

BS"D

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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON VAYIKRA ZACHOR
and PURIM - 5763

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From: torahweb@zeus.host4u.net Sent: March 12, 2003 To: weekly1@torahweb.org Subject: Rabbi Benjamin Yudin - Misfortune or a Fortunate Miss to subscribe, email weekly@torahweb.org <http://www.torahweb.org/thisWeek.html>

RABBI BENJAMIN YUDIN -
MISFORTUNE OR A FORTUNATE MISS

In Parshas Vayikra we are introduced to the laws of the korbanos - the offerings. The Ramban (Vayikra 1:9) teaches, "since man's deeds are accomplished through thought, speech, and action, therefore Hashem commanded that when man sins and brings an offering, he should lay his hands upon it in contrast to the evil deed he committed, he should confess his sin verbally in contrast to his evil speech, and should burn the innards and the kidneys of the offering in fire because they are the instruments of thought and desire in the human being."

The extent to which korbanos are brought to rectify negative and improper thoughts may be seen from the following two instances. At the end of Parshas Vayikra the Torah introduces us to the korban olah v'yoraid - the variable offering whose cost varies according to what the sinner can afford. It is called an "offering that goes up and down". The Torah lists three sins for which this offering is brought: denying testimony, contaminating holy things, and false or unfulfilled oaths. For violating any of the above, a wealthy individual brings a sheep or a goat for a korban chatos, a sin offering. If, however, one cannot afford the animal offering, he may bring in its stead two birds (either two turtledoves or two young doves) one for a chatos and the other as an olah (a burnt elevation offering).

The Evan Ezra (Vayikra 5:7) cites Rav Yitschok who addresses himself as to why two birds are brought by the poor man in lieu of the one animal brought by the wealthy sinner. He gives a most fascinating answer, namely: lest the poor man sinned with his improper thought! When the poor man confessed his sin of not testifying on someone's behalf, and wishes to accomplish a complete atonement but cannot afford to bring what he considers a good and proper atonement of either a sheep or goat, often when he brings his meager offering he will harbor resentment and question G-d's judgement as to why he is a poor man. Even if he justifies his criticism of Hashem by wanting to serve Hashem in a more generous and lavish fashion, he has shown ignorance of the last Mishna in Menachos that teaches that it is not the cost of the offering that affects atonement, rather the sincerity of the one that brings the offering. Moreover, he is guilty of not appreciating Hashem's acts of kindness to him and for being an ingrate. To atone for these negative thoughts and criticisms he brings the second bird as an Olah, which atones for sins of improper thought.

A further example of this is found in the commentary of the Ramban (Vayikra 14:18) who notes that as part of the purification process for the metzora - the one stricken with leprosy - many offerings (an asham - guilt offering, a chatos, an olah, and a mincha - meal offering) are brought, and all are expressions of atonement. Why so many? The Ramban suggests that one offering is to atone for the sin he committed before he was affected by the plague, and the additional sin offering for the sin he committed during the time of the plague. Citing from Iyov (1:22), "perhaps in his anguish he complained to Hashem". The affliction of tzara'as manifests itself physically upon its victim, and in addition it causes him to be removed and ostracized from the community. The shame and psychological anguish of the metzora must have been unbearable, Yet even in this state, lest he thought that Hashem was mistreating him, for these negative thoughts he must bring a sin offering.

The above two examples demonstrate how careful one must be with their thoughts, In reality it requires a strong belief in hashgacha pratis - Hashem's direct and personal involvement in the life of each individual, coupled with the belief that "kol david rachmana l'tav avid" (Berachos 60b) - all that Hashem does is for the best.

The Purim holiday that we are about to celebrate, if properly understood, reinforces this principle. The Talmud (Megillah 7b) teaches that "one is obligated to become intoxicated with wine on Purim until one does not know the difference between cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordechai." The Avudraham explains that since the key events of the miracle of Purim - Vashti's downfall, Esther's coronation, and Haman's execution, all occurred during a feast of wine, we commemorate the miracle by drinking on Purim. The L'vush in his commentary on the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 695) teaches that Purim differs from Chanukah. The latter was primarily an attack against the spirit and Torah of the Jew, therefore we celebrate with lighting the menorah and hallel to Hashem, and there is no obligation to eat a festive meal or seudas mitzvah. Purim, on the other hand, was a physical threat to annihilate the Jewish people, and thus we gladden the body by eating and drinking, and one of the four mitzvos of the day of Purim is to eat a festive meal.

The Kedusha Leivi offers a novel interpretation of this famous passage of the Talmud that one is to drink until one cannot differentiate between cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordechai. Everything is for the good. Thus, even those occurrences that appear on the surface to be bad are in reality good. A case in point is Purim. Haman wanted to do great harm to the Jewish people. This certainly was bad, but note that his evil design was not only thwarted by Hashem but actually served the Jewish people well. The Talmud (Megillah 14a) states that Haman's decree did more to unify the Jewish people and bring them closer to their father in heaven than did the preaching and admonishing of all the prophets that preceded him. Thus, Purim shows that there is a more profound way of looking at events. Ordinarily, man has limited vision and understanding of events. However, when man enjoys and partakes of several glasses of wine, he loses his former limited intellectual perspective and can realize that there really is no difference between cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordechai, as ultimately, with G-d controlling all, it is all good.

<http://www.koltorah.org/ravj/The%20Propriety%20of%20Purim%20Entertainment.htm>

Rabbi Jachter's Halacha Files (and other Halachic compositions)

In this issue, we will examine the propriety of a number of unusual behaviors that some have tolerated on Purim, but would hardly tolerate throughout the year. We will discuss the phenomenon of the "Purim Rav," men dressing as women, and people grabbing items from each other. Our discussion is based on Rav Ovadia Yosef's Teshuvot Yechave Daat 5:50.

The Purim Rav The phenomenon of the Purim Rav is traditional in many Ashkenazi Yeshivot. This practice seems to have been common even in pre-war Europe. Presumably, the practice is based on the Talmudic teaching that a Rav enjoys the right to waive the respect that is due him (Kiddushin 32a and Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 242:32).

Rav Ovadia Yosef, however, strenuously objects to the practice. He notes the Gemara (Bava Metzia 59a) that states that one who embarrasses another it is if he has spilled his blood. Tosafot (Sota IOB s.v. Noach) teaches that we must even sacrifice our life in order to avoid embarrassing another. The prohibition to embarrass a Torah scholar is possibly even a greater sin, as the Gemara (Shabbat 119b) states that Jerusalem was destroyed because of the denigration of Talmidei Chachamim.

Rav Ovadia writes that the prohibition rests on the audience as well as the individual who plays the Purim Rav. He cites the Gemara (Bava Metzia 84b) that states that Rabbi Elazar the son of Rabbi Shimon was punished for failing to respond to the insult of a Talmid Chacham. Rav Ovadia notes the Teshuvot HaRivash (number 220) who rules that one may not denigrate a Rav even if the Rav has waived his rights to the respect that is due him. The Rama (Y.D. 242:32) codifies this ruling of the Rivash. He records reports that Rav Shimon Sofer, the son of the Chatam Sofer, died from the anguish that he experienced from the insults hurled at him during a "Purim Shpiel" (play).

He concludes that one must object forcefully to instituting a Purim Rav in a Yeshiva or anywhere else. Rav Moshe Shternbuch (Moadim Uzmanim 2:186-187 in a footnote) also decries against the practice of poking fun at Talmidei Chachamim on Purim. He writes that it is a grave sin to poke fun at anyone on Purim. He writes, though, that one may mock Amalekites and their ideological successors.

Accordingly, it is not appropriate for Sephardic Yeshivot to "import" this practice from the Ashkenazi Yeshivot. However, we may defend the practice of Ashkenazi Yeshivot to stage a Purim Rav, if it is conducted reasonably. First, the Rav must fully consent to the practice. Second, the "Shpiel" must be done in good taste and participants must assiduously avoid crossing the fine line between making a good-spirited joke and denigrating the Rav. Rabbanim usually do not take umbrage at a good-spirited Shpiel as they understand that it is part of the Purim spirit and positively contributes to Talmid-Rebbe bonding.

A Man Dressing as a Woman The Rama (O.C.696:8) quotes a practice of some Ashkenazi men to dress as women and women to dress as men on Purim. The Rama defends this practice by stating "there is no violation of Torah Law involved since their intention is merely for entertainment." This explanation appears odd. When does a prohibition not apply if it done for entertainment? In fact, the Rambam (Hilchot Ginaiva 1:2) and Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat 348:1) rule that we may not steal even as a joke.

The source of the Rama's assertion seems to be Rashi's comment on the Pasuk (Devarim 22:5) that forbids men and women to wear the clothes of the opposite sex. Rashi writes, "this

is done to gain access to areas that are off-limits to them, and the intention is for promiscuity." Accordingly, one could say that if one's intentions are honorable, such as creating Simchat Purim, then he does not violate the prohibition. The Rama notes that there are those who forbid this practice, but he writes that the practice is to be lenient.

The Taz (Yoreh Deah 182:4) cites his father-in-law the Bach who vigorously opposes the practice of cross-dressing on Purim. The Taz writes, "one who listens [to the Bach] will be blessed, because many problems are created when one cannot differentiate between men and women." The Bair Hagola (YD. 282:7) adds to the Taz, "many evil decrees have befallen the Jews as punishment for this practice, and praised be one who puts an end to it." The Mishna Berura (696:30) cites the Shla and the Kneset HaGedola who urge all to refrain from engaging in this practice. In fact, the admonitions of the Bach, Taz, Bair Hagola, Shla, and Kneset Hagedola succeeded, as the Aruch Hashulchan (O.C. 696:12) writes that Jews no longer follow this practice.

Rav Ovadia Yosef also vigorously opposes this practice. It seems that this bizarre custom never took root among Sephardic Jewry. He notes that the Chida (Shiyurei Beracha Y.D. 3) cites a Teshuva of the Rambam where he strenuously objects to the practice of some to cross-dress at weddings to create a festive atmosphere. The Rambam notes that the people adhered to his ruling and ended this practice. Accordingly, the Minhag quoted by the Rama is defunct. Hence, one should not attempt to resurrect a controversial Minhag that took the Poskim hundreds of years to eliminate. Rav Ovadia adds that one should not even permit one's small children to wear the clothes of the opposite sex for Purim. One might have thought that for children we may rely on the Rama. However, Rav Ovadia's strenuous objection to this practice leads him to conclude that it is forbidden even for children. He thus objects to children's plays on Purim where the boys or girls wear outfits of the opposite sex. Rav Ovadia believes that this is poor Chinuch for children.

Grabbing hems The Rama (O.C. 696:6) notes a practice for people to grab items from each other on Purim. The Rama again condones this practice since it is part of the festive atmosphere of Purim. He cautions, though, that this practice should be controlled by the standards established by the local community leaders. The question again is why does the Rama tolerate this practice? In fact, the Mishna Berura (696:31) approvingly cites the Eliyahu Rabbah who quotes the Shla who states, "One who guards his soul should avoid this practice."

An answer (see Biur Hagra O.C. 696:8 s.v. Ma Shenahagu) is that this practice is based on a Gemara (Sukkah 45a) that teaches (according to Rashi's interpretation) that on the final day of Sukkot a game was conducted in the Bait Hamikdash where the adults chased after the children, grabbed their Lulavim, and ate their Etrogim. We should note that this is not a cruel activity, as it is reasonable to assume that the children were told in advance that it would happen. I am certain that the children enjoyed the game of the adults chasing after them and trying to grab their Lulavim and Etrogim. Rashi (ad.loc.s.v. Viochlin Etrogeihem) explains that this practice does not constitute theft because this is an accepted practice as part of the festive holiday spirit. This is analogous to one who tries to "steal" a basketball while playing the game or trying to make a football player fumble a football. These do not constitute acts of theft, nor are these acts considered theft in jest that the Rambam and Shulchan Aruch forbid. It is simply part of the game and is part of the fun. One who has a basketball "stolen" from him as part of a basketball game does not find it morally offensive even if he is the owner of

the ball. He entered the basketball court knowing this might happen and he accepts the rules of the game he is playing. Tosafot (ad.loc. s.v. Meeyad) writes, "One may learn from [the practice in the Bait Hamikdash on the final day of Sukkot] that those young men who joust at weddings and damage their "combatant's" clothes or horse, are excused from paying damages, because this is the accepted practice in creating a festive wedding meal atmosphere. Rama codifies this comment of Tosafot (Choshen Mishpat 378:9). The Rama, though, notes that if the local Bait Din wishes to stop this practice, they have the right to do so. The Rama by Purim seems to be based on the same approach. He condones the practice of people grabbing things from each other, since one's entering the Shul on Purim constitutes consent to this practice. The individual is not surprised that his items are grabbed from him on this day, nor is he coerced to enter the Shul on Purim. Nevertheless, the Aruch Hashulchan (O.C. 696:12) writes that this practice has expired and if someone decides to revive this practice, he will have to pay for any damages he might create. Interestingly, this Tosafot might apply to the question of whether one must pay for damages to another while playing a sport such as hockey or basketball. Entering the ball field might constitute a waiver to any potential claims one might make. Nevertheless, a Bait Din might have the right to declare that these games are unacceptable. For example, the rabbis of the Summertime Morasha Kollel do not permit the students to play hockey during their free time.

Conclusion Although the Rama records his approval with the strange customs, cross-dressing and grabbing items from each other, these customs have been discarded. We often stress the importance of observing venerated Minhagim. Venerated Minhagim are valued because they have passed the scrutiny of Halachic authorities of many generations. The Minhagim of wearing the clothes of the opposite sex and grabbing items from each other have been discarded because they did not pass the scrutiny of the Torah scholars of the generations subsequent to the Rama. Rav Ovadia notes that the statement of the Jerusalem Talmud (Bava Metzia 7:1) "Minhag Mevatel Halacha," a Minhag overrides a Din, has become a popular folk saying among Jews. However, he notes that this only applies to a Minhag that has met consistent rabbinic approval throughout the generations. It also seems to apply exclusively to monetary matters, as that is the context where this idea is presented. Poskim constantly review the propriety of Minhagim. Ours is an example where the Poskim did not merely "rubber stamp" the Rama's approval of these Minhagim. This leads us to appreciate those Minhagim that have been approved and acknowledged. The practice of staging a Purim Rav and conducting a Purim Shpiel have survived in Ashkenazi Yeshivot, despite the objection of Rav Moshe Shternbuch and Rav Ovadia Yosef. It remains to be seen whether this practice will persist in the coming generations. This practice has a chance of survival only if it will be conducted with restraint and sober judgment.

We also see from this essay that it is preferable to conduct Simchat Purim with sobriety and restraint. Authentic Simcha emerges from a healthy soul that does not require outrageous behavior to generate joy.

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 "RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vayikra -
 These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Y. Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape #366, Chometz She'avar Olov HaPesach.
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It Could Happen At Any Moment

The pasuk [verse] in the beginning of Parshas Vayikra says, "A man who offers from you a sacrifice to G-d..." [Vayikra 1:2]. Our Sages infer a legal principle from this pasuk. When a person designates an offering to G-d, he should say "Korban L'HaShem" [a sacrifice to G-d] as opposed to "L'HaShem Korban" [to G-d, a sacrifice]. The reason for this principle is because we fear the possibility that he might express himself by first expressing the name of G-d and then die before verbalizing the word "sacrifice". In that case, he would have uttered the name of G-d in vain. According to the Rebbe, Reb Heschel, this is also the reasoning behind the time honored Jewish greeting: When one Jew meets another, he says the words "Shalom Aleichem" [Peace be upon you]. The other person responds to the first with the words "Aleichem Shalom" [Upon you shall be peace]. The Rebbe, Reb Heschel, says that this greeting is based on the dichotomy expressed by the previously mentioned principle, which distinguishes between "Korban L'Hashem" and "L'HaShem Korban".

"Shalom" is one of the names of G-d. The person who initiates the greeting has the merit of greeting his fellow Jew first. He is therefore given a dispensation and is allowed to begin with G-d's Name and say "Shalom upon you". He has the protection of not having to worry about dying suddenly at that time. The other person, who is merely responding, does not have the 'protection' that is granted to the initiating greeter. He is only allowed to say "Upon you, Shalom".

This whole concept seems very morbid. Why are we so worried that a person would just die suddenly? It seems so pessimistic and fatalistic. It seems like such a strange Halacha. It is as though Halacha is obsessed with death! What a depressing Halacha!

The Shemen HaTov counters that this Halacha is not depressing at all. On the contrary, it should give us encouragement. The realization that at any given moment -- even in the split second between the time it takes to say the word "L'HaShem" and "Korban" -- a person could suddenly die, emphasizes the message that we are in G-d's Hands. The reason why a person may suddenly die or may not suddenly die is because G-d is calling the shots. The knowledge that we are always in the Hands of the All Merciful Father and that life is not random should be comforting. It is ultimately consoling that every thing that happens to us at each split second in our lives is measured. There is a difference between obsession with death and constant awareness of G-d.

Perhaps this explanation can help us understand another Halacha that has always bothered me. There is a Halacha that during the Mincha of Erev Yom Kippur, prior to the final meal preceding the fast, we recite the "al chet" confession (Vidui). The reason given for this recitation (despite the fact that we will be reciting confession throughout Yom Kippur) is "lest he choke at the final meal" (and not make it to Yom Kippur).

The same reasoning can apply to Erev Yom Kippur. We want a person to enter Yom Kippur realizing this concept that we are in His Hands, every minute of our lives. What could be a more powerful message for a Jew entering Yom Kippur, than the knowledge that his time could be up at any minute. "I might not make it through this final meal of Erev Yom Kippur, because G-d is intimately involved in my life." If G-d is intimately involved in my life, then I must in fact carefully ponder -- how did I relate to Him during this past year. This is the message that G-d wants us to have in mind as we enter into the Day of Atonement.

The Message Given to the "Lower Waters"

There is a halacha is that every sacrifice must be accompanied by salt [Vayikra 2:13]. Rashi cites a famous teaching of the Sages that a covenant was made during the six days of creation, when the "lower waters" were promised that they would be offered on the Mizbayach [altar]. This Rashi is referring to the salt (which is a derivative of the ocean's waters and is offered with each sacrifice) and to the water libations (that occur during the Festival of Succos).

The "lower waters" had complained to G-d when the waters were originally divided during creation, that they received "the shorter end of the deal". The "upper waters" were taken to Heaven, near the Throne of Glory of G-d. "Why", they complained, "should we be stuck down on earth?" G-d responded that He would make it up to the lower waters, by decreeing that salt -- which comes from the sea -- would be a necessary ingredient in each sacrifice. Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky, zt"l, commented that this seems to be a rather strange "bargain". If the waters had a complaint against G-d, so to speak, He should have made it up to the water. What kind of consolation is it that salt has special status? This is somewhat of a stretch. Why shouldn't the water be rewarded directly?

In his unique fashion, Rav Yaakov presented an interesting approach to this question. G-d is sending a message. Rashi in the Talmud describes the ancient process of making salt: One dug out a little pool not far from the seashore. The ocean waves would come in and fill the little pool. Eventually the water would evaporate and the salt would remain. Thus salt, Rav Yaakov argues, is the "lowest of the low". The water, which originally contained the salt, in fact, re-ascends to Heaven to rejoin the "upper waters".

The message that G-d is sending is that remaining here on this earth is worthwhile as well. Spirituality is not only something for the Heavens. It can be achieved on earth as well. We see that even when the water portion of the "lower waters" has evaporated, and what remains is only the lowest of the low, that residual component still plays a central role on the Mizbayach. The lesson is that being a Jew does not necessarily mean living in the Heavens. You shall be Holy PEOPLE [Shmos 22:30] -- not angels! Judaism is not a religion for angels; it is a religion of this world. Even the lowly salt that is left after all the water has evaporated -- will be placed on our Mizbayach. Even that will become sanctified!

The message to the "lower waters" was "Do not be upset. Do not feel like you were rejected." The "upper waters" did not necessarily receive the better deal since they are near G-d and the "lower waters" are down on earth. Sanctity and spiritual elevation can be achieved on this earth as well.

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CRITICIZING THE LEADER
RABBI MICHAEL TAUBES
Kehillas Tzemach Dovid, Teaneck Orthodox
[The Jewish Standard March 7, 2003]

"The rabbi is being dishonest!" "His behavior is immoral!" "We demand a full inquiry!" "Look how he concerns himself with only his own interests and is insensitive to ours!" "We are all victims of the rabbi's selfish and unethical conduct!" "We insist upon a complete explanation of his actions!"

Such were the kinds of charges raised by the Jewish people against Moses, according to an opinion cited in the midrash on this week's Torah portion (Tanchuma Yashan, Pekudei Chapter 4), in the aftermath of the collection of donations for the mishkan (tabernacle) and the construction of that portable temple that would accompany them in the desert. In spite of all the good that Moses had done for them, and in spite of the people's recognition, articulated earlier, of his personal greatness in terms of his relationship with G-d, the people had no qualms, in investigating the finances of the mishkan, about registering a litany of offensive complaints about Moses' personal conduct, accusing him of pocketing some of their contributions for himself and growing fat off of their wealth. And so our portion begins with Moses responding by offering a detailed account as to exactly what each and every donated item was used for and how every last penny was spent. Interestingly, the Talmud itself (Kiddushin 33 b) alludes to the report of this negative assessment of Moses' conduct on the part of the Jewish people, but it does not spell things out, recording only a vague reference. Rashi, after filling in some of the missing details, tries to explain this omission of the full story by suggesting that because what the people did was so distasteful, the Talmud chose not to publicize their behavior. In other words, Rashi suggests, the authors of the Talmud apparently preferred not to depict the Jewish people as a group of confrontational, whining ingrates, demonstrating such a blatant disrespect for someone whom they should have held in much higher regard. A complete description of their remarks thus is not presented there.

But what actually was so bad about the people asking for a full accounting of the expenditures for the mishkan? After all, the mishkan was built with their funds; were they not entitled to know where their money went? Moses was certainly a great man, but should he therefore have been considered infallible and beyond reproach? Is it not possible that there may have been some mistake, due, for example, to the large volume of donations, which would need to be rectified and perhaps apologized for? It would seem that a request for a complete disclosure and a precise reckoning of the mishkan's economic ledger is not only natural but perfectly appropriate. Why, then, does the Talmud, as elucidated by Rashi, consider the people's conduct to have been so distasteful?

Evidently the problem was not with what the people were asking for, but rather with the way they asked for it. Had a respectful delegation come to Moses and asked that he share a record of the fiscal details relating to the mishkan, it would indeed have been hard to find fault with such a request. The trouble was that the people's contentions turned personal. Moses had suddenly and quickly become the target of ad hominem attacks and of all sorts of wild and disparaging accusations, including the publicized suspicion that he was not only a thief, but, as mentioned in a related context, an adulterer as well. These personal criticisms thus took on a life of their own, such that the issue at hand soon became not the financial specifics of the mishkan, but the personality traits of Moses, whom many Jews were apparently all too ready to believe was unscrupulous and lacked a proper moral and ethical compass. It was this situation that the Talmud, at least in Rashi's view, found objectionable.

One can only imagine what the Jewish community would have been treated to had this episode transpired in modern times, when broadcasting allegations to a wide audience is so simple.

Surely there would have been a flurry of public anti-Moses activity. The Jewish newspapers would have featured a series of editorials, articles, and letters to the editor about Moses' character and perhaps even his unsuitability to serve in his position. With the advent of cyber-technology, "concerned activists" would have formed e-mail discussion groups, allowing anybody and everybody with anything to say about Moses to have his or her comments shared with the broader public. Maybe a Website would even have been established to invite ideas as to how to keep the dishonest Moses in check. And the resulting divisiveness in the community, along with the pain and embarrassment caused for many innocent people, would have been almost immeasurable. Clearly, such a scenario would also be rightfully frowned upon by the Talmud, for this is not the way that religiously committed Jews ought to behave.

There is no doubt that people can have legitimate questions and complaints towards even a leader of the caliber of Moses. There is also ample room for some disagreement on matters of personal judgment and certainly for constructive and well-intended criticism. But the standards of both halacha and common decency and civility require that those questions be asked, those complaints voiced, that disagreement expressed, and that criticism aired in a respectful manner and in an appropriate forum, without allowing, even unwittingly, the creation of an environment reminiscent of a witch-hunt or of a personal vendetta. Moses in his day was a victim of a form of abuse by a public that may initially have meant well; the Talmud, according to Rashi's explanation, seems to quietly urge us not to emulate that public's conduct.

From: RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN'S PARSHAT HASHAVUA LIST [parsha@ohrtorahstone.org.il] Sent: Wednesday, March 12, 2003 1:08 AM To: Shabbat_Shalom@ohrtorahstone.org.il Subject: Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Zachor By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Zachor (Deuteronomy 25:17-19) By Shlomo Riskin Efrat, Israel - Purim is the holiday least representative of what Judaism generally represents, most "out of sync" with usual Jewish standards and practices. After all, the heroine of the Megillah story is Esther, a beautiful Jewish woman brought up in the house of Mordecai the Jew (even member of the Sanhedrin), who allows herself to be taken to the palace of the gentile King Ahashveros as his favored Queen! And our Sages go so far as to teach that "it is a mitzvah" for every person to drink on Purim until he can no longer distinguish between praising Mordecai and cursing Haman" (B. T. Megillah 7a). What about all of our prohibitions against intermarriage, the most obvious expression of Jewish assimilation into the host culture in the land of our exile?! And what about the fundamental commandment, "Thou shalt be holy." (Leviticus 19:1), and the call to sobriety implicit in the Divine command to Aaron, "Wine and meat you shall not drink, neither you nor your sons with you, when you enter the Tent of Meeting so that you not die" (Leviticus 10:9)?!

I believe we will gain deeper insight into the message of the Purim story and celebration when we ponder another aspect of the flavor and texture of the holiday: Purim is the Jewish mardi gras, the day in which everyone dresses up in costumes, when we even relax the general prohibition of a male dressing up as a female or a female dressing up as a male. True understanding of the significance of this mode of Purim celebration will come when we consider the very first Biblical personality who put on a mask, who masqueraded as someone else.

That individual was none other than Jacob - Israel, the most chosen of the Patriarchs, the father of the twelve tribes. He

allowed his mother Rebecca to place goat-skins on his hands and neck, he donned the clothes of his elder twin brother, and he stood before his father Isaac pretending to actually be his elder brother Esau. He put on the Esau-Mask in order to receive the birth-right from his father, a birth-right which he believed he rightfully deserved - for three cogent reasons. First of all, the Divine message had informed Mother Rebecca during her difficult pregnancy that "the elder shall serve the younger;" secondly because Esau had sold the birthright to Jacob for a bowl of lentil soup; and thirdly because Esau had scorned the cardinal family rule by marrying two Hittite wives! Jacob was certainly convinced that he was temporarily masquerading in the external garb of Esau in order to receive what was really supposed to be his in the first place.

Indeed, it may have been the case that father Isaac wanted proof that Jacob had the ability to lead the family, that he was not merely a retiring and naive dweller in the tents and the study-halls, but that, if necessity required it, he could be an aggressive hunter, a courageous warrior, a smooth-tongued politician. After all, Isaac understood from the Covenant between the Pieces which G-d had communicated to Abraham that history would not always treat the Israelites with kindness and respect! And so Jacob put on an Esau mask - and thereby received the birthright-blessings from his father as the leader of Israel.

But then something happened. The Latin word for mask is persona - and personality is the face which we present to the outside world. A prominent sociologist once wrote that there are four "yous": who you are, who you think you are, who others think you are, and who you would like others to think you are. Sometimes, even oftentimes, we forget to remove our temporary masks and we become the very people we had pretended to be, for good or for ill. This is precisely what happened to father Jacob. And so when young Jacob goes off to Labanland he takes his mask with him, and he assumes the very oppressive combative and manipulative persona which was the essence of Esau. The voice of Jacob is stilled for 22 years, until he exorcises Esau from within his personality and returns to his father's house and his true self.

Purim is our galut (exile) holiday, telling the story of the precarious state of Israel (and humanity) in a world devoid of the eminent presence of G-d, the tragic unfolding of history as connecting one incident of coincidence and happenstance after another. The very name Purim means lots, the roll of the dice; the very term Megillah means to be exposed and vulnerable; the very medium of Iggeret (letter) - the Scroll of Esther is written as an iggeret rather than a book (sefer) - suggests transience, impermanence, insignificance. Under such alien conditions everyone needs a protective coat - a masquerade costume, if you will - for some kind of protection. Esther, therefore, must wear the outer mask of Ahashveros' queen, and Mordecai must don the ministerial robes of the King's advisor. In the true reality of inner essences, however, the Almighty is weaving the tapestry of redemption from behind the curtains of the stage of history, Mordecai is paving the way for the destruction of evil tyranny, and Esther is the savior of her people.

Why do we drink on Purim? Our Sages teach us that the true individual, his real inner essence, is revealed when he is angry, when he must spend money, and when he is under the influence of drink. In an unfair world of manipulative Esaus and tyrannical Hamans, we must often wear the external mask of aggression and warfare for necessary self protection. But it is crucial that what emerges when we drink is the essence of our truest selves, the real "us" which has not been submerged by the masquerade, the voice of Jacob which speaks only of love and peace. In the words of the sweet lyricist of Israel, "To G-d in my travail do I call

out, so that He may answer me. G-d save my (inner) soul from (my) lying lips and a deceptive tongue... for too long a time has my soul dwelled with enemies of peace. I am peace - and when I speak (words of aggression) it is only because they are dedicated to war" (Psalms 120).

Shabbat Shalom.

You can find Rabbi Riskin's parshiot on the web at:

<http://www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/parsha/index.htm> Ohr Torah Stone Colleges and Graduate Programs Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Chancellor Rabbi Chaim Brovender, Dean To subscribe, E-mail to: <Shabbat_Shalom-on@ohrtorahstone.org.il>

<http://www.tzemachdovid.org/rabbitaubes/purim1.html>

PURIM

RABBI MICHAEL TAUBES

One of the more beautiful mitzvahs of Purim is Mishloach Manos, the mitzvah to send a gift of at least two food items to a friend. It should be noted that the food items sent should be the type that would and could be eaten at the Purim seudah. Such food should be sent to at least one friend or neighbor. But while engaging in this practice is indeed enjoyable and pleasant for most, the question may be raised as to why this mitzvah appears only in connection with Purim. It would make sense to legislate such a requirement in connection with other holidays as well. Why not provide Mishloach Manos before Pesach or Shavuot or Sukkos too? In truth, we do find reference to the sending of "Manos" in connection with Rosh Hashanah (see Nechemiah, Perek 8), and there is also a custom to collect "Maos Chittim" funds to enable poor Jews to provide for Pesach. But our practice is limited in the formal sense to Purim alone, and the question thus is why Purim is different than all other holidays in this regard.

Some suggest that the mitzvah to share food on Purim was legislated in order to "repair" a serious error in thought and deed committed by many Jews in the days of Mordechai and Esther. As Haman aptly described to Achashverosh, the Jews were a dispersed, scattered and disunited people. It seems that they didn't care for one another and had no interest in helping each other out. Indeed, Chazal imply that the Jews of Shushan, believing falsely that they were in no immediate danger from Haman's decrees, did not initially do anything to assist the other Jews whose well-being they knew was being threatened. There was not enough friendship and camaraderie among the Jews of that time. And so the Mitzvah of Mishloach Manos was enacted precisely in order to foster a spirit of closeness and warmth among the members of the Jewish community who lacked it at the time.

Remarkably enough, we are confronted with some of the same problems of disunity within the Jewish community today as well. There is much bickering between Jews both here and in Eretz Yisrael about various different subjects. Purim comes along to teach us, among other things, the message of Jewish unity. We must certainly concern ourselves with the plight of all Jews and take an interest in their lives and reach out to whomever we can, and this should not be limited to Purim alone. But it must be a unity based on Torah and Halacha, which is ultimately what should bind us. We need not offer others food items, but we should offer them our Torah and our way of life. Of course, they must be people who would be receptive to such an offer. We can not compromise our standards or our beliefs for the sake of unity. The "food" which we offer other Jews must be 100% "kosher". Only then is the offer meaningful. We therefore cannot push aside our laws and traditions in the misguided hope that doing so will bring about brotherhood and friendship. But to those who are willing to listen to the Torah which we can present, we must reach

out and teach. Purim, perhaps more than any holiday, teaches us to share what we have with others. If we truly believe in our Torah, and our traditions, we ought to spread our belief and bring about the kind of unity which ultimately developed in the days of Mordechai and Esther.

http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2002/parsha/rsch_vayikra.html

TorahWeb from last year [VAYIKRa]

RABBI HERSCHEL SCHACHTER

THE LEADER WITH THE SMALL ALEPH

The Talmud (Chagiga 5b) tells us that G-d "sheds three tears" over the tragedies of the human situations that people bring upon themselves. One of those tears is over people appointed to positions of leadership who misuse their authority for the purpose of self-aggrandizement. It is a psychological principle that power corrupts. It is very unusual for one to wield a lot of power and to remain unaffected. The parsha speaks of the case of the Jewish king of Eretz Yisroel (the land of Israel) sinning and being able to offer a special kind of "korban chatas" ("sin offering"). The expression used is, "asher nasi yecheta" ("that a leader shall sin"), and the Rabbis pointed out that the connotation of the phrase is that "it is the good fortune and to the credit of that generation" that their chosen leader is able to admit his mistakes. "Hakaras hachet" (recognizing that one has sinned) is difficult for any intelligent person, and even more difficult for one in a position of leadership. If the chosen leader is able to admit his errors, this indicates that the people had chosen wisely.

Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, when he had to choose a dayan (rabbinical judge) for the city of Brisk to assist him in paskening the shailos (issuing Jewish legal rulings in response to questions), he preferred Rav Simcha Zelig Regeur over the other candidates because he alone was able to admit that he did not know how to pasken on several of the issues that Rav Chaim had posed to him. The Talmud recommends even for laymen that we all "train ourselves to say that we do not know". This criterion is even more crucial for appointing one to a position of leadership. The Talmud tells us that in the overwhelming majority of cases the views of Beis Hillel have been accepted as opposed to those of Beis Shammai. One of the reasons given for this is that generally speaking the students of Beis Hillel were more humble than those of Beis Shammai. In general, the students of Beis Shammai were more brilliant than those of Beis Hillel, and often found it too difficult to humble themselves to the degree of their counterparts. The assumption is that the more humble the individual is, the better the chance he has to discover the deep truths of the Torah.

Moshe Rabbeinu was the greatest Torah scholar of all times, precisely because of his great humility. The opening mishna in Avos states that "Moshe kibel Torah meSinai" The simple translation of the phrase means that he received the Torah at the location of Mt. Sinai. There is a famous interpretation offered by both Chassidic and Misnagdishe rabbonim, that Moshe was worthy of receiving the Torah because he was like Mt. Sinai, i.e., because of his humility. Just as Sinai was not so tall a mountain, and acted with humility in context to the other mountains, and was therefore chosen by G-d for the purpose of matan Torah in lieu of other tall mountains, so too, Moshe Rabbeinu, Beis Hillel, and anyone else humble of spirit, stands a better chance of succeeding in clarifying the truth of the Torah.

When choosing a rabbi of whom we ask sheilos, or when selecting one for a position of leadership, the criterion of humility should be high on the list of qualities to look for. It is indeed the "good fortune of the generation" to be able to choose as their

leader someone who is in the habit of saying "eini yodeah", and humble enough to admit on occasion that he erred. At the end of the first word in Chumash Vayikra there is a small aleph, as opposed to the first letter of the word "Adam" at the beginning of Sefer Divrei Hayamim, where there is a large aleph. The small aleph is understood as representing the humility of Moshe Rabbeinu. The Baal HaTanya explained, along the same lines, that the extra-large aleph of "Adam" represents the arrogance of Adam Harishon. The chumash tells us that the cause of the original sin was the arrogant attitude of Adam and Chava who believed the words of the Snake, who said that if they ate from the Etz Hadaas they would become as great as G-d! Fortunate is the generation who understands enough to appoint as its leader the person with the small "aleph" like Moshe Rabbeinu.

From: Menachem Leibtag [tsc@bezeqint.net] Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2003 12:25 PM To: Pareg; Lite1 Subject: [Par-reg] PARSHAT VAYIKRA THE TANACH STUDY CENTER [http://www.tanach.org] In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag Shiurim in Chumash & Navi by [RABBI] MENACHEM LEIBTAG PARSHAT VAYIKRA

Can the numerous and very detailed laws about 'korbanot' have any meaning today? We should certainly hope so. But to appreciate their meaning today, we must first understand what they meant back then (i.e. at the time when these laws were first given). In this week's shiur, we undertake an analysis of Parshat Vayikra in an attempt to better understand what korbanot are all about, and how they relate to the overall theme of Chumash.

INTRODUCTION Even though the mishkan emerges as a primary topic in both Sefer Shmot and Sefer Vayikra, a very simple distinction explains which details are found in each book. In Sefer Shmot, the Torah explains how to build the mishkan, and hence Shmot concludes (in Parshat Pekudei) with the story of its assembly. In contrast, Sefer Vayikra explains how to use the mishkan, and hence Parshat Vayikra begins with the laws of the korbanot - the sacrifices that will be offered there. Even though this distinction explains why Sefer Vayikra discusses korbanot in general, it does not explain why the Sefer begins specifically with the laws of korban ola; nor does it explain the logic of the progression from one type of korban to the next. Our shiur will attempt to do so. To explain our conclusions, we first present an outline that summarizes the progression of topics within Parshat Vayikra. Before you continue, study it carefully (with a Chumash at hand).

PARSHAT VAYIKRA - THE KORBAN YACHID

- I. KORBAN NEDAVA - Voluntary offerings (chaps. 1-3)
- A. Ola (the entire korban is burnt on the mizbeich)
1. 'bakar' - from cattle
 2. 'tzon' - from sheep
 3. 'of' - from fowl
- B. Mincha (a flour offering)
1. 'solet' - plain flour mixed with oil and 'levona'
 2. 'ma'afeh tanur' - baked in the oven
 3. 'al machvat' - on a griddle
 4. 'marcheshet' - on a pan (+ misc. general laws)
 5. 'bikkurim' - from the first harvest...
- C. Shlamim (a peace offering, part is eaten by the owners)
1. bakar - from cattle
 2. tzon - from sheep
 3. 'ez' - from goats

[Note the key phrase repeated many times in this unit:

"isheh reiach nichoach I-Hashem."]
 II. KORBAN CHOVA - MANDATORY OFFERINGS
 A. * CHATAT (4:1-5:13)

1. for a general transgression
 [laws organized according to violator]
 - a. 'par kohan mashiach' (High Priest) - a bull
 - b. 'par he'elem davar' (bet din) - a bull
 - c. 'se'ir nassi' (a king) - a male goat
 - d. 'nefesh' (layman) a female goat or female lamb
 2. for specific transgressions ('oleh ve-yored')
 - a. a rich person - a female goat or lamb
 - b. a poor person - two birds
 - c. a very poor person - a plain flour offering
- B. * ASHAM (5:14-5:26) - animal is always an 'ayil' (ram)
1. 'asham me'ilot' - taking from Temple property
 2. 'asham talui' - unsure if he sinned
 [Note the new dibbur at this point / see Further iyun.]
 3. * 'asham gezeilot' - stealing from another
 [Note the key phrase repeated numerous times in this unit:

"ve-chiper alav... ve-nislach lo."]

As you study this outline, carefully follow its structure in a Tanach Koren (or similar), noting how each 'parshia' corresponds to a line in our chart. Note also that each asterisk (*) in the outline marks the beginning of a new 'dibra', i.e. a short introduction for a new instruction from G-d to Moshe [e.g. "va-yedaber Hashem el Moshe..."]. Note as well how the outline suggests a short one-line summary for each parshia, as well as a title for each section. We will now explain why we have chosen those titles.

TWO GROUPS: NEDAVA & CHOVA First and foremost, note how our outline divides Parshat Vayikra into two distinct sections: 'korbanot nedava' = voluntary offerings and 'korbanot chova' - mandatory offerings. Should any individual wish to voluntarily offer a korban to G-d, he has three categories to choose from: ola, mincha, or shlamim (respectively - chapters 1, 2, and 3). Note how these three groups are all included in the first dibbur - and comprise the nedava section. In contrast, there are instances when a person may transgress, and hence become obligated to offer a certain korban - either a chatat or an asham (depending upon what he did wrong). The two categories (chapters 4 and 5) comprise the second section, which we titled chova.

The Chumash itself stresses a distinction between these two sections not only the start of a new dibbur in 4:1, but also the repetition of two key phrases that appear in just about every closing verse in the parshiot of both sections, stressing the primary purpose of each respective section: In the nedava section: "isheh reiach nichoach I-Hashem" ["an offering of fire, a pleasing odor to the Lord" See 1:9,13,17; 2:2; 3:5,11,16]; In the chova section: "ve-chiper alav ha-kohen..."

[the kohen shall make expiation on his behalf..." - See 4:26,31,35; 5:6,10,13,16,19,26]

With this background in mind, we will now discuss the logic behind the internal structure of each section, to show how (and why) the nedava section is arranged by category and type of animal, while the chova section is arranged by type of transgression committed.

NEDAVA - take your pick If an individual wishes to offer a korban nedava, he must first choose the category that reflects his personal preference. First of all, should he prefer to offer the entire animal to G-d, he can choose the ola category; but should he prefer to offer flour (instead of an animal), then he can choose the mincha category. Finally, should he prefer not only the animal option, but would also like to later partake in eating from this

korban - then he can choose the shlamim category. Once the individual has made this choice of either an ola, mincha, or shlamim - then he can pick the type of his choice. For example, should one choose to offer an ola - which is totally consumed on the mizbeich - then he must choose from among cattle, sheep, or fowl. The Torah explains these three options (in the first three parshiot/ see chapter 1) including precise instructions concerning how to offer each of these animals. Should the individual choose a mincha - a flour offering - instead, then he must select from one of the five different options for how to bake the flour, corresponding to the five short parshiot in chapter two. Finally, should he choose the shlamim - a peace offering - then he must select either bakar - cattle, kvasim - sheep, or izim - goats, corresponding to the 3 parshiot in chapter three.

It should be noted as well that the laws included in this korban nedava section also discuss certain procedural instructions. For example, before offering an ola or shlamim, the owner must perform the act of 'smicha' (see 1:4, 3:2,8,13). By doing smicha - resting all his weight on the animal - the owner symbolically transfers his identity to the animal. That is to say, he offers the animal instead of himself (see Ramban). One could suggest that the act of smicha reflects an understanding that the korban serves as a 'replacement' for the owner. This idea may be reflective of the korban ola that Avraham Avinu offered at the akeida - when he offered a ram in place of his son - "ola tachat bno" (see Breishit 22:13).

CHOVA - if you've done something wrong As we explained earlier, the second category of Parshat Vayikra discusses the 'korban chova' (chapters 4 & 5), an obligatory offering that must be brought by a person should he transgress against one of G-d's laws. Therefore, this section is organized by event, for the type of sin committed will determine which offering is required. The first 'event' is an unintentional transgression of 'any of G-d's mitzvot' (see 4:2 and the header of each consecutive parshia in chapter 4). Chazal explain that this refers to the unintentional violation ('shogeg') of any prohibition of the Torah punishable by 'karet' (had it been done intentionally - 'meizid'). [This offering is usually referred to as a 'chatat kavu'a' (the fixed chatat).]

Should this transgression occur, then the actual animal that must be brought depends upon who the sinner is. If the kohen gadol (high priest) sins, he brings a 'par' [bull]. If it is the nassi [political leader], he must bring a 'se'ir' (male goat). If it was simply a commoner, he must bring either a she-goat or lamb. [There is also a special case of a mistaken halachic ruling by the 'elders' [i.e. the 'sanhedrin' - the supreme halachic court], which results in the entire nation inadvertently sinning. In this case, the members of the sanhedrin must bring a special chatat offering. See 4:13-21.]

In chapter five we find several instances of specific transgressions that require either a chatat [oleh ve-yored] or an asham. These cases include accidental entry into the mikdash while spiritually unclean ('tamei' / see 5:2) and violating a promise made with an oath ('shvu'at bitui' / see 5:4). Interestingly, this korban is categorized as a chatat (see 5:6,10,13), despite the Torah's reference to these acts as asham (see 5:5). The fact that this korban is the same animal as the regular chatat - i.e. a female goat or sheep - underscores this point. Note also where the new dibbur begins (in 5:14 and not in 5:1!)]

The korban oleh ve-yored (5:1-13) is unique in that the type of korban brought depends entirely upon the individual's financial status. When one transgresses according to any of the cases detailed in 5:1-4, then - if he is: a) rich - he brings a female

sheep or goat; b) 'middle class' - he can bring two birds; c) poor - he can bring a simple flour offering.

One could suggest that the Torah offers this graduated scale because of the frequency of these specific transgressions, which may place too costly a burden upon individuals prone to these slips. The final cases mentioned require a korban asham. In each of these cases, the transgressor must offer an ayil [a ram].

- when one takes something belonging to hekdesch ('asham me'ilot' / 5:14-16)
- when one is unsure if he must bring a chatat ('asham talui'), i.e. he is not sure if he sinned.
- when one falsely denies having illegally held possession of someone else's property ('asham gezeilot' / 5:20-26).

THE GENERAL TITLE - KORBAN YACHID Our title for the entire outline was korban yachid - the offering of an individual - for this entire unit details the various types of korbanot that an individual (=yachid') can bring. Our choice of this title reflects the opening sentence of the Parsha: "adam ki yakriv.." - any person should he bring an offering to G-d..." (see 1:2). The korban yachid is in contrast to the korbanot tzibbur which is brought by the entire congregation of Israel (purchased with the funds collected from the machatzit ha-shekel). The laws relating to korbanot tzibbur are found primarily in Parshiot Emor and Pinchas.

WHICH SHOULD COME FIRST? Now that we have explained the logic of the internal order of each section, we must explain why the laws of korban nedava precede those of korban chova. Intuitively, one would have perhaps introduced the compulsory korban before the optional one. One could suggest that Parshat Vayikra begins specifically with the korban nedava since these korbanot in particular reflect the individual's aspiration to improve his relationship with G-d. Only afterward does the Torah detail the korban chova, which amends that relationship (when tainted by sin). Additionally, perhaps, the korban nedava reflects a more ideal situation, while the obligatory sin-offering seeks to rectify a problematic situation.

We may, however, suggest an even more fundamental reason based on the 'double theme' which we discussed in our study of the second half of Sefer Shmot. Recall from our previous shiurim that the mishkan served a dual purpose: A) to perpetuate the experience of Har Sinai (emphasized by Ramban); and B) to atone for chet ha-egel (emphasized by Rashi).

(A) REENACTING HAR SINAI As you'll recall, at Ma'amad Har Sinai Bnei Yisrael offered olot & shlamim (during the ceremony of 'na'aseh ve-nishma' / see Shmot 24:4-7). In fact, in this ceremony we find Chumash's first mention of a korban shlamim, suggesting a conceptual relationship between the korban shlamim and Har Sinai. [Note also that Chumash refers to the korban shlamim as a 'zevach' (see 3:1 & 7:11). The word zevach itself is also used to describe a feast, generally in the context of an agreement between two parties. For example, Lavan and Yaakov conduct a zevach after they enter into a covenant ('brit') agreeing not to harm each other (see Br. 31:44-54). Today, as well, agreements between two parties are often followed or accompanied by a lavish feast of sorts (e.g. state dinners, weddings, business mergers, etc.). Therefore, one could suggest that by offering a zevach shlamim, an individual demonstrates his desire to partake in a joint ceremony with the Almighty.]

The korban ola likewise relates to Ma'amad Har Sinai. Recall the key phrase in the Torah's description of the korban ola: "isheh reiach nichoach l-Hashem." [See 1:9,13,17.] The Torah employs the exact same phrase in its presentation of the olot tamid, the daily congregational offering, as inherently connected to Bnei

Yisrael's offerings at Har Sinai: "Olat tamid ha-asuya BE-HAR SINAI, le-reiach nichoach isheh I-Hashem" (Bamidbar 28:6).

In Parshat Tetzaveh, when the Torah first introduces the olat tamid and summarizes its discussion of the mishkan, we find the same phrase: "... le-relach nichoach isheh I-Hashem... olat tamid le- doroteichem petach ohel mo'ed..." (Shmot 29:41-42)

Hence, by offering an olat or shlamim - the efficacious reminders of Ma'amad Har Sinai - the individual reaffirms the covenant of "na'aseh v'nishma" - the very basis of our relationship with G-d at Ma'amad Har Sinai. [One could also suggest that these two types of korbanot reflect two different aspects of our relationship with G-d. The olat reflects "yirah" (fear of G-d), while the shlamim may represent "ahava" (love of G-d).]

Recall also that the last time Bnei Yisrael had offered olat & shlamim before chet ha-egel was at Har Sinai. The Shchina left Bnei Yisrael on account of the egel, thus precluding the possibility of offering korbanot. Now that the mishkan is finally built and the Shchina has returned, G-d's first message to Bnei Yisrael is that they can once again offer olat & shlamim, just as they did at Har Sinai. This observation can help us appreciate why the very first topic in Sefer Vayikra is the olat & shlamim.

(B) KORBAN CHOVA - BACK TO CHET HA-EGEL In contrast to the 'refrain' of 'isheh reiach nichoach' concluding each korban nedava, we noted that each korban chova concludes with the phrase "ve-chiper alav ha-kohen... ve- nislach lo". Once again, we find a parallel to the events at Har Sinai. Recall our explanation that Aharon acted as he did at chet ha-egel with the best of intentions, only the results were disastrous. With the Shchina present, any transgression, even unintentional, can invoke immediate punishment (Shmot 23:20-22). Nevertheless, G-d's attributes of mercy, the essence of the 'second luc hot', allow man a 'second chance,' the opportunity to prove to G-d his sincerity and resolve to exercise greater caution in the future. Before he ascended Har Sinai to seek repentance for chet ha-egel, recall how Moshe Rabbenu told the people: "Atem chatatem chata'a gedola... ulai achapra be'ad chatatchem" (Shmot 32:30; read also 32:31-33).

Later, when Moshe actually receives the thirteen /midot ha-rachamim' on Har Sinai along with the second luchot (34:- 9), he requests atonement for chet ha-egel: "... ve-salachta le-avoneinu u-lechatoteinu..." (34:9).

This key phrase of the korban chova - "ve-chiper alav... ve-nislach lo" - may also relate to this precedent of G-d's capacity and willingness to forgive. The korban chova serves as a vehicle by which one can ask forgiveness for sins committed beshogeg and beseech G-d to activate his midot ha-rachamim.

Therefore, we may conclude that the korban nedava highlights the mishkan's function as the perpetuation of Ma'amad Har Sinai, while the korban chova underscores the mishkan's role as means of atonement for chet ha-egel.

A 'CLOSER' DEFINITION With this background, one could suggest that the popular translation of korban as a sacrifice may be slightly misleading. Sacrifice implies giving up something for nothing in return. In truth, however, the 'shoresh' (root) of the word korban is k.r.v., 'karov' - to come close. Not only is the animal brought 'closer' to the mizbeich, but the korban ultimately serves to bring the individual closer to G-d. The animal itself comprises merely the vehicle through which this process is facilitated. Therefore, korbanot involve more than dry, technical rituals; they promote the primary purpose of the mishkan - the enhancement of man's relationship with G-d.

TEFILLA KENEGED KORBANOT Chazal consider 'tefilla' (prayer) as a 'substitute' for korbanot in the absence of the Bet Ha-mikdash. Like korbanot, tefilla also serves as a vehicle through which man can develop his relationship with G-d. As

such, what we have learned about korbanot has meaning even today. Individual tefilla should embody both aspects of the korban yachid: nedava and chova. Tefilla should primarily reflect one's aspiration to come closer to G-d. And secondly, if one has sinned, tefilla becomes an avenue through which he can amend the tainted relationship.

Finally, tefilla, just like the korbanot of the mishkan, involves more than just the fulfillment of personal obligation. Like the midot ha-rachamim, tefilla should be considered a unique privilege granted to G-d's special nation who accepted the Torah at Har Sinai - allowing them an avenue to perfect their relationship with their Creator. As such, tefilla should be treated as a burden, but rather as a special privilege.

shabbat shalom, menachem

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