of every whiplash and each spurt of blood. Jesus' bloodied and gapingly wounded body embraces the cross as a lover would embrace his beloved, seemingly oblivious to the blows and the blood searing his flesh.

Gibson has Jesus cry out, "There is no greater joy than to lay down one's life for one's friends." He

refuses to answer the charges against him because he chooses to be a martyr; he willingly desires the pain in order to expiate not his—but all of humanity's—sins. In a flash-back to the "Last Supper-Seder," Gibson has Jesus say, "Take (the bread-matzah) and eat; this is my body. Drink (the wine); this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out... for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 25:26,27).

If Gibson was consistent with the letter of the Gospel of Matthew, he was not consistent with its spirit. Twenty-five chapters of the Gospel deal with Jesus' teachings of love and compassion; only in the last two chapters does Matthew describe the Passion, the suffering, and in a far more constrained manner than does Gibson. Is the main message of Christianity one of vicarious atonement, Jesus' acceptance of pain in order to remove guilt and responsibility from all of us humans? Does Christianity teach us to emulate Jesus by courting martyrdom, by reveling in suffering and dying in this world in order to enjoy the world to come and the Kingdom of heaven? Was Jesus martyred principally for his theological beliefs, because he called himself the Messiah and only son of G-d, because he "is the way, the truth, and the life—no one can reach the Father, only through him," as Gibson would have us believe in his Passion movie?!

I respect and understand that all of these are aspects of Christian belief and doctrine. My question is one of emphasis. After all, in today's terror ridden world fundamentalist Moslems are fanatically inspiring their youth to court martyrdom for the sake of a sumptuous paradise. Post-modernistic liberals in America and Europe are removing responsibility from 'victims of occupation' for taking innocent human lives in acts of homicide. Given the outstretched hand of the Vatican to Brother Israel, post-Pope John the 23rd, as well as the magnificent relationship between Evangelical Christians and the State of Israel, would it not better serve our Christian siblings to emphasize the absolute morality of "Thou shall not murder" rather than a frenzied and ecstatic celebration of the martyr whose excruciating death grants automatic expiation and seemingly absolves the individual of responsibility? And at a time when fundamentalist Islam is preaching conquest by the sword, would it not behoove Christianity to stress the possibility of many peaceful paths to our Parent-in-Heaven while not compromising the necessary Christian belief in Jesus? As a good Christian named Darren remarked to me as we left the movie theater, "There was too little compassion and too much passion [suffering]." © 2004 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

**RABBI DOV KRAMER**

## **Taking a Closer Look**

“**A**nd He called to Moshe; and G-d spoke to him from the 'Tent of Meeting,' to say:" (Vayikra 1:1). The Mishkan (portable Temple) had just

been finished and became filled with G-d's glory (Shemos 40:33-34). The first words that were spoken from this new Sanctuary would surely be momentous. One cannot help but feel somewhat surprised that the first thing G-d tells us (through Moshe) is what kind of offerings we can bring Him.

Don't get me wrong- I'm not trying to downplay the importance of the offerings that were brought in the Mishkan or the Temple, or that will (hopefully soon) be brought once again in the rebuilt Temple. And we can surely understand how important it was to set the guidelines and boundaries for the offerings to be brought to G-d for a generation accustomed to bringing whatever kind of offering they wanted, any where, at any time. But we still might have hoped for a more groundbreaking, even universal message than the particulars of what kind of offerings to bring Him. Why are these details the initial words spoken in the newly consecrated Sanctuary?

Rashi (Vayikra 1:1) brings two possible explanations for the word(s) "to say:" Either (a) say to the Children of Israel words of inspiration (i.e. how important they are to G-d); or (b) tell G-d what the people's response is (i.e. whether they will accept His words). The Brisker Rav, in order to answer why G-d needed a response at all, ties these two explanations to a Talmudic dispute. The Talmud (Sotah 37b) says that there were three covenants made between G-d and the Children of Israel in the form of "blessings and curses." One opinion says that these three covenants were made at Sinai, in the Plains of Moav, and at Mt. Grizim and Mt. Eival. The other opinion says that the three were at Sinai, in the "Tent of Meeting," at in the Plains of Moav. In order for a covenant to take effect, it must be agreed upon by both parties. Therefore, according to the opinion that one of the covenants made was in the newly consecrated "Tent of Meeting" (i.e. the Mishkan), G-d asked Moshe to find out if the nation accepted His terms, and to report back. If, However, there was no covenant made in the Mishkan, there was no need to solicit a response. These two possibilities (needing a response or not needing one) correspond to Rashi's two possible explanations for the meaning of what Moshe was told "to say." (Rashi's commentary on Sotah seems to support this line of thinking.)

The Brisker Rav does not, however, explain why this second covenant was needed. True, the first covenant was broken with the sin of the "golden calf." But a "replacement" was already made prior to the second set of "luchos" (stone tablets with the 10 commandments on them) and the building of the Mishkan. G-d had repeated many of the commandments previously given (Shemos 34:11-26), and then told Moshe that "based on these commandments I am forming a covenant with you and with [the Nation of] Israel" (34:27). So why was another covenant needed after the Mishkan was finished?

There is another Talmudic dispute (Sanhedrin 43b) regarding when the concept of "arvus" (responsibility for each other's actions and inactions) took effect. We know that "kol Yisrael aravim zeh be'zeh," every member of the nation of Israel is a guarantor for every other member. When did we agree to accept personal responsibility for every other person? Rabbi Yehuda says that those things that are known about ("revealed") were accepted before we entered the Land of Israel, while things that are unknown (but could be found out) did not take effect until we entered the land. (He uses this to explain why the nation was not punished for sins Achan did prior to his taking from the off-limits spoils of Yericho.) Rabbi Nechemya is of the opinion that we never accepted responsibility for things that are "hidden" (unknown), and only accepted responsibility for things that are known once we entered the land.

According to Rabbi Nechemya, this responsibility could have been accepted at either the Plains of Moav (right before entering the land) or at Mt. Grizim and Mt. Eival (soon after they entered). The same is true according to Rabbi Yehuda regarding the responsibility for things unknown. But what about the earlier commitment, to take responsibility for each other's spiritual well-being for things we can see? The covenant at the Plains of Moav happened about a month before they entered the land. Is his whole opinion that we took such responsibility before entering the land applicable to such a limited time frame? And since he says there were two stages of accepting "arvus" (known and then unknown), we can only put one at the Plains of Moav if there was another covenant afterwards. But according to one opinion in Sotah, the other two covenants were before that, so the first stage of "arvus" must have taken effect at an earlier covenant.

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 27b) uses a verse from Vayikra (26:37)- which was taught before the nation left Mt. Sinai- as the source for "arvus." Obviously, then, this responsibility took effect way before they reached the Plains of Moav. Perhaps this is why another covenant was needed after the Mishkan was completed- so that each person can accept responsibility for everyone else. G-d therefore asked Moshe to see if the nation would accept his terms- and they did.

This is Rashi's second explanation for what G-d told Moshe "to say," and is very fitting to be the first words ("kol Yisrael aravim zeh be'zeh.") spoken in the newly consecrated Mishkan. © 2004 Rabbi D. Kramer

#### RABBI AVI WEISS

## Shabbat Forshpeis

**W**hen beginning this week's parsha, we realize that the very first word of the Book of Leviticus has a letter aleph that is smaller than the others.

Why?

Smaller, suggests the Ba'al Turim, because it points to Moshe's (Moses) humility. It teaches an ethical lesson. Moshe preferred the text to read *va-yikar* without a final aleph, as *va-yikar* means "by chance." Rather than state that God called Moshe (*va-yikra*) implying a constant close relationship, Moshe, in his modesty, wished the text to read that God spoke with him only occasionally (*va-yikar*). Moshe, of course, adheres to God's command that the aleph be included, but does so humbly and writes a small aleph.

A second, more mystical thought comes to mind. Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook, the first Ashkenazik Chief Rabbi of Israel insists that the soul is made up of different Hebrew letters. When performing a mitzvah (commandment) Rav Kook argues, the letters shine brightly. In other words, whatever the action required for a religious observance, it ought reflect an inner spiritual quest — and, that quest is expressed through the illumination of the inner letters.

Perhaps this teaching explains why the aleph is smaller. The aleph, being the first letter of the alphabet, represents all Hebrew letters, and those letters for Rav Kook mirror the idea of the "soul aglow." A *korban* (sacrifice) which is the subject of God's calling to Moshe (*va-yikra*) should not remain an external empty gesture. It must be complemented by the human being's inner decision to internalize the mitzvah. Hence, the aleph is distinguished by being written small, as the goal of the sacrifice is to stir the figuratively small, albeit powerful "lights of the soul" drawing one near God. No wonder the very word *korban* comes from the word *karov*, to come close to God.

A final Chassidic thought: Rav Shlomo Carlebach often told the story of the Munkatsha passport. In this story a chassid asked the Munkatsha Rebbe for a passport to travel from Munkatsh to Berlin just before WW II. Considering the climate of the times the request seemed impossible to fulfill. After many hours, the Rebbe emerged from his private chambers and gave him an empty piece of paper soaked with tears with which the chassid was escorted everywhere in Germany with great honor.

Rav Shlomo explained that the Munkatsha passport surfaces over and over in our lives. When a bride walks around the groom, they give each other the Munkatsha passport. When children are born they close their eyes and cry, giving to and receiving from their parents the Munkatsha passport. And when we stand near the Kotel to pray before the Lord, we do so with the Munkatsha passport. And, concluded Rav Shlomo, when we begin the Talmud, we start on the second page — *daf bais*. Where is *daf aleph*, the first page? It is empty, absolutely empty. It is the Munkatsha passport.

Rav Shlomo never explained what the Munkatsha passport meant, but for me it represents infinite love. Hence, the aleph of *va-yikra* is small to remind us of the importance of approaching God with

*daf aleph*, with the Munkatsha passport — symbol of the unconditional love that we ought have for God and that God has for us and that we should all have for one another. © 2003 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA

#### YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

## Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA SICHA OF RAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT"A

*Adapted by Dov Karoll*

“**A**nd He called to Moshe, and God spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting...” (Vayikra 1:1)

The Midrash (Torat Kohanim, Dibbura di-nedava 1:2:9- 11, paraphrased in Rashi 1:1 s.v. Me-ohel) analyzes this verse: "From the Tent of Meeting:" this teaches that the Voice broke off and did not leave the Tent. Could this be because the Voice was low? The verse states, "And he heard THE Voice" (Bemidbar 7:89). What is THE Voice? This is the same Voice that is described elsewhere, "The Voice of God is powerful, the Voice of God is glorious, the Voice of God breaks the cedars" (29:4-5)! If so, why does it state, "From the Tent of Meeting?" This teaches us that the Voice broke off and could not be heard outside the Tent.

The Maharal (Gur Aryeh, Vayikra 1:1, s.v. melammed) asks why we need a special verse to teach that the people of Israel could not hear the Voice; after all, they were not allowed to enter the Tent of Meeting when God was speaking to Moshe! He answers that the prohibition was only to put one's whole body in, but to lean one's head inside would be acceptable. The Maharal explains that this verse comes to teach us that even if one would lean one's head in to the Tent, he would still not hear the Voice, for only Moshe could hear the word of God.

What we see from here is that were it not for the fact that the Torah explicitly taught us otherwise, we would have thought that the Voice of God could not be contained, that it would extend beyond the Tent of Meeting. In other words, in the realm of Torah study, the sound, the voice of the Torah must not stop with the walls of the beit midrash, of the study hall, but rather it must continue beyond them. The verse states, "Train the child according to his way" (Mishlei 22:6), and we must recognize that not everyone will remain in the beit midrash his entire life.

There is a dispute between Rabbeinu Tam and Rabbeinu Elchanan, quoted in Tosafot Yeshanim (Yoma 85b, s.v. teshuva) and in the Hagahot Maymuniyot (Hilkhhot Talmud Torah 3:2), regarding how to understand the statement, "Yafeh talmud Torah im derekh erez," "Torah study is good together with an occupation" (Avot 2:2). Rabbeinu Tam says that *derekh erez*, having an occupation, is to be understood as the primary factor in this sentence; whenever we encounter the sentence structure, "A with B," B is primary. Of

course, he does not mean that having an occupation is primary in objective value, but rather he is stating that the Torah understands that most people will not spend most of their time involved in talmud Torah. Rabbeinu Elchanan disagrees, and asserts that the assumption that one can emphasize talmud Torah to a lesser degree is not ideal, even at the practical level.

What is Rabbeinu Tam telling us? The Torah recognizes that most people will leave the beit midrash at some point, that they will need to maintain the value of talmud Torah even while they have made their dominant time commitment to their occupation. In Yeshivot, there has generally been some disconnection between the beit midrash and the outside world. This Yeshiva, from its founding, has aimed to transmit the sound of Torah beyond the walls of the beit midrash. That voice ought not be limited to the Yeshiva itself.

This is manifest not only in the idea of Hesder, of combining military service with Yeshiva study, but also in the study of Tanakh, Bible, and Machshava, Jewish thought, which had not been widespread in Yeshivot. It is also manifest in the Yeshiva's Teacher's Institute, which eventually became the Teacher's College with its accreditation. This, too, helps spread the word of the beit midrash beyond its own walls. And of course, the Virtual Beit Midrash is another sterling example of this effort. This approach is based heavily on the teachings of Harav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook zt"l, which have guided me throughout.

The Gemara in Berakhot (27b-28a) tells of an incident when Rabban Gamliel was temporarily replaced as the Nasi, the head of the Sanhedrin. The Gemara states that on that day, either four hundred or seven hundred additional benches, according to the two versions cited in the Gemara, were brought in to the beit midrash to accommodate the influx of students. This change was due to the fact that Rabban Gamliel had a rule: "Any student whose inside is not as his outside [meaning that his motivation is not pure] may not enter the beit midrash."

Rabban Gamliel was troubled when he saw this, for he was concerned, "Perhaps, God forbid, I have withheld Torah study from Israel!" He was reassured in a dream that those whom he had prevented were not really sincere. However, the Gemara immediately clarifies that Rabban Gamliel's approach was indeed problematic, and that this message was sent to him in a dream merely to put his mind at ease.

Apparently, the beit midrash is meant to have an expansive role and not a limited one. But even Rabban Gamliel was not limiting the spread of Torah beyond the beit midrash; rather, he was concerned with the environment within the beit midrash itself. While the Gemara (Mo'ed Katan 16a-b and Sukka 49b) derives that Torah should be taught in private settings and that one ought not teach his students out in public places, this refers to the instruction itself and not to the overall approach.

Our approach is better characterized by the following Midrash: "[Wisdom] raises her voice in the streets (rechoivot)'—this refers to the place where they expand (marchiv) it, namely, the beit midrash" (Tanchuma Bechukotai 3, based on Mishlei 1:20). The Torah should spring forth to the streets, to the people outside the beit midrash, after it has been developed within the beit midrash. One needs to develop and expand the Torah inside, and then he can, and should, go out and spread the Torah, "Raise her voice in the streets." One needs to be responsive to the needs of the Jewish People, as to the sound of a crying baby, wherever the call originates from.

Some people today think that the way to succeed in contemporary society is to close oneself off from any outside influence, to seclude oneself in the beit midrash. They think this is safe and that it will prevent failure. I saw pre-war Eastern Europe, and the religious world there operated on that assumption, and it failed. Because of the Shoah, we tend to idealize pre-war Europe, but there were serious problems, and major rebellions, against the closed system that existed there. The Jewish council of Vilna had fewer religious Jews on it than the Knesset does today. An acquaintance of mine from Ger said that everyone he knew had wayward ideas despite the outward appearance of religiosity.

The problem is that many people advocating this approach are young, and they do not have the experience and the perspective that I do. They do not realize that this system also has its problems.

Rather, the way to proceed is to develop the "Voice" inside the beit midrash, and then to send it forth into the world. If one does this, the voice that emerges is a much more powerful one, for it is the "The Voice of God [that] is powerful, the Voice of God is glorious, the Voice of God breaks the cedars." [*This sicha was delivered on leil Shabbat, Parashat Vayikra-Zachor, 5763 (2003).*]

#### **RABBI DOVID SIEGEL**

### **Haftorah**

**T**his 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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### RABBI LABEL LAM

## Dvar Torah

**C**oncerning four sons the Torah speaks: One wise, one wicked, one simple, and one who does not know how to ask. (The Pesach Haggadah)

And you shall tell your child on that day (Shemos 13:8)

Why are only four varieties of children mentioned here? Could there not be more types than this? Are "wise" and "wicked" opposite terms? Does the "simple" one stand in contradistinction to "the one who does not know how to ask"? What's the order here?

Having just heard the shocking claim that "We were slaves in Egypt and HASHEM our G-d took us out with a strong hand and an outstretched arm," there are really only four kinds of reactions. Let's imagine, for example, someone would enter a University cafeteria and claim to be Napoleon. Now let us measure the responses. One student will come running over immediately with a note pad and paper and begin to pepper the man with the hand in jacket with detailed questions. He'll be excited to have a primary source for a paper on French history.

Another will be automatically repelled. He'll begin to look for the exit, assuming that this man is a lunatic and he has just escaped from a mental institution. Why else would a grown person walking around in the 21st century make such an outrageous claim? A third will inch a little closer and wonder, observing the other two opposite responses, and inquire more generally, "Who is Napoleon? Did he invent a pastry?"

A fourth fellow sitting self-absorbed, in a corner, will glance occasionally at the excitement but retreat again to whatever else he's doing. When asked his opinion on the matter he'll shrug his shoulders, his look will say, "Who cares who this guy is?! I've got my own problems? Let him be whoever he wants to be! It's not my business!"

These four attitudes divide evenly into two categories. There are two types of responses of those who have some knowledge base, and two possible responses by those who don't. The wise one is knowledgeable and his appetite is stimulated by the Seder and he wishes to know more and more. That hunger must be fed.

The wicked one is haunted by the fact that that he fails to live up to what he knows. His conscience doesn't give him rest. His level of existential angst is heightened by the Pesach Seder so he feels a need to reject it all. He is basically told that he can only push himself away. He could never derail G-d's plan- His seder, but only his role in that plan. That's his medicine.

The simple one doesn't know what's flying but is willing to take some risks to discover what the real

story is although the price of knowledge might be required action. He is embraced and admired for his courage to want to know.

"As for the son who does know how to ask", he's paralyzed with fear to venture out of his comfort zone or maybe just to be found ignorant. He therefore emulates the ostrich, enjoying the temporary bliss of ignorance. He needs to be prompted and made to feel safe that's it's ok not to know and it better to find out what you need to know than not!

The Maharal asks why the word "one" appears before the name of each category of child and he says that they are really "one" person. We have all these parts within us though one may be more dominant at a given time. There are areas in which we are growing from strength to strength and others in which we are at risk of shrinking. Certain new and exciting topics are due to arise that may become our new friends for years to come and then there are those topics, "Well, let's not go there!" The question for each of us at the Pesach Seder is, "How do we approach this child?"

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#### AISH HATORAH

## What's Bothering Rashi?

by R' Dr. Avigdor Bonchek

**W**e begin a new sefer this week, the third of the five books, Sefer Vayikra. This book deals mainly with the laws of the Temple and the Kohanim (priests). But it also deals with Mitzvos that make the Jewish People a "Nation of Priests."

In discussing the various offerings to be brought in the Temple, we find the following verse which relates the offering which a leader brings when he sins.

"When a Prince has sinned and has done unintentionally any of the commandments of Hashem, his God, which should not be done, and is guilty." (Leviticus 4:22)

"When a Prince sins"—Rashi: An expression of "good fortune." [Implying that] fortunate is the generation whose leader is concerned to bring an atonement for his inadvertent sins, all the more so would he regret his intentional sins."

Rashi (actually, the Midrash) makes a play on words. The Torah says "When ("asher") a Prince sins" and Rashi finds this similar to the word "ashrei" which means "happy is" or "fortunate is." From that pun it is a short leap to the moral lesson about the humble, honest prince.

A Question: Granted the play on words is clever, but why the need for it? Why does Rashi cite this Drash (it is certainly not P'shat)? Rashi does not usually cite a Midrash unless there is some problem with the Torah's words. What is bothering him?

Hint: Compare our verse with other verses in this Parsha where the Torah mentions people sinning

and their obligation to bring a sacrifice. (For example: Lev. 4:3; 4:13 etc.)

An Answer: Similar verses appear in our Pedra. They are: "If ("im") the anointed priest should sin to bring guilt on the people etc." (Leviticus 4:3)

"If ("im") the entire congregation of Israel erred and the matter was concealed from eyes of the community etc." (Leviticus 4:13)

"If ("im") a person unwittingly sin, one of the ordinary people, etc." (Leviticus 4:27)

But in our verse we have: "When ("asher") a Prince shall sin etc."

Rashi was sensitive to this deviation from the usual language used in all other instances of sacrifice-offerings in this Parsha. Thus he commented on the word "asher" which was unusual.

How does his comment explain this difference?

An Answer: The use of "asher" signifies a special message; that the sinning of the Prince, and his recognition and confession of his guilt, constitutes a special, rare occasion. The Prince, being the highest authority in the community, had no one above him to fear. He was the apex of communal power. No one, no power, could enforce the law upon him; no one could punish him for his crimes or misdemeanors. This is a unique situation. The ordinary citizen, even the virtuous one, lives in constant awareness, albeit unconscious, that if he is caught at a misdeed, he may be personally punished and publicly embarrassed. This has a profound deterrent effect on most people. Not so the Prince. He lives, as it were, above the law. He, being the highest authority, need not fear his underlings prosecuting or punishing him. He could dispense with them; not they with him. So, if we have a Prince, that in spite of his unchallenged power, is willing, of his own volition, to admit his guilt, this is quite unusual and significantly praiseworthy. This is the point of Rashi's comment. An example of confession by a community leader is found in the case of Judah (Genesis 38:26) where he admits to having fathered Tamar's child (children), when he could most easily have escaped detection. This courageous and righteous act of admitting his guilt entitled him to be the father of Princes—of King David and his descendants.

Not long ago a president of the United States was impeached by the Congress. The most powerful man in the world was humbled, severely criticized and publicly embarrassed, all because he could not bring himself to admit to wrongdoing, all because he could not say "chatsi," "I have sinned." Hubris and the illusory power of his position, make such an admission appear to be an almost superhuman feat. Everyone would have breathed easier, everyone would have uttered a sigh of relief, everyone would have felt "fortunate" if the president would have admitted his wrongdoing.

Indeed "fortunate is the generation whose leader can admit his guilt." Rashi's lesson was true

thousands of years ago, it is no less true today. © 2004  
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### **MACHON ZOMET**

## **Shabbat B'Shabbato**

by Rabbi Yitzchak Cohen,  
Rabbi of Moreshet, a town in the Galil

**T**his week we once again begin Vayikra, the book of the sacrifices, an expression of great holiness. They are offered at the heart of the nation of Bnei Yisrael, in the Temple. On the other hand, much of the flesh of the sacrifices is removed from the fire and eaten: this is an example of desire in the center of holiness.

This week is also the beginning of the month of Nissan, the month of spring, which symbolizes physical and spiritual blossoming. The blooms of spring bring spiritual pleasure that has an affect on the emotions and leads to praising the Creator. However, the blooms are also the occasion of a great excitement of temptation. Is it reasonable that physical desire and a high spiritual level are linked in this way?

Man arrives in the world with a great soul, with tremendous spiritual treasures. During a lifetime, he absorbs spiritual matters and incorporates them into the depths of his soul. How do these spiritual things influence him? In answer, let us take an example from the world of art, which touches on the most innermost layers of the soul, making use of everyday human concepts. A story, a song, or a play has the ability to illustrate concepts much more clearly than many words. The reason is that a story has an inner point that touches our soul, and a link is formed.

True absorption of holiness can only take place through attachment. In the Temple, which represents the heart and the great desire, there is a link to burning flesh to which everybody can become attached. But G-d forbid that we remain only in the realm of the flesh. One who brings a sacrifice must look into greater depths, in order to understand and to feel that everything that happens on the Altar symbolizes what is happening to him. And this is the true link between desire and holiness.

The elements of the season of spring, with its freedom and blooms, are an expression of progress, innovation, and creativity. The desire itself is part of the incentive for true freedom, and we have been commanded to make full use of all the tools that G-d has given us.

### **"Sacrifices"-Korbanot**

by Rabbi Uri Dasberg

The above title is the name given to the section of the morning prayers recited before the start of the "pesukei d'zimra" (collected chapters from Tehillim). When the Almighty told Avraham that atonement for Bnei Yisrael's sins would be by offering sacrifices, he replied, "Master of the World, that is sufficient while the

Temple stands. What will happen when the Temple is not there? And G-d replied, I have established the laws of the sacrifices. If they read them before me, I will consider it as if they had sacrificed to me, and I will forgive all their sins." [Ta'anit 27b].

However, at the end of Menachot, it is written, "Whoever is involved in the laws of the Chattat is considered as if he had brought a Chattat sacrifice" [110a]. This implies that it is not enough just to read the material but it is necessary to relate to it, and to study the relevant Torah portions in depth. Perhaps this explains why there are people who skip the section of "karbonot" in the daily prayers.

The Noda B'Yehuda asks why we do not mention the daily sacrifices in the shemoneh essrei, just like we describe the special sacrifices as part of Musaf. His answer is that the prayer is in principle meant to be recited whenever a person feels the need for it, while if the sacrifices were also included, along with the twice-daily Tamid, it would only be suitable in the morning and the afternoon. Another answer that is given is that the shemoneh essrei was originally written when the Temple existed. At that time, it was not necessary to discuss the sacrifices as a replacement for bringing them, since they were still offered in the Temple. Afterwards, they were not added into the prayer.

### **Torah Words for a Joyous Occasion: Bar/Bat Mitzva**

by Rabbi Yehuda Shaviv

Every word of the first verse of Vayikra is explained in detail in Torat Kohanim, and Rashi quotes several of these explanations. One of the comments on the last word in the verse, "saying," ("leimor"), is: "Go out and tell them my words, and answer me if they accept them."

This is a novel idea. We know that before the Torah was given Bnei Yisrael had the option of accepting or rejecting it, and construction of the Tabernacle was based on voluntary contributions. However, once the Torah was given and the Tabernacle was built, the nation was obligated to perform the mitzvot. And now we are told that the words of G-d are suggestions, and even from within the Tent of Meeting Moshe has been asked to tell Bnei Yisrael what G-d wants and to wait to see "if they accept." Thus, it seems that there always remains an element of free choice. This might be related to the principle of seeing the Torah as being renewed each and every day.

And this leads us to our message for a boy or girl who has reached an age of responsibility for mitzvot. Even though you are now obligated to observe them, there is still room for choice, and G-d waits to hear from you again and again that you willingly perform the mitzvot.

