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Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet
Parshas Tzav
Shabbos Hagadol

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PESACH :: Rabbi Berel Wein

Pesach is the holiday of memory and of hope. Memory is really the key to Jewish survival and a meaningful Jewish life. All of the rituals and foods of Pesach, the Seder and all of its customs, are intended to be memory aids. Events that are well over three millennia old are remembered and celebrated.

In this the Jewish people remain completely unique in having a national memory that stretches back over such a length of time. We remember that we left Egypt on a Thursday and that the events of our salvation at Yam Suf are indelibly recorded in our minds and daily prayers.

The sweep of Jewish history from Avraham till today is one long continuum of momentous events, special personages and indescribable perseverance and tenacity. Yet somehow the Jewish people in its collective memory recall all of it and keep it alive from one generation till the next.

That is the secret of the vitality of the Pesach Seder, celebrating events that are over thirty three hundred years old. Those Jews who have lost this sense of memory and live only in the ever-changing present are doomed to angst and doubt. Rootless, they will have to sway in the winds that buffet our world from every direction.

Loss of memory is as tragic for a people as it is for an individual human being. Parents and children succumb to this disease of forgetfulness. The story is told about an absent-minded great professor who upon alighting from his bus stop was so confused that he forgot his home address. Seeing a young boy playing with a ball on the sidewalk he approached and asked him: "Do you know where the great professor lives?" The boy looked up to him in wonder and said; "Abba, don't you recognize me?" Without common and important memory the generations will never be able to recognize each other.

That is the reason that the Pesach Seder and holiday is so vital and has always continued to retain its hold on the Jewish people, even amongst sections of the Jewish people who are not necessarily strictly observant. Everyone deep down in their hearts recognizes and treasures the importance of generational memory and tradition.

And Pesach is probably the strongest memory aid that Judaism possesses. For with every bite of matzo the memories come flooding into our subconscious soul. This is the bread of our forefathers, not only of Egyptian bondage, but of Temple times, of Spanish and French exiles, of Eastern European greatness and Holocaust, of Israel both ancient and current.

The matzo speaks to us of our past and our journey throughout human history. The prophet's words "you are My witnesses" echo in our minds and hearts and in the crackling sound of the matzo being chewed and digested.

Look where we have been and what we have overcome. Remember the generations that enabled us to reach this day. See the faces of our children and grandchildren at the Seder table. What message shall we leave for them? What is our legacy to them if nothing but this great sense of memory and past?

The other side of the coin of Pesach is hope. The view of a better future no matter what our current difficulties are. Judaism is the faith of hope and optimism. For thousands of years Jews proclaimed at the Pesach Seder "Next year in Jerusalem, rebuilt and populated." This unlikely proclamation has come true in front of our very eyes. Those who deny its importance or resist its message are bereft of hope.

The world is full of seemingly self-important naysayers. But the hope of the ages has nevertheless been vindicated in actual and realistic terms. And we still hope for greater things - for the dry bones of the prophet Yechezkel's great vision to be revived once more, for a time of peace and security and true freedom for all.

We have extraordinary hopes for our future and for the future of humankind generally. We have never lost our hope for better times and improved situations. Pesach comes to reinforce our sense of these hopes and expectations. That our situation lacks current perfection is certainly an understatement. But Pesach reminds us not to despair of our future.

Looking at our past challenges one may gain a sense of renewed confidence regarding our future. Building our families, educating our young and old, striving and working for improvement, both personal and national, is the lesson of Pesach. This tandem of memory and hope assures our eventual survival and triumph.

Shabat shalom

Chag sameach v'kasher

Weekly Parsha :: TZAV :: Rabbi Berel Wein

Judaism does not view service of God or of other humans as being a purely voluntary exercise. In fact Judaism follows a regimen of obligations and commands. Any system that requires discipline and continued commitment is built on the giving and acceptance of commands. Every efficient army or commercial enterprise in the world is based upon a command structure.

Thus it is axiomatic that the Torah uses the word "tzav" – command – when describing Moshe's instructions to Aharon in assuming his now new role as the High Priest of Israel. Though Judaism allows great latitude for individual talents and creativity to be expressed, there is always a basic framework of commands and laws within which this talent and creativity is to be channeled.

The blessings that Jews pronounce before the performance of a mitzvah all state that the Lord has commanded us – "v'tizvanu" – to perform this holy act. We bow to God's will and to the discipline of Torah in our performance of the rituals of Judaism.

We currently live in a society that exalts the idea of being able to do things "my way." Again, though individuality is to be admired and encouraged especially in the young, the basic framework has to be maintained. And that framework consists of the grids of commandments and obligations that bind us to Torah and tradition.

Jewish experience teaches us that Judaism cannot be made meaningful by employing fads and gimmicks, no matter how popular they may initially seem to be. The spirit of Shabat is never enhanced and made meaningful through the condoning of the violation of its commandments.

Lowering the standards of Shabat observance to make it more popular has only led to its complete demise among the descendants of those who tinkered with its commandments.

This Shabat is the one that precedes the holiday of Pesach. It is called "Shabat Hagadol" – the great Shabat. In reality every Shabat is the great Shabat. There is no other concept in Judaism that carries with it so many commandments and obligations, so many do's and don'ts, as does the Shabat.

All attempts to "improve" the Shabat have proven to be self-defeating and eventually are unable to stand the rigors of time and circumstance. Shabat is great because it is the embodiment of Jewish commandments and discipline. Those who abide by its strictures and obligations taste the delight of that day, a foretaste of paradise itself.

All of its prohibitions somehow lead to a true state of contentment and freedom. The greatness of Shabat is therefore inextricably bound with the concept of freedom.

Shabat and Pesach march together in tandem throughout Jewish life. Shabat is therefore the great gateway to Pesach for by understanding and accepting the concept of "v'tizvanu" – of obeying commandments and fulfilling obligations we can achieve the freedom of soul that we all so desperately strive for.

It is therefore no mere coincidence that the Torah reading of "Tzav" usually falls on the Shabat that precedes Pesach – Shabat Hagadol. Freedom comes with a purpose and a price. Being commanded is both the price and reward of achieving freedom.

Shabat shalom

Chag sameach v'kaasher.

TORAH WEEKLY :: Parshat Tzav

For the week ending 4 April 2009 / 9 Nisan 5769

from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

OVERVIEW

The Torah addresses Aharon and his sons to teach them additional laws relating to their service. The ashes of the korban olah - the offering burnt on the altar throughout the night - are to be removed from the area by the kohen after he changes his special linen clothing. The olah is brought by someone who forgot to perform a positive commandment of the Torah. The kohen retains the skin. The fire on the altar must be kept constantly ablaze. The korban mincha is a meal offering of flour, oil and spices. A handful is burned on the altar and a kohen eats the remainder before it becomes leaven. The Parsha describes the special korbanot to be offered by the Kohen Gadol each day, and by Aharon's sons and future descendants on the day of their inauguration. The chatat, the korban brought after an accidental transgression, is described, as are the laws of slaughtering and sprinkling the blood of the asham guilt-korban. The details of shelamim, various peace korbanot, are described, including the prohibition against leaving uneaten until morning the remains of the todah, the thanks-korban. All sacrifices must be burned after they may no longer be eaten. No sacrifice may be eaten if it was slaughtered with the intention of eating it too late. Once they have become ritually impure, korbanot may not be eaten and should be burned. One may not eat a korban when he is ritually impure. Blood and chelev, forbidden animal fats, are prohibited to be eaten. Aharon and his sons are granted the breast and shank of every korban shelamim. The inauguration ceremony for Aharon, his sons, the Mishkan and all of its vessels is detailed.

INSIGHTS

Cover Story

"Command Aaron" (6:2)

"Exposed!!!" "See It ALL!!!" "Now - The Real Truth Comes Out!!!"

"Unveiled For The First Time!!!"

We live in a world where a lack of covering is endemic, a world where everything has to be revealed. Because our society lacks a true spiritual center, the only quality that is prized is revelation. Revelation is all. That which is unseen or cannot be seen is distrusted and disregarded.

Holiness is something that has to be covered. Its very nature requires covering. If you have a precious jewel you don't go out into the street with it in your hands. You place it in a box away from prying eyes.

At any one time there exist 36 holy people on whose merit the whole world rests. They are hidden. They have to be hidden.

On Sunday, February 19, 1995, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach died in Jerusalem at the age of 84. The next afternoon 300,000 people - a number roughly equivalent to the adult Jewish population of Jerusalem - escorted him on his final journey.

The Israeli press was caught off-guard. There were no prepared obituaries, for they had never heard of him. He was frail and unimposing even in his youth. He sat on no council of sages. He created no publishing empire. He didn't distribute inspirational cassettes. He held no pulpit. For 45 years he headed a respected Jerusalem yeshiva that provided his only salary. And 300,000 escorted this frail old man, whom the press had never heard of, to his rest.

Holiness requires covering.

Rashi says about the above verse: "The word 'command' always connotes alacrity and alertness. Rabbi Shimon said the Torah needs to command an extra degree of alertness where there is a lack of covering."

When we think of the Temple offerings it's easy to forget that in the majority of the offerings part of the korban was consumed by the Kohen

and by the person who brought the korban. You might think that this was no more than a side benefit of the offering. In fact, this eating - this most seemingly physical of actions - covered the deepest holiness of the korban. However, there was one korban in which neither the Kohanim nor the person who brought the offering partook: the Korban Olah or 'elevation offering'. The Korban Olah was entirely consumed by fire. No part of it was eaten.

In other words the holiness of the Korban Olah was revealed. It did not have the covering of holiness, the mystic camouflage that happened when the Kohen and the supplicant ate from the korban.

It was for this reason that the Korban Olah needed an extra decree of vigilance and alacrity. For that which is revealed needs extra guarding and alertness.

Source: Chidushei HaRim

Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

PARSHAS TZAV

The fire on the Altar shall be kept burning on it, it shall not be extinguished; and the Kohen shall kindle wood upon it every morning; he shall prepare the elevation offering upon it; and shall cause the fasts of the peace offerings to go up in smoke upon it. A permanent fire shall remain aflame upon the Altar; it shall not be extinguished. (6:5,6)

Horav Bentzion Yadler, zl, relates that a simple Jew once visited one of the distinguished Baalei Mussar, Ethicists. He complained of a heavy heart, a depressed soul, because it was becoming increasingly difficult for him to properly observe all of the mitzvos. The demands of his far-reaching business were compelling and the balancing act of Torah/mitzvos versus success in commerce was taking its toll on his observance. Heaven forbid should it be taking its toll on his business - only on his religion. This is why I referred to him as a "simple Jew." "Rebbe," he asked, "What should I do? I cannot go on like this." The wise man told him to visit a certain village populated mostly by farmers, and there he would discover the solution to his problem.

The man immediately left for the village. The first person he met was standing atop a wagon filled with timber, stacking each log side by side and on top of the other. "Excuse me, my friend," the farmer called out. "Could you do me a favor and hand me one of those logs on the side?"

"I am sorry," the man replied. "I cannot help you. The logs appear too heavy for me to lift." Since he was a city dweller, lifting and carrying logs was unusual for him. The heaviest object that he typically lifted was his pen.

The farmer looked at the man and said, "If you had replied, I do not want to help you," I could live with that. You have no obligation to help me, but do not say, 'I cannot help.' If you want to do it, then you could. You simply do not have the desire to help. Nothing, absolutely nothing, stands in the way of one's will!"

This random meeting came to an end and, at the end of the day, the businessman returned to his home. The next day, he went to visit the wise man and related what had occurred. The Baal Mussar listened and then said, "Remember what the farmer told you. It will be a beacon of guidance for you and, incidentally, it answers your question. A person's will is his most important attribute. It is the anchor that keeps him moored in place. It is the linchpin that secures a person to Torah and mitzvos. No such excuse exists as business matters. If you want to be a Torah Jew, then you will become one, and nothing will stand in your way. If you find excuses that prevent you, it means that you really do not want to be observant. It is all up to you - and what you want."

The Alter of Novardok, Horav Yosef Yoizel Horowitz, zl, was wont to say: "There is no such thing as 'not able;' there is, however, such a thing as 'no desire.'"

How does one achieve this elusive desire to grow, to be observant, to study Torah, to understand that life for a Jew means one thing - and one thing only? Rav Bentzion relates that he asked this question of the Maharil Diskin, zl, who told him, "Study mussar, ethics and character development, with great diligence and act modestly." This was indeed the practice of the

Maharil. As his student, Horav Zerach Braverman, zl, related, his rebbe always carried Rabbeinu Yonah's Shaarei Teshuvah in his Tallis bag.

Horav Tzvi Michel Shapiro, zl, would often say, "If one seeks the easy way to become a yarei Shomayim, G-d fearing Jew, he should not study mussar. Thus, he will appear in his own eyes as a frum, observant, G-d fearing Jew. It is only after he studies mussar with intensity that he will begin to realize how distant from this goal he really is.

Rav Bentzion interprets the significance of studying mussar into the pasuk which enjoins us to see to it that the fire on the Altar should constantly be kept burning. The Torah intimates that if one wants to be sure to maintain a constant flame of love for the Torah, a fire of yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven, it is not sufficient merely to not extinguish it with water or actively put out the flame. One must keep on adding "wood," constantly affirming one's commitment through learning mussar, which is required text to maintain the flame.

It is said concerning Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl, the father of the mussar movement, that he reviewed the sefer, Mesillas Yesharim, Path of the Just, by Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzato, zl, for eighteen continuous years, until its words were engraved on the chambers of his heart. He did this so that his character would be refined and the steps he took would be on the correct path - the path of the just.

Many of the great Torah luminaries of the previous generation viewed mussar study as an imperative that must be observed at all costs. Once such gadol, Torah giant, who exemplified this adherence was the Manchester Rosh Yeshivah, Horav Yehudah Zev Segal, zl. He would often say, "I do not know how it is possible to exist without the study of mussar. If I let even one day pass without mussar study, I already sense a bit of arrogance within myself!" He felt that the classic mussar texts--notably the Shaarei Teshuvah; Chovos Halevavos; Mesillas Yesharim; Nefesh Hachaim; and Sefer Chafetz Chaim--comprised the arsenal one needs to protect himself from the harm caused by the yetzer hora, evil inclination.

The Rosh Yeshivah felt that one who disregards self-improvement, who is content to fulfill matters of ritual and observance, but has no interest in those mitzvos which relate to character refinement and interpersonal relationships, is in a sense disregarding a critical part of the Torah. He is no different than those members of liberal sects of Judaism who pick and choose mitzvos as they see fit.

The following incident demonstrates the Rosh Yeshivah's lofty level of character refinement, a plateau reached only by a person who constantly engaged in self-examination and improvement, always seeking to build a positive attitude so that he may be free of negativity.

In 1957, the Rosh Yeshivah accepted a boy whose background in religion and Torah study was very limited. His desire, however, was incredibly strong and, therefore, he was accepted. The Rosh Yeshivah and his rebbetzin took the boy into their own home, showering him with love and care. One evening prior to Pesach, Rav Segal was discussing something with the rebbetzin within earshot of their young "boarder," who had been helping with the Pesach preparations. The boy, feeling quite at home, interrupted their conversation to contribute his own feelings about the matter. Rav Segal was displeased with this breach of manners, and he told the boy, "We did not ask you for your opinion." The discussion ended with the Rosh Yeshivah returning to his study and the boy and the rebbetzin returning to their work.

Some two and a half hours later, Rav Segal emerged from his study - his face flushed and his eyes still moist from weeping. He opened a volume of the Rambam Hilchos Deios and read from the text: "Whoever displays anger is considered as if he worshipped idols." He looked at the boy and said, "I want to do teshuvah, repent, and I ask your forgiveness from having shown anger towards you." The boy replied that he harbored no negative feelings as a result of what he felt was nothing more than constructive criticism. Nonetheless, Rav Segal was not satisfied until the boy expressed his forgiveness.

There is another aspect to the mussar imperative: it helps us to develop a closer bond with the Almighty. Let me explain. Rav Segal would study mussar early each morning as a preparation for Shacharis. One morning, a student looked on as the Rosh Yeshivah repeated for more than an hour the words of the Mesillas Yesharim in Perek I, "that man was created for the

sole purpose of rejoicing in G-d and deriving pleasure from the splendor of His Presence." The pleasure which Rav Segal derived from serving Hashem was clear to all. It was the pleasure of a pure neshamah, a pristine soul, whose personality had been refined to perfection through decades of relentless effort. Mussar was the crucible; the neshamah was the product. This enhanced his relationship with the Almighty, bringing him closer, increasing his love for--and joy in--serving Hashem.

This brings us to the next point. I have always wondered how someone of the caliber of Moses Mendelsohn, who in many ways is considered the inspiration and progenitor of the German Enlightenment--a movement that was directly responsible for the assimilation and eventual spiritual demise of hundreds of thousands of Jews--ended up with such an ignominious epitaph. As a talmid, disciple, of the Korban HaEidah, Horav David Franckel, zl, one would have expected a totally opposite result. What happened to his learning? Where did he go wrong? What motivated his children to apostasize themselves? Indeed, we have no Jewish remnant left to his memory.

I think the root of his downfall was his lack of learning mussar. To him, Torah was chochmah, wisdom, an intellectual pursuit--no different than science, mathematics and philosophy. He did not equate Torah with its Source. The joy inherent in serving Hashem through Torah learning and mitzvah observance was lacking from his life. Learning was progressive intellectualism. It had nothing to do with a Jew's purpose in life. He treated Judaism as a rational religion comprised of ceremony, considering the Torah to be nothing more than a religious textbook.

His yearning for secular knowledge was the result of insecurity, a lack of pride in his heritage. He thirsted for the German way of life and thought. He wanted to be accepted. Had he studied mussar and focused on self-improvement, he would have realized that all of his yearnings were founded on his own personal issues - not on Judaism. He was the problem - not the religion. Mussar would have shown him the way. Regrettably, he was not willing to look.

This is the law of the feast peace offering that one will offer to Hashem. If he shall offer it for a Thanksgiving offering. (7:11,12)

The Korban Shelamim, Peace-offering, comes in two forms: the Shalmei neder unedavah, free-willed offerings that one brings to the Mizbayach; and the Shalmei todah, Thanksgiving-offerings, which is in a sense, obligatory, since one brings it as an expression of gratitude to the Almighty. It is a free-will offering which one feels compelled to bring. The Korban Todah is distinct from the Korban Shelamim in two aspects. The Torah requires the Korban Todah to be accompanied by four types of baked loaves, thirty made of leavened flour, and ten of unleavened flour. Four of these loaves are eaten by the Kohen, with the remaining thirty-six shared by the owner and those joining him. This law does not apply to a Korban Shelamim. It does not require any accompanying loaves. Second, the allotted time for consuming a Korban Todah is only one day and part of the night until chatzos, midnight. One is permitted to eat the Korban Shelamim for two days and one night. Given the fact that the Todah has all of these accompanying breads, the time allotted for eating seems a bit demanding. One would expect the Torah to grant an extension to the individual who has so much to eat. Instead, he has even less time than he does for the Korban Shelamim. Why?

The Netziv, zl, in his Haamek Davar writes that this was established by design, so that the one paying gratitude via his Korban Todah would invite his family and friends to share in consuming his korban. As a result, his miracle, the reason for which he is bringing the Korban, will be publicized, creating a heightened Kiddush Hashem, sanctification of Hashem's Name. This is the reason that the Bircas HaGomel, blessing recited in place of the Todah, the blessing of gratitude, is recited only in the presence of a minyan, quorum of ten men. This way the miracle is publicized, and Hashem's Name is sanctified.

Horav Avigdor HaLevi Nebentzhal, Shlita, suggests this as the reason that the blessing of Horav es riveinu, "Who takes up our grievance," which is recited following the reading of the Megillah, must be said in the presence of ten men, in order to increase the publicity concerning the miracle which occurred on Purim. Likewise, we find that the lighting of the Chanukah

menorah should take place at a certain time and place in which it will receive optimum notice.

Alternatively, another reason is given that the Korban Todah must be consumed on the day that it is offered. Human nature has it that time cools emotion. What excites a person one day will not necessarily stimulate the same enthusiasm on the next day. A person who is spared death will invariably be extremely animated the first day. As time goes on, the excitement begins to wane, the status quo sets in, and he becomes complacent about his future. The Torah wanted the Korban Todah, which is the expression of one's gratitude to the Almighty, to be offered when the individual is at the height of his appreciation, when he acknowledges the miracle with intensity, excitement and fervor. This is why the entire Korban must be consumed in one day - the day it is offered, so that the miracle that catalyzed this event will be fresh in his mind. Indeed, the Bircas HaGomel should l'chatchilah, initially, be recited within three days after one was spared.

The excitement surrounding the reading of the Megillah on Purim night is not the same the next day. The prayers of Rosh Hashanah are not as intense on the second day. The Birkas Shehechyanu is recited only for those mitzvos that are not commonplace - such as Pidyon HaBen, Redeeming of the First Born, but not on Tefillin, which we do every day. A Shehechyanu is made for a fruit that we have not eaten in a year. That is human nature. We become complacent; we get used to something; the adventure is gone and with it, the necessary emotion to properly express our feelings of elation.

The Korban Shelamim is not motivated by emotion; rather, it is a product of seichel, rational thought. A person acknowledges the need to move closer to Hashem. He decides to do something about it, and brings a Korban Shelamim as an expression of his commitment. It is not an issue of seizing the moment, but rather of carrying out a determination rooted in a well considered decision.

What is left over from the flesh of the feast offering shall be burned in the fire on the third day. And if some of the flesh of the feast offering was intended to be eaten on the third day, it is not acceptable, the one who offers it may not intend this - it remains rejected. (7:17,18)

In the Talmud Pesachim 85A, Chazal make what appears on the surface to be a startling statement. The hands of an individual that come in contact with either Pigul, a sacrifice in which the Kohen has improper intentions, thus invalidating it, or Nosar, the flesh of a sacrifice that was left over and not consumed in its prescribed time, become tamei, ritually contaminated. One of the reasons given for this Rabbinic tumah is chashdei Kehunah, a suspect among the Kohanim. Rashi explains that in the event that there would be a Kohen who was angry at the person offering the sacrifice, he might render it Pigul to spite the owner. Now, due to the tumas yadayim, contamination of the hands, it would serve as a deterrent. Since Pigul is ritually unclean, it would mean that the Kohen is compelled to immerse his hands in a mikveh after coming in contact with pigul. He will not want to trouble himself to do this; therefore, he will not render the Korban into Pigul. Tosfos explain that even a wicked Kohen, who would harm another Jew financially, was nonetheless extremely meticulous with regard to the laws of tumah, ritual contamination, and taharah, purity.

What Chazal are teaching us is mind boggling! A Kohen has no qualms about rendering a Korban invalid, thereby incurring a financial loss to another Jew; yet, he would be deterred from acting out his diabolical plan if it involved a little tircha, trouble, to himself. He does not want to go "out of his way" to immerse his hands in a mikveh. The little bit of tircha saves him from sin. This is incredible!

Horav Avraham Grodzenski, zl, feels that Chazal have delved into the human psyche, understanding it from a more profound standpoint than we do. The slightest strain, the smallest inconvenience, is sufficient reason for some - even Kohanim - who are unusually alacritous, to refrain from being proactive in sin. We have before us a battle of wills: the will to do evil, to hurt a fellow Jew who no longer finds favor in our eyes; the opposing will, not to bother oneself. In other words, I will sin if it is convenient, if it is not too demanding on my time or energy. In this scenario, sin loses out. The flip side is that we see how a little bit of tircha can affect someone, causing him to "decide" not to go forward. Does this apply to a positive

act? Will tircha preclude mitzvah performance? Quite possibly, for some, it might. How careful we must be of our true intentions, examining the "reasons" we give for not acting. Are they the real reasons, or are we simply masking our laziness? That is the question. Clearly, everyone has his own "individual" answer.

The flesh that touches any contaminated thing may not be eaten. (7:19)

The Baal HaTanya, zl, notes what seems to be a paradox regarding the laws of tumah, ritual contamination, and taharah, purity. We find that when something tahor, clean, touches a davar tamei, unclean object, it becomes tamei. Likewise, when an object touches something holy, the kedushah, sanctity, of the object affects it, rendering it holy. In other words, simple contact, touching between two objects, has an immediate effect which creates a halachic transformation within the object that is touched.

There is a difference between the two: i.e. unclean touching clean; holy touching that which is not yet holy. When something comes in contact with an unclean object, a mere touch suffices to render the second object tamei. When something touches kedushah, a simple touch is insufficient. It needs b'liyah; its taste must be absorbed. The "relationship" is more than mere contact. It needs a more binding and thorough union.

The Torah is teaching us a profound lesson. The Baal HaTanya sees this as an ethical message concerning relationships among people. In order to be influenced by kedushah, mere "touching," simple contact, popping in and out at one's leisure, is insufficient. It will not contribute much to the person who is searching for a life of higher meaning, deeper content, and holier endeavor. He must suffuse himself into the kedushah in order for it to leave an enduring impact on his life. In contrast, for one to become tamei, spiritually defiled, it does not take a lot - mere contact. When one comes into association with the wrong group, gravitates toward a friend whose goals and objectives are not in sync with the Torah way of life, he takes the chance of falling into the same abyss of moral/spiritual corruption as his newly-found friend. A positive influence must be developed; a negative impact occurs through exposure. How careful we must be with regard to falling prey to such an experience.

Ahallelah Hashem b'chayay, azamrah l'Elokai b'odi

I will praise Hashem during my lifetime, I will sing to my G-d as long as I exist.

The K'sav Sofer explains the sequence of the pasuk, "I will praise Hashem during my lifetime," as "I praise Hashem because I am alive", coinciding with the Yalkut Shimoni that exhorts a person to praise Hashem al kol neshimah u'neshimah, for every breath that we breathe. "I will sing to my G-d as long as I exist" - this idea alone, the mere fact that I am alive, is sufficient reason for me to praise Hashem, so surely I must praise Him for all the good with which Hashem has blessed us.

In an alternative explanation, attributed to Horav Yitzchak, zl, M'Volozhin, Ahallelah Hashem b'chayay, is a reference to one's youth, when he feels alive, when all of his strength and faculties are in full bloom. At that point, he clearly feels a sense of joy in being able to enjoy his life to its fullest. When he ages, however, when his body no longer has its original vigor, when pain accompanies him constantly and he is frail and infirm, he no longer has the ability to "live" life to its fullest. He merely exists, not yet "gone," but not alive in the full sense of the word. He is odenu, "still" among the living. This is the meaning of azamrah l'Elokai b'odi, "I will sing to my G-d," b'odi, "while I am 'still' alive." In addition, a person must learn to recognize the incredible act of chesed, lovingkindness, that Hashem grants us during our twilight years.

Drasha Parshas Tzav

by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

It is not a glamorous job, but somebody has to do it. And so the Torah begins this week's portion by telling us the mitzvah of terumas hadeshen, removing the ashes that accumulate from the burnt-offerings upon the altar. The Torah teaches us: "The Kohen shall don his fitted linen tunic, and he shall don linen breeches on his flesh; he shall separate the ash of

what the fire consumed of the elevation-offering on the Altar, and place it next to the Altar" (Leviticus 7:3).

What is simply derived from the verse is that the service of ash-removal is done with the priestly tunic. What is noticeable to the Talmudic mind is the seemingly innocuous adjective "fitted." Rashi quotes the derivation that applies to all the priestly garments: they must be fitted. They can not be too long, nor can they be too short. They must be tailored to fit each individual Kohen according to his physical measurements.

The question is simple. The sartorial details of the bigdei kehuna (priestly vestments) were discussed way back in the portion of Tezaveh, which we read five weeks ago. Shouldn't the directive of precise-fitting garments have been mentioned in conjunction with the laws of tailoring? Further, if the Torah waits to teach us those requisites in conjunction with any service, why not choose a more distinguished act, such as an anointment or sacrifice? Why choose sweeping ashes?

My dear friend, and the editor of the Parsha Parables series, Dr. Abby Mendelson, was, in a former life, a beat writer for the Pittsburgh Pirates baseball club. In the years that we learned Torah together, he would recount amusing anecdotes and baseball minutia. Some of his stories have retained an impact on me years after I heard them. This is one of them.

Roberto Clemente was an amazing athlete who played the game of baseball with utmost dedication. One day, late in the 1968 season, he was playing outfield against the Houston team. The Pirates were no longer contenders, and the game had no statistical meaning.

A ball was hit deep toward the outfield wall. As Clemente raced back, it seemed that the ball was going to hit the wall way over his head. With superhuman strength he propelled himself like a projectile toward the wall. Speeding at a forty-five degree angle he collided with the wall at the same time that the ball hit it, two feet above his head.

Strictly adhering to the laws of nature, both Clemente and the baseball rebounded from the wall, the former's return to earth much less graceful than the latter's. While the white sphere gently bounced to the playing surface and rolled toward the infield, the much larger uniformed and spiked entity came crashing after it with a resounding thud.

Bruised and embarrassed, Clemente clamored after the elusive orb and finally threw it to a less traumatized member of his team who completed the hapless mission.

In the post-game interview an innocent reporter asked Clemente, "Roberto, your team is out of contention. There are three games left. Why in the world did you try so hard to make that play? Was it worth bruising yourself?"

Clemente was puzzled. In a few short sentences he explained his actions. "I am not paid to win pennants. My job is to catch the ball. I tried to catch the ball. I was trying to do my job."

When the Torah tells us that the clothes have to fit perfectly for a particular service it is telling us that the job is exactly right for the man who is doing it. The ash-cleaner is not doing another Kohen's job, wearing an ill-fitted garment as if it were thrown upon him as he entered for the early morning shift.

What seems to be the most trivial of jobs is the job that must be done! That is the job of the hour, and that is exactly what the Kohen is designated to do. And for the job or service that is tailor-made for the individual the clothes must also be tailor-made for the job as well!

I once asked a high-level administrator of a major institution what was his job. He answered in all seriousness, "I do what ever has to be done to get the job done and that becomes my job."

Whatever we do, and however we do it, we must realize that the end can only come through the menials. Whatever it takes to get to the goal is as integral as the goal itself. It requires devotion and commitment, and it requires self-sacrifice. If you dress with dignity to collect the ash, if you approach every task with both with sartorial and personal pride and grace, then you are certainly up to any task.

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Time is of the Essence

Many of the mitzvos associated with Pesach revolve around proper timing. There are very specific guidelines of time that govern the proper observance of the Korban Pesach. The korban must be offered during the afternoon of the fourteenth day of Nissan. It is critical that it be eaten at the proper time. The precise time for eating is a dispute whether it is until midnight of the fifteenth of Nissan or until the morning. If the korban was not completed at the right time, the leftover meat becomes disqualified, subjecting one who eats it to the severe punishment of kares.

Similar to the requirement of eating the Korban Pesach at the correct time, there exists an obligation to perform the other mitzvos of the Seder at precisely the right time. Tosfos (Pesachim 99b) observes that unlike Shabbos and other yomim tovim when it is permissible to eat the meal earlier than when it is actually nightfall, the matzah must be eaten after dark. By whatever time the Korban Pesach must be completed so too must the matzah be eaten. The poskim extend this insistence on proper timing to the maror, the telling of the Hagada, the saying of the Hallel and the drinking of the four cups.

The basic difference between chometz and matzah is also a function of time. Exactly the same ingredients of flour and water make up both. It is only the factor of time that differentiates between them. Even the prohibitions of eating and possessing chometz revolve around the clock. At one moment in time of Erev Pesach, one can no longer eat chometz. An hour later, one can no longer benefit from chometz. Finally at noon, the prohibition of owning and eating begin according to the Torah itself.

More than any other yom tov, time plays a critical role in the proper observance of Pesach. What is the significance of this? Why does the proper commemoration of Yetzias Mitzraim require such observances that are so time oriented?

During davening and kiddush of each yom tov we mention that we celebrate these days as a remembrance of Yetzias Mitzraim. Although the Shalosh Regalim are linked to Yetzias Mitzraim historically, what is the connection between the observance of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur and Yetzias Mitzraim? Even though there is no historical connection, we declare that these two Yom Tovim are also "zecher leyetzias mitzraim." Apparently there is a dimension not dependent upon historical events that link the entire concept of yom tov to Yetzias Mitzraim.

The first mitzvah given to the Jewish people as a nation as they are about to leave Mitzraim is Kiddush Hachodesh - sanctifying the new moon. Is this just a necessary prerequisite since one cannot observe Pesach on the fifteenth of Nissan if Rosh Chodesh Nissan is not declared? Apparently, there is a greater significance why we were given Kiddush Hachodesh on the eve of attaining our freedom. There is one feature that truly demarcates between a slave and a free man. A free man is master of his own time whereas a slave's time belongs to his owner. The halacha teaches us that one cannot sanctify an object he does not own. Not only is this true of material possessions but it is true of time as well. Before the Jewish people were freed it was inconceivable that they should be able to sanctify Rosh Chodesh. The mitzvah of Kiddush Hachodesh was the beginning of the transformation from slavery to freedom. The very observance of yom tov is a testimony to Yetzias Mitzraim. The ability to create "kedushas hazman" of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur is a declaration of "zecher leyetzias mitzraim" even if there is no historical connection between them. The relationship between time and freedom is highlighted by the statement of Chazal that only one who is involved in Torah study is truly free. Talmud Torah is a mitzvah that has no limitations of time. One who fulfills this mitzvah properly by salvaging every moment is truly in control of time and is a free man. One who wastes the most precious gift of time by not sanctifying it properly cannot be called a free man.

The celebration of Pesach centers on time more than any other yom tov of the year. It is specifically at this time, when we commemorate our transformation to becoming free men, that the sanctification of time becomes a primary theme of the yom tov. We who now are in control of time can use time properly in the service of Hashem. As we observe the mitzvos of the Seder in their proper time and are careful concerning the prohibitions of chometz we are declaring that this is the celebration of "zecher leyetzias mitzraim."

h a a r e t z

Portion of the Week / 'A sweet savor'

By Benjamin Lau

A recurrent phrase in biblical passages concerning sacrifices offered to God in the Portable Tabernacle is "sweet savor unto the Lord." This is a puzzling term. How can the smell of the sacrifice's burnt meat please the God of Israel?

A careful examination of the contexts in which the phrase appears in Leviticus teaches us three things. First, the term is not necessarily associated with offerings of meat; it also appears in conjunction with vegetable offerings. Second, the phrase "sweet savor" is used only in connection with sacrifices that are totally consumed by fire on the altar and not eaten by anyone. Third, the sacrifices producing "sweet savor" are not offered in the same place as other sacrifices; the former are placed on the burnt-offerings altar, where they are totally consumed by fire.

In his "Guide for the Perplexed" (section 3, chapter 46), Maimonides explains that all the offerings consumed by fire on the burnt-offerings altar were intended "to remove any thoughts of idol worship." When the Israelites brought their burnt offerings - a lamb, a bird or vegetables - and those offerings were totally consumed by fire in order to serve God, that act expressed the Israelites' loyalty to their religious faith; this expression of loyalty is what created the "sweet savor unto the Lord." In contrast, the so-called trespass offerings symbolized the burning of the Israelites' sins and, says Maimonides, "their smoke is not a 'sweet savor unto the Lord'; quite the contrary, that smoke is disgusting, it is an abomination and, for this reason, these offerings are burnt outside the camp."

The many categories of offerings described as producing a "sweet savor unto the Lord" lead authors of the Mishnah (Tractate Menahot) to state a major and fundamental principle of religious faith: "Quantity does not matter; what is important is that they express a true devotion to God."

The biblical scholar Umberto Moshe David Cassuto says the following about the meaning of the phrase "a sweet savor unto the Lord": "It is written 'And the Lord smelled a sweet savor' [Genesis 8:21]... but the God of Israel has no need of sacrifices; after all, we read in Psalms: 'Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?' (50:13). Noah's sacrifices to God are burnt offerings; the flesh of the sacrifice is totally consumed by fire and not eaten. Only the aroma reaches God's throne - and it is an insubstantial thing. Obviously, the aroma of the burnt flesh is not the 'sweet savor unto the Lord.' Rather that phrase refers to something far more important ... in modern Hebrew, the term 'sweet savor unto the Lord' is understood not literally, but figuratively as 'God approved it, or appreciated the intentions of the person offering the sacrifice.' This is what Noah's sacrifice does, and thus it is approved by God."

The same devotion to God expressed by Noah, Abraham and the Israelites in the wilderness has been articulated by Jews throughout the generations, in the various diasporas, and here in the Jewish homeland in the modern era. Indeed, Jews spend a great deal of time discussing their relationship with God on Passover, which will be celebrated next week.

The haroset, an integral element in the traditional seder meal, is essentially an appetizer; each Jewish community has its own tradition of preparing it. In the tradition of Sephardi Jews (of Middle Eastern descent), haroset is a blend of dates, walnuts and various spices; in the tradition of Ashkenazi Jews (of European descent), the ingredients must include apples and, preferably, a small amount of wine.

The Amoraim [Jewish scholars whose legal debates were codified in the Gemara between 200 and 500 C.E.] were divided over the symbolism of haroset. According to Rabbi Levi, it is an (edible) allusion to the apple referred to in, "I raised thee up under the apple tree" (Song of Songs 8:5), while Rabbi Yohanan says it signifies the mud or mortar used by the Israelites to create bricks for their Egyptian slave-masters. Rabbi Levi is referring to an early midrash that extols the courage of the Israelite women in Egypt, who encouraged their husbands who were metaphorically drowning in the mortar of their arduous labors. These women would bring food and drink to their weary husbands and then entice them to have sexual

relations with them; the women became pregnant and thus ensured that a future generation of Jews would be born in Egypt.

The placement of the haroset in the center of the Passover seder table is basically a statement to all the participants, a reminder of the courage of those Jewish women in Egypt and other Jews throughout our history, a courage that has sustained us. Thanks to their heroism and devotion, we are privileged to sit at the seder table. Those of us who sit there and partake of the haroset connect ourselves with powerful life forces that can elevate us, even if we are almost literally drowning in mud.

We do not have to offer sacrifices, nor do we have to be sacrificial victims to obtain God's approval, to generate a "sweet savor unto the Lord." We can obtain His approval as the members of a free nation, here in our ancestral Jewish homeland, as we pursue, in ethical and moral ways, the goal of promoting social justice not only in Israel, but in the entire world. By pursuing that goal, we can show all humanity the true essence of God.

Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Tzav: The Olah Offering and Prophecy

The ultimate objective of the Temple service is hashra'at Shechinah, bringing the Divine Presence into our physical world. This goal is clearly connected to the unique phenomena of divine inspiration and prophecy. God's Presence in the Temple parallels on the national level the dwelling of prophecy in the mind of the prophet.

In particular, the Olah offering, completely burnt on the altar, corresponds to the highest level of communication between us and God, a sublime level in which the material world is of no consequence. Just as the altar fire utterly consumed the physical aspect of the offering, so too, this type of spiritual encounter completely transcends our physical existence. By examining the Olah service, we can gain insight into the prophetic experience.

Beyond the Physical Realm

The daily Tamid offering was completely consumed by fire on the altar during the night. What was done with the ashes? The following day, a kohen placed one shovelful of ashes next to the altar. To dispose of the rest, he changed into less important clothes and transported the ashes to a ritually clean spot outside the camp.

Thus, we see that the Olah service involved three different locations, with descending sanctity:

The fire on top of the altar.

Next to the altar, where a shovelful of ashes was placed.

A ritually clean place outside the camp for the remaining ashes.

Three Stages

The prophetic experience is a blaze of sacred flames inside the human soul, a divine interaction that transcends ordinary life. This extraordinary event corresponds to the first stage, the nighttime burning of the offering in the fire of the holy altar.

However, the prophet wants to extend the impact of this lofty experience so that it can make its mark on his character traits and inner life. This effort corresponds to the placement of some of the ashes, transformed by the altar's flames, next to the altar. This is a secondary level of holiness, analogous to those aspects of life that are close to the holy itself, where impressions of the sacred vision may be stored in a pure state.

The lowest expression of the prophetic vision is in its public revelation. Informing the people of the content of God's message, and thereby infusing life and human morality with divine light - this takes place at a more peripheral level. Outside the inner camp, bordering on the domain of secular life, the kohen publicly brings out the remaining ashes. Even this area, however, must be ritually pure, so that the penetrating influence of the holy service can make its impact. For the sake of his public message, the kohen-prophet needs to descend somewhat from his former state of holiness, and change into lesser clothes. In the metaphoric language of the Sages, "The clothes worn by a servant while cooking for his master should not be used when serving his master wine" [Shabbat 114a].

The Constant Altar Fire

The Torah concludes its description of the Olah service by warning that the altar fire should be kept burning continuously: "The kohen will kindle wood on it each morning" [Lev. 6:5]. Why mention this now?

Precisely at this juncture, after the kohen-prophet has left the inner nucleus of holiness in order to attend to life's temporal affairs, he must be aware of the constant fire on the altar. Despite his involvement with the practical and mundane aspects of life, the holy fire continues to burn inside the heart. This is the unique characteristic of the altar fire: from afar, it can warm and uplift every soul of the Jewish people. This sacred fire is a powerful, holy love that cannot be extinguished, as it says, "Mighty waters cannot extinguish the love; neither can rivers wash it away" [Song of Songs 8:7].

Yet, it is not enough for the holy fire to burn only in the inner depths of the heart. How can we ensure that its flames reach all aspects of life, and survive the "mighty waters" of mundane life?

The Torah's concluding instructions present the solution to this problem: "The kohen will kindle wood on it each morning." What is the purpose of this daily arrangement of kindling wood? New logs of wood nourish the altar's holy flames. We find a similar expression of daily spiritual replenishment in Isaiah 50:4: "Each morning He awakens my ear to hear according to the teachings." Just as renewal of the altar's hearth each day revives the holy fire, so too, daily contemplation of God's wonders and renewed study of His Torah rejuvenates the soul. This renewal energizes the soul, giving strength for new deeds and aspirations, and awakening a new spirit of life from the soul's inner fire.

[Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 182-184. Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I, pp. 122-124.]

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Korech: The Matzah and Maror Sandwich **Rabbi Josh Flug (YUTorah.org)**

One of the practices of the night of the seder is korech. The concept of korech is to eat the matzah and maror together in order to commemorate the practice of Hillel the Elder who ate the korban Pesach, the matzah and the maror together (Hillel lived during the Second Temple Period). In this issue we will discuss some of the halachic discussions surrounding korech.

How Should One Fulfill the Mitzvot of Korban Pesach, Matzah and Maror?

The Gemara, Pesachim 115a, notes that there are two opinions among the Tannaim regarding how one must eat the korban Pesach. The Torah (Shemot 12:8) states that the korban Pesach should be eaten with matzah and maror. According to Hillel, this means that one should eat all three items together. [This explanation follows the opinion of Rashi, Pesachim ad loc., s.v. Shehaya. According to Rambam (1135-1204), Hilchot Chametz U'Matzah 8:6, Hillel only combined the matzah and the maror.] Rabanan (the other rabbis of the time) disagree and maintain that it is not necessary to eat all three together. Within the opinion of Rabanan, the Gemara quotes a dispute whether it is permissible to eat all three together but not necessary or whether one may not eat all three together (see Rashbam, ad loc., s.v. V'Hashhta). The Gemara concludes that since there is no definitive ruling on whether one should follow the opinion of Hillel or Rabanan, the preferred practice (nowadays when we don't eat a korban Pesach) is to recite a beracha on matzah, eat the matzah, recite a beracha on maror, eat the maror and then eat both together without reciting a beracha as a remembrance for the Temple (zecher l'Mikdash).

Tosafot, ad loc., s.v. Ela, explain the necessity for all three stages at the seder. While it may seem logical to recite the berachot on matzah and maror and then eat them together, this is not halachically possible. The Gemara, in the discussion preceding the discussion about korech, notes that there is a dispute as to whether two mitzvot that are fulfilled by eating something can both be fulfilled when eaten simultaneously. Hillel is certainly of the opinion that they can be fulfilled when eaten

simultaneously. However, the Gemara notes that if one of those mitzvot is only rabbinic in nature, the rabbinically mandated mitzvah nullifies the taste of the biblically mandated mitzvah to the extent that one does not fulfill the biblically mandated mitzvah. For this reason, the Gemara notes that since maror in the absence of the korban Pesach is rabbinic in nature and matzah is biblical in nature even with the absence of the korban Pesach, one cannot fulfill the mitzvah of matzah if one eats it together with maror. Tosafot further state that one cannot eat the matzah first and then eat matzah and maror together (without eating maror separately first) because after one fulfills the mitzvah of matzah, any matzah that is eaten afterwards does not constitute a fulfillment of the mitzvah and therefore, nullifies the taste of the rabbinically mandated maror. Therefore, the only method of fulfilling Hillel's opinion is to fulfill matzah and maror separately and then combine them.

The Two Approaches to Understanding Korech in Today's Time

R. Yosef D. Soloveitchik (1903-1993), Hagadat Si'ach HaGrid no. 65, presents two approaches to understanding the practice of korech in the absence of the korban Pesach. The first approach is to assume that if Hillel lived nowadays, he would eat matzah and maror together in order to fulfill both of those mitzvot. Therefore, if one wants to fulfill the opinions of Rabanan and Hillel, one must first eat matzah and maror separately in order to fulfill the opinion of Rabanan and then together to fulfill these mitzvot according to Hillel. When one recites the berachot on the matzah and the maror, one should have in mind that those berachot also cover the matzah and maror of korech. Therefore, one should not speak from the beginning of the recitation of the beracha on matzah until the conclusion of korech. According to this explanation, korech is the rabbinic method of fulfilling matzah and maror (according to Hillel) and the reason why it was instituted this way was in order to commemorate the Temple. R. Soloveitchik notes that the aforementioned Tosafot, in explaining the necessity for all three components, seem to follow this approach.

Alternatively, one can understand that Hillel will agree that nowadays one should fulfill the mitzvot separately. In the absence of the korban Pesach, there is no inherent reason to eat the matzah and maror together. The only reason why the Gemara states to eat the two together is to commemorate what Hillel did when the Temple was standing. Korech nowadays does not seek to fulfill the mitzvah of matzah or maror, but rather a general obligation to commemorate the Temple (see Sukkah 41a). According to this explanation, there is no need to recite a beracha on Korech and therefore, one may speak between the mitzvot and it does not constitute an interruption.

R. Soloveitchik posits that Rambam follows the second approach. Rambam, Hilchot Chametz U'Matzah 8:6, writes that in the times of the Temple, one has the option of eating the matzah and maror together or separately. As such, one cannot assume that nowadays we are more stringent and require eating them together and separately in order to fulfill all opinions. However, one can explain that Rambam follows the second approach and korech does not serve to fulfill the mitzvah of matzah or maror, but rather to commemorate the Temple.

As a matter of practical Halacha, R. Yosef Karo (1488-1575) Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 475:1, rules that one should not talk from the beginning of the recitation of the beracha on matzah until the completion of korech unless the conversation relates to the fulfillment of the mitzvot. Shulchan Aruch does say that one should declare that korech is a remembrance for the Temple prior to eating the matzah and the maror together. R. Yisrael M. Kagan (1838-1933) Mishna Berurah, Bei'ur Halacha ad loc., s.v. V'Omer, questions whether it is appropriate to recite this declaration in light of the prohibition against talking between the beracha on matzah and the completion of korech. He concludes that one should omit this recitation (at least until after the completion of korech). R. Simcha Rabinowitz, Piskei Teshuvot 475:6, justifies the practice of reciting the declaration prior to korech by claiming that it is relevant to the mitzvah.

Should One Recline for Korech?

R. Ya'akov ben Asher (c.1269-1343), Tur, Orach Chaim no. 475, writes that his brother, R. Yecheiel, was unsure whether there is a requirement to recline (haseibah) for the mitzvah of korech. Ostensibly, this question should be contingent on the two approaches. According to the first approach, korech is the method in which one fulfills the mitzvot of matzah and maror according to Hillel. As such, one should recline just as one reclines for the fulfillment of the mitzvah of matzah when it is eaten separately. According to the second approach, korech is not the fulfillment of matzah or maror and therefore, it should not be necessary to recline.

In reality, the question of whether one reclines for korech has other factors. First, does the fact that korech contains maror inhibit one from reclining? R. Yecheiel's primary concern about reclining for korech seems to be that it is inappropriate to recline for maror and since korech contains maror, the same concern might apply. R. Yosef Karo, Beit Yosef, Orach Chaim no. 475, assumes that it is permissible to recline for maror and therefore, the presence of maror should not inhibit one from reclining for korech. Second, R. Yosef Karo notes that since the purpose of korech is to emulate what Hillel did during Temple times, and he certainly ate in the reclined position, we should do so as well. For these two reasons, R. Karo, Shulchan Aruch op. cit., rules that one should recline for korech.

TALMUDIGEST—Bava Kama 100 - 106

For the week ending 4 April 2009 / 9 Nisan 5769

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by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

THE CONFUSED CHASID - Bava Kama 103b

A chasid - an especially righteous Jew - came before Rabbi Tarfon with a problem. He had purchased something from one of two sellers without

making payment and did not remember to whom he owed the money. Rabbi Tarfon instructed him to simply place the purchase money in front of both and let them settle between themselves.

The question arises as to what Rabbi Tarfon would have ruled in a case in which such a buyer had been challenged by one of the sellers and had taken an oath of denial only to later admit that he was lying. In such an event, concludes the gemara, Rabbi Tarfon would have ruled that he is obligated to pay both of them as we see in the mishna case of someone who steals from one of five people and falsely swears in denial.

This conclusion is based on the assumption that in the case of the chasid there was no false oath taken since we cannot imagine such a righteous Jew taking a false oath. But perhaps, the challenge is offered, he became a chasid only after committing this sin and repenting.

The refutation of this challenge is based on a tradition that whenever a chasid is mentioned in the Talmud, it is a reference to either Rabbi Yehuda ben Bava or Rabbi Yehuda bar Rabbi Iloi, both of whom were especially righteous from the very beginning.

While the title chasid used in Talmudic accounts is limited to those two Sages, it does seem that one who has committed even so grave a sin as taking a false oath is still eligible to be called a chasid after repenting.

WHAT THE SAGES SAY

“All of Seder Nezikin (the Talmudic order of which Bava Kama is a part) is considered like one long mesechta (as regards whether there is a definite order to the mishnayot in it).”

Rabbi Yosef - Bava Kama 102a

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