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Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

One of the most difficult elements of the Torah and the way of life it prescribes is the phenomenon of animal sacrifices – for obvious reasons. First, Jews and Judaism have survived without them for almost two thousand years. Second, virtually all the prophets were critical of them, not least Jeremiah in this week's haftarah.[1] None of the prophets sought to abolish sacrifices, but they were severely critical of those who offered them while at the same time oppressing or exploiting their fellow human beings. What disturbed them – what disturbed G-d in whose name they spoke – was that evidently some people thought of sacrifices as a kind of bribe: if we make a generous enough gift to G-d then He may overlook our crimes and misdemeanours. This is an idea radically incompatible with Judaism.

Then again, along with monarchy, sacrifices were among the least distinctive features of Judaism in ancient times. Every ancient religion in those days, every cult and sect, had its altars and sacrifices. Finally, it remains remarkable how simply and smoothly the sages were able to construct substitutes for sacrifice, three in particular: prayer, study and tzedakah. Prayer, particularly Shacharit, Mincha and Musaf, took the place of the regular offerings. One who studies the laws of sacrifice is as if he had brought a sacrifice. And one who gives to charity brings, as it were, a financial sacrifice, acknowledging that all we have we owe to G-d.

So, though we pray daily for the rebuilding of the Temple and the restoration of sacrifices, the principle of sacrifice itself remains hard to understand. Many theories have been advanced by anthropologists, psychologists and Bible scholars as to what the sacrifices represented, but most are based on the questionable assumption that sacrifice is essentially the same act across cultures. This is poor scholarship. Always seek to understand a practice in terms of the distinctive beliefs of the culture in which it takes place. What could sacrifice possibly mean in a religion in which G-d is the creator and owner of all?

What, then, was sacrifice in Judaism and why does it remain important, at least as an idea, even today? The simplest answer – though it does not explain the details of the different kinds of offering – is this: We love what we are willing to make sacrifices for. That is why, when they were a nation of farmers and shepherds, the Israelites demonstrated their love of G-d by bringing Him a symbolic gift of their flocks and herds, their grain and fruit; that is, their livelihood. To love is to thank. To love is to want to bring an offering to the Beloved. To love is to give.[2] Sacrifice is the choreography of love.

This is true in many aspects of life. A happily married couple is constantly making sacrifices for one another. Parents make huge sacrifices for their children. People drawn to a calling – to heal the sick, or care for the poor, or fight for justice for the weak against the strong – often sacrifice remunerative careers for the sake of their ideals. In ages of patriotism, people make sacrifices for their country. In strong communities people make sacrifices for one another when someone is in distress or needs help. Sacrifice is the superglue of relationship. It bonds us to one another.

That is why, in the biblical age, sacrifices were so important – not as they were in other faiths but precisely because at the beating heart of Judaism is love: "You shall love the Lord your G-d with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." In other faiths the driving motive behind sacrifice was fear: fear of the anger and power of the gods. In Judaism it was love.

We see this in the Hebrew word for sacrifice itself: the noun korban, and the verb lehakriv, which mean, "to come, or bring close". The name of G-d invariably used in connection with the sacrifices is Hashem, G-d in his aspect of love and compassion, never Elokim, G-d as justice and distance. The word Elokim occurs only five times in the whole of the book of Vayikra, and always in the context of other nations. The word Hashem appears 209 times. And as we saw last week, the very name of the book, Vayikra, means to summon in love. Where there is love, there is

[1] Jeremiah 7:22, "When I freed your fathers from the land of Egypt, I did not speak with them or command them concerning burnt offerings or sacrifice" – a remarkable statement. See Rashi and Radak ad loc., and especially Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed, III: 32.

[2] The verb "to love" – a-h-v – is related to the verbs h-v-h, h-v-v and y-h-v, all of which have the sense of giving, bringing, or offering.

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sacrifice.

Once we realise this we begin to understand how deeply relevant the concept of sacrifice is in the twenty-first century. The major institutions of the modern world – the liberal democratic state and the free-market economy – were predicated on the model of the rational actor, that is, one who acts to maximise the benefits to him- or herself.

Hobbes' account of the social contract was that it is in the interests of each of us to hand over some of our rights to a central power charged with ensuring the rule of law and the defence of the realm. Adam Smith's insight into the market economy was that if we each act to maximise our own advantage, the result is the growth of the common-wealth. Modern politics and economics were built on the foundation of the rational pursuit of self-interest.

There was nothing wrong with this. It was done for the highest of motives. It was an attempt to create peace in a Europe that had for centuries been ravaged by war. The democratic state and the market economy were serious attempts to harness the power of self-interest to combat the destructive passions that led to violence.[3] The fact that politics and economics were based on self-interest did not negate the possibility that families and communities were sustained by altruism. It was a good system, not a bad one.

Now, however, after several centuries, the idea of love-as-sacrifice has grown thin in many areas of life. We see this specifically in relationships. Throughout the West, fewer people are getting married, they are getting married later, and almost half of marriages end in divorce. Throughout Europe, indigenous populations are in decline. To have a stable population, a country must have an average birth rate of 2.1 children per female. In 2015 the average birth-rate throughout the European Union was 1.55. In Spain it was 1.27. Germany has the lowest birth-rate of any country in the world.[4] That is why the population of Europe is today rendered stable only on the basis of unprecedented rates of immigration.

[3] The classic text is A. O. Hirschman, The Passions and the Interests, Princeton University Press, 1977.

[4] The Observer, 23 August 2015.

Lose the concept of sacrifice within a society, and sooner or later marriage falters, parenthood declines, and the society slowly ages and dies. My late predecessor, Lord Jakobovits, had a lovely way of putting this. The Talmud says that when a man divorces his first wife, "the altar sheds tears" (Gittin 90b). What is the connection between the altar and a marriage? Both, he said, are about sacrifices. Marriages fail when the partners are unwilling to make sacrifices for one another.

Jews and Judaism survived despite the many sacrifices people had to make for it. In the eleventh century Judah Halevi expressed something closer to awe at the fact that Jews stayed Jewish despite the fact that "with a word lightly spoken" they could have converted to the majority faith and lived a life of relative ease (Kuzari 4:23) Equally possible though is that Judaism survived because of those sacrifices. Where people make sacrifices for their ideals, the ideals stay strong. Sacrifice is an expression of love.

Not all sacrifice is holy. Today's suicide bombers sacrifice their lives and those of their victims in a way I have argued (in Not In G-d's Name) is sacrilege. Indeed the very existence of animal sacrifice in the Torah may have been a way of preventing people from offering human sacrifice in the form of violence and war. But the principle of sacrifice remains. It is the gift we bring to what and whom we love.

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

This week's Torah portion tells us that one type of peace offering (Shlamim) is known as the thanksgiving sacrifice (Todah). (Leviticus 7:12) Rashi notes that this sacrifice was given after experiencing a special miracle. He specifies one who has endured a sea voyage, a trip through the wilderness, a prison stay or a recovery from an illness.

To this day, those who survive difficult situations are obliged to recite the thanksgiving benediction at the Torah (birkat ha-gomel). Jewish law extends the obligation to include those who are saved from any type of peril.

The Ramban's comments in the Book of Exodus (13:16) can shed light on the importance of the thanksgiving sacrifice. For him G-d's intervention in the supernatural should give one a sense of G-d's involvement in the everyday. For example, from the splitting of the sea, an event in which G-d was so obviously manifest, one should come to recognize the input of G-d every day in containing the waters within the boundaries of the sea shore. In the words of Nehama Leibowitz, "the unusual deliverances and outstanding miracles are there merely to draw our attention to the miracle of existence."

The timing of the reading of the thanksgiving

offering, the Shabbat before Passover, also teaches a significant lesson. After all, on Passover, we thank G-d for miraculously taking us out of Egypt. The Haggadah comes to its crescendo as we sing Dayenu—which means enough. Some think Dayenu deals with our telling G-d that we have had enough suffering. In reality the song says the reverse. We say to G-d, had you only performed but a fraction of the larger miracle, it would have been enough. Dayenu is the quintessential statement of thanks to G-d.

The fact that the thanksgiving sacrifice is a type of peace offering is also clear. When giving to G-d, the human being achieves a level of inner peace. This is because love is not only a function of receiving, but also of giving. How I remember writing to the Rav, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, of blessed memory, upon his return to class after he lost his wife. After listening to his lecture (shiur), I was so taken that I wrote to him expressing my love and admiration. A few days later, the Rav thanked me, but told me the note was unnecessary. I responded, "Rebbe I wrote the letter for you, but even more important, for myself. I had a need to tell you, 'I love you.'" The Rav nodded and told me that he understood.

If only we would learn the message of the thanksgiving offering. To say the simple words to those who mean the most to us, but whom we often take for granted — words like todah, thank you, to our closest of kin and, of course, to G-d Himself.

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The parsha deals initially with the concept of an eternal flame or light that would continually be present on the holy altar in the Mishkan/Tabernacle. This is not the sole instance in the Torah where this concept of an eternal flame, fire or light is discussed. The great golden candelabra in the Mishkan/Tabernacle was also to have one light that was to be deemed an eternal light that was never to be extinguished. Millennia later, our synagogues commemorate this concept of an eternal light in the holy house of prayer with the presence of a ner tamid fixture over the holy ark of the Torah scrolls.

The question arises as to the symbolism and meaning of this eternal fire. Who and what does it represent and what is its message to our society and world. The simple explanation of the eternity of this flame is that it symbolizes G-d's constant and unending presence in our lives and in the national life of the Jewish people. He is always present even if He is unseen, unrecognized and even purposely ignored by His creatures.

The eternal fire reflects the eternity of the Creator, the eternity of Torah and of the people of Israel. In a world where little today is held to be lasting let alone eternal, the reminder of an eternal flame is necessary and vital. There have been myriad temporary gods that have bedeviled humankind over the ages. The entire pantheon of paganism was built upon differing and constantly changing gods. Only Israel had the vision of a universal, unchanging and eternal G-d.

But, perhaps there is an even more cogent message from the eternal flame to us. Many times in life we make sacrifices in order to achieve ends that we desire. This is certainly true in the material sphere of our lives. Long hours and great exertion are the norm of our workday lives. Not always are our sacrifices rewarded with social, professional or monetary success and achievement.

We tend then to view them - our efforts and sacrifices - as being in vain and a wasted effort. However we may feel about those material spheres of our lives, this does not hold true for our spiritual efforts and pursuits. No effort, even if it appears to us to be unsuccessful and even inconsequential, is wasted. The spirit remains eternal.

The rabbis in Avot taught us that according to the effort so is the reward. There are a number of interpretations of this cryptic phrase. One meaning is that the effort will be rewarded even if the goal of that effort has not yet been achieved. For effort on behalf of spiritual matters – charity, Torah study, the welfare of the Jewish people, etc. – is blessed with an eternal quality that survives because it becomes part of our eternal soul. The sacrifices made on behalf of our souls live on as part of our G-dly nature, the eternal flame that the Creator has placed within us all.

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

It has often been said that if an individual were to be incarcerated for his evil thoughts, no one would be living outside of a penitentiary. Jewish law strongly corroborates this piece of conventional wisdom: "Thoughts or emotions (dvarim shebalev) are not of significance," since only a person's actions, and not his/her fanciful imaginings, create culpability. However, this week's Torah reading, which continues our journey into the remote world of ritual sacrifices, specifies an exception from this "common sense" rule of the paramount importance of accomplished deed over intentional design.

According to the text, the peace offering must

be eaten on the same day of the sacrifice. When the peace offering is brought to fulfill a vow, then the time period for eating it is extended to the next day, but not to the day after that. Therefore,. "if any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his feast-offering should be eaten at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted… it shall be an abomination (pigul) and the soul that eats it shall bear his iniquity." (Lev. 7:18)

Rashi's comment, based on the Talmudic interpretation (B. T. Kritot 5a), expands the waves of the 'pigul-effect' to include thought as well as action—not only is it forbidden to eat a peace offering on the third day, but merely thinking at the time of the sacrifice that one will eat it on the third day disqualifies it from being brought as a valid offering.

And since our prayers are linked to the sacrificial ritual—one view in the Talmud maintains that the three statutory prayers we recite each day correspond to the morning sacrifices, afternoon sacrifices, and evening incense (B.T. Berachot 26a)—it is no wonder that almost all our Sages insist that improper thoughts or even a lack of internal devotion will disqualify the prayer—no matter how carefully the words may be articulated. Why are prayers and sacrifices so inextricably bound up with the thoughts of the individual, whereas in the case of most other commandments, the rule of thumb is that "Divine ordinances do not require internal intent (kavannah)?

Perhaps the answer to this question can be found in the Midrash Rabbah (Chukat 8), which reports how a pagan once confronted the great sage Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakai about the Biblical commandment of the 'red heifer,' the special portion which we also read this Sabbath arguing that it resembled sorcery. "You bring a cow, and burn it and grind it up and then take the ashes; if one of you has been defiled by death, you then sprinkle two or three drops on him and you declare him pure!" Even stronger, while the ashes of this red heifer purify the impure, another individual who touches those ashes becomes defiled by them! His students balked at the simplistic response their Master gave to the pagan: "Our Master, you pushed him away with a reed, but what do you say to us?"

The great Sages responded as follows: "By your lives it's not death that defiles, and it's not water that purifies. It is rather the Holy One blessed be He who declares, 'I made my statutes, I have decreed my decrees.'"

Now, I believe that Rabban Yechonan Ben Zakai is saying something far more profound than merely expressing the arbitrary nature of the commandments. Let us look at another comment found in Midrash Tanhuma B'Shallah and a fascinating insight will hopefully emerge: "There were three things over which the Israelites protested, because they brought suffering and tribulation: the incense, the Holy Ark, and the staff. The incense is an instrument of tribulation, because it caused the death of Nadav and Avihu (Lev. 10:2); therefore G-d informed Israel that it is also an instrument of atonement on the Day of Forgiveness. The Holy Ark is an instrument of tribulation, because when Uzzah touched it, he was immediately struck down (2 Sam. 6:7) ; therefore G-d informed Israel that it is also an instrument of blessing of Oved Edom the Gitite. The staff is an instrument of tribulation, because it brought the plagues upon Egypt; therefore G-d informed Israel that it is also an instrument of blessing when Moses did miracles with it."

In effect, the midrash is explaining that objects—staffs, incense, a holy ark, sacrifices, words of prayer—are not necessarily sacred in themselves. Their purpose is to bring one closer to G-d; in order for this purpose to be realized, the individual must wholeheartedly utilize them to bring him/her closer to G-d. As far as ritual objects are concerned, it is not the object that is intrinsically holy, but it is rather what one does with it and how one relates to it in thought and intent that creates the holiness. Therefore, the very same ashes of the red heifer can purify or defile, just as the very same Holy Ark can bring death or blessing—depending on the purpose for which it is utilized.

That is as far as ritual objects are concerned; the situation is radically different concerning ethical actions. When an individual gives charity, or extends a loan, to a person in need, the intent of the donor is of little or no account; his action is intrinsically significant, no matter the motivation. Hence, the Talmud rules that "a person who says 'I am giving a sum of money to charity so that my son may live' is still considered a completely righteous individual (zaddik gamur)" (B.T. Pesahim 8a).

Jewish theology is here teaching a critical lesson. The goal of Judaism, is ethical and moral action, to walk in G-d's ways—just as He is compassionate, so must we be compassionate" etc. Acts of compassion are intrinsically sacred; they are the very purpose of our being. The purpose of ritual, on the other hand, is in order to bring us close to the G-d of compassion, a means to an end. "You shall build me a Sanctuary, in order that I may dwell in your midst," commands G-d. Therefore, only rituals that are accompanied with proper intent will lead to the desired end and will therefore have eternal significance.

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

"Command Aharon and his sons, saying" (Vayikra 6:2). Because the Torah uses the term "command" rather than "speak to," Rashi tells us that "command' is always used as an expression of encouragement (i.e. to motivate to act with zeal) immediately and for generations. Said Rabbi

Shimon, 'the verse needs to encourage more when there is a financial loss." In other words, the reason G-d told Moshe to "command Aharon and his sons" rather than "speak" to them was to encourage them to do this now, to keep doing it, and/or because doing so involves a financial loss. One of the major discussions the commentators engage in on this Rashi is whether the "financial loss" aspect is besides the "now and forever" aspects, or instead of them, including whether or not Rabbi Shimon is arguing with the first statement (that a "command" encourages immediate action and action for the long term). Let's take a closer look at Rashi's source, and similar sources, to see what we can glean from them.

The main source for Rashi's statement is the Sifra (a.k.a. Toras Kohanim), whose wording, at least according to the Vilna Gaon, is almost word for word the same as Rashi's. In B'raisa d'Rabbi Yishmael, which lists his 13 ways of things are learned exegetically from verses (and serves as the introduction to the Sifra), the 4th category is learning a precedent that can be universally applied from two verses, with the example given being that the term "command" indicates that what is being commanded applies immediately and for generations. There is no mention of "encouragement," nor is Rabbi Shimon's opinion mentioned. If Rabbi Shimon is of the opinion that the term "command" does not indicate "immediately and for generations," he must disagree with this B'raisa. (And if he agrees with the B'raisa, we would have to explain how he adds "financial loss" to the mix when the B'raisa does not.)

The concept of "encouragement for immediate action and for generations" is taught in the Talmud as well (Kiddushin 29a) regarding circumcision, which quotes a B'raisa from the Beis Midrash of Rabbi Yishmael (albeit not the same B'raisa, as different verses are quoted as the source; we will leave a full discussion as to why for a different time, with G-d's help). Here too, Rabbi Shimon's opinion isn't referenced, but the concept of "encouragement" is (with one of the two verses quoted teaching us this).

Rabbi Yishmael's opinion that the term "command" teaches us that what is being commanded applies "immediately and for generations" is also taught in the Sifre (at the beginning of Parashas Naso, see also Bamidbar Rabbah 7:6), without including "encouragement" in his teaching. However, there are three other opinions quoted there, and encouragement plays a role in at least two of them. First, Rabbi Yehudah ben B'saira says that the word "command" is always used for encouragement, using one of the verses the B'raisa in the Talmud quoted to prove his point. Then Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (i.e. the same Rabbi Shimon quoted by Rashi and the Sifra) says that the term "command" is only used if there is financial loss involved, with one exception (Bamidbar 34:2), when they are commanded to divide the Promised Land. Although he doesn't say why or how there is an exception, he does say that in that one case "command" is used to encourage them; the question remains as to why this exception doesn't disprove the rule. The last opinion in the Sifre is Rebbe's, who understands the term (extended to other forms "commandment"), to be one of warning ("azhara").

It certainly seems as if the Sifre is quoting four separate opinions, a notion supported by the fact that their names are given first ("so-and-so says,", as opposed to "said so-and-so," which would imply adding onto, or explaining, what was previously stated). This can be contrasted with the Sifra (and Rashi), where Rabbi Shimon's name is given after the verb for "says," necessitating an explanation as to why in one source Rabbi Shimon is arguing with the notion that "command" refers to "immediate and long-term" action whereas in the other he seems not to be.

The idea that "command" applies "immediately and for generations" is stated later in the Sifre as well (on Bamidbar 28:2), without any mention of encouragement, and without any indication that there were three other opinions. This mirrors the B'raisa of Rabbi Yishmael at the beginning of Toras Kohanim, but Rabbi Yishmael's name is not mentioned in this part of the Sifre, leaving the impression that it is a universally held position. I would therefore suggest that some aspects of the opinions cited in these sources are agreed to by all, while others are not.

That the term "command" is employed in order to encourage action is agreed to by everyone; the question is why encouragement is needed. According to Rabbi Yishmael, encouragement is needed whenever something should be done immediately and for the long-term (for generations), and whenever the word "command" is used in such a situation, this is the reason it is used. It is also true that if something can apply immediately and can also apply for future generations, and the word "command" is used, the very use of that word teaches us that it applies immediately and for generations. There are cases where the word "command" is used when it was already apparent (from the context) that it applies immediately and/or for generations, and in these cases the term is used because of the encouragement necessary in such situations. There are also cases where the "command" cannot apply immediately (such as dividing land that wasn't conquered yet) or for generations (such as the "encouragement" given specifically to Yehoshua, see D'varim 3:28), but is used because of the encouragement needed (due to other factors) in those situations. But if it is theoretically possible that it can apply immediately and for generations, and the word "command" is used, the word itself teaches us that it does apply.

That the word "command" teaches us that

something applies “immediately and for generations” when it is theoretically possible is agreed to by all, and is what the B’raisa at the beginning of Toras Kohanim and the Sifre in Parashas Pinachas are teaching us. But since this is a separate issue from why the encouragement inherent in the word “command” is necessary, no “encouragement” mentioned in these two sources.

In the Sifre (on Parashas Naso), after Rabbi Yishmael gives his opinion that not only does the “command” apply “immediately and for generations” but is also the primary reason for needing encouragement, Rabbi Yehudah ben B’saira argues, saying that the reason encouragement is needed varies from situation to situation; even when something is commanded to be done “immediately and for generations,” there may be a stronger reason why encouragement is needed/given. (Because there isn’t just one factor that is always the primary reason for encouragement, he doesn’t give any.) Rabbi Shimon (bar Yochai) disagrees, saying that financial loss, when a factor, is always the biggest reason why encouragement is needed. (True, the word “command” is used for encouragement even in cases where there is no financial loss, but if there is financial loss, it creates the biggest need for encouragement.) Rebbe also disagrees, telling us that whenever something is “commanded,” the seriousness of the commandment, and therefore the importance of following it, is the primary message.

In summary, all agree that the word “command” is used to encourage action (or prevent wrongful action), and all agree that if something can apply immediately and for generations and the word “command” is used, it does. They only differ about which factors require the most encouragement, or if there are any factors that, when present, always require the most encouragement.

Now let’s take a closer look at Rashi (and the Sifra). The discussion is not about whether or not the laws about to be taught apply immediately and for generations, as everyone agrees that they do. The discussion is about why the word “command” is used instead of “speak.” And the answer, according to both opinions brought in the Sifra, is to provide additional encouragement to the Kohanim. According to the first opinion, who we know from the other sources to be Rabbi Yishmael, the fact that they apply immediately and for generations is the primary reason why additional encouragement is needed. Rabbi Shimon agrees with Rabbi Yishmael that the reason the Torah uses the word “command” instead of “speak” is to provide extra encouragement, so the verb “says” comes before his name. Nevertheless, because Rabbi Shimon is of the opinion that being commanded “now and for generations” is not the quintessential reason for needing encouragement, he adds that “there is more of a need for encouragement when there is financial loss.”

RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ

Shabbat Shalom Weekly

The Torah states: "This is the law of the burnt offering." (Leviticus 6:2). The verse can alternately be read as: "This" is the principle of the arrogant person (the one who looks upon himself as -- in the Hebrew, "haOlah" -- an exalted person.) The arrogant person constantly demands "This!" He wants things to be done his way, immediately and without consideration of the needs of others.

An arrogant person's thoughts are focused only on what he or she wants. He is totally self-centered and inconsiderate of others. This trait causes much strife in interpersonal relationships. It two people in a relationship both demand that things must be their way, they will quarrel all the time. If such a person finds someone who is submissive to him, he will get his way, but at the heavy price of causing another human being pain and anguish.

What to do? All of us have a certain degree of arrogance in us. Be aware of the needs and feelings of others. Be willing to compromise on your demands of how things should be. You need not always give in to others. However, when you take someone else's needs into consideration, you gain spiritually more than just having your demands met.

And if it is someone else who is arrogant and demanding? Obviously, send him or her a copy of this week's edition! *Dvar Torah based on Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin*

RABBI YAKOV HABER

TorahWeb

"Meeshenichnas Adar marbin b'simcha -- When Adar comes, we increase our joy" (Ta'anis 29a). What is the root of this tremendous joy intensifying as Purim draws near? Although many important approaches have been offered to this question, Rav Shimshon Pincus zt"l (Purim, first essay) develops an original theme concerning this concept highlighting an overlooked aspect of the festival of Purim. Here we present his main ideas with some small expansions and connect it to the mitzvos of korbanos about which we read in the parshiyos surrounding Purim in a leap year.

As a result of a rare decree in Jewish history machinated by Haman and Achashveirosh, brought about ultimately via a parallel Divine decree in heaven (Megilla 12a, Esther Rabba to 3:9), the entire Jewish nation was in danger of total annihilation. The scope and enormity of the impending doom which hung over B'nei Yisrael cannot be properly fathomed. Perhaps only those having lived through last century's similar decree in Europe could sufficiently appreciate the depth

of such a disaster. But then... total turnabout! "V'nahafoch hu asher yishl'tu hayehudim heima b'son'eihem! -- and it was reversed; the Jews vanquished their enemies rather than their enemies destroying them! (Esther 9:1)" In a word, the entire Jewish people received a new "lease on life"; in a sense, they were resurrected, created anew.

This historical event of immeasurable significance introduced into the Jewish calendar a central theme, that of hischad'shus -- renewal. Rav Pincus develops at length the fact that people always seek out newness, fresh ideas and experiences. The old, without effort at injecting enthusiasm, does not present the same attraction as the new. As an example, Rav Pincus presents a humorous scene of two Yeshiva boys one asking the other, "tell me a d'var Torah". To this request the second replies, "B'reishis bara Elokim eis hashamayim v'eis ha'aretz!" This is certainly a true "dv'ar Torah", Divinely dictated, letter for letter! But people are not inspired by the old; they are always looking for the new. The Talmud (Avoda Zara 19a, in the name of Rav Huna) stresses the importance of learning Torah a little at a time and thoroughly reviewing before proceeding. But it concludes (in the name of Rava): "this matter is known by the scholars and they violate it!" It would appear that the motivation to ignore this sound advice unfortunately is exactly the drive for chiddush. As is well known, chazara of an already learned Gemara is less exciting than learning a new one; hence, without a specific motivation, many just do not review sufficiently.

Even Hashem Himself, kiv'yachol, receives pleasure from hischad'shus. The Zohar comments that HKB"H is especially happy over chidushei Torah discovered by his beloved people. In addition, Kol-Bo, commenting on the phrase "shehasimcha bim'ono" recited before bircas hamazon at a sheva b'rachos, writes that G-d delights in the creations of thousands of new angels each moment.

Purim, coming at the end of the holiday year, in chodesh Adar, the last month in the Jewish calendric system of months with Nissan being the first, provides a spiritual window to tap in to the enormous power of renewal. The end of any great event can often lead to stagnation, sadness, or passivity. Divine Providence arranged that precisely at this point in the year, its conclusion, a festival conducive to developing the concept of renewal should occur. No one is doomed to be mired in his past failures or deficiencies. Everyone can make a fresh start and apply themselves properly to maximize their individual potential. Purim and Adar are an especially auspicious time to begin that journey.

However, much needs to be said about injecting enthusiasm into the "old" as well. Always seeking out new experiences can wreck all stability, relationships, and, in general, many facets of avodas Hashem. We are commanded to wear the same tefillin and tzitzis each day, pray the same Shemone Esrei three times a day, and celebrate the same holidays. Any stable individual does not switch families or careers constantly. A person does not come home from work each day at a different time or travel home a different way. Too much change can lead to lack of focus, not completing tasks and not tapping in to the full power of meaningful life activities.

However, one can and should inject an element of hischad'shus even into the "old". Developing new Torah ideas in addition to learning and re-learning the same text, adding different personal requests within the fixed prayer service, singing new zemiros at the Shabbos table are but a few examples. But hischad'shus is a theme which is relevant not only to engaging in new activities within the old. It is also applicable to injecting the old with new enthusiasm. Rav Kook zt"l, commenting on the enormous changes of last century and people "tiring with the old", coined an expression, "hayashan yischadeish, v'hachadash yiskadeish! -- the old will be renewed, and the new will be sanctified." Doing mitzvos enthusiastically injects freshness into each mitzvah activity. Learning new insights into avodas Hashem and thinking of them as one does various mitzvos imbues newness into their performance. The prophet (Y'shaya 29:13) warns us against serving G-d "mitzvas anashim m'lumada", habitually, by rote. Clearly, the navi is not advocating changing the mitzvos; but he is adjuring us to inject freshness and enthusiasm into all of our spiritual activities. The same, of course, must be done in relationships and parenting. In order to keep excitement and connectedness, it can be necessary to inject various new activities even within the framework and stability of the old as well as maintaining and promoting enthusiasm for "regular" activities. (See also The Nazir, N'si'im, and Nuances for a further development of this theme.) Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz (Sichos Mussar to Acharei Mos) adds a new dimension: constant growth in serving G-d assures that the old will not stale. When a person is always climbing the spiritual ladder, there will always be freshness to their service of G-d.

The avodas hakorbanos serves as a paradigm of this duality of fixed mitzvos done with enthusiasm and new activities within the fixed framework. On the one hand, the most famous of korbanos was the korban tamid, the twice-daily olah offering of sheep. Indeed a widely-quoted expression states "'es hakeves ha'echad ta'aseh baboker, v'eis hakeves hasheini ta'aseh bein ha'arbayim' -- zeh k'lal gadol baTorah -- the daily sacrificial order is a fundamental principle in Torah". Constant and stable avodas Hashem is not only virtuous and meritorious but is the key to any serious success. But lotteries were thrown to determine which kohein did what part of the service (Yoma Perek 2). Thus, it is unlikely that any kohein did the same avoda of the tamid too frequently. The ketores was never

brought by the same kohein twice (with the exception of the Kohein Gadol) (ibid. 2:4). Even within the sameness, there was newness. In addition, "kohanim z'rizim heim" (Beitza 18a), the kohanim served with quickness and enthusiastically.

But many korbanos, arguably the bulk on any given weekday, were korbanos n'dava, optional sacrifices: the olah, the sh'lamim and the m'nachos. For the olah, many different types of animals could be brought -- bulls, sheep, goats and birds. For the shl'amim, a male or a female animal could be brought also within the different animal types. Sometimes one would bring a toda instead of an ordinary sh'lamim, adding various breads to the korban. The fixed service of G-d thus blended in with the new.

The desire for the new and the fresh is a healthy drive implanted within mankind by our Creator. It pushes humanity toward invention, progress and growth both physical and spiritual. In a way, we all copy G-d in fulfillment of the commandment of "v'halachta bid'rachav". G-d created the universe, the greatest act of "chiddush"; we copy him by bringing chiddushim and hischad'shus into our lives. But the balancing act allowing for any meaningful growth as a person and as an oveid Hashem is properly blending chiddush, new activities properly rooted within the time-honored Torah principles, together with hischad'shus, performing the old with renewed enthusiasm for complete service of our Creator.

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg
Rosh Yeshiva, Kerem B'Yavne
Translated by Moshe Goldberg

"This is the law of the sacrifices of the Olah, the Mincha, the Chatat and the Asham... which G-d commanded Moshe at Mount Sinai, on the day when He commanded Bnei Yisrael..." [Vayikra 9:37-38]. This verse from the Torah portion ends the commandments about the sacrifices. From the words "on the day" the sages derived a rule that the sacrifices are only brought during the day and not at night (Chulin 22). In the page of the Talmud before this, some laws pertaining to an Olah brought from a bird are derived from the laws of a Chatat brought from cattle. For example, "Just as a Chatat from cattle is brought only in the day, so an Olah of a bird is only brought during the day." The Talmud asks why a special derivation is needed, since the law of an Olah for a bird is included in the general law that a sacrifice should only be brought during the day. Why then is a special derivation needed, from the Chatat of cattle? The answer that is given is that we might think that the verse "on the day" refers only to a bird brought as a Chatat, while an Olah from a bird could indeed be brought at night, and therefore a special derivation is needed from the Chatat of cattle.

The Rashba asks why it is so clear that "on the day" can teach us the law that a Chatat from a bird cannot be brought at night, while it is not clear that an Olah from a bird can only be brought during the day (Responsa, 276). He comes to the conclusion that the text is in error and should be modified.

The Or Samayach gives a reply to this question (Maaser Sheni, chapter 7) based on the words of Ibn Ezra in the previous Torah portion (Vayikra 5:7). Ibn Ezra asks why for an "Oleh Veyored" sacrifice (which changes depending on the financial status of the one bringing the sacrifice) a wealthy person brings a sheep as a Chatat, while a poor person brings two birds -- one as a Chatat and one as an Olah. Why doesn't a poor person bring a single Chatat of a bird instead of the Chatat of a sheep which the rich person brings? He replies that a Chatat of an animal is divided up into one part that is burned on the Altar and one part that is eaten by the Kohanim, while a Chatat of a bird is eaten by the Kohanim, and the Altar is merely sprinkled with the blood. And therefore the Torah commanded to also bring an Olah from a bird, which will be consumed on the Altar, instead of the part of the sacrifice of a sheep that is brought on the Altar.

This reasoning might lead us to think that the Olah of a bird can be brought at night, since it is a replacement for the "imurim," the part of the sacrifice of a sheep that is sent to the Altar. Since this can be put on the Altar at night, it is indeed necessary to find a special source to show that the Olah of a bird can only be brought during the day.

At the end of his discussion, the Or Samayach adds the following: "And I was very happy to have G-d lead me on the true path."

The author of Makor Baruch (Rabbi Baruch Epstein) discussed this special happy feeling. He once visited the author of Or Samayach (Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk), and he found him in a very happy mood. Rabbi Meir Simcha said that he had just discovered a wonderful Torah insight, and that afterwards he had fallen asleep. He had a dream, where he saw Torah giants of the past sitting in heaven and complaining that in today's world there is nobody who knows to determine the real truth of the Torah. And then the Rashba stood up and said that in the city of Dvinsk there is a Torah scholar who was closer to the truth of the Torah than he was himself, since the Rashba proposed to modify the text of the Talmud in order to reconcile the difficulty that he saw, while the Talmid Chacham gave a good response without any need to change the text.