

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

Among the sacrifices detailed in this week's sedra is the korban todah, the thanksgiving offering: "If he offers it [the sacrifice] as a thanksgiving offering, then along with this thanksgiving offering he is to offer unleavened loaves mixed with oil, unleavened wafers spread with oil, and loaves of fine flour well-kneaded and mixed with oil." (Lev. 7:12).

Though we have been without sacrifices for almost two thousand years, a trace of the thanksgiving offering survives to this day, in the form of the blessing known as Hagomel: "Who bestows good things on the unworthy", said in the synagogue, at the time of reading of the Torah, by one who has survived a hazardous situation.

What constitutes a hazardous situation? The sages (Berakhot 54b) found the answer in Psalm 107, a song on the theme of giving thanks, beginning with the best-known words of religious gratitude in Judaism: Hodu la-Shem ki tov, ki le-olam chasdo, "Give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness is forever".

The psalm itself describes four specific situations:

1. Crossing the sea: "Some went out on the sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters... They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away... Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed."

2. Crossing a desert: "Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle. They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress."

3. Recovery from serious illness: "They loathed all food and drew near the gates of death. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave."

4. Release from captivity: "Some sat in darkness and the deepest gloom, prisoners suffering in iron chains... Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom and broke away their chains."

To this day, these are the situations of hazard (many nowadays include air travel as well as a sea voyage) on which we say Hagomel when we come through them safely.

In his book *A Rumour of Angels*, the American sociologist Peter Berger describes what he calls "signals of transcendence"-phenomena within the human situation that point to something beyond. Among them he includes humour and hope. There is nothing in nature that explains our ability to reframe painful situations in such a way that we can laugh at them; nor is there anything that can explain the human capacity to find meaning even in the depths of suffering.

These are not, in the classic sense, proofs of the existence of G-d, but they are experiential evidence. They tell us that we are not random concatenations of selfish genes, blindly reproducing themselves. Our bodies may be products of nature ("dust you are, and to dust you will return"), but our minds, our thoughts, our emotions-all that is meant by the word "soul"-are not. There is something within us that reaches out to something beyond us: the soul of the universe, the Divine "You" to which we speak in prayer, and to which our ancestors, when the Temple stood, made their offerings.

Though Berger does not include it, one of the "signals of transcendence" is surely the instinctive human wish to give thanks. Often this is merely human. Someone has done us a favour, given us a gift, comforted us in the midst of grief, or rescued us from danger. We feel we owe them something. That "something" is todah, the Hebrew word that means both "acknowledgement" and "thanks".

But often we sense something more. It is not just the pilot we want to thank when we land safely after a hazardous flight; not just the surgeon when we survive an operation; not just the judge or politician when we are released from prison or captivity. It is as if some larger force was operative, as if the hand that moves the pieces on the human chessboard were thinking of us; as if heaven itself had reached down and come to our aid.

Insurance companies tend to describe natural catastrophes as "acts of G-d". Human emotion does the opposite. G-d is in the good news, the miraculous survival, the escape from catastrophe. That instinct-to offer thanks to a force, a presence, over and above natural circumstances and human intervention-is itself a

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signal of transcendence. That is what was once expressed in the thanksgiving offering, and still is, in the Hagomel prayer. But it is not just by saying Hagomel that we express our thanks.

Elaine and I were on our honeymoon. It was summer, the sun was shining, the beach glorious and the sea inviting. There was just one problem. I could not swim. But as I looked at the sea, I noticed that near to the shore it was very shallow indeed. There were people several hundred yards from the beach, yet the water only came up to their knees. What could be safer, I thought, than simply to walk out into the sea and stop long before I was out of my depth.

I did. I walked out several hundred yards and, yes, the sea only came up to my knees. I turned and started walking back. To my surprise and shock, I found myself suddenly engulfed by water. Evidently, I had walked into a deep dip in the sand. I was out of my depth. I struggled to swim. I failed. This was dangerous. There was no one nearby. The people swimming were a long way away. I went under, again and again. By the fifth time, I knew I was drowning. My life was about to end. What a way-I thought- to start a honeymoon.

Of course someone did save me, otherwise I would not be writing these lines. To this day I do not know who it was: by then I was more or less unconscious. All I know is that he must have seen me struggling. He swam over, took hold of me, and brought me to safety. Since then, the words we say on waking every day have had a deep meaning for me: "I thank You, living and enduring G-d, for You have restored my life to me: great is Your faithfulness." Anyone who has survived great danger knows what it is to feel, not just to be abstractly aware, that life is a gift of G-d, renewed daily.

The first word of this prayer, Modeh, comes from the same Hebrew root as Todah, "thanksgiving". So too does the word Yehudi, "Jew". We acquired the name from Jacob's fourth son, Judah. He in turn received his name from Leah who, on his birth, said: "This time I will thank [some translate it, "I will praise"] G-d" (Gen. 29:35). To be a Jew is to offer thanks. That is the meaning of our name and the constitutive gesture of our faith.

There were Jews who, after the Holocaust, sought to define Jewish identity in terms of suffering, victimhood, survival. One theologian spoke of a 614th

commandment: You shall not give Hitler a posthumous victory. The historian Salo Baron called this the "lachrymose" reading of history: a story written in tears. I, for one, cannot agree. Yes, there is Jewish suffering. Yet had this been all, Jews would not have done what in fact most did: hand on their identity to their children as their most precious legacy. To be a Jew is to feel a sense of gratitude; to see life itself as a gift; to be able to live through suffering without being defined by it; to give hope the victory over fear. To be a Jew is to offer thanks. © 2012 Chief Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and torah.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“During the majestic and magical evening of the seder, how many matzot does the leader of the proceedings take, two or three? And how many cups of wine do the participants drink, four or five? I daresay the overwhelming majority of my readers will respond: three matzot and four cups of wine. But in my seder, we all take two matzot and drink five cups of wine. Cynics may comment that it is indeed a gastronomic and digestive boon to trade a matzah for a glass of good, red, dry wine, but my reason is purely halakhic and Zionist, as I hope to prove.

The simple interpretation of a Talmudic passage (Berakhot 39b) would suggest two matzot: "Rav Papa maintains that everyone agrees that on Passover evening, we place the broken matzah within (or under) the whole matzah and make a blessing thereon". This implies two matzot or rather one and one half, and the Vilna Gaon rules that this is our normative practice.

The origin of our usual custom of taking three matzot - two whole and one broken stems from Rashi (Commentary on Pesachim 116a). He insists that we must have two whole matzot to retain our custom of lehem mishneh (parallel to our two Shabbat hallah loaves). Maimonides, on the other hand, insists upon one and one-half, ruling that "lehem oni", the matzah / bread of affliction, trumps "lehem mishneh", the double portion of the manna which we commemorate on the Sabbath (Laws of Hametz and Matzah 8,6).

I vote with Maimonides, since Passover is only the very beginning of our redemption: Even when we left Egypt, we were still a long distance (and a whole generation) away from the land of Israel, and seven weeks away from the Receiving of the Torah. The "whole" matzah expresses our gratitude for the exodus, but the half matzah is a necessary reminder that our affliction had far from concluded at that point in time.

Let us turn to the wine. Conventional wisdom explains the four cups of wine as emanating from the four expressions of redemption articulated in the Book of Exodus (6:6-7): "I will free you.... I will save you... I will redeem you....I will take you...." But in the very next verse comes the fifth expression, "I will bring you into

the land which I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob" (ibid 8). What happened to the fifth cup?

A cursory glimpse into the order of the cups of wine should explain what occurred. We begin with Kiddush, the first cup, which mentions both the creation and the exodus, and enables us to eat a little hors d'oeuvre of karpas; then we pour the second cup for Maggid, the story of the enslavement and the exodus; we eat the meal of our freedom, replete with reminders of the sacrificial foods, and then pour the third cup for Grace after the Meal.

It is this blessing for the food which, in its prayer for the restoration of Jerusalem, makes reference to its destruction, and in its praise for the G-d who is good and who does good (HaTov VehoMetiv) reminds us that after the Hadrianic persecutions following the abortive Bar Kochba rebellion. Now, albeit within the context of praise, the spectra of destruction and exile has entered the Passover seder. At this point, comes the special cup for Elijah (it's not in the count of four because only Elijah drinks from it), but this is also within the context of exile, since it is introduced with the words, "Pour Your wrath against the Gentiles who do not know You....for they have consumed Jacob and laid waste His habitation..."

Now comes the fourth cup of Hallel and the recitation of the blessing of the Song (Nishmat: "May the breath of all living souls praise G-d...."), with its prayer and gratitude for G-d's restoration of Israel to our homeland and Jerusalem (Mishna Pesachim 10, 5). A Tosefta substitutes Hallel HaGadol (Psalm 136: Praised be the Lord... whose loving-kindness extends to the world") for the Nishmat Prayer. Our haggadah includes Hallel HaGadol as well as Nishmat, until the conclusion of Yishtabach, with the praise to "G-d, King of all living worlds."

Each ritual drinking of wine - should refer to a specific theme. Hallel evokes our return to national sovereignty in Israel; Hallel HaGadol and Nishmat refer to redemption of the world. And indeed the Tosafists (as well as the Gaonim and Maimonides) all cite a variant reading, "On the fifth cup, we recite the Blessing of the Song (or Hallel HaGadol)". Many of the Gaonim actually demand a fifth cup, the Rambam along with most decisors permits it, though he would only endorse reciting Hallel HaGadol with this fifth cup.

Modern scholarship would suggest that in the haggadot of the land of Israel, they always included a fifth cup - and only in our galut haggadot was it excluded. Perhaps from the backdrop of galut the yearning for world redemption seemed a bit too much to ask for. Now that we have returned to our homeland, I would urge the addition of a fifth cup immediately before reciting Hallel HaGadol. In our global village, until the world recognizes our G-d of peace and morality, no single nation will ever feel secure. © 2012 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The basis for observance of mitzvot and ritual lies in the word tzav. The Torah does not present us with many options when it comes to observing G-d's explicit commandments. Before the performance of a mitzvah, we are to recite a blessing that clearly states *asher tzivanu*-that we have been commanded and instructed to perform this mitzvah. We naturally retain our free will as to whether we wish to perform the mitzvah or not.

But we are to understand that the ultimate reason for the performance of the mitzvah is not because we deem it to be pleasant or worthy or any other rational human explanation for its performance. We observe and perform the mitzvah ultimately and perhaps solely because G-d has commanded us to do so and we committed ourselves at Sinai that we will do what we are instructed to do.

Now all of this flies in the face of contemporary wisdom, custom and mores. We live in a time when the right to do what I want to do supersedes all instructions and guidance-parental, school or just plain good old common good sense. This contradiction in values and worldview lies at the heart of much of the divisions that exist within the Jewish world.

Our generation is permanently stuck in the teenage years; it resents anyone telling it what to do. And since this feeling is part of the general package of free will that the Lord has endowed us with, it is difficult in the extreme to understand *vtizvanu* in the absence of training, habit, intensive Jewish education and historical perspective.

It should be obvious that people would wish to follow good, proven, beneficial instructions. But that certainly is not the case with human nature. Millions of people engage in harmful activities that have been conclusively proven medically to be life shortening.

Over the long run of Jewish history all of the groupings that have rejected the idea of *vtizvanu* have eventually disappeared from the Jewish scene. History is always unforgiving as to human foibles and grievous errors. Yet just as anti-Jewish hatred resurrects itself in all generations no matter that history records what a terrible toll it always takes on the haters, so too does the *tzivanu* rejecters constantly reappear amongst us in different guises and with ever more populist names.

The rejecters are "progressive," "democratic," "peace and love people." The only problem is that they are wrong and ultimately harmful to themselves and to the Jewish people as a whole. Again, all of Jewish history and experience shows how truly wrong they are. The Lord does not allow Himself, so to speak, to be second guessed and His commandments to be improved upon. The prophet Malachi states the matter

quite succinctly: "I, the Lord, have not changed and you, the children of Israel have not been exterminated."

Since the Lord has not changed and the Jewish people are still around to serve as His special people, the tzivanu imperative still applies. That is why the very existence of this parsha of Tzav is of such vital importance. © 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

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 today, thank you, to our closest of kin and, of course, to G-d Himself. © 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

Sefer Vayikra begins with G-d calling to Moshe from the Mishkan (Vayikra 1:1), but goes back in time (8:1-36) to the seven days of "fulfillment" (Milu'im), when Aharon and his sons were trained to do the service that would be performed once the Mishkan became operational, on the "eighth day" (9:1-24). This "eighth day" was the day that G-d called to Moshe at the beginning of Sefer Vayikra (1:1), the first day of Nisan in 2449 (Sh'mos 40:2), almost a year after the exodus from Egypt. Vayikra therefore begins where Sefer Sh'mos ended, with G-d's divine presence descending on the Mishkan on that "eighth day" (40:34) but Moshe being unable to enter (40:35) until G-d called him in (Vayikra 1:1).

Once inside, G-d commanded Moshe regarding the sacrifices, the details and laws of which are taught from the beginning of Sefer Vayikra until the narrative regarding the "Milu'im" begins. We would have assumed that this is where the Torah goes back in time, describing events that took place a week before the commandments given at the beginning of the sefer, if not for one verse (7:38), which states explicitly that these laws were commanded to Moshe on Mt. Sinai. Where, then, did this shift back in time occur? Why is there no indication of this chronological change until after it happens?

Ramban provides three possible explanations for this verse. His third approach is that "Mt. Sinai" doesn't mean atop the mountain, but rather "in front of Mt. Sinai," i.e. in the Mishkan, which was built next to Mt. Sinai, and where it was located when these commandments were taught to Moshe. (The nation didn't move from Mt. Sinai until more than a month and a half after the Mishkan was operating, see Bamidbar 10:11-12.) The verse therefore mentions both Mt. Sinai and the Sinai desert, indicating that it wasn't from atop the mountain itself (but "in the desert of Sinai"), yet was before they traveled away from Mt. Sinai. According to this approach, the "time shift" still occurs when the

"Milu'im" narrative begins (8:1). While this might explain the wording of the verse, it doesn't explain why we might have thought that any of the preceding laws were taught after they had traveled from Sinai. After all, these laws applied right away, and had to be known at least by the "eighth day" (when the Kohanim started bringing offerings in the Mishkan), if not earlier (during their training). Without any reason to think that any of these laws were taught after the nation left Mt. Sinai, we would have assumed that they were taught before they moved. Even if the explicit mention at the beginning of Sefer Vayikra wasn't enough, just mentioning the Mishkan here should have been enough without having to mention both Mt. Sinai and the Sinai Desert. If anything, mentioning Sinai indicates that the preceding laws (or at least some of them) were commanded before the Mishkan was built.

Ramban's second approach splits the verse in half, with some of the offerings (the "olah," which is completely burnt, the "chatus," the sin offering, and the "Milu'im,") being taught on Mt. Sinai (literally), and the rest taught in the Mishkan, in the Sinai Desert. However, the verses do not indicate that some were taught in one place and others taught elsewhere, and the details of the "sh'lamim" (whose meat is shared by all), as well as the other offerings, are mentioned in the commandments to the nation and included in the commandments to the Kohanim. The verse itself doesn't seem to be talking about two categories, or two locations, merely stating that "these are the laws that G-d commanded Moshe on Mt. Sinai, on the day that He commanded the Children of Israel to bring their offerings to G-d, in the Sinai Desert." Despite the laws that were taught to the Children of Israel being taught in the Mishkan (Vayikra 1:1-2), here we are told that the laws that were taught to the Children of Israel were commanded on Mt. Sinai.

A more natural "division" (suggested by some) would be that those laws taught to the nation (1:1-5:26) were commanded in the Mishkan, while the laws directed to Aharon and his sons (6:1-7:34) were commanded on Mt. Sinai. According to this, the "time shift" occurs at this point, with the "Milu'im" that occurred before the "eighth day" following the laws that were taught even earlier. Aside from this "division" not being demarcated in the text, an issue that arises from this suggestion is that offerings described in the first part (which weren't taught until later) are referenced in the second part. This is not problematic for the "olah" (6:2), even though an earlier mention of "olah" is referenced ("this is the olah that is on the flame on the altar all night," indicating that it was previously discussed), as the twice-daily "olah" was already taught at Sinai (Sh'mos 29:38:42). [The point of this commandment would seem to be that a voluntary "olah" is offered the same way as the mandatory "olah," which was already taught.] The reference to the "sh'lamim" (Vayikra 6:5), on the other hand, would seem to be a

problem if Parashas Tzav was not taught after Parashas Vayikra, as an offering that had not yet been taught was being referenced. Additionally, we are told that the laws directed to "the Children of Israel" were taught at Sinai, not (just) those directed to the Kohanim.

In his first approach, Ramban references the opinion of our sages, that all of the laws and their details were taught on Mt. Sinai and then repeated in the Mishkan. According to this approach, since the laws and details taught in both Parashas Vayikra and Parashas Tzav were all taught on Mt. Sinai and then repeated in the Mishkan, the verses in Sefer Vayikra are telling us what was commanded in the Mishkan, with the summation (7:37-38) telling us that these commandments were the same as those that had already been taught to Moshe on Mt. Sinai (see Netziv). This would certainly explain how the "sh'lamim" can be referenced, as not only had it already been taught on Mt. Sinai, but it had been taught again now in the Mishkan. The question becomes why the Torah needed to tell us this here, since all commandments were taught at Sinai and repeated in the Mishkan, a concept learned from Sh'mita (see Rashi on Vayikra 25:1; see also <http://tinyurl.com/5765behar>, pg. 2, and <http://tinyurl.com/5768behar>, pg. 7). We also need to understand the verbose wording of the verse; why does Torah add "on the day that He commanded the Children of Israel to bring their offerings to G-d, in the Sinai Desert" rather than just leaving it as "these are the laws that G-d commanded Moshe on Mt. Sinai"?

Previously (<http://tinyurl.com/5772dmkvaypek>), I discussed the possibility that the Mishkan was made differently than had originally been commanded because the nation was no longer the same as it had been before the sin of the golden calf. That there were changes because of the golden calf is explicit; the Tribe of Levi replaced the first born in the Temple service (see Rashi on Bamidbar 3:12); Moshe carved out the second set of Luchos (Sh'mos 34:1), whereas G-d Himself carved the first (32:16); the words on the second set reflected the nation's status after the sin, whereas the words on the first set were appropriate for the level they had been on before the sin (see Nesivos/Nachalas Yaakov on Parashas Vu-eschanan); and the pillars of the doorway of the Mishkan (Sh'mos 36:38) and of the courtyard (38:17) were made differently than had been commanded (26:37 and 27:17). What about the offerings brought in the Mishkan? If the change in the way the nation related to G-d manifested itself in the representation of the covenant between them, in the structure within which G-d dwelled amongst them, and in the representatives of the nation in the Temple service, did it also manifest itself in the service itself?

By telling us, explicitly, that the offerings commanded in the Mishkan were exactly the same as had been commanded on Mt. Sinai (before the sin of the golden calf, as were the "Milu'im," from which Toras

Kohanim, Tzav 18:3-5, derives the timing of the original commandments; it is significant that the Golden Altar was commanded after the "Milu'im," as this might be where the changes began), the Torah is teaching us that the nature of the service itself was the same as it would have been even had there been no golden calf. "These are the laws that G-d commanded Moshe on Mt. Sinai," before the sin of the golden calf, "on the day that He commanded the Children of Israel to bring their offerings to G-d" in the future, after they build the Mishkan "in the Sinai Desert," as opposed to having commanded them now, for immediate use. © 2012 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI YITZCHOK ADLERSTEIN

Davar B'Ito

“Every male of the Bnei Aharon shall eat it. It is an eternal portion for your generations from the fire-offerings of Hashem. Whatever touches them shall become holy."

Were it only so simple! Touch material to something holy, and the holiness instantly infuses the ordinary with specialness, elevating it to a level of sanctity! It doesn't really happen that way. Our verse must mean something different.

On the simplest level, we take it indicate a vulnerability of material used as an adjunct to kodesh, rather than describing a short-cut to holiness. The pasuk teaches us about food that is eaten together with kodesh, like a korban. Eating something tameh together with kodesh would be unthinkable. Intuitively, we realize that foods taken together with a piece of a korban, for example, must themselves be prepared on the same level of taharah as the korban itself. All the precautions that go into protecting the taharah of the korban must be taken when preparing the non-kodesh foods that are meant to be consumed with the korban. (We call this chulin / ordinary, non-kodesh foods prepared on taharah-plane of kodesh.)

This is the simple meaning of the pasuk. The derashah of Chazal finds yet another meaning. When non-kodesh matter is brought into contact with kodesh to the extent that the former absorbs some of the latter, the non-kodesh must now be governed by the same halachos as the latter. If substance of a valid korban is absorbed, the non-kodesh material becomes subject to the same limitations as the korban. In other words, if the korban can only be eaten for a limited amount of time in a certain place, the non-kodesh that has absorbed the ta'am of kodesh is now subject to the same limitations and restrictions.

The common denominator of both of these approaches is that the mundane can take on some of the trappings of holiness without becoming elevated itself.

Chaggai the prophet is instructed by Divine command to pose a question to the kohanim of his

generation, whose conduct left much to be desired: "If a person carries meat that is tameh in the corner of his garment, and then he touches bread with that corner, and the bread touches the stew, and [the stew touches] the wine or oil or any other food-does that food become sanctified? The kohanim answered and said, 'no.'"

Chaggai continues, "If one who touched a dead person would touch all of these, would they become tameh?" The kohanim answered, "They would become tameh." (Chaggai 2:12-14) Chaggai was not just administering a pop quiz on the laws of offerings. As nevi'im do so often, he used allegorical language to make a point about proper and improper behavior.

A person who partakes of a korban prepares food to be eaten with it. Along with the korban, therefore, he readies "bread...stew...wine." These constitute the bulk of the meal. Although these are less important, he sometimes adds "oil or...other food." (Note that the definite article is used only together with bread, stew and wine. The definite article underscores that those items are known and obvious, because they are the expected main items of the menu.) Regardless of the frequency with which they are included, they have to be prepared specially in order to be eaten with the meat of a korban. They have to be prepared on the same level of taharah as the korban itself.

Chaggai asks them if this preparation, together with actual contact with kodesh, gives them the status of kodesh. They respond, of course, that they don't.

He then turns the tables, and asks them to substitute tumah for kedushah. Will contact with tumah change the status of the foods brought along with the korban? The Kohanim are forced to concede that it will make them temai'im, and forbid their consumption.

Apparently, kedushah and tumah do not behave entirely symmetrically. Tumah is contagious; kedushah, not necessarily so. Ordinary, non-kodesh food that is prepared for consumption with food of genuine kedushah demonstrates this inequality. This non-kodesh food is elevated-but only somewhat. It becomes restricted, in the sense that it must stay tahor. Should it become tameh, eating it becomes forbidden. This change in status is not sufficient to make it genuinely holy, however. Unlike real kodesh, there is no mitzvah to eat chulin prepared in a state of taharah.

Chaggai continues, and drives home his point. "So is this people and so is this nation before Me...and so is all their handiwork. What they offer there is tameh."

People and nation are two different groups. They refer to the kohanim and the rest of the nation. Chaggai finds both of them sorely wanting. He refers to "all their handiwork," meaning all their dealings in the arena of kedushah. The kohanim and the rest of the Nation saw themselves as spiritually significant. They thought themselves to be committed to holiness and growth.

Chaggai tells them otherwise. Drawing near to the mizbeach does not give them essential kedushah. Their offering of korbanos don't mean so much. Because they act improperly, the kedushah inherent in those korbanos does not negate the chilul Hashem that they create. People see them-especially the kohanim-as holy people. But they aren't, really. Like the non-kodesh eaten with the korban, they are only part of the support mechanism. Their contact with holiness does not make them holy. Because people look up to them, their chilul Hashem is only magnified.

Playing the holy role is not necessarily a step in the right direction. Sometimes, it makes matters worse. (Based on Ha'amek Davar and Harchev Davar, Vayikra 6:11) © 2012 Rabbi Y. Adlerstein & torah.org

RABBI BENJAMIN YUDIN

Torah Web

The mishnah (Pesachim 116:b) mandates that in every generation a person is obligated to look at himself as though he personally departed from Egypt. The Rambam, (Hilchos Chametz U'matzah 7:6,7) cites this command as the reason for our reclining and drinking four cups of wine at the seder. The Alter of Slabodka is purported to have said that this is the most challenging mitzvah of the night of Pesach.

At first glance, the mishnah is teaching that the level of hakoras hatov we must all have at the seder is not simply for what He did for our ancestors and that we would not be where we are today were it not for His kindnesses afforded them, rather, we must look at the exodus and express a personal hakoras hatov for what He did for us.

The birkas ha-gomel, thanksgiving blessing, is mandated by the Talmud (Berachos 54b) for the following four survivors: (a) one who completed a sea journey (b) one who completed a hazardous land journey such as crossing a dessert, (c) one who recovered from a serious illness (d) one released from captivity. Interestingly, our meal at the seder is upgraded to a seudas ho'da'ah-meal of thanksgiving, as upon leaving Egypt we successfully experienced all four. The Alshich asks, if the motivation and cause for the thanksgiving is appreciation for what Hashem has done, than in reality we should be reciting this blessing constantly, as his kindnesses are with us always. Therefore, he teaches it is not only the salvation from these threatening circumstances, but as the verse in Tehillim (107:24) which is the scriptural source for this blessing states "they have seen the deeds of Hashem". When one hears of the salvation that another experienced, it bolsters their faith in G-D, and His personal involvement in the affairs of man. When however, an individual experiences a personal life-saving situation, they are giving thanks for the privilege of seeing G-D first hand. A miraculous outcome for someone else solidifies my belief intellectually, but

when I am the direct recipient of His kindness my Emunah-faith is elevated to a tangible experiential level.

Tehillim (33:1) states: "ranenu tzadikim Ba'Shem-sing joyfully oh righteous because of Hashem." The Medrash Shocher Tov points out that it does not say "el Hashem" which would mean sing to Hashem, rather Ba'Shem, understood that as soon as they are privileged to see the Devine they sing. Thus, we find immediately prior to the miraculous rescue at Yam Suf, (Shemos 14:31) "Israel saw the great hand that Hashem inflicted upon Egypt", and immediately thereafter, (15:1) "then Moshe and the children of Israel sang this song". We also find at the opening day ceremony to the inauguration of the Mishkan that the Torah teaches (Vayikra 9:24), "A fire went forth from before Hashem, the people saw, and sang glad song". Similarly, the prophet Micha (7:15) promises "as in the days when you left the land of Egypt, I will show it (Jewish people) wonders". And lastly, we also pray in the daily in every shemoneh esrei, "may our eyes witness Your return to Zion".

The Talmud (Berachos 12a) explains why the Shema in the morning is followed by the blessing of Emes veyatziv, while that of the night is followed by Emes v'emunah, by citing the passuk (Tehillim 92:3) "to relate your kindness in the morning and your faith at night." Why do we focus on "kindness" in the morning but on "faith" at night? Daytime represents clarity, when one can see and comprehend with certainty; things are "clear as day", as the saying goes. This refers to the kindnesses and miracles that He performed for us. Nighttime, however, indicates the doubt and uncertainty we may have as to when and how we will be extricated from our communal and personal challenges. As such, nighttime is a time to draw upon one's faith that redemption-geulah will come.

The majority of mitzvos-shofar, lulav, tefillin, hallel-are all day mitzvos, reflecting the positive and open relationship between Hashem and Israel. Why, asks the Vilna Gaon in his Oros HaGrah, are the mitzvos of Pesach -- eating the korban Pesach, matzoh, and marror-all night mitzvos? His answer is that the night of Pesach is philosophically and halachically a day. Similarly the Gaon explains that although the Torah says (Shemos 13:8), "you shall tell your son on that day " when describing the mitzvah of sippur yetzias mitzraim, we fulfill this mitzvah at night since this night is axiologically a day. We experienced on this night His presence with such clarity that the character of this night was forever transformed from a night of faith to a virtual daytime of seeing.

Thus, the charge to "look at oneself as if they personally left Egypt" means not only to attempt to put oneself back in time over three thousand years ago, but rather to know with absolute surety that Hashem, the Honored Guest at our seder, will solve our communal and personal pressing problems. © 2012 Rabbi B. Yudin & The TorahWeb Foundation

RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND

RavFrand

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The parsha begins with the instruction: "Command Aharon (Tzav es Aharon) and his sons saying: This is the law of the olah-offering: It is the olah-offering [that stays] on the flame, on the Altar all night until the morning, and the fire of the Altar shall be kept aflame on it." [Vayikra 6:2] The Olah offering is a sacrifice that was totally burnt. With most sacrifices someone eats something. Most of a peace offering (Korban Shelamim) is eaten by the person who brings the sacrifice; the sin offering is eaten by the Kohanim. However, the Korban Olah is consumed entirely by the fire of the Mizbayach.

Rashi says that the connotation of the word "Command" (Tzav) is "charge" (lashon zeerus). Why was it necessary to "charge" Aharon? He certainly does not need any special kind of motivation lecture? R. Shimeon states that it is necessary for the Torah to emphasize a command through "charging" when monetary loss is involved. [Kiddushin 29a] People do not like to waste money or lose money. When a mitzvah involves cost with no apparent "payback," the Torah finds it necessary to "charge" those commanded to more fully motivate them and help them overcome their hesitancy.

People find it hard to take an animal, which may have cost them a thousand dollars, and merely have it "go up in smoke" without anyone getting any physical benefit from it. Therefore, by the Olah offering, the Torah says "Tzav es Aharon"-encourage him, give him a Tzav-because a monetary loss is involved.

Why is that? I saw an interesting observation from Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro. The world says "Time is money" but the way it should really be stated is "Money is time"-meaning in order to make money, a person needs to spend time on it and time is the most precious commodity in the world. Almost anything else can be replaced, but time can never be replaced.

Our Sages tell us a strange thing: "For righteous people, their money is more precious to them than their bodies". This is counter-intuitive. We would think: Tzadikim? They don't care about their money.

The reason that "for righteous, money is more precious than their bodies" is because Tzadikim realize that in order to gain money, they somehow need to

invest time. Therefore their money is precious to them because "my time was invested in acquiring this." This is why "in a place where monetary loss is involved" even people of the highest stature (like



Aharon the High Priest) need to be charged and encouraged to nevertheless diligently proceed with the mandated expenditure.

Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro was a disciple of Rav Yitzchak Zeev Soloveitchik (the Brisker Rav) and was himself a Rosh Yeshiva in Israel. He writes as follows:

It is known that the people of America have been blessed with affluence and no doubt G-d rewarded them in this fashion due to the merit of their generosity and the merit of the charities they occupy themselves with. However, I believe, there is also another factor here. I have noticed two significant attributes which certainly also merit the bestowal of riches upon them: First of all, they are diligent in their businesses (zerizusam b'iskeihem). From the time they start their task at work until they finish, they do not allow anything to disturb them. This is different than the workers in our country who take coffee breaks every half hour. Americans appreciate their time and in that merit they have been successful financially.

Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro then mentions the following very interesting incident. The Ponnivitzer Rav and Rav Elchanon Wasserman learned together as study partners (b'chavrusa) in the Kollel in Radin. They wanted to look up something in a certain book quoted by the Chofetz Chaim in his Shaar HaTziyon commentary to Mishneh Berura. The sefer was not available in the Beis HaMidrash so they went to the Chofetz Chaim's house, knocked on his door, and asked "Can we see that sefer you quote in the Shaar HaTziyon?"

The Chofetz Chaim told them he did not have the Sefer. They were surprised inasmuch as he quoted it in his commentary. He told them that when he needed to look up something in a sefer he borrowed it from someone and then returned it. The Chofetz Chaim told them "I did not want to buy the sefer because I only buy sefarim I actually need! If I don't need a sefer I don't buy it."

At that point, the Chofetz Chaim turned to his bookshelf and let out a sigh. They thought he let out the sigh because he had so few volumes in his personal library. He corrected them: "No. What bothers me is that maybe I bought a sefer amongst my collection that I don't use enough and therefore I really shouldn't have purchased it-I gave out my money for something I didn't really need."

This is a very interesting story and it is contrary to conventional wisdom. Conventional wisdom is that people like to have large libraries. The Chofetz Chaim's opinion was if you do not absolutely need something you do not buy it, because money was very precious to him-because time was very precious to him. This is in line with the idea that "in a place where there is monetary loss encouragement and 'Tzav' is necessary.

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