

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

PARASHAT SHEMINI

Haftarah: Shemuel II 6:1-19

APRIL 14, 2018 29 NISAN 5778

Rosh Hodesh Iyar will be celebrated on Sunday & Monday, April 15 & 16.

DEDICATION: Lorraine Bat Victoria Gindi – 4 Iyar

TODAY is 17th Yahrzeit of Rabbi Miller A'H Thursday 27 Nissan

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EDITORS NOTES

On Wednesday morning we were discussing the offerings which Aaron brought to the Mishkan and related the second offering to the goat the brother – the shevatim killed and used for dipping the coat of Joseph. We related their sin to the sin at the egel and then possible sin of Nadav and Avihu. As I sat to write about it, I googled “shemini goat yosef sacrifice”

And instead of typing this, Rabbi Mansour writes:

Obeying Torah Authority

Parashat Shemini tells of the inauguration of the Mishkan, the special events that were held to mark the "opening day" of the Mishkan's operation. Moshe tells Aharon, who on this day became the Kohen Gadol, to prepare a number of animals as his personal sacrifice, and to instruct Benei Yisrael to prepare animals for their sacrifice. Benei Yisrael's sacrifice included an Egel – a calf – as well as a goat. The Sages explain that these two offerings served to atone for two different sins: the calf, of course, atoned for Chet Ha'egel, the sin of the golden calf, whereas the goat served to atone for the sale of Yosef. Over two centuries earlier, Yosef's brothers sold him as a slave to Egypt, and to conceal their crime they slaughtered a goat and dipped Yosef's garment in its blood, so that it would appear as though he were killed by an animal. On the day of the Mishkan's inauguration, Benei Yisrael atoned for their ancestors' sin through the offering of a goat as a special sacrifice to God.

Why were Benei Yisrael required to earn atonement for the sale of Yosef on this day, and what connection is there between this crime and the sin of the golden calf?

The work "Be'er Yosef" explains that both these unfortunate events – the sin of the calf and the sale of Yosef – resulted from the same mistake: disregarding the guidance of Torah leaders. As many Rabbis explained, Benei Yisrael did not actually worship a golden calf. Rather, they sought to create some kind of structure that would replace Moshe as the source of guidance and instruction from God, the site at which God would convey His commands. Such an idea is not intrinsically wrong; in fact, this is precisely the function served by the Mishkan. However, when Benei Yisrael contemplated this idea, they consulted with Chur, one of the leaders appointed to guide the people in Moshe's absence, and he opposed the initiative. But the people were very enthusiastic about the idea to fashion the calf, and therefore killed Chur for expressing opposition. Aharon, the other leader appointed over the nation, had no choice but to acquiesce, in order to spare himself the same tragic fate as his colleague. The severity of the sin thus lay not in the act itself, but rather in the brazen disregard for Chur's authority.

Similarly, Yosef's brothers acted as they did on the basis of sound Halachic reasoning. Yosef had spoken negatively about them to their father, seemingly in an effort to have them expelled from the family, and his dreams indicated that he sought to rule over them, in violation of Yehuda's exclusive rights to the monarchy. The brothers therefore convened a Beit Din (Rabbinical court) and concluded that he is liable to the death penalty. They erred, however, in not consulting with the Rabbinic leadership of the time – Yaakov, Yitzchak, Shem and Ever. As in the case of the golden calf, what appeared as a valid and warranted course of action was followed either without the guidance of the Torah leaders.

On the day of the Mishkan's inauguration, Moshe had Aharon issue instructions to Benei Yisrael so that they could atone for this grave mistake, of taking religious matters into their own hands without consulting with their Rabbinic leadership. On this occasion, when the people earned expiation for the sin of the golden calf, they were called upon to atone as well for the similar

mistake committed by their ancestors who sold Yosef without consulting with Torah authorities.

Later in this Parasha, we read of the tragic death of Aharon's two sons, Nadav and Avihu, for bringing an offering on this day of the Mishkan's inauguration. The Gemara explains that Aharon's sons brought their offering on the basis of sound Halachic reasoning, but were punished for not consulting with Moshe and Aharon. On this day, when Benei Yisrael sought to atone for this very sin, of disregarding the authority of Torah leaders, Nadav and Avihu, who were otherwise exceedingly righteous men, neglected to consult with their generation's leaders, and were punished very harshly. This demonstrates the importance of recognizing our dependence upon the guidance of the Torah scholars, and the need to act in accordance with their instructions, and not on the basis of our personal feelings and intuition.

In our class we went in a slightly different direction. We suggested that whenever possible, one should ask their rabbi. If for nothing more, this is advice is sound simply to lay responsibility for the answer on the rabbi. The rabbi has big shoulders and when we ask and we follow, then any mistakes are not on us, but on the rabbi. So we all need to make sure to find a rabbi who knows. Not one who answers, "better not", but one who is unafraid of telling us the truth.

Shabbat Shalom

David Bibi

Summary of the Perasha Nathan Dweck

Shenimi - Inauguration of the mishkan, Kashroot

1- 8th day of the inauguration of the mishkan. Aharon brings Korbanot for the first time.

2- Aharon brings korban mincha & shelamim and blesses Benei Israel

3- Hashem consumes the korbanot. Aharon's sons bring esh zara and die. Hashem tells Aharon and his remaining sons not to mourn and to continue the service.

4- Moshe tells Aharon and his sons to eat the mincha and shelamim offerings

5- Aharon and his sons don't eat the shelamim. Moshe is confused / angered as to why.

6- Laws of Kashroot (animals, birds, fish, flying insects). Laws of the dead animals that cause tumah.

7- Items that can become tameh. Laws of kashroot for creeping creatures. Reason for Kashroot.

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

"The camel, though it chews the cud, its hoof is not split, it is tameh for you." (Vayikra 11:4)

It seems that the phrase "the camel though it chews its cud" in the verse is in an inappropriate place. Since the verse tells us the reason why we cannot eat this animal, why does it begin by stating a reason that we can eat it? The verse should have said, "But this is what you shall not eat from those that chew the cud or have split hooves, the camel, for its hoof is not split, even though it chews its cud." Why is the camel's "kosher sign" written first, or even at all?

Rabbi Moshe Kormornick, quotes the Keli Yakar that answers that the phrase "it chews its cud" is actually not coming to explain its "kosher sign." Rather, the exact opposite. The fact that the camel chews the cud, the kosher sign, is precisely what makes it even more treif, because pretending to be good when in fact you are not is a terrible character trait, worse than someone wicked who at least openly acts wickedly. Therefore, the Keli Yakar explains that this sort of animal is worse to eat as it represents more of a danger to the Jewish People who may be tricked by its kosher sign!

Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

On the inauguration day of the Mishkan (Tabernacle), the nation was commanded to bring

a goat and a calf as korbanot, sacrifices to Hashem. Rashi quotes a Midrash that says that the goat was intended to bring atonement for the sale of Yosef, during which the brothers dipped his coat in the blood of a goat. The calf was brought to atone for the sin of the golden calf. We can understand the reason why they needed to atone for the golden calf now, since the Mishkan itself was only necessary after they made this sin. But if we look at the story of the sale of Yosef, though, we see that the dipping of the coat was not such a significant part of the actual sale. Rather it was done simply to hide the fact of the sale from their father, Ya'akov. So how does a goat offering rectify the sin, and why do they need to bring this offering now?

Many commentaries explain that by the sin of the golden calf, the original intention was since they thought that Moshe had passed away, they wanted to create an intermediary between Hashem and the nation. The problem was that, even though their intentions may have been noble, they took matters into their own hands instead of consulting with the leaders. If they had asked Aharon and Hur (Miriam's son) who were appointed by Moshe to lead the nation while he was on Mount Sinai, they would have realized their mistake.

The sale of Yosef was very similar in this respect. The brothers had determined that Yosef was guilty, and they thought they were halachically correct in selling him. However, if they would have consulted with Ya'akov, Yitzhak, or with the court of Shem and Eber, they would have understood that they were mistaken. So the dipping of the coat magnifies their error. Not only did they not reveal their intention to their father, but they took great measures by dipping the coat in the goat's blood to make sure that he would not find out what they were doing. The nation therefore brought the goat offering at the inauguration of the mishkan to rectify this sin.

Later in the parashah, we read about the tragic death of Nadab and Abihu, two of Aharon's sons. Some explain that their sin was that they did not consult with Moshe and Aharon before bringing the fire into the Mishkan. It would seem that the punishment is very severe for such an infraction, but now we can understand better. Since the whole purpose of the day was to atone for sins that occurred due to a failure in asking the elders for advice, a violation of that nature would totally negate the entire process. Therefore their punishment needed to be swift. The people would then take the lesson to heart and do teshubah.

The Mishnah in Pirkei Abot (1:4) says, "Make for yourself a Rav." Every person needs to choose a Rabbi with whom he consults when he has any questions in halachah, hashkafah or any other aspect of religion. Our great Torah leaders have a special connection with Hashem, and when we ask them for guidance, it is as if we are asking Hashem Himself what we should do. This is a critical component of our religion and this is why it was given such a prominent place in the inauguration of the Mishkan.

Shabbat Shalom Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

Ethics of the Fathers

"And drink in their words thirstily" (Abot 1:4)

What is the analogy between studying Torah and drinking water thirstily?

To someone who is thirsty, every drop is precious. Likewise, every drop of Torah study should be precious and cherished. Just like one who is thirsty may even walk great lengths to reach a well, one should not hesitate even to travel a long distance in order to participate in a Torah study group.

Alternatively, since water is available in such abundant measure, the cost of a glass of water is very little. However, when one is dying of thirst and is given a glass of water, he does not just owe his benefactor the price of the water, but the value of his life since without the water his life might have come to an end, G-d forbid.

The message is: appreciate the words of Torah that the Rabbis share with you in the same

way that a thirsty man is indebted to the one who gave him water. In both cases, the recipient received an extension of life, one physical and the other spiritual. (Vedibarta Bam)

Let There Be Light

"Light is one of the most remarkable phenomena of physics. The light from the sun travels to us at the fantastic speed of 186,282 miles a second. If the sun was a little closer to us or if the sun were a little bigger, we would be burned to a crisp. We need the warmth of the sun at the right distance for human and animal life to exist and flourish the earth."

Reflection on the perfection of the creation illuminates the lights of the soul, bringing us closer to Hashem. (Norman D. Levy, based on Rabbi Miller's Duties of the Mind)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR
Visit DailyHalacha.com, DailyGemara.com,
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Understanding Humility

The events described in Parashat Shemini offer us a remarkable glimpse into the humble characters of Moshe and Aharon, and an opportunity to examine more closely the concept of humility and its importance in Torah life.

In this Parasha, the Torah tells us of the events of "opening day," the day the Mishkan was inaugurated and Aharon officiated as a Kohen for the very first time. G-d instructed Moshe that Aharon should offer a series of special sacrifices, after which the Shechina, the manifestation of the Divine Presence, would descend upon the Mishkan. Rashi (9:23) tells that after Aharon completed the service, he entered the Mishkan, but, to his disappointment, nothing happened. Aharon's reaction was something which we hear far too infrequently: "I know that the Almighty is angry with me, and it is because of me that the Shechina has not descended." In other words, Aharon blamed himself. Whereas most people tend to point fingers at others when things do not go as planned, casting accusations in every which direction except inward, Aharon placed the blame squarely upon himself, figuring that the Shechina did not descend because of his role in the sin of the golden calf. Aharon took the blame for the Shechina's absence.

Rashi continues that Moshe joined Aharon inside the Mishkan, prayed to G-d, and then the Shechina arrived. When Moshe returned outside, he said to the people, "My brother Aharon is worthier and more prominent than me, for it was through his sacrifices

and service that the Shechina shall reside among you.” We might have excused Moshe for feeling some degree of pride for bringing the Shechina, but this is not what he did. Quite to the contrary – he credited Aharon for this achievement, going so far as to explicitly say that Aharon was superior.

These events, as mentioned, provide a powerful lesson in humility. Humility means recognizing that we cannot take credit for our achievements. Most people try taking credit for even that which they did not do. Moshe and Aharon show us that we should avoid priding ourselves and seeking recognition even for that which we do.

Why is this so, and how does one develop this quality?

Quite simply, humility is about recognizing that everything we have is from G-d. Imagine a person receiving a million-dollar gift and then priding himself over his wealth. How can he take pride for something he did nothing to achieve? Well, this is the situation that each and every one of us finds himself in. Nothing we have is our own; it is all given to us by G-d. Even if we achieve through our intelligence and hard work, we must ask ourselves in all honesty, who enabled us to do that? G-d gives us our intelligence and energy, and He can take it away from us whenever He decides, in an instant. And, as we all know, there are no guarantees of success, no matter how bright one is, how hard he works, and how well-connected he is. We have nothing without G-d – not wealth, not intelligence, not health, not our families, not our intellectual achievements. So it is absurd for us to take pride in our accomplishments, every one of which is a gift granted to us by Hashem.

One of the most striking examples of humility told in the Torah is Abraham Abinu’s declaration, “Anochi Afar Ve’efer” – “I am but earth and ash” (Bereshit 18:27). Why did Abraham compare himself specifically to “earth and ash”? The Rabbi of Brisk explained that earth has no meaningful past, but has the potential for a great future, as it can produce valuable and nourishing vegetation, and majestic trees. Ash is just the opposite – it cannot be used for anything of significance in the present or future, but it was, in the past, something of significance. Abraham tells G-d that he is both earth and ash; he has accomplished nothing on his own in the past and can accomplish nothing on his own in the future. As a human being, he is entirely dependent on G-d for everything. He cannot take any credit for his achievements in the past and cannot look forward to any independent accomplishments in the future.

Humility assumes such an important role in Torah life because it is a natural outgrowth of our belief in G-d’s unlimited control over us and over the world. When we live with this awareness, we understand just how absurd it is to seek honor and recognition, and why we should be focusing our attention instead on bringing honor to the One who truly deserves it – the Almighty.

**VICTOR BIBI
SOD HAPARASHA**

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Rabbi Wein

How are we to view and deal with the unavoidable tragedies that occur to all of us in our lifetimes? No one really escapes unscathed and untroubled from life in this world. The nature of human beings is that we are all mortal and therefore sadness and tragedy are always waiting for us in the wings. As such, the story of the death of the two elder sons of Aaron as recorded for us in this week’s Torah reading has personal relevance to all of us.

In fact, all of Torah deals with our current lives and circumstances, even if perhaps it is not visible to our limited eyes and minds. But this startling narrative of tragedy and death striking the great family of Aaron and Moshe suddenly and without warning, marring the great day of anticipated celebration at the dedication of the holy Mishkan/Tabernacle, strikes us as being particularly poignant and depressing.

This is especially true because the tragic events were so unexpected and, to a great extent, remained inexplicable at least in ordinary human terms and understanding. There is an obvious lesson that the incense offering that had the power to arrest plague and save lives also had the ability to be lethal if used incorrectly and without Godly command and instruction. But the deeper, transcendent and overriding message of understanding the heavenly system of justice in the world, both on an individual and national basis, certainly escapes our understanding and thinking.

But what can certainly be learned from the words of the Torah is the reaction of Aaron to this shocking tragedy. The Torah records for us that Aaron remained silent. Jewish tradition holds that this type of reaction to tragedy is a correct and worthy one.

I have written often about the value of silence as exemplified in Jewish life and tradition. But here in the face of tragedy and unequalled personal pain, silence is perhaps the only reaction for human beings. Truth be told, there is really nothing that can be said to explain the judgments of Heaven.

This is one of the reasons that in visiting the house of a mourner, one should not speak unless and until the mourner has spoken. People should avoid saying things that are banal and trite for they bring little comfort and consolation to those who are bereaved. The entire book of Iyov teaches us the futility of railing against Heaven or of attempting to explain rationally what is essentially irrational and beyond the scope of our understanding.

It is interesting to note that throughout the world hospitals contain signs that ask for silence. This is not only for the comfort of the patients but is also a reminder that there is really nothing significant to say. Sympathy comes from the heart and not from the tongue. The greatest comfort one can bring to another human being many times is merely one's own presence without having to express any words.

Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks When Weakness Becomes Strength

Have you ever felt inadequate to a task you have been assigned or a job you have been given? Do you sometimes feel that other people have too high an estimate of your abilities? Has there been a moment when you felt like a faker, a fraud, and that at some time you would be found out and discovered to be the weak, fallible, imperfect human being you know in your heart you are?

If so, according to Rashi on this week's parsha, you are in very good company indeed. Here is the setting: The Mishkan, the Sanctuary, was finally complete. For seven days Moses had consecrated Aaron and his sons to serve as priests. Now the time had come for them to begin their service. Moses gives them various instructions. Then he says the following words to Aaron:

"Come near to the altar and offer your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and the people; sacrifice the offering that is for the people and make atonement for them, as the Lord has commanded." (Lev. 9:7)

The sages were puzzled by the instruction, "Come near." This seems to imply that Aaron had until then kept a distance from the altar. Why so? Rashi gives the following explanation:

Aaron was ashamed and fearful of approaching the altar. Moses said to him: "Why are you ashamed? It was for this that you were chosen."

There is a name for this syndrome, coined in 1978 by two clinical psychologists, Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes. They called it the imposter syndrome.[1] People who suffer from it feel that they do not deserve the success they have achieved.

They attribute it not to their effort and ability but to luck, or timing, or to the fact that they have deceived others into thinking that they are better than they actually are. It turns out to be surprisingly widespread, and particularly so among high achievers. Research has shown that around 40 per cent of successful people do not believe they deserve their success, and that as many as 70 per cent have felt this way at some time or other.

However, as one might imagine, Rashi is telling us something deeper. Aaron was not simply someone lacking in self-confidence. There was something specific that he must have had in mind on that day that he was inducted into the role of High Priest. For Aaron had been left in charge of the people while Moses was up the mountain receiving the Torah. That was when the sin of the Golden Calf took place. Reading that narrative, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that it was Aaron's weakness that allowed it to happen. It was he who suggested that the people give him their gold ornaments, he who fashioned them into a calf, and he who built an altar before it (Ex. 32:1-6). When Moses saw the Golden Calf and challenged Aaron—"What did these people do to you, that you brought upon them this great sin?"—he replied, evasively, "They gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!"

This was a man profoundly (and rightly) uncomfortable with his role in one of the most disastrous episodes in the Torah, and now he was being called to atone not only for himself but for the entire people. Was this not hypocrisy? Was he not himself a sinner? How could he stand before God and the people and assume the role of the holiest of men? No wonder he felt like an imposter and was ashamed and fearful of approaching the altar.

Moses, however, did not simply say something that would boost his self-confidence. He said something much more radical and life-changing: "It was for this that you were chosen." The task of a High Priest is to atone for people's sins. It was his role, on Yom Kippur, to confess his wrongs and failings, then those of his household, then those of the people as a whole (Lev. 16:11-17). It was his responsibility to plead for forgiveness.

"That," implied Moses, "is why you were chosen. You know what sin is like. You know what it is to feel guilt. You more than anyone else understand the need for repentance and atonement. You have felt the cry of

your soul to be cleansed, purified and wiped free of the stain of transgression. What you think of as your greatest weakness will become, in this role you are about to assume, your greatest strength."

How did Moses know this? Because he had experienced something similar himself. When God told him to confront Pharaoh and lead the Israelites to freedom, he repeatedly insisted that he could not do so. Reread his response to God's call to lead the Israelites out of Egypt (Ex. chapters 3-4), and they sound like someone radically convinced of his inadequacies. "Who am I?" "They won't believe in me." Above all, he kept repeating that he could not speak before a crowd, something absolutely necessary in a leader. He was not an orator. He did not have the voice of command:

Then Moses said to the Lord, "Please, my Lord, I am not a man of words, not yesterday, not the day before and not since You have spoken to Your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue." (Ex. 4:10) Moses said to the Lord, "Look, the Israelites do not listen to me. How then will Pharaoh listen to me? Besides, I have uncircumcised lips." (Ex. 6:12).

Moses had a speech defect. To him that was a supreme disqualification from being a mouthpiece for the Divine word. What he did not yet understand is that this was one of the reasons God chose him.

When Moses spoke the words of God, people knew he was not speaking his own words in his own voice. Someone else was speaking through him. This seems to have been the case for Isaiah and Jeremiah, both of whom were doubtful of their ability to speak and who became among the most eloquent of prophets.[2]

The people who can sway crowds with their oratory are generally speaking not prophets. Often they are, or become, dictators and tyrants. They use their power of speech to acquire more dangerous forms of power. God does not choose people who speak with their own voice, telling the crowds what they want to hear. He chooses people who are fully aware of their inadequacies, who stammer literally or metaphorically, who speak not because they want to but because they have to, and who tell people what they do not want to hear, but what they must hear if they are to save themselves from catastrophe. What Moses thought was his greatest weakness was, in fact, one of his greatest strengths.

The point here is not a simple "I'm OK, You're OK" acceptance of weakness. That is not what Judaism is about. The point is the struggle. Moses and Aaron in their different ways had to wrestle with themselves. Moses was not a natural leader. Aaron was not a natural priest. Moses had to accept that one of his most important qualifications was what nowadays we would call his low self image, but what, operating from a completely different mindset, the Torah calls

his humility. Aaron had to understand that his own experience of sin and failure made him the ideal representative of a people conscious of their own sin and failure. Feelings of inadequacy – the imposter syndrome – can be bad news or good news depending on what you do with them. Do they lead you to depression and despair? Or do they lead you to work at your weaknesses and turn them into strengths?

The key, according to Rashi in this week's parsha, is the role Moses played at this critical juncture in Aaron's life. He had faith in Aaron even when Aaron lacked faith in himself. That is the role God Himself played, more than once, in Moses' life. And that is the role God plays in all our lives if we are truly open to Him. I have often said that the mystery at the heart of Judaism is not our faith in God. It is God's faith in us. This then is the life-changing idea: what we think of as our greatest weakness can become, if we wrestle with it, our greatest strength. Think of those who have suffered tragedy and then devote their lives to alleviating the suffering of others. Think of those who, conscious of their failings, use that consciousness to help others overcome their own sense of failure. What makes Tanakh so special is its total candour about humanity. Its heroes – Moses, Aaron, Isaiah, Jeremiah – all knew times when they felt like failures, "imposters." They had their moments of dark despair. But they kept going. They refused to be defeated. They knew that a sense of inadequacy can bring us closer to God, as King David said: "My sacrifice [i.e. what I bring as an offering to You] O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise" (Ps. 51:19).

Better by far to know you are imperfect than to believe you are perfect. God loves us and believes in us despite, and sometimes because of, our imperfections. Our weaknesses make us human; wrestling with them makes us strong.

[1] Pauline Clance and Suzanne Ament Imes, "The Imposter Phenomenon in High Achieving Women: Dynamics and Therapeutic Intervention." *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1978, pp. 241–247.

[2] There is a striking secular example: Winston Churchill had both a lisp and a stutter and though he fought against both, they persisted long into adulthood. Because of this, he had to think carefully in advance about his major speeches. He was fastidious in writing or dictating them beforehand, rewriting key phrases until the last moment. He used short words wherever possible, made dramatic use of pauses and silences, and developed an almost poetic use of rhythm. The result was not only that he became a great speaker. His speeches, especially over the radio during the Second World War, were a major factor in rousing the spirit of the nation. In the words of Edward Murrow he "mobilised the English language and sent it into battle."

Rav Kook on the Perasha The Error of Nadav and Avihu

In the midst of the great public joy during the Tabernacle dedication, tragedy struck the family of the Kohen Gadol:

“Aaron’s sons, Nadav and Avihu, each took his fire pan, placed fire on it and then incense. They offered before God a strange fire that God had not instructed them. Fire came forth from before God and consumed them; and they died before God.” (Lev. 10:1-2)

Why did Nadav and Avihu die? What was their sin?

Chochmah and Binah

The Kabbalists explained that Nadav and Avihu erred by separating the spiritual realm of binah (insight) from the higher realm of chochmah (wisdom). To understand this statement, we must first clarify the concepts of chochmah and binah.

Chochmah is the very essence of holiness. It is pure awareness, a flash of intuitive understanding. This lofty perception contains the splendor of sublime ideals at their highest level, before they are applied to the detailed characteristics of reality. Compared to the infinite expanse of chochmah, all else is small and inconsequential.

Below chochmah lies the spiritual realm of binah. Binah is an elaboration and extension of chochmah. This realm is created when the light of chochmah is ready to realize the ideals that govern finite content, enabling the formation of worlds and souls. Binah reflects reality in its most idealized form. It corresponds to the sublime purpose of creation and the culmination of life.

Exquisite beauty and delight are revealed in the realm of binah. Enlightenment through prophecy emanates from this realm. The absolute holiness of chochmah, on the other hand, transcends all forms of spiritual pleasure.

Israel draws its inner spirit from the transcendent realm of chochmah. As the Zohar states, “Oraita mechochmah nafkat” — the Torah emanates from chochmah. The source of Israel’s faith is beyond all spiritual delight, beyond all ideals. Ideals belong to the realm of binah. Ultimately, they restrict our aspirations and are unable provide an absolute and constant level of morality.

Separating Binah from Chochmah

Nadav and Avihu drew their inspiration from the wellsprings of binah. They sought the sublime experiences that characterize this realm, a spiritual grandeur that is accessible in our world. Due to their heightened awareness of their own greatness, however, they mistakenly saw in the holy realm of binah the ultimate source of reality. They placed all of their aspirations in this spiritual realm.

By doing so, they abandoned the higher source of light that transcends all spiritual freedom and joy. The true basis of life is rooted in the supernal realm of chochmah and Torah. Unpunished, their mistake would have brought about the collapse of the world’s moral foundations. History is testimony to movements dedicated to great ideals that, because they were not anchored to the elevated source of chochmah, descended into the darkest depths of ignorance and cruelty.¹

Nadav and Avihu erred by pursuing the spiritual joys of prophecy and inspiration in a form detached from Torah and its practical teachings. This is what the Kabbalists meant by saying that Nadav and Avihu divided binah from chochmah. They tried to attain closeness to the Holy on their own initiative, offering a fire “that God had not instructed them.” The various explanations for their behavior suggested by the Sages — that they were inebriated, that their heads were uncovered (a sign that they lacked proper awe of Heaven), that they taught Torah in front of their teacher - all reflect the same basic flaw. Nadav and Avihu concentrated their efforts on their own spiritual attainments, without integrating the discipline of Torah. They were highly aware of their own spiritual greatness, but personal holiness must be negated before the higher light of Torah.

Repairing the Mistake of Nadav and Avihu

The Torah stresses that Nadav and Avihu had no children. Their service of God was not one that could be transmitted to future generations. And yet their independent spirit and idealism has an important place in the future Messianic Era:

“Remember the Torah of Moses My servant, which I enjoined him on Horev, laws and statutes for all of Israel. Behold, I am sending you the prophet Elijah before God’s great and terrible day. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers.” (Malachi 3:22-24)

Malachi envisioned a future reconciliation between fathers and children. His prophecy also mentions Elijah the prophet and the Torah of Moses. What is the connection between these different themes?

The pre-Messianic Era is a time characterized by a tragic rift between the younger generation, idealistic and independent in spirit, and the older generation, faithful to the old traditions and the Torah of Moses. This divide parallels the sin of Nadav and Avihu, who separated binah from chochmah, dividing the ideals from their eternal source.

But the unique personality of Elijah, combining the prophetic ideals of justice with zeal for God's covenant and Torah, will repair this rift. It is Elijah's synthesis of Torah and idealism that will reconcile the generations. And together, the passionate spirit of youth (binah), together with the orderly and practical wisdom of the elders (chochmah), will bring about the final redemption.

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Orot HaKodesh, vol. II, pp. 283-286; vol. III, pp. 360-361)

1 How many million have perished in wars over religious beliefs, as well as political ideologies such as communism and fascism?

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

“Derech erez precedes the acquisition of Torah”

We traditionally study the Mishnayot of Perke Abot, The Ethics of the Fathers, during the weeks between Pesach and Shavuot. These Mishnayot are especially selected because of the instruction/mussar of our great Sages through which we can perfect our character in order to be prepared to accept Hashem's Torah. This is one way to understand why Sefer Beresheet, which includes only 3 Mitzvot, preceded Sefer Shemot, which includes the giving of the Torah. Sefer Beresheet is known as Sefer Derech Eretz. Through the many episodes which Hashem relates to us, we can see clear examples of Good & Evil, Kindliness, Honesty, Loyalty, Respect, Reward & Punishment, Power of Prayer, Prophecy, Inspiration, Family, Plan & Purpose, Hashem, Self Control... Beresheet is filled with models of good character in order for us to follow them to be prepared to be able to accept the Torah.

The Gaon of Vilna, in 'Even Shelema', opens his Sefer with this great principle.

“All Hashem's service is dependent upon the improvement of one's character. Character traits are fundamental to the performance of Mitzvot and to Torah principles”.

The Rambam devotes a whole chapter in his 'Yad Hachazaka' to the subject of perfecting our character traits. He titles it 'Hilchot De'ot', The Laws of Opinions. When we study this chapter we do not find any ideas regarding 'opinions'. It contains detailed instructions regarding correcting and perfecting our character traits.

So, why did Rambam name his chapter 'De'ot' (opinions/ideas) and not 'Midot' (character traits)? In order to teach us the real sources of both 'Opinions' & 'Character Traits'.

“Opinions (good or bad ideas) are what shape our Character. And Character (healthy or otherwise) will determine our opinions”.

Perke Abot 3:13

“He (R' Channina Ben Dosa) used to say, If the spirit of one's fellow is pleased with him, then the spirit of Hashem is pleased with him”.

Rabbi Miller ZT'L would say that this Mishna provides an answer to the big question which we should all have. How can I realize what Hashem feels about me. If He would only just send me a telegram and let me know.

Hashem is telling us through this Mishna that when people are pleased with us, this indicates that Hashem is pleased with us.

Therefore, a purpose in life is to make sure people are pleased with us.

17th Yahrzeit of Rabbi Miller A'H Thursday 27 Nissan