

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

The 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 Liadi, the first Rebbe of Lubavitch. He noticed a grammatical oddity about the second line of this week'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.

**TORAS AISH IS A WEEKLY PARSHA
NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTED VIA EMAIL
AND THE WEB AT WWW.AISHDAS.ORG/TA.
FOR MORE INFO EMAIL YITZW@AOL.COM**

The material presented in this publication was collected from email subscriptions, computer archives and various websites. It is being presented with the permission of the respective authors. Toras Aish is an independent publication, and does not necessarily reflect the views of any synagogue or organization.

**TO DEDICATE THIS NEWSLETTER PLEASE CALL
(973) 277-9062 OR EMAIL YITZW@AOL.COM**

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. © 2012 Chief Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and torah.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“An individual who will sacrifice from yourself a sacrificial offering unto the Lord...” (Leviticus 1:2)

My teacher and mentor Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik ztz"l would often speak of the two great Biblical mountains, Mt. Moriah where God sent Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac, and Mt. Sinai, from which God presented His the Torah to the Israelites.

The Bible insists that from the time of the Divine Revelation at Sinai the Almighty continues to communicate with us in "a great voice that never ceases." The Ramban says that the Tabernacle was a continuation of the revelation on Conventional wisdom would maintain that Mt. Sinai should have been the more sacred of the two, since there is nothing on earth more sacred than our Divinely given Torah, the very words of God. Nevertheless, the Sages of the Talmud only endowed eternal sanctity to Mt. Moriah, upon which our first two Holy Temples were built and which will be the foundation for the third Holy Temple as well. Mt. Sinai, by contrast, sustained its sanctity only during the period when the Divine Voice emanated from its heights; today it is no longer sacred, and could therefore be given up as part of Israel's peace agreement with Egypt. Why does Mount Moriah have greater sanctity than Mount Sinai?

Rav Soloveitchik magnificently explains that whereas on Mount Sinai, God presented Israel with the gift of His Torah, on Mt. Moriah, Abraham, was willing to sacrifice his beloved son to God. My teacher insisted that sanctity requires sacrifice and the greater the human sacrifice, the higher the degree of Divine sanctity.

Biblical Judaism took great pains to ensure that religion- our God given values and ideals - be seen as the apex of our communal structure. It should be the national commitment towards which we all aspire and for which the individual must be willing to sacrifice material comforts and even his/her own life. It is because we took the Abraham- Isaac model so seriously that our history is so tear-drenched and blood-stained, from the Hebrew babies in the River Nile at the beginnings of our history to the present day Israeli cemeteries where so many parents have buried their children. It is also because of this that - paradoxically- we have survived, and largely succeeded in transmitting our sacred faith, until today. Apparently, it is only a

commitment to God where we are willing to put our future at risk that we will secure an eternal future.

But though we must sacrifice our material comforts, and even our professional standing on the altar of our religious ideals; we dare not utilize our religious ideals as the stepping stones to enhance our personal power and prestige. Once that happens, then our religious ideals will become tainted and corrupted, the subjective ego will become the goal, and the still-small voice of God will be drowned out by the raucous shouts of political power.

Hence, our Bible attempted to separate the religious estate from political power and governmental structure. The priest-teacher Kohanim, were meant to minister in the Temple, not in the palace of parliament, and the Prophet was totally independent of the monarch, neither appointed nor supported by any of the king's agencies. When, in the Hasmonean period of the Second Commonwealth, the Kohanim became the governmental ruling class, it was tragic for Judaism, and presaged the death-knell of the Second Temple. (See Ramban, Genesis 49:10).

The members of the Sanhedrin were not appointed by the ruling powers; they were totally independent, their office was determined by scholarship and piety alone. Indeed, in the absence of the prophet, the king is to be appointed by the Sanhedrin!

The Bible does not advocate a separation of religion from state (it was the king who Biblically exhorted the Israelites at Hakhel); but it certainly does advocate a separation between religion and politics, a system whereby the religious leadership is completely independent of the ruling power, so that the Chief Rabbinate is a religious and not a political appointment. Only an independent prophet like Nathan- devoid of a seat in parliament, government office, secretary, car and driver, and driven only by the voice of God burning within him - could have had the courage to stand before King David with the damning words, "thou art the man." Only such an independent and truly spiritual personage could have caused the venerated King to descend from his throne, weep uncontrollably and declare, "I have sinned before the Lord."

When religion becomes a traded political commodity, when rabbis use religion to gain political power, instead of sacrificing personal benefits for religious values, religious values get sacrificed for the aggrandizement of the individual rabbi-politician.

Shame on the "rabbis" who take Torah out of the beit midrash and into hooligan initiated street demonstrations, expressions of political power whose ugly shouts drown out the Biblical directive; "You shall love the stranger." Shame on the rabbi-politicians who sacrifice the future of our land and country to gain governmental funds for an educational system which trains able-bodied men to live unproductive lives, contrary to objective and truly traditional Torah law (a Torah which was meant to be a prescription for life, not

a substitute for life); shame on religious political parties who appoint insensitive judges, impervious to the cries of women hopelessly locked into marital bondage in defiance of the Talmudic directive to be lenient in freeing the agunah.

We must free our Holy Torah from the shackles of petty politics of "Torarism" - the terrorism of Torah. We must understand that politics corrupt, and religious politics corrupt absolutely. We did not sanctify the political; we politicized the sacred ©2012 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

G-d calls out to Moshe from the inner sanctuary of the Mishkan. Yet, as Rashi points out to us, the sound of God's voice, so to speak, was loud and strong. However it was limited to the area within the Mishkan. Those who were outside of that sanctuary heard nothing. The message imparted here is a clear and simple one. Not everyone hears God's voice nor can it be heard everywhere.

There was a long period of time in English and American society that those who entered the clergy were said to have responded to a "calling." In our jaded, materialistic, dysfunctional world of today a "calling" is something to be mocked at as being naive and impractical. Yet the Torah emphasizes here that Moshe responded to such a "calling" and that in fact this became the name and title of one of the five books of Moshe.

Leading and teaching the Jewish people can certainly be viewed as a profession and a career. But if that is all it is then it is deficient in its spiritual potential and its ultimate chance of success. Unless one hears, so to speak, the voice of God calling one to public service and Torah teaching, the soul of the matter will always be compromised.

Moshe is able to be the incomparable Moshe that he is because he hears the Lord calling out to him even if no one else apparently does so as well. All of his life he responds to that call and remains faithful to the task and challenge that leading the Jewish people poses for him.

Midrash teaches us that Moshe first heard the voice of God, so to speak, at the encounter at the burning bush. There the Lord called out to him in the voice and tone of his father Amram and Moshe therefore was able to hear it without being overwhelmed. Much later in Jewish history, the Lord told the prophet Eliyahu that he could hear His call in the still small voice that reverberates within all of our consciences.

God is heard, so to speak, in the voice of our ancestors, of Jewish tradition and family bonds. Many Jews today are completely unaware of their own family heritage and certainly of the greater heritage of Israel as

a whole. And very few of us are strong enough psychologically and spiritually to hearken to our inner voice, still and small as it is.

So we wander through life seeking direction and guidance and turn to others to help us find ourselves. First we should look inward for the Godly GPS implanted within us. That is our Mishkan, the place where God's voice can be heard. Searching for it elsewhere, in the voices of strangers, outside of our Mishkan will be frustrating and fruitless.

Since the voice of God, no matter how powerful and strong it may be, is still described as being a small voice, it is obvious that one has to pay attention and strain to hear it. This effort always characterized Moshe's life, the loyal servant of God, who was attuned to hear the calling that guided him, and through him, all of Israel and humankind as well. ©2012 Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Why is the letter aleph in the word va-yikra, the very first word of the Book of Leviticus written smaller than the others?

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

A second, more mystical thought comes to mind. Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook, the first Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Israel insists that the soul is made up of different Hebrew letters. When performing a mitzvah (commandment) Rav Kook argues, the letters shine brightly. In other words, whatever the action required for a religious observance, it ought to reflect an inner spiritual quest - and, that quest is expressed through the illumination of the inner letters. Perhaps this teaching explains why the aleph is smaller. The aleph being the first letter of the alphabet represents all Hebrew letters, and those letters for Rav Kook mirror the idea of the "soul aglow." A korban (sacrifice) which is the subject of God's calling to Moshe (va-yikra) should not remain an external empty gesture. It must be complemented by the human being's inner decision to internalize the mitzvah. Hence, the aleph is distinguished by being written small, as the goal of the sacrifice is to stir the figuratively small albeit powerful "lights of the soul" drawing one near God. No wonder

the very word korban comes from the word karov, to come close to God.

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

Rav Shlomo explained that the Munkatcher passport surfaces over and over in our lives. When a bride walks around the groom, they give each other the Munkatcher passport. When children are born they close their eyes and cry, giving to and receiving from their parents the Munkatcher passport. And when we stand near the Kotel to pray before the Lord, we do so with the Munkatcher passport. And, concluded Rav Shlomo, when we begin the Talmud, we start on the second page - daf bet. Where is daf aleph, the first page? It is empty, absolutely empty. It is the Munkatcher passport. Rav Shlomo never explained what the Munkatcher passport meant, but for me it represents infinite love. Hence the aleph of va-yikra is small to remind us of the importance of approaching God with daf aleph, with the Munkatcher passport - symbolic of the unconditional love that we ought to have for God and that God has for us and that we should all have for each other. ©2012 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and President of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School - the Modern and Open Orthodox Rabbinical School. He is Senior Rabbi at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, a Modern and Open Orthodox congregation of 850 families. He is also National President of AMCHA - the Coalition for Jewish Concerns

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“Any grain-offering that is brought to/for G-d cannot be allowed to become leavened, for all leaven and all (fruit) honey shall not be offered as a fire-offering to G-d" (Vayikra 2:11). Although it might seem appropriate for the prohibition against "chametz" to be mentioned in the Torah portion read as we prepare for Pesach, at first glance it appears to belong in next week's Parasha (Tzav)--where the instructions for the offerings are taught to the Kohanim (6:2), rather than when the nation is taught what types of offerings can be brought (1:2). Abarbanel (question #12) positions it slightly differently: We are taught what we can offer (which animals, and the type of grain/flour), not what we can't. For example, there are only two types of birds that can be brought as an offering, mentioned by name (1:14). There is no need to mention that chickens and geese cannot be offered; once we know which birds can be offered, we automatically know

that other bird cannot. Why would the Torah need to tell us that leaven and honey cannot be offered? Once we know that only "matza" (which, by definition, is unleavened) can be brought, we should know that leaven cannot. And without any specific mention that honey can be brought, there should be no need to point out that it cannot.

Abarbanel's question is stronger regarding honey than leaven; since flour can become chametz if not baked quickly enough, even if only materials that can be offered are mentioned, a warning against letting it become chametz is appropriate. Nevertheless, since the instructions for bringing the offering (after the material was brought to the Kohain by the one bringing it) are not taught until later, this warning belongs there, not here (and, in fact, it is there as well, see 6:10). Another nuance that deserves a closer look is how honey is brought into the conversation. Rather than saying "leaven and honey is forbidden," we are told that leaven is problematic, followed by the reason it is problematic: "for leaven and honey can't be offered." Why is honey only brought into the conversation because of the problem with leaven? How does the prohibition against honey relate to the issue of the grain-offering becoming chametz?

Abarbanel answers his question by suggesting that despite the Torah only mentioning which materials can be brought as an offering, we would have thought that the seven kinds of produce that the Land of Israel is praised about (D'varim 8:8) can be used even if all of them were not specifically mentioned. After all, wheat is used in the grain-offerings, barley is used in the Omer offering and in the offering brought by a Sotah, wine is used in the libations, and olive oil is used in the grain-offerings. Therefore since most of these seven "species" are used in offerings to G-d, we would think the others are okay to use as well, thus necessitating an explicit prohibition against using those not mentioned, including not using a form of wheat (leavened bread) that wasn't mentioned.

This point is strengthened when we consider that there was not enough oil for the amount of flour in a grain-offering, thus necessitating the use of an additional liquid (water, see Tosfos, M'nachos 57a, d"l Minchas N'sachim), even though no additional liquid is mentioned. If an ingredient that's needed wasn't mentioned, it makes sense that it didn't have to be water, but could be one of the "seven species." ["Honey" does not need to refer to sticky/goosey stuff; the land is praised for "flowing with milk and honey," with the honey "flowing" as well. Rashi (Sh'mos 2:11) translates "honey" as "sweet substances that come from a fruit."] Therefore, the Torah points out that not all seven "species" can be brought in an offering, and some forms of wheat (leaven) and all "honey" is actually prohibited. Since this information needs to be known by those bringing the offerings, and pertains to which

materials can be used in an offering, it was taught in our Parasha.

Panim Yafos addresses the issue of how honey was brought into the conversation, without including any of Abarbanel's concerns or suggestions. He suggests that since flour cannot become chametz if there is no water, we might have considered using fruit juice instead. However, since we can't use fruit juice ("honey"), and must use water, the flour can become chametz if we are not careful. The Torah expresses this by telling us that we have to be careful not to allow the grain-offering to become chametz, because not only is chametz forbidden, but so is honey. This can be synthesized with Abarbanel's approach; when the Torah listed the materials to be used for offerings, it preempted our using liquid that comes from one of the other "seven species" (instead of water) by telling us that chametz is a concern, as not only is chametz forbidden, but so is using "honey."

There are numerous reasons given for the prohibition against chametz (and honey) in any offering put on the altar, but most do not address the issues raised above. Ramban and Rabbeinu Bachye quote Rambam's explanation (Moreh Nevuchim 3:46) that idol worshippers wouldn't offer bread to their deities, only sourdough and sweet things, so G-d forbade us from offering those same things. The notion of bringing offerings to a deity seems rather foreign to the Western mind, and commentators have struggled to explain why offerings take such a central role in our rituals-to the extent that Rambam seems to say that they are only a response to the cultic practices of the time. Many argue (vehemently) with this notion (see Ramban on 1:9), but regardless of the inner meanings of each aspect of the Temple service (see Ralbag's commentary throughout Sefer Vayikra), there is no reason to negate the possibility that some aspects of the Temple service are a direct response, or include a direct response, to the way other deities were worshipped (as evidenced by Ramban's accepting Rambam's approach to leaven and honey).

When discussing the types of animals used for an offering, Rambam (ibid) explains how slaughtering that particular animal negates the belief system of a specific culture (such as sheep being revered in Egypt, goats representing demons to the Sabians, and cattle being considered "holy" in India), which is why these were used for offerings to the One True G-d. If idol-worshippers believed that their deities actually needed the nourishment provided by the offerings, it would be a dishonor to provide them with poor-man's food. This could be why the Torah insists that all grain-offerings be matza, "bread of affliction," to dispel the notion that G-d actually "eats" our food. They would have brought their deities the finest breads (leavened, of course) and the sweetest delicacies, so we are forbidden from using them in our offerings to G-d, indicating that the offerings are for our benefit, not His. Since the message inherent

in which materials were used for offerings included a negation of the practices of idol-worshippers, these elements were included in our Parasha as well. And since the same material used for a grain-offering could become chametz, this was the prohibition that started this part of the conversation, with honey included because it is prohibited for the same reason.

Rav Chanoch Waxman (<http://vbm-torah.org/archive/parsha66/24-66vayikra.htm>) demonstrates how matza represents our suffering in Egypt (see Rashi on D'varim 16:3), our being redeemed from slavery as we ate it in "in haste," anticipating redemption (Sh'mos 12:11-12) and had only matza after we left 12:39), as well as our commemoration of G-d redeeming us (12:17). He suggests that, put together, matza represents the process of redemption. Chametz, on the other hand symbolizes the completion of the process (which is why it is included in the Thanksgiving offering and the offering on Shavuot, even though they cannot be put on the altar itself). Similarly (and Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch makes this point as well), "honey," and the first fruits from which Biblical honey comes, symbolize our having arrived in the Promised Land (which flows with milk and honey), and giving thanks to G-d for giving it, and what it produces, to us. Based on this, Rabbi Waxman suggests that the requirement that the offering be matza, and the prohibition against offering leaven and honey, teach us that we should present ourselves to G-d as humble, poor and needy rather than as satiated. I would suggest that the message is that bringing offerings are only a process, a means to bringing us closer to G-d, rather than the completion of the process. Throughout Jewish history, people treated the Temple service as the goal of our spiritual yearning, rather than as an important part of the process that leads to continued spiritual growth. When G-d rails against sacrifices (e.g. Yirmiyahu 7:21-23), it is because they were used to assuage religious guilt rather than as part of the process of coming closer to G-d. By prohibiting leaven and honey, G-d is telling us that religious ritual is designed to help us in the process of spiritual growth, but is not an end unto itself. This message is more appropriately addressed to the entire nation, rather than just to the Kohanim, so is taught in our Parasha.

By including it with the list of materials, those who want to bring an offering will know that it's not just that the grain-offering has to be considered "matza," but that it has to be completely matza, with no chametz (see M'nachos 58a, which learns from our verses that even if only part of it is chametz it cannot be offered). Why can't even a small amount be chametz? "Because all leaven and all honey" even the slightest amount, "shall not be offered as a fire-offering to G-d." With this in mind, the one bringing the offering knows that what they are about to bring is not the completion of the process, but the beginning. © 2012 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI YOCHANAN ZWEIG

Curtain Call

“If the anointed Kohein will sin...”

This week's parsha records four of the six offerings that fall under the penumbra of the Korban Chatas-sin-offering. The sin-offering brought by a commoner was a female goat or sheep. If however, the perpetrator was a Kohein Gadol who, being a scholar, took the liberty of ruling to permit a certain prohibited activity for himself. Subsequently upon discovering that this act was in fact forbidden, he was required to bring a "par Kohein Mashiach"-

"bull of the anointed Kohein" instead of the female goat or sheep of the commoner. (4:3) The Torah describes how after slaughtering the animal the blood was caught in a bowl. The Kohein Gadol was required to dip his finger into the bowl containing the bull's blood and sprinkle it before the paroches, curtain separating the Holy from the Holy of Holies. (4:5)

The Torah records a second sin-offering that results from a mistaken ruling. If the Sanhedrin of seventy-one judges issued an erroneous ruling which resulted in the majority of the nation or a majority of the tribes transgressing a sin punishable by spiritual excision, a korban called the "par helem davar shel tzibbur"- "bull for the matter which was concealed from the congregation" was required. Unlike the previous offerings which were brought by the individual penitent, this korban was offered by the Sanhedrin for the entire community. Here too, the Torah records that the blood of the animal was sprinkled on the paroches. (4:13-17) However, Rashi identifies a discrepancy between both procedures. Whereas the sprinkling for the "par Kohein Mashiach" is recorded as occurring before the "paroches hakodesh"-

"holy separating curtain", the sprinkling for the "par helem davar" is described as occurring before the "paroches". (4:17) Why is the same curtain identified as holy in regards to "par Kohein Mashiach" but not when associated with the "par helem davar shel tzibur"?

The Talmud identifies two procedures that were utilized to inaugurate a Kohein Gadol. Ideally, pouring the anointing oil upon the head of the Kohein Gadol elevated him to his new position. If no anointing oil was available, donning the Kohein Gadol with all eight of his Priestly vestments was sufficient. The anointed Kohein Gadol was known as the "Kohein Mashiach", whereas the Kohein Gadol who was elevated through the vestments was referred to as the "Merubah Begadim". One difference between the two types of Kohein Gadol was the requirement to offer the "par Kohein Mashiach". Only the anointed Kohein Gadol brought this offering; the "Merubah Begadim" brought the offering of the commoner for his inadvertent transgressions. (Horayos 11b)

The reason why the paroches is termed "hakodesh" is because the staves of the Aron Hakodesh protruded from inside the "Kodesh Hakadoshim"- "Holy of Holies" into the curtain, creating the effect of a woman's form for the person standing in the Kodesh. (Menachos 98b) The Torah therefore refers to the separating curtain as a covering for the Ark. Hence it is given the appellation "paroches hakodesh".

The Talmud enumerates those items which were not present during the Second Temple. Among these items were the anointing oil and the Holy Ark which were hidden after the destruction of the First Temple. (Horayos 12a) Since the anointing oil was only present during the First Temple, the "par Kohein Mashiach" could only be brought during this time. The Torah alludes to this future occurrence by describing the sprinkling as being performed before the paroches hakodesh. The separating curtain could only be identified as "hakodesh" when the Aron was in the Kodesh Kodashim and the staves were protruding from the curtain, which only occurred during the First Temple. The "par helem davar shel tzibbur" which was not contingent upon having the Kohein Mashiach, could occur even during the Second Temple. Therefore, the sprinkling of the blood of the "par helem davar shel tzibbur" is described as occurring before the "paroches" alone, which is the manner in which the paroches is referred to when it does not function as a covering for the Aron. © 2012 Rabbi Y. Zweig & torah.org

RABBI ZVI SOBOLOFSKY

Torah Web

Many of the korbanos mentioned in Parshas Vayikra are brought as a response to sin. The korban chatas and various korbanos asham are linked to specific sins that were committed, and even the korban olah has the ability to atone for less severe sins. Most sins that require atonement are committed unintentionally. Why does the Torah require any atonement for unintentional sins? This question is not only relevant in the realm of korbanos, as the mitzvah of teshuva applies for such sins as well. Why are we held responsible for things that we didn't intend to do?

There are three important lessons we can derive from our obligation to address even unintentional actions. A person who kills unintentionally must run to an ir miklat-a city of refuge. This is not only to protect him from the relatives of the victim but also serves as an atonement for the act of murder he committed, albeit unintentionally. The Torah graphically illustrates the model scenario of such an act: a person is chopping wood in the forest and the loose blade of his tool flies off and hits someone. In this example the Torah is focusing our attention on the fact that this tragedy may have been avoided had the woodsman been more careful. More generally, in the realm of Torah

prohibitions we are instructed to enact safeguards lest we succumb to sin. If such safeguards are not adhered to, we are more likely to sin both intentionally and unintentionally. Although we may not technically be at fault for an unintentional sin, it too must be atoned for since we are responsible for our insufficient caution with respect to our mitzvah observance.

In Parshas Vayera, Hashem is ready to punish Avimelech for taking Sara, whereupon he protests that he is innocent as he didn't know that she was a married woman. Chazal comment that although Avimelech was telling the truth, he was still responsible for his actions. Avimelech was the leader of a society which did not adhere to basic standards of modesty. He sanctioned the behavior of those who would investigate immediately as to the status of any woman who entered his kingdom. Although there was no direct connection between the atmosphere of immodesty that prevailed and the specific issue of Sara, Avimelech was held responsible for condoning behavior that was conducive to sin. If our behavior results in sin, even if not intended, it should serve as a wake up call that perhaps we are living a lifestyle which is not conducive to the meticulous observance of mitzvos.

There is another lesson we can learn from the need for korbanos of atonement. In the physical world, there are consequences of our actions whether performed willingly or otherwise. One who consumed poison unknowingly must still be treated for its effects. Similarly, sin is spiritual poison which has negative consequences for our spiritual health. The need to offer a korban alerts us to the serious nature of sin and the negative impact it has on us. Teshuva and korbanos are necessary as antidotes to the self-inflicted damage we have caused unknowingly.

The Torah spends a lot of time addressing the different unintentional sins that warrant various korbanos. These are not just technical details relevant only when there was a Beis Hamikdash. Rather, these halachos require us to examine our actions. Are there specific precautions we can take to prevent these occurrences in the future? Can we create an atmosphere and lifestyle that is less likely to result in actions that require atonement? Do we understand the consequences of our actions? As we offer a korban and return to Hashem these are the critical questions we must ask ourselves. © 2012 Rabbi Z. Sobolofsky & The TorahWeb Foundation

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg

Rosh Yeshiva, Kerem B'Yavne

Rosh Chodesh, the first day of the month, appears together with the holidays in the Torah portion of Pinchas, but the significance of the day is not clear, except for the special sacrifices that are brought

on this day. The first time that any special festivity is mentioned with respect to Rosh Chodesh appears in connection with David, when he said to Yehonatan, "the new month starts tomorrow and I am supposed to sit with the King to eat" [Shmuel I 20:5].

Three sins took place in the era of the creation—the sin of Adam, the sin of the earth, and the sin of the moon. According to Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook, what all three sins have in common is "forgetting the self" [Orot Hakodesh volume 3 page 140] and looking around to external factors. When Adam was asked why he ate from the Tree of Knowledge he blamed "the woman you gave to be with me" [Bereishit 3:12]. When the woman was asked, she pointed at the serpent. But the Holy One, Blessed be He, had asked, "Where are you?" [3:9] — where is your own personal self?

A tree serves as the basis for growing fruit, which is the ultimate goal, and the Holy One, Blessed be He, wanted the taste of the tree itself to be the same as the taste of the fruit—that is, that the pleasant feeling of the goal should be felt while the work takes place. But the earth did not produce trees with the taste of the fruit, rather it preferred to emphasize the final goal. The same principle was true of the moon when it was jealous of the reign of the sun. "And in this way the world continues on the path of ignoring the important traits of every individual and of the community as a whole." [Rav Kook].

Adam sinned on Rosh Chodesh, and therefore we say, "You gave Rosh Chodesh to Your nation as a time of atonement for all their offspring" [Rosh Chodesh prayers]. "This is the fault of Adam, which is a fault from birth" [Rabbi Tzadok from Lublin].

With the receiving of the Torah the situation should have been fixed. "When Yisrael stood at Mount Sinai, their contamination was removed" [Shabbat 146a]. This refers to the fault caused by Adam. But they sinned once again with the Golden Calf, which is clearly a sin of looking aside at foreign cultures. Once again they forgot their own "self" and they repeated the sin of Adam: "I said that you are Divine... but you will die like man (Adam)" [Tehillim 82:6-7]. The great repair was delayed until the days of the Mashiach. Only for the women, who did not sin with the Calf, did something of the repair of the world remain. Therefore it is written in the Talmud Yerushalmi that women have a custom not to do any labor on Rosh Chodesh, as a reward for the fact that they did not sin with the Calf.

In the distant future, the sin of the moon will also be fixed—"And the light of the moon will be like the light of the sun" [Yeshayahu 30:26]. That is why, as opposed to the other holidays which are based on past events, Rosh Chodesh is focused on the future. "And it will happen every month... all flesh will come to bow down before Me, G-d says" [66:23].

Since the future is linked to the flowering of the seed of David and to the renewal of his kingdom, the first time that we hear of a holiday spirit on Rosh

Chodesh is when David "arrives on stage." And the phrase used to usher in the new month is, "David, King of Yisrael, lives and continues to exist" [Rosh Hashana 25a].

"Let it be your will... that the fault in the moon will be filled... and that the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun... and that the phrase will be fulfilled within us... And they will search for their G-d and for their King David." [Kiddush Levanah]. © 2012 Rabbi A. Bazak and Machon Zomet

SHLOM KATZ

Hama'ayan

Our parashah opens (after an introductory verse), "When an adam / man among you brings an offering to Hashem..." R' Yeshayah Halevi Horowitz z"l (the Shelah Ha'kadosh; died 1635) comments: Know, that if Adam Ha'rishon had not sinned, there would have been no need for a separate holy place [the mishkan], since the entire world would have been Gan Eden. This is the meaning of the verse (Yirmiyahu 3:16), which speaks of future times [which will be like the brief period before Adam's sin], "In those days, says Hashem, they will not say, 'The Ark of the Covenant of Hashem,' and it will not come to mind; they will not mention it and will not recall it." Rashi z"l explains that every assembly of Jews will be holy and Hashem will rest upon it, as if it was the Aron.

The Shelah Ha'kadosh continues: Likewise, if Adam had not sinned, there would no need for some people (i.e., kohanim) to be distinguished from others to serve Hashem. Rather, everyone would have been part of the "kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation" [in the words of Shmot 19:6].

Furthermore, the Shelah continues, there would have been no times that are holier than other times. Rather, all times would have been equal, just as the future will be "a world which is all Shabbat" [paraphrasing what we recite in Birkat Ha'mazon on Shabbat]. In that world, the Shelah concludes, man would not have needed to offer an offering to Hashem, for man himself would have been an offering, just as now we are taught that man's soul is offered on an altar above after his death. To allude to this, the Book of Vayikra, which deals with sacrificial offerings, begins with mentioning "adam." (Shnei Luchot Ha'brit) © 2012 S. Katz & torah.org



<http://www.orpheshalom.org>