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Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

The American Declaration of Independence speaks of the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Recently, following the pioneering work of Martin Seligman, founder of Positive Psychology, there have been hundreds of books published on happiness. Yet there is something more fundamental still to the sense of a life well-lived, namely, meaning. The two seem similar. It's easy to suppose that people who find meaning are happy, and people who are happy have found meaning. But the two are not the same, nor do they always overlap.

Happiness is largely a matter of satisfying needs and wants. Meaning, by contrast, is about a sense of purpose in life, especially by making positive contributions to the lives of others. Happiness is largely about how you feel in the present. Meaning is about how you judge your life as a whole: past, present and future.

Happiness is associated with taking, meaning with giving. Individuals who suffer stress, worry or anxiety are not happy, but they may be living lives rich with meaning. Past misfortunes reduce present happiness, but people often connect such moments with the discovery of meaning. Furthermore, happiness is not unique to humans. Animals also experience contentment when their wants and needs are satisfied. But meaning is a distinctively human phenomenon. It has to do not with nature but with culture. It is not about what happens to us, but about how we interpret what happens to us. There can be happiness without meaning, and there can be meaning in the absence of happiness, even in the midst of darkness and pain. (See Roy F. Baumeister, Kathleen D. Vohs, Jennifer Aaker, and Emily N.Garbinsky, 'Some Key Differences between a Happy Life and a Meaningful Life', Journal of Positive Psychology 2013, Vol. 8, Issue 6, Pages 505-516.)

In a fascinating article in The Atlantic, 'There's more to life than being happy' Emily Smith argued that the pursuit of happiness can result in a relatively shallow, self-absorbed, even selfish life. What makes the pursuit of meaning different is that it is about the search for something larger than the self.

No one did more to put the question of meaning into modern discourse than the late Viktor Frankl. In the three years he spent in Auschwitz, Frankl survived and helped others to survive by inspiring them to discover a purpose in life even in the midst of hell on earth. It was there that he formulated the ideas he later turned into a new type of psychotherapy based on what he called "man's search for meaning". His book of that title, written in the course of nine days in 1946, has sold more than ten million copies throughout the world, and ranks as one of the most influential works of the twentieth century.

Frankl knew that in the camps, those who lost the will to live died. He tells of how he helped two individuals to find a reason to survive. One, a woman, had a child waiting for her in another country. Another had written the first volumes of a series of travel books, and there were others yet to write. Both therefore had a reason to live.

Frankl used to say that the way to find meaning was not to ask what we want from life. Instead we should ask what life wants from us. We are each, he said, unique: in our gifts, our abilities, our skills and talents, and in the circumstances of our life. For each of us, then, there is a task only we can do. This does not mean that we are better than others. But if we believe we are here for a reason, then there is a tikkun, a mending, only we can perform, a fragment of light only we can redeem, an act of kindness or courage, generosity or hospitality, even a word of encouragement or a smile, only we can perform, because we are here, in this place, at

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this time, facing this person at this moment in their lives.

"Life is a task", he used to say, and added, "The religious man differs from the apparently irreligious man only by experiencing his existence not simply as a task, but as a mission." He or she is aware of being summoned, called, by a Source. "For thousands of years that source has been called God." (The Doctor and the Soul: from Psychotherapy to Logotherapy, New York: A.A. Knopf, 1965, 13)

That is the significance of the word that gives our parsha, and the third book of the Torah, its name: Vayikra, "And He called." The precise meaning of this opening verse is difficult to understand. Literally translated it reads: "And He called to Moses, and God spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying..." The first phrase seems to be redundant. If we are told that God spoke to Moses, why say in addition, "And He called"? Rashi explains as follows: "And He called to Moses: Every [time God communicated with Moses, whether signalled by the expression] 'And He spoke', or 'and He said', or 'and He commanded', it was always preceded by [God] calling [to Moses by name]. (Rashi to Vayikra 1:1) 'Calling' is an expression of endearment. It is the expression employed by the ministering angels, as it says, 'And one called to the other...' (Isaiah 6:3)."

Vayikra, Rashi is telling us, means to be called to a task in love. This is the source of one of the key ideas of Western thought, namely the concept of a vocation or a calling, that is, the choice of a career or way of life not just because you want to do it, or because it offers certain benefits, but because you feel summoned to it. You feel this is your meaning and mission in life. This is what you were placed on earth to do.

There are many such calls in Tanach. There was the call Abraham received, telling to leave his land and family. There was the call to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:4). There was the one experienced by Isaiah when he saw in a mystical vision God enthroned and surrounded by angels: "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'" (Isaiah 6:8)

One of the most touching is the story of the young Samuel, dedicated by his mother Hannah to serve in the sanctuary at Shiloh where he acted as an assistant to Eli the priest. In bed at night he heard a voice calling his name. He assumed it was Eli. He ran to see what he wanted but Eli told him he had not called. This happened a second time and then a third, and by then Eli realised that it was God calling the child. He told Samuel that the next time the voice called his name, he should reply, 'Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.' It did not occur to the child that it might be God summoning him to a mission, but it was. Thus began his career as a prophet, judge and anointer of Israel's first two kings, Saul and David (1 Samuel 3).

When we see a wrong to be righted, a sickness to be healed, a need to be met, and we feel it speaking to us, that is when we come as close as we can in a post-prophetic age to hearing Vayikra, God's call. And why does the word appear here, at the beginning of the third and central book of the Torah? Because the book of Vayikra is about sacrifices, and a vocation is about sacrifices. We are willing to make sacrifices when we feel they are part of the task we are called on to do.

From the perspective of eternity we may sometimes be overwhelmed by a sense of our own insignificance. We are no more than a wave in the ocean, a grain of sand on the sea shore, a speck of dust on the surface of infinity. Yet we are here because God wanted us to be, because there is a task He wants us to perform. The search for meaning is the quest for this task.

Each of us is unique. Even genetically identical twins are different. There are things only we can do, we who are what we are, in this time, this place and these circumstances. For each of us God has a task: work to perform, a kindness to show, a gift to give, love to share, loneliness to ease, pain to heal, or broken lives to help mend. Discerning that task, hearing Vayikra, God's call, is one of the great spiritual challenges for each of us.

How do we know what it is? Some years ago, in To Heal a Fractured World, I offered this as a guide, and it still seems to me to make sense: Where what we want to do meets what needs to be done, that is where God wants us to be. *Covenant and Conversation 5779 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"Speak unto the children of Israel and say unto them: When any person of you brings an offering unto God, you shall bring from the cattle, the herd or the flock " (Leviticus 1:2) The book of Leviticus continues where the book of Exodus left off: after the exquisite description of the complexity of the Sanctuary's components, the Torah is ready to introduce the priestly duties of sacrifices described in

the verse above.

Undoubtedly, the entire sacrificial system, replete with whole burnt offerings, sin offerings, guilt offerings and peace offerings, has a rather raucous ring to the modern sophisticated ear.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch attempts to provide a symbolic significance for each of the sacrifices, and etymologically suggests that the essence of korban (Hebrew for sacrifice) is to bring the individual close (karov) to God.

For our purposes, I'd like to approach the entire holy Temple ceremony by analyzing a rather striking midrash which emphasizes an otherwise innocuous pronoun in our opening verse: "When any person of you (mikem) brings an offering unto God…." The fact is that if the purpose of our verse is to issue a command to bring offerings, it could just as easily have been transmitted without the word mikem. Indeed, this particular pronoun in this particular context never appears in the Bible again. Teaches the midrash:

Why does [the biblical text] state mikem [of you]? From here we derive that whoever fulfils the obligation to recite one hundred blessings each day is considered as if he/she offered a sacrifice. How do we know this? From the Hebrew word mikem [of you], which has the numerical equivalent of one hundred [mem-kafmem=40+20+40]. (Midrash Yalkut Ma'ayan Ganim, ad loc.)

Why does the midrash link these 100 daily blessings with an offering to God? Presumably, if we understand the connection, the world of blessings may very well illuminate the world of sacrifice.

Let us examine the essence of a blessing. Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi in his classic work The Kuzari, teaches that the laws of proper blessings enhance our pleasure, create heightened awareness and a more sensitized appreciation of every object in the world; indeed the necessity of our making a blessing precludes the possibility of our taking for granted God's many bounties. After all, pleasure demands awareness, and a blessing sharpens our senses, leading them to appreciate what we have and are about to enjoy: a glorious sunrise, a burst of lightning, the children around the Sabbath or festival table, a bright, red strawberry.

But what then should we do with our awareness? How do we channel our new-found awakenings to the gifts of the world around us? A comment of Rabbi Aaron Soloveitchik, of blessed memory, on a passage in Tractate Berakhot, can provide us with an interesting insight.

Rabbi Levi asked concerning two contrasting texts. It is written: 'The heavens are the heavens of God but the earth has He given to the children of men,' (Ps. 115:16), and it is also written, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof" (Ps. 115:16). There is no contradiction: in the one case it is before a blessing has been said, in the other case after. (Berakhot 35a)

The usual interpretation explains that before I make a blessing, everything belongs to God; the blessing is my request for permission to partake of God's world. Hence, partaking of something without a blessing is in effect committing thievery against God; it is as a result of our blessing that the Almighty grants us permission to partake of His physical world. In effect, before the blessing, the world is God's, and after the blessing, He gives the world's bounty to us humans.

In a unique twist, Rabbi Soloveitchik turns this interpretation on its head: "The heavens are the heavens of God, but the earth has He given to the children of men." (Ps. 115:16) is the description of the world before blessings, and the verse, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," is after the blessing!

Why? A world devoid of blessing is a world without any divine connection, a neo-platonic world with an iron curtain separating the human and godly realms.

Suddenly, earth and heaven are no longer enemies, strangers in a strange universe, but all of God's creations magnificently and miraculously come together. If the Torah has one urgent message, it is the sanctification of our physical world. For Jews, the divine and the physical meet in an eternal dialogue, and the first expression of that dialogue is the blessings we make.

An additional and related aspect of the significance of blessings is the Hassidic-Kabbalistic nation. Early in the book of Genesis, God becomes disappointed with His world and decides to destroy it (except for the righteous Noah, that is): And God said, "I will blot out the human being whom I have created…. both humans, and beast, and creeping things, and fowl of the air…." (Genesis 6:7)

Rashi asks why God's anger is directed toward animals? After all, these brute creatures are innocent of any wrongdoing. Rashi then presents us with two possible interpretations. First, that all of creation including animal life had become so depraved that nothing could be called innocent – a perversity that pervaded all of reality. But his second answer is the one that concerns us here: Everything was created for the human being. When he ceases to be, what need have I for them (beasts, creeping things, fowl)! (Rashi, ad loc.)

This is a profound idea that looks at God's creation as a hierarchy, starting with inanimate rocks, ascending toward living plant life, and from there to animal creatures of mobility and then reaching upward to the communicating human being. All the mobility of an animal cannot alter the fact that animals are ruled by the earth and the waters and the skies, into the mold of each individual species. Only the human being's gift of communication enables him to relate to God – if indeed he utilizes his freedom of choice properly.

Now when the human being takes the objects

of the world around him, and he makes blessings over the world he lives in, he brings all of existence – including plant life, animal life, and every worldly object into a relationship with God. In effect he is giving a higher purpose to all of these realms, thereby bringing everything back to its ultimate divine source. By uplifting the world, by restoring it to its divine dimension, the human being repairs a world broken by iniquity and despair, alienation and materialism And without this potential for uplifting the world, without a lofty and up-reaching human being, all of creation becomes short-circuited, the universe has no purpose for being, a reverse "bang" takes place.

Now we are ready to return to our midrash, the rabbinic concept which identified the daily blessings with the sacrifices that brought humanity close to the divine. What God wants from us is not only to build a Sanctuary, but to transform the entire world into God's Sanctuary, God's Temple. "You shall make for Me a Sanctuary so that I may dwell in your midst," commands God. And so the sacrifices bring cattle, grain and fruits back to the Almighty who created them, enlisting the world – inanimate, vegetative and the human facilitators – in the service of the divine.

Just as Temple sacrifices brought God and all of His creations into the world, so do the daily 100 blessings bring God into the world – suffuse the material world with divine spirituality – in our world today. By means of daily blessings we have the potential of making the entire universe a divine sanctuary.

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Having completed the portions describing the building of the Mishkan (tabernacle), the Torah now presents the order of sacrifices that were offered there. Although they are certainly more esoteric than other parts of the Torah, the portions dealing with Temple sacrifice have much to teach.

Consider the opening thought of this week's portion. It speaks in an introductory fashion about an individual offering a sacrifice to the Lord. The term used for individual is Adam, (Leviticus 1:2) a strange word, as the Torah most often in such circumstances uses the term ish or isha (man or woman). Several thoughts come to mind as to the reason for this unusual choice of words.

Adam, unlike all others, was fashioned by God Himself. The name evokes the imagery of this first human being who was intimately connected to the Lord. The use of Adam here appears in order to express the hope that, through the sacrificial service, the individual comes close to Hashem.

Rashi suggests another solution. Just as the first Adam was able to take advantage of all the world had to offer without concern that it belonged to others (for he was alone in the world), so must every person who brings a sacrifice be certain that the offering to God be solely his or hers. It must not be stolen for in the process of serving God one must never violate interpersonal ethics.

Another thought comes to mind. Adam evokes the imagery of Adam who was pure in the garden of Eden. In time, Adam, together with Eve, violated God's command. When an individual brings a sacrifice, he/she is attempting to return to the pristine state of Eden, a fixed Eden without sin – an Eden of complete innocence. Thus, when bringing the sacrifice, the individual is called Adam as the korban is about the quest to right a wrong and to achieve the state of "Paradise Regained."

Still another thought. While it is true that the sacrificial service outlined in our portions deals specifically with the Jewish people, the use of the term Adam speaks to the universal dimension of the Temple. Adam was the parent of all humankind. From him, all human beings emerged. The term Adam by its very definition embraces the whole world. Perhaps the Torah uses the term Adam to remind us that ultimately the Temple in which sacrifices are brought, is a place where all humankind will one day come to worship the Lord - beit tefillah le-khol ha-amim.

It would be erroneous to think that the term Adam only applies to a man. According to the Midrash, Adam was both male and female. Chava (Eve) comes into being through a bifurcation of Adam into separate male and female entities. Indeed, the term Adam used here sends the message that the korban (sacrifice) applies equally to men and women - both can approach and come close to God.

We are taught that every little word in the Torah is there to teach us something significant. The use of the word Adam confirms this idea as it teaches us so much about how God wants us to act toward one another and to view the world.

RABBI DAVID LEVINE

The Poor Man's Sacrifice

Korbanot, offerings, are primarily an avenue for forgiveness of sins. The minchah offering here is not the communal minchah brought each day, but an individual's minchah brought as a gift (n'davah). Our Rabbis explain that there are three main types of n'davah, voluntary offering: an animal, birds (turtle doves or young doves), and a meal offering. A large animal would normally be brought as a voluntary offering by a wealthy person who could afford to donate the entire animal as he would receive no part of the offering in return. Birds might be offered by someone

who had fewer discretionary funds. This leaves the gift of a meal offering (mincha) as a gift from a pauper, one who could not even afford the cost of birds. Rashi quotes the Gemara (Menachot, 104b) which explains that Hashem does not accept a minchah offering from a wealthy man as this is not a demonstration of humility. An important aspect of this voluntary offering is the recognition of all that Hashem provides for us. Were a wealthy man to bring a meal offering, it would not be viewed as a sign of his understanding that all that he has comes from Hashem.

In the beginning of the second chapter of Sefer Vayikra, we find: "When a soul (nefesh) brings an offering of allegiance (korban mincha) to Hashem, his offering shall be of fine wheat flour, and he will pour oil on it and place frankincense upon it." The use of the word nefesh, used here to mean a man, is unusual, as man would normally be referred to as ish or adam. This is a pattern break from the normal wording of the Torah, and it becomes a signal to the reader that there must be a deeper message which is being imparted.

Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman explains that the pauper brings wheat because he has greater access to the materials necessary as he can gather wheat from various gleanings from the field which were required to be left for the poor. This still required that he exert himself to collect the wheat and then to set some aside, thus giving up wheat which was his source for food for his family. HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin asks why the poor man does not bring a bird as his offering. Birds are not that expensive and even though it may cost him more than his meal offering, he might be willing to spend more for his offering. HaRav Sorotzkin explains that a poor man was likely to have the ingredients for the minchah offering in his home already but is unlikely to have a bird as he could not afford to eat that meat. The poor man may have flour, oil, and frankincense in his home, but he must put aside a portion of his daily allowance to afford even this meager offering. The wealthy man brings a large animal and the average man brings birds. The poor man recognizes that his offering cannot compare to the gifts of the others. He wants to recognize Hashem but he may be embarrassed to present this pittance as his offering. Hashem recognizes his efforts and equates his gift with the more expensive gifts of the other donors. Hashem says, "I consider it as though he offered his very soul before Me."

HaRav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch explains that the word minchah comes from the root manach, "to keep nothing back from anybody, to give him a right to all that we have, to lay everything at his feet; a meaning which would be expressed by 'homage, allegiance.'" This gift to Hashem expresses the idea, "that part of his possessions which is represented by what he brings really belongs to the Receiver of the gift, is only granted by Him, is only in the possession of the bringer as a fief at the receiver's disposal, so that with regard to these foods and his use of them, the bringer feels that he is subject to the will of the Receiver." The gift of the animal or the birds involves the soul of the animal or bird, its blood. This blood is sprinkled on the altar and is the essential part of the offering. The soul of the korban mincha is replaced by the soul of the poor man who brings the minchah. The ibn Ezra sees the nefesh as that part of man which willingly gives of itself to others, thus the poor man demonstrates a willingness to give of himself to Hashem.

HaRav Sorotzkin explains that the slaughtering of an animal or bird for an offering is followed by the gathering of the blood, the spilling out of this blood on the altar, and the skinning of the animal and the separation of the parts of the offering which will go on the altar. The person who brings that type of offering sees this taking place and realizes that this is the punishment that should have been given to him for sinning against Hashem. Were it not for the fact that Hashem was willing to take a replacement animal, he would have suffered the same fate that he now witnesses. The poor person cannot afford the animal or the bird but brings a minchah in its place. He will not witness slaughtering, spilling of blood, or the flaying of the animal. How will he then change his ways? The minchah offering is often called the minchah t'horah, the pure minchah offering. This means that the poor man must examine his actions carefully to guarantee that he has not made the offering impure by his actions. This means that the person who brings the minchah offering must be both pure in body and pure in mind or "the minchah offering I will not desire from your hands." The poor person undergoes his change of character before he brings the offering instead of after he views the punishment for which the animal is his substitute.

We have seen that the poor man is singled out because his meager offering is considered as if he had offered his soul to Hashem. We understand that the nefesh of the animal is offered, and the offering of the poor man is considered like his own nefesh. We have seen the relationship of the term nefesh to n'davah which is a willing offering from one's self. Lastly, we have seen that the poor man must examine his soul before bringing his offering which is unlike those who must use the viewing of the process of their korbanot to examine their lives and change. Thus we see that the disruption in the Torah's established pattern by the term nefesh (instead of ish or adam) has led us to different levels of depth in our studies and in our understanding.

The key to our understanding of korbanot is the concept of forgiveness dependent on a physical act which enables the bringer of the korban to change his life. We are able to see that Hashem allows everyone, regardless of his wealth, to gain this message through the type of korban that he is required to bring. As we view the kindness of Hashem in His treatment of the

poor man's sacrifice, we can see that the "punishment" is not the message. Hashem wants all men to return to Him and His Laws through an awareness of the destruction which occurs when one strays. We are grateful to Hashem for this kindness.

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

As all of you are aware that the first word in this week's Torah reading is written in a different fashion in the scroll of the Torah itself. The word 'vayikra' is written with a small 'alef 'at the end of the word. This has been discussed widely over the ages by the great commentators and thinkers of Israel, who have derived many important lessons from this unusual writing of the word.

I find a connection between this small letter and another idea that the rabbis advance regarding this third book of the Bible. It was somehow traditional amongst many communities in Jewish society that this book of Vayikra should be the first book that children study when they begin their biblical education. The words of the rabbis to describe this educational advice were that "let those that are completely pure study the laws of holiness and purity In other words, the laws and rituals regarding the service of the priests and of the Temple and of the sacrifices that were to be brought, either as donations or as atonement for sins or omissions, are the core holy sections of the Torah. And since young children are still not tarnished by the experiences of life and the maturity of physical growth, they should begin their Jewish education by studying this part of the Torah. The small miniature letter at the end of the word signifies that this section of the Torah has a special connection to young children beginning their education and their understanding of life.

Holiness is not subject to human logic and understanding. It is removed from our sphere of rationality. The holy is not ordinarily found in the everyday world and mundane activities of human society. Holiness is an atmosphere created by goodness and devotion to the Almighty and to its value system. Holiness is something that human beings must create. It is ephemeral and intangible, difficult to define and yet it can be glimpsed and experienced.

The fact that it is so inexplicable makes its pursuit in this world so difficult. All the sacrificial laws that appear in this book of Vayikra -- laws that are so difficult to understand and far removed from our world and society -- are tools to be used in the pursuit of holiness.

Children have the gift of imagination and are not yet stifled by the realities that surround us. They can imagine and see things that we sophisticated but jaded adults are no longer able to envision. To children, nothing is strange, and nothing is impossible, and imagination and reality operate in the same sphere of their personality and understanding. To children, legends are real and imaginary characters are their friends. These laws that aim to direct us to holiness, to reach for the stars so to speak, have meaning and reality.

Later in life, when childhood curiosity and imagination has been rubbed away by the harshness of reality, these laws will become more difficult to understand and appreciate, and the pursuit of holiness will become far more difficult. A small letter at the end of the word comes to remind us of this truth.

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

Hear Conditioning

Whoever misses the Divine hand that touched the Purim story is not looking. And if he claims that he heard the Megilah, he probably was not listening. Imagine, the Prime Minister draws lots and decides to annihilate the entire Jewish nation. Within 24 hours he has approval from the ruler of the not-so-free-world, King Achashveirosh.

Within days, the plot is foiled, the Prime Minister is hanged and his prime target is promoted to replace him! Pretty political. Pretty miraculous. And definitely divine. Yet Hashem's name is not mentioned once in the Megilah. Why? Of course, the Megilah is replete with allusions. There are acronyms that spell the name of Hashem, and our sages explain that every time the word "King" is mentioned in the Megilah, it has a divine reference. But, still, why does the last book of the Prophets, a Divinely inspired Megilah, have only veiled references to Heavenly intervention?

It was a sweltering August day when the Greenberg brothers entered the posh Dearborn, Michigan offices of the notoriously anti-Semitic car-maker, Henry Ford.

"Mr. Ford," announced Hyman Greenberg, the eldest of the three, "we have a remarkable invention that will revolutionize the automobile industry. " Ford looked skeptical, but their threats to offer it to the competition kept his interest piqued. "We would like to demonstrate it to you in person." After a little cajoling, they brought Mr. Ford outside and asked him to enter a black Edsel that was parked in front of the building.

Norman Greenberg, the middle brother, opened the door of the car. "Please step inside Mr. Ford."

"What!" shouted the tycoon, "are you crazy? It must be two hundred degrees in that car!"

"It is," smiled the youngest brother, Max, "but sit down, Mr. Ford, and push the white button."

Intrigued, Ford pushed the button. All of a

sudden a whoosh of freezing air started blowing from vents all around the car, and within seconds the automobile was not only comfortable, it was quite cool! "This is amazing!" exclaimed Ford. "How much do you want for the patent?"

Norman spoke up. "The price is one million dollars." Then he paused, "And there is something else. We want the name 'Greenberg Brothers Air Conditioning' to be stamped right next to the Ford logo."

"Money is no problem," retorted Ford, "but no way will I have a 'Jew-name' next to my logo on my cars!"

They haggled back and forth for a while and finally they settled. One and one half million dollars, and the name Greenberg would be left off. However, the first names of the Greenberg brothers would be forever emblazoned upon the console of every Ford air conditioning system.

And that is why today, whenever you enter a Ford vehicle you will see those three names clearly defined on the air-conditioning control panel: HI -- NORM -- MAX.

The writers of the Megilah left us with a message that would accompany us throughout our long exile. You will not always see G-d's signature openly emblazoned upon every circumstance. However, throughout persecution and deliverance, He is always there. And just like on Purim His obvious interference is undocumented; but we know and feel it -- and we search for it, and we find it! So, too, in every instance we must seek His name, find it, and recognize it. It may not be emblazoned on the bumper; it may be hidden on the console -- but it is there. For Hashem is always speaking. All we have to do is listen. Joyous Purim!

RABBI YITZCHOK ADLERSTEIN

Mei Marom

Longing and yearning are unrecognized essentials of life. Few pleasures compare to the sweetness of a longing derived from desire that is pure and holy.

Longing is often a consequence of distance. We yearn for something we want, from which we are separated, or find beyond our immediate grasp. The neshamah descends to this world so that it can experience this yearning from the pure source from which it came.

We understand that our experience with yearning can be painful, not pleasurable. This happens, however, because our desires are not for absolute purity. They have become cheapened and sullied, and incorporate elements of lust. The neshamah, however, does not know of such things. The objects of its desire remain pure and holy. Longing for them is intense and a source of pleasure.

We also understand that in an absolute sense, Hashem does not and cannot "need" anything. He is perfect, and all perfection is within Him. Yet we also know that the source of anything that we find within ourselves has to be something within Him. If longing and yearning are so important, there must be something that, kivayachol, exists within Him that parallels it.

If it is distance that creates yearning, then it must be great indeed for things that have not yet come into existence. The gap between existence and non-existence is certainly large. So one way of grasping Hashem's yearning, as it were, is to see it associated with creation -- specifically the creation of things that ought to come into existence, but have not yet done so.

The power of creativity, as given to humans, is associated with Torah she-b'al peh. Unlike the Written Torah which is open and manifest, we create the Oral Torah, as it were, through our work in delving into it. Our involvement with Torah she-b'al peh has the power to create new things. Hashem, as it were, longs for it.

All of this is true for all people other than a single exception. For Moshe, all of Torah was new, and part of a creative process. Even the Written Torah became part of our world only when it was communicated (orally, at that) to Moshe. Thus, we could see Hashem's own "longing" at work in His giving the Torah to Moshe. All that needed to be created through the Torah of Klal Yisrael depended on Moshe receiving that Torah from Him; He "longed" for that creation.

This, then, explains Chazal's grasp of the "calling" to Moshe that provided the name for the third Chumash. This calling, they say was not an isolated event. (Toras Kohanim 1:6-7, cited by Rashi) Rather, it preceded every speech, every saying, every commandment to Moshe. The "calling" was an expression of affection. In other words, it manifested the "longing" Hashem had for the power of those revealed words to ultimately create what had not yet come into being.

Chazal continue to describe the "calling" of Vayikra. They tell us that we should not make the mistake of thinking that this expression of affection preceded not only the words revealed to Moshe, but introduced as well the pauses between sections that are apparent from the breaks in the text. Those breaks provided an opportunity for reflection. They allowed Klal Yisrael to ponder the words that had they had just been given, and find new insight into them. In other words, those breaks supported a process of Torah she-b'al peh learning by Klal Yisrael. That Torah she-b'al peh would also create what needed to be created. The very opportunity to pause and reflect was a manifestation of Hashem's longing for their Torah.

The "calling," then, was appropriate to both the written text, and to the breaks between sections. If it would have accompanied both, however, it would have suggested that there was room for extra affection

beyond the actual existence of this Torah she-b'al peh process -- and that was not the case. The calling was therefore restricted to the sections of written text.

Had Klal Yisrael not sinned with the Eigel, they would have still received a mishkan. That mishkan, however, would have been created simply through their words of Torah. Hashem would have taken those words and turned them from Above into the structure of the mishkan. After the sin, they needed to fashion the mishkan with their own hands.

What replaced the power of "longing" for the uncreated that would have powered the transformation before the Golden Calf? The sin itself opened up a chasm between Hashem and His people. He "yearned" for its closure, i.e. for their doing teshuvah. A midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 1) describes Moshe's unhappiness with the building of the mishkan, since he had been left out of the appeal to the people for materials for its construction. Hashem reassured him. "By your life! Your speech is cherished by Me." In other words, Klal Yisrael after the Eigel had need to provide materials for the mishkan, and to fashion them into the Tabernacle and its appurtenances. Moshe, however, was one up on them. His words, through which Hashem communicated the Written Torah, retained the power to create anew, and were deeply cherished by Him. (Based on Mei Maron, Vayikra Maamar 2) *© 2019 Rabbi Y. Haber & torahlab.org*

RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ

Shabbat Shalom Weekly

The Torah gives instructions for offering various types of flour offerings prepared in different manners: "And if you bring near a flour offering baked in the oven... and if your offering is a flour offering baked in a pan... and if your offering is a flour offering baked in a pot..." (Leviticus 2:4,5,7).

What is the deeper meaning behind each of these different offerings?

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains: The Mincha, flour offering, expresses our appreciation to the Almighty for our happiness in life. Minchat Solet, the fine flour offering, has many forms of preparations to focus us on appreciating from the basic necessities of life to the wonderful "extras" with which we have been blessed.

The offerings are baked in an oven, a pan and a pot corresponding to bread, cake and specially prepared dishes. Bread (ma'afeh tanur) is ordinary food, a necessity for happy daily life. Cake (machavat) signifies the extra enjoyment, the historically unusual condition of luxury. The specially prepared dish (marcheset) is for a special occasion, the temporary, passing moment of a unique joy.

Our lesson: focus and appreciate each and every thing in our lives as a gift from the Almighty, Who loves us and cares for us! *Dvar Torah based on Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin © 2019 Rabbi K. Packouz & aish.com*

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Spinning Wool

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

As a general rule, a person who steals from another must return the equal value of what was taken; in other words the monetary value of the item stolen. The exception to this rule is stated this week in the weekly portion; (Vayikra 5; 21-25) “If a person will sin and commit a treachery against Hashem by lying to his comrade regarding a pledge or a loan or a robbery or by defrauding his comrade… and he swears falsely… He shall repay its principal and add a fifth to it”. In other words, he must add an additional twenty percent on the value of the item that was stolen.

To obligate one to do this there must be three prerequisites (1) He must have stolen (2) He must have sworn in court that he didn’t steal (3) Following his swearing he admits he lied

To gain atonement, the robber must also offer an Asham sacrifice and must pay the value of the item stolen plus an additional one fifth.

Is the extra fifth that is paid, atonement for his sin? If this was true, then the one who was robbed could not forgive this fifth owed to him. Thus even if the victim who was robbed from refused to accept this fifth as remuneration, the robber would still have to pay to gain atonement. Nevertheless the Mishna in Tractate Baba Kamma states that one can forgive the extra fifth.

This becomes especially difficult according to the Rambam (Maimonides) who states (laws of Gezela 7;8) that the laws of the fifth (Chomesh) and the sacrifice are offered as atonement.

One might explain according to the Rambam, that the forgiveness will affect the actual value lost (keren) and since there is no keren , then there cannot be any fifth added after. Therefore the robber loses any chance to gain atonement.

Another interpretation one may offer is that since the main objective is to compensate the one who was robbed, then if he offered to pay this, he has achieved this goal and he is also forgiven regardless whether the one who was robbed refused the money (Mechila) (Avnei Nezer).

What would happen in a case where the robber didn’t care about atonement? Would there still be an obligation to pay this fifth? If the reason is atonement then the answer would be in the negative. However we know that in a case where the man died before paying the fifth that the surviving heirs must pay this additional fifth. This would lead us to the conclusion that the obligation to compensate is strictly monetary and by fulfilling that requirement he would also gain atonement (as was sited above) *© 2018 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit*