

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI DOV KRAMER**

### Taking a Closer Look

**R**ashi (Vayikra 1:1), based on the Sifra, tells us that before any commandments were given from the Mishkan, Moshe was told to tell the Children of Israel that his unique communication with G-d was on their behalf, not his own. The proof to this (Rashi and the Midrash continues) is that for the 38 years that the nation was banished (after the sin of the "spies" until the entire generation died out), this communication did not occur. Among the questions asked on this Midrash is how it could be said that there was no communication between G-d and Moshe during those years, if we see that there was, both during and after Korach's rebellion.

If Korach rebelled before the spies were sent (see [www.aishdas.org/ta/5767/korach.pdf](http://www.aishdas.org/ta/5767/korach.pdf)), and the commandments that followed (some of which were a result of the rebellion, while others, such as terumah and ma'aser, were relevant to the Kohanim and Levi'im being chosen to serve in the Temple) were also given then, it is theoretically possible that there was no communication between G-d and Moshe for those 38 years. However, a straightforward reading of the text, as well as the almost unanimous understanding of our Sages and the commentators (including Rashi, see Bamidbar 16:4 and 16:14), is that Korach rebelled (shortly) after the sin of the "spies," during those 38 years that the nation was banished. If G-d not communicating with Moshe during those 38 years is the "proof" that their communication was really because of G-d's love for the nation (and not His relationship with Moshe), how could these commandments, which were communicated directly from G-d to Moshe during these 38 years, have taken place?

Sefer Hazikaron references Rashi on Taanis (30b), who asks this question and differentiates between the type of communication Moshe had with G-d during those 38 years and the type he had with Him before the nation was banished and again after that generation died out. Whereas Moshe was said to have spoken to G-d "face to face" (or "mouth to mouth"), it was through "a vision at night with unclear aspects" during these 38 years. Although the Maharitz Chiyos says that the commentary on Taanis attributed to Rashi isn't really Rashi's commentary, this approach is widely used among the commentators, including Rashi himself (Devarim 2:17). Sefer Hazikaron also references the

Rashbam (Bava Basra 121b), who first differentiates between the level of communication during those 38 years and before/after them, then suggests that the difference was in the circumstances surrounding the communication, as during those 38 years, the only time G-d communicated with Moshe was because of a pressing need (such as when Korach rebelled).

It would be difficult to accept that there wasn't any communication whatsoever between G-d and Moshe unless there was an emergency need for it, in light of the Rambam (Hilchos Yesoday HaTorah 7:7) telling us that prophecy is not only experienced when G-d has a message to send (and uses the prophet as His messenger). If individuals can experience prophecy as a function of their own personal relationship with G-d, how could Moshe, the master of all prophets, have lost his ability to experience the same?

There's one major difference between what Rashi wrote in his commentary on Devarim, and what is written in the commentary attributed to him on Taanis. Whereas in Taanis the difference between Moshe's prophecies was in the clarity of the prophecy, in Devarim Rashi adds the words "b'lashon chiba," "in a manner of affection." What kind of "affection" did G-d show Moshe when He communicated with him? The first words of Rashi in Vayikra spell it out for us (also using the expression "lashon chiba"); G-d "calling Moshe's name" before speaking to him was a means of showing His affection for Moshe. Apparently, this show of affection was missing whenever G-d communicated with Moshe during those 38 years. Not only was the message less clear, it was said/communicated with less affection.

When did G-d communicate with Moshe during those 38 years? Either when the need arose for a message to be sent to the nation (i.e. Korach), or when Moshe experienced personal prophecy. However, the latter was always initiated by Moshe, so even if Moshe's personal prophecy was still "face to face" (the Brisker Rav is quoted as saying that it wasn't, while the Imray Chain deduces from Yalkut Shimon 431 that it was), it wasn't preceded by G-d calling him by name. It could be suggested that the two approaches of the Rashbam are based on whether or not Moshe's personal prophecy during those 38 years were still "face to face." If they weren't, then we have a straightforward explanation of what the difference was, as during those 38 years there was no "face to face" communication. If, however, Moshe did experience "face to face" communication

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during his personal prophecies, the difference lies in Moshe not being "called" affectionately during those 38 years, neither before the prophecies that arose out of a special need, nor when Moshe experienced a personal prophecy.

The term used by Moshe when the 38 years came to an end, quoted by Rashi, the Midrashim and the Talmud to show that things had reverted back to the way they were, was "to me" ("eilai"), "to me was G-d's speaking." It wasn't just that it was more directly "to me" because it was again "face to face," nor was it only that G-d again spoke "to me," even without there being a pressing need for it or Moshe being the one to initiate the contact. After the generation died out, G-d once again "called to Moshe" before speaking to him, demonstrating His affection for him. © 2010 Rabbi D. Kramer

#### **RABBI BEREL WEIN**

### **Wein Online**

**T**his Shabat we begin to read the book of Vayikra. This book of Vayikra has very little narrative to it and concentrates mainly on the sacrifices that were offered in the Temple service of the mishkan and the beit hamikdash; the laws of purity and defilement; and a listing of many of the commandments of the Torah and Jewish ritual.

This makes this section of the Torah a difficult one to comprehend, internalize and attempt to teach to others. Therefore our educational sense would have postponed the teaching of this book of the Torah until the years of maturity and life experience have fashioned us as Torah devotees and scholars. Yet the rabbis of Jewish tradition have ordained that children begin their Torah experiences by studying the book of Vayikra.

Their statement is: "Let those who are still pure and holy begin their education by studying the concepts of purity and holiness." Purity and holiness are difficult concepts to study. They are states of being, more of the heart and soul than that of the mind.

Someone who does not ever deal in being holy and pure will never be able to fathom the secrets of the Torah that lie in this book of Vayikra. That person will only see a seeming hodgepodge of laws and rituals, many of which would be judged to be anachronistic in our "enlightened" age.

But our Torah is a Torah of experience and emotion as much as it is one of soaring intellect and deep analytical thought. To begin to understand the concepts of purity and holiness, one must be, or at least strive to be, a person of holiness and purity. And that is a most significant lesson that the book of Vayikra teaches us.

Purity and holiness are inextricably bound to the overriding value of constant sacrifice in Jewish life. It is no coincidence that the laws of the sacrificial worship in the Temple are connected to the laws of purity in this book of Vayikra. Without sacrifice, constant daily sacrifice, purity and holiness are unachievable goals.

In a very contaminated environment, it is most difficult to keep one's self clean and pure. It requires great discipline and restraint, care and will- in short, a supreme sense of sacrifice. In life we are always faced with myriad, daily choices. Every choice that we make indicates that we have sacrificed another choice that we could have made.

Then the only question that remains is whether we made the correct sacrifice. Will our choice bring us closer to a sense of holiness and purity and purpose in our lives or, perhaps, will it do the opposite? The seeming jumble of laws in the book of Vayikra is meant to guide our choices of which sacrifices we should wisely make in our lives.

The Torah details for us all of the categories of sacrifices? public, private, those of leaders and of paupers? and thereby points the way to our sacrificing wisely and productively. This is the overall thrust of this great biblical book of Vayikra. © 2010 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 SHLOMO RISKIN**

### **Shabbat Shalom**

**“A**nd He called to Moses and the Lord spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying: 'Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them, anyone who brings a sacrifice to the Lord, from the animals, from the cattle and from the sheep you shall offer your sacrifices.'" (Lev 1:1,2).

The opening words of this third book of the Bible, the Book of Vayikra, tells us that G-d first called to Moses and then communicated to him a specific message concerning the sacrificial offerings of the Sanctuary. Why this double language of "calling" first and then "speaking" afterwards? Why not cut to the chase: "And the Lord spoke to Moses from the Tent of Meeting"?

The Talmudic sage Rabbi Musia Rabbah, in the Tractate Yoma (4b), explains that the Bible is giving us a lesson in good manners: before someone commands another to do something, he must first ask permission

to give the order. He even suggests that before someone begins speaking to another, one must ascertain that the person wishes to hear what he has to say. With great beauty, the rabbis suggest that even G-d Himself follows these laws of etiquette when addressing Moses, asking his permission before speaking to or commanding him.

The Ramban (Nahmanides) takes a completely opposite view, limiting this double language of addressing to the Sanctuary specifically: "this [seemingly superfluous language of first calling and then speaking] is not used elsewhere [where G-d is addressing Moses]; it is only used here because Moses would not otherwise have been permitted to enter the Tent of Meeting, would not otherwise have been permitted to be in such close proximity to the place where the Almighty was to be found." (Ramban ad loc). From this second perspective, it is Moses who must first be summoned by G-d and receive Divine permission before he dare enter the Sacred Tent of Meeting of the exalted Holy of Holies.

This latter interpretation seems closest to the Biblical text; since the very last verses in the Book of Exodus specifically tell us that whenever a cloud covered the Sanctuary, Moses was prevented from entering the Tent of Meeting and communicating with the Divine (Exodus 40:34, 35). Hence, the Book of Leviticus opens with G-d summoning Moses into the Tent of Meeting, apparently signaling the departure of the cloud and the Divine permission for Moses to hear G-d's words.

This scenario helps us understand G-d's relationship - and lack thereof - with the Israelites in general and with Moses in particular. You may recall that the initial commandment to erect a Sanctuary was in order for the Divine Presence to dwell in the midst of the Israelites (Ex. 25:8); such a close identity between the Divine and the Israelites on earth would signal the period of redemption. This would have been a fitting conclusion to the exodus from Egypt.

Tragically, Israel then sin with the Golden Calf and G-d immediately informs them that, "I cannot go up in your midst because you are a stiff-necked nation, lest I destroy you on the way" (Ex. 33:3). Only if the Israelites are worthy can G-d dwell in their midst. If they forego their true vocation as a "sacred nation and a Kingdom of priest-teachers" while G-d is in such close proximity to them, then this G-d of truth will have to punish and even destroy them. He will therefore now keep His distance from them, retaining His "place," as it were, in the supernal, transcendent realms, and sending His "angel-messenger" to lead them in their battles to conquer the Promised Land (Ibid 33:2,3).

As a physical symbol of the concealment - or partial absence - of the Divine (hester panim), Moses takes the Tent of Meeting and removes its central position in the Israelite encampment, to a distance of 2000 cubits away. (33:7). He then remonstrates with

G-d arguing that the Almighty had promised to show His love by means of His Divine Name, to reveal to him His Divine attributes; and to accept Israel as His special nation (33:11,12). In other words, Moses argues that that He, G-d - and not an angel-messenger - must reveal His Divine ways and lead Israel (Rashbam on 33:13).

G-d then responds that indeed "My face will lead, I, Myself and not an angel-messenger, and "I shall bring you [you, Moses, but not the nation] to your ultimate resting place" (33:14). Moses is not satisfied, and argues that G-d Himself - His "face" and not His angel-messenger must lead not only Moses but also the nation! Otherwise, he says, "do not take us [the entire nation] out of this desert." And finally G-d agrees that although He cannot be in the midst of the nation, He can and will lead them, stepping in whenever necessary to make certain that Israel will never disappear and will eventually return to their homeland.

G-d may not be completely manifest as the G-d of love in every historical experience of our people, and will not yet teach the world ethical monotheism. Israel remains a "work-in-progress," with G-d behind a cloud and "incommunicado." Our nation, albeit imperfect, still serves as a witness that the G-d of love and compassion exists, and orchestrates historical redemption through Israel. G-d is "incorporated," incorporated, in Israel, the people and the land.

What G-d leaves behind even when He is in a cloud are the two newly chiseled tablets of stone - His Divine Torah with the human input of the Oral Law - as well as His thirteen "ways" or attributes, G-d's spiritual and emotional characteristics of love, compassion, freely-given grace, patience, kindness, etc. (Lev. 34:1-7). And when individuals internalize these attributes-imbue their hearts, minds and souls with love, compassion, kindness, grace and peace - they cause G-d to become manifest, enabling them to communicate with G-d "face to face," like Moses. Then the cloud between Moses' Active Intellect and G-d's Active Intellect disappears, and Moses is enabled to teach and understand G-d's Torah.

And so Vayikra opens when G-d perceives that Moses has reached the highest spiritual level achievable by mortals, the cloud is removed from the Tent of the Meeting and G-d invites Moses to enter it and receive more of those Divine Emanations which comprise our Bible... © 2010 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

### **RABBI SIR JONATHAN SACKS**

## **Covenant & Conversation**

**T**he laws of sacrifices that dominate the early chapters of the book of Vayikra / Leviticus, are among the hardest in the Torah to relate to-for it has been almost 2000 years since the Temple was destroyed and the sacrificial system came to an end.

But Jewish thinkers, especially the more mystical among them, strove to understand the inner significance of the sacrifices, the statement they made about the relationship between humanity and G-d. They were thus able to rescue their spirit even if their physical enactment was no longer possible.

Among the simplest yet most profound was the comment made by R. Shneur Zalman of Ladi, the first Rebbe of Lubavitch. He noticed a grammatical oddity about the second line of today's sedra: "Speak to the children of Israel and say to them: when one of you offers a sacrifice to the Lord, the sacrifice must be taken from the cattle, sheep or goats." (Lev. 1:2)

Or so the verse would read if it were constructed according to the normal rules of grammar. However, in Hebrew the word order of the sentence is strange and unexpected. We would expect to read: adam mikem ki yakriv, "when one of you offers a sacrifice". Instead what it says is adam ki yakriv mikem, "when one offers a sacrifice of you". The essence of sacrifice, said R. Shneur Zalman, is that we offer ourselves. We bring to G-d our faculties, our energies, our thoughts and emotions. The physical form of sacrifice-an animal offered on the altar-is only an external manifestation of an inner act. The real sacrifice is mikem, "of you". We give G-d something of ourselves.

Let us stay with this idea and pursue it further. In sacrifice, what do we give G-d? The Jewish mystics, among them R. Shneur Zalman, spoke about two souls each of us has-the animal soul (nefesh ha-behamit) and the G-dly soul. On the one hand we are physical beings. We are part of nature. We have physical needs: food, drink, shelter. We are born, we live, we die. As Kohelet / Ecclesiastes puts it: "Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. Both have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is a mere fleeting breath." (Ecclesiastes 3: 19)

Yet we are not simply animals. We have within us immortal longings. We can think, speak, communicate. We can-by the acts of speaking and listening- reach out to others. We are the one life form known to us in the vast universe that can ask the question "Why?" We can formulate ideas and be moved by high ideals. We are not governed by biological drives alone. Psalm 8 is a hymn of wonder on this theme:

"When I consider your heavens, / the work of your fingers, / the moon and the stars, / which you have set in place, / what is man that you are mindful of him, / the son of man that you care for him? / Yet You made him a little lower than the angels / and crowned him with glory and honor. / You made him ruler over the works of your hands; / you put everything under his feet..."

Physically, we are almost nothing; spiritually, we are brushed by the wings of eternity. We have a G-dly soul.

The nature of sacrifice, understood psychologically, is now clear. What we offer G-d is (not just an animal but) the nefesh ha-behamit, the animal soul within us.

The verse uses three words for the animals to be sacrificed: behemah (animal), bakar (cattle) and tzon (flock). Each represents an animal-like feature of the human personality.

Behemah is animal instinct itself. The word refers to domesticated animals. It does not imply the savage instincts of the predator. What it means is something more tame. Animals spend their time searching for food. Their lives are bounded by the struggle to survive. To sacrifice the animal within us is to be moved by something more than mere survival.

Wittgenstein, when asked what was the task of philosophy, answered "To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle". The fly, trapped in the bottle, bangs its head against the glass, trying to find a way out. The one thing it fails to do is to look up. The G-dly soul within us is the force that makes us look up, beyond the physical world, beyond mere survival, in search of meaning, purpose, goal.

The word bakar, cattle, in Hebrew reminds us of the word boker, "dawn", literally to "break through", as the first rays of sunlight break through the darkness of night. Cattle, stampeding, break through barriers. Unless constrained by fences, cattle are no respecters of boundaries. To sacrifice the bakar is to learn to recognize and respect boundaries-between holy and profane, pure and impure, permitted and forbidden. Barriers of the mind can sometimes be stronger than walls.

Finally tzon, flocks, represents the herd instinct-the powerful drive to move in a given direction because others are doing likewise. The great figures of Judaism- Abraham, Moses, the prophets-were distinguished precisely by their ability to stand apart from the herd; to be different, to challenge the idols of the age, to refuse to capitulate to the intellectual fashions of the moment. That ultimately is the meaning of holiness in Judaism. Kadosh, the holy, is something set apart, different, separate, distinctive. Jews were the only people in history consistently to refuse to assimilate to the dominant culture or convert to the dominant faith.

The noun korban, "sacrifice", and the verb le-hakriv, "to offer something as a sacrifice" actually mean "that which is brought close" and "the act of bringing close". The key element is not so much giving something up (the usual meaning of sacrifice) but rather bringing something close to G-d. Le-hakriv is to bring the animal element to be transformed through the Divine fire that once burned on the altar, and still burns at the heart of prayer if we truly seek closeness to G-d.

By one of the great ironies of history, this ancient idea has become suddenly contemporary. Darwinism, the decoding of the human genome, and scientific materialism (the idea that the material is all

there is) have led to the widespread conclusion that we are animals, nothing more, nothing less. We share 98 per cent of our genes with the primates. We are, as Desmond Morris used to put it, "the naked ape". Homo sapiens exists by mere accident. We are the result of a random series of genetic mutations who just happened to be more adapted to survival than other species. The nefesh ha-behamit, the animal soul, is all there is.

The refutation of this idea-and it is one of the most absurdly reductive ever held by intelligent minds-lies in the very act of sacrifice itself as the mystics understood it. We can redirect our animal instincts. We can rise above mere survival. We are capable of honouring boundaries. We can step outside our environment. We can transcend the behemah, the bakar and the tzon. No animal is capable of self-transformation; but we are. Poetry, music, love, wonder-the things that have no survival value but which speak to our deepest sense of being-all tell us that we are not mere animals, assemblages of selfish genes. By bringing that which is animal within us close to G-d, we allow the material to be suffused with the spiritual and we become something else: no longer slaves of nature but servants of the living G-d. © 2010 Rabbi Sir J. Sacks and torah.org

#### **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 Hagaddah, 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 lifts 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. © 2010 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 YITZCHOK ADLERSTEIN**

## **To Thine Own Torah Self Be True**

**M**any find the broader lesson of chatas shocking. We are used to invoking the mantra "I didn't do it on purpose! I didn't mean to do that!" to free ourselves from guilt. The chatas/sin-offering proclaims that we are wrong, that we have missed the Torah's mark in a major way. Intention is not the only yardstick of moral failing. The Torah holds us accountable as well for what we do not intend-for oversights that could have been avoided had we cared enough not to lose sight for a moment of the importance of the duties with which He entrusted to us.

An unstated elitism, however, greets us when the Torah maps its chatas demands upon us. The first few instances of chatas do not even deal with active transgressions, so much as improper judgment-and only by the most special people! When the anointed Kohen or the High Court rule improperly and regret it later, they are to bring a special chatas that fits their role. Only after they, the highest spiritual authorities are considered, does the Torah tell us about the more common chatas-the one brought by ordinary people.

They, however, only need to bring this korban for an active discretion-only when they have done something, violated some precept. We get the impression that Hashem concerns Himself, so to speak, with the inner life of only the people who lead the spiritual charge. For everyone but the superstars, what they think does not matter so much, as long as that thought does not morph into illicit action.

The korban olah ve-yored strikingly disabuses us of this notion. The inner life of the common man are incredibly important. Moreover, those private thoughts are very much His concern, *kivayachol*.

How else could we make sense of this grouping of three seemingly unrelated transgressions? Why their own, special protocol? Why here-and nowhere else does the Torah create ways for everyone to bring this korban, regardless of how rich or poor they are, going so far as to describe three completely different forms of the korban, depending on a person's material well-being? Why are those who transgress these three sins described as *ashem/desolate* (Vayikra 5:2,3)?

The common thread that unites all three transgressions is Truth, and its place in the inner life of the everyday person. Each of the three transgressions which necessitate a korban olah ve-yored shows that the truth of a core value has been compromised. These truths are critical to turning a soul into a Jewish personality according to the Torah's expectations.

The first of the three deals with Man in the context of greater society. Hashem makes many demands on us as individuals to share our energies and talents with the larger community. When we fail to do our share, we sin not only to our fellow citizens, but to Him, as the ultimate guarantor of the Torah society. Upholding justice is the most significant of the social obligations. When a person denies his knowledge of evidence relevant to a lawsuit, he harms his fellow Man, he sins against G-d, and he shows that he has lost his grasp of an essential truth about his place in the community of men. The Torah allows each and every individual to approach his friend (even without the official court order that we call a summons), and demand that he testify on his behalf. When a person then denies his knowledge, and asserts this in court, he must bring an olah ve-yored. Denial of truth needed in service of Justice is a denial of a greater truth about Man's obligation towards others in general, and to uphold justice in particular. There simply is no way that Justice can prevail without everyone recognizing that they must be prepared at all times to make their individual contribution to the legal system.

The second transgression of the three seems to deal with a violation of the sanctity of the Mikdosh, but contains a subtle, secondary error. A person becomes *tameh*, and then enters the Mikdosh inadvertently, forgetting for the moment that he or she is *tameh*, or losing awareness that he has stepped into a

holy place. The consequence is the korban olah ve-yored.

Taharah/purity, as symbolized by the Mikdosh, is a fact of life. We experience it in the innocence of childhood, and in the exhortations of our childhood teachers never to lose it. We spend years learning about how to safeguard it, how to nurture it and preserve it in adulthood. We absorb the idea that we are morally free to soar to heights of accomplishment. The Mikdosh is the visible symbol in our midst of the striving for spiritual achievement on the absolutely highest plane.

Tumah/impurity is also a fact of life. We become halachically *tameh* when we encounter involuntariness. To be morally free means that we are not compelled to act. We have free will. We are not programmed by our genes, inexorably shaped by our environments, destined by the motions of the stars. Yet, from time to time we face what seems to us to be stunning evidence of the contrary. There is so much that we do not control! We are not even fully in charge of our own bodies, the part of the material world necessarily closest to us. When we experience some sort of involuntary discharge-and all the more so when we come in contact with the Death, the most feared involuntary experience! -- the Torah calls us *tameh*. It has us perform some ritual to stop a slide on a slippery slope. Impressed with our lack of freedom in regard to physical phenomena, we could consciously or unconsciously assume that the same is true of moral and spiritual choices. Our recovery from *tumah* always reasserts the truth of moral freedom. *Tumah* is indeed part of life, but it can be experienced without our allowing it to become universal and the only fact of life.

Particularly dangerous is blending the realms of *tumah* and *taharah*. We can and must deal with both but they must each take their separate place, and receive their individual attention. The person who is *tameh* who enters the Mikdosh because he forgets his *tumah*, or forgets that he has entered the place that forever teaches the gifts of *taharah*, has combined polar opposites. He has undervalued the truth of moral freedom. This, too, is a sin against G-d, and something that concerns Him even in the most undistinguished person.

The last of the three olah ve-yored transgressions concerns the truth of inner thought itself. A person swears falsely, either about what he knows not to be true, or by failing to live up to a commitment he has made through an oath. He must bring an olah ve-yored offering.

Speech is thought, externalized. It is a product at the same time of human will to express some thought. An oath is speech that has been linked to the name of G-d. Every oath, whether it explicitly mentions Hashem or not, still invokes G-d. An oath proclaims, "G-d Himself will attest that what I am saying is true!"

Now if an oath impacted the interests of another person, the false oath would cause harm to the other, as will as cheapen Hashem's Name, by comparing His existence with a blatant untruth. The transgression here, however, applies even where there is no other interested party. The person swears regarding something that concerns him alone.

This, however, is the point. Your inner life, each small thought you think, is known to Him. He does not wish you to trivialize thought and will. When you move casual thought to the level of spoken declaration (and, by using an oath, call upon Him as a guarantor), you had better be true to "thine own self." The strength of the sense of truth within Man's mind-his thought and his will-is very much a concern of Hashem.

The olah ve-yored, then, sends a strong message about the integrity of every person that would like to call himself "Jew." We can transgress not only by what we do, but through the ill-formed and misshapen ideas that swirl around our heads. Those, too, along with our actions, determine what we actually are in the most profound sense. (Based on the Hirsch Chumash, *Vayikra 5:13*) © 2010 Rabbi Y. Adlerstein and 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.

#### **RABBI NAFTALI REICH**

### **Legacy**

**W**hat do all the sacrificial offerings that comprised the Temple service have in common? Each class of offering had its own specialized set of detailed instructions, calling for a certain species and gender of animal or bird, for various kinds of cakes, for libations, spices or condiments of a particular sort, and so on. No two sacrifices were identical, and no requirement was universal. Except for one. Every sacrifice required salt. Furthermore, the requirement of

salt was not simply a minor instruction. There is a specific positive commandment in the Torah mandating the addition of salt to all sacrifices, and to add emphasis to emphasis, there is also a specific prohibition forbidding the omission of salt from any sacrifice. Clearly, the addition of salt is critical. Why salt?

The Talmud sheds light on this puzzling question. At the time of creation, the Talmud explains, the Creator parted the lower world from the firmament, separating the waters of the heavens from the waters of the seas. The seas were mortified. "Master of the Universe!" they cried out. "We want to be close to Your heavenly throne. Why have You placed us off in the distance?" In order to reassure the seas that they had not been abandoned or rejected, the Creator granted them the privilege of providing salt for all sacrifices brought in the Temple.

But the questions still remain. How could a minuscule drop of salt added to a sacrifice appease the overwhelming desire of the sea to be closer to Hashem? How was that adequate compensation for being distant from Hashem?

The commentators explain that we are often all too dependent on our environment for our level of spirituality. If only we could live in more sheltered surroundings, we tell ourselves, we would be such spiritual people. If only we could isolate ourselves from the hubbub of the mundane world we could draw closer to the Creator and the fulfillment of the transcendent aspirations of our inner souls. In the meantime, however, we resign ourselves to the reality of our existence and the futility of aspiring to high levels of spirituality.

But this is not what Hashem expects of us. He does not want us to make our spiritual growth dependent on what we consider ideal conditions. In any setting, no matter how distant, no matter how difficult, He wants us to yearn to connect with Him. Moreover, it is this very yearning which will bring us closer to Him and forge that powerful spiritual connection. The aching desire in our hearts spans any chasms of time and space and brings us right into Hashem's enfolding embrace.

In this light we can understand Hashem's words of consolation to the waters of the seas. True, they would have to remain in the lower world while the waters of the heavens rose to the upper world. But this did not necessarily mean that they would be estranged from Hashem. The solution was in the salt.

Salt is the sublimation of all the elements dissolved in the water. It is the very essence of the entire sea reduced to a tiny pinch. By providing salt for the sacrifices, the sea would be reaching with all its being out across the vast distances to the center of spirituality, and this reaching out itself would bring it close to Hashem.

A king had two sons. One of them lived in the palace and served as the chief minister of the kingdom.

He met with his father daily and conferred with him on a wide variety of state and other matters. The second son served as the king's ambassador to an important but very distant kingdom. Every other year, he returned to the palace for a short visit, but for all the rest of the time he remained in the faraway land.

After a number of years, the king grew old and feeble, He decided to address the question of the succession to the throne. He called in his ministers and informed them that he had chosen a successor.

"The son who is closer to me," he said, "shall sit on my throne."

The ministers nodded sagely. It was as they expected. The chief minister would make a good king.

"Send for my son right away," the king continued. "He must travel a great distance to come back here to the palace."

The ministers were baffled. "But you just said that you had chosen the closer son, your majesty!"

"Indeed I have," said the king. "The chief minister is a good, loyal son, but he is with me all the time. He is not excited when he comes to see me. The ambassador, however, may live far away, but he yearns to see me with all his heart. No distance can affect our closeness."

In our own lives, we can all reach deep within ourselves for that pinch of salt that represents our very being and identity. If we dedicate that salt to our relationship with our creator, we can gain untold spiritual riches no matter where we find ourselves. © 2010 Rabbi N. Reich and torah.org

### 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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