



Parshat Tazria/HaChodesh 27 Adar 2, 5774/March 29, 2014 Vol. 5 Num. 29

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 Rabbis Adam Frieberg, Ezra Goldschmiedt, Josh Gutenberg, Yair Manas, David Teller and Dovid Zirkind

A Sin Offering for Giving Birth? Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

The beginning of our parshah, apart from teaching us about *brit milah*, focusses on the *tumah* (ritual impurity) caused for a woman who gives birth, and the sacrifice brought in order to remove it. The sacrifice is titled *chatat*, which is usually rendered as “sin offering”, because its ritual is normally carried out by a person who has sinned.

The Talmud (Keritot 26a) states explicitly that the woman who gives birth has not sinned, and her offering is not a true “sin offering” – but then why does she become impure, and why does the Torah require this offering at all, for what seems to be the epitome of a good deed, bringing a new life into this world?

The Garden of Eden

One approach is found in Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim Luntschitz’s Kli Yakar commentary. (Vayikra 12:2) Rabbi Luntschitz explains that the source of this impurity is the punishment of Chavah in the Garden of Eden, “In sorrow you will give birth.” (Bereishit 3:16)

The sin, according to the Kli Yakar, is in eating from the Tree of Knowledge. The birth process should have been clean and easy, just as agricultural development should have been. (See Ramban to Bereishit 2:8.) Eating from the forbidden fruit caused the hardships of the field and of giving birth. The woman experiencing these hardships while giving birth reconnects to this early sin, and is thus required to purify and atone.

The Oath

A different approach was suggested by

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (Niddah 31b, adapted from Soncino translation): “Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai was asked by his disciples: Why did the Torah ordain that a woman should bring a sacrifice after childbirth? He replied: When she kneels in bearing a child, she swears impetuously that she will not have relations with her husband. The Torah, therefore, ordained that she should bring a sacrifice...”

According to Rabbi Shimon, both the sacrifice and the impurity are tied to the woman’s relationship with her husband. The Talmud continues to clarify that Rabbi Shimon’s words are not meant literally; no real oath has taken place, for an oath would actually require a different kind of korban. Rather, Rabbi Shimon should be understood figuratively; the hardships of labour separate the husband and wife.

As I once heard from my Rabbi and mentor, Rabbi Mosheh Lichtenstein, the husband symbolizes the world outside of the mother and her baby. In the first weeks after birth, the mother is focused on the young infant. This narrowing of her focus, while obviously justified and needed, comes at the expense of her duties toward her husband, the world, and even G-d. Thus, while the new mother is withdrawing she is considered impure, and she needs to bring a sin offering at the end of this period.

The sin of creation

A third explanation may be added. It is not only the woman who gives birth who is required to bring an unusual sin offering; the same requirement is due from G-d, as it were, for “giving birth” to the world. In a well-known midrash

(Talmud, Shevuot 9a), we learn that G-d is obligated to bring a sin offering for making the Moon smaller than the Sun.

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, in a published letter (Igrot haRaayah 1:108), hinted at the following explanation for the Divine sin offering: the Sun represents the ideal that instigated Creation, and the Moon represents the practical realization of that ideal. The “sin” attributed to G-d, thus, is Creation itself, which fails to fully represent the pure ideal behind it. For this, a sin offering is being brought every Rosh Chodesh.

Giving birth is similar, in many ways, to creation of a world (Talmud, Sanhedrin 37a), and so a similar explanation may be offered here. Giving birth is the ultimate act of kindness and a profound mitzvah (see Tosafot Gittin 41b *shene’emar*), but it is also an act of bringing potential into reality, and losing some of the potential light along the way. In our practical world, the mother won’t be able to be the perfect mother she dreams of being, and the child will not be able to realize every skill and ability given to him by G-d. The mother, then, experiences a period of impurity and brings this “sin offering” in recognition of these inherent failures, and with a prayer for the day in which, “The light of the moon shall be like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold as the light of the seven days, on the day when G-d shall bind the fracture of His people, and their wound He shall heal.” (Yeshayahu 30:26)

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Who is the prophet of our haftorah?

Yechezkel, son of Buzi, was a priest who was exiled from Israel before the destruction of the first Beit haMikdash. Some suggest that “Buzi” is actually Yirmiyahu. His book begins in Babylon, although the first half of the book (until Chapter 24) records rebukes he had issued before the destruction of the Beit haMikdash, against the sins and corruption of the Jewish nation.

After G-d’s decision to destroy the Beit haMikdash, Yechezkel turns to the surrounding nations and prophesies their own destruction as a punishment for the suffering they have inflicted upon the Jewish nation. Then, from Chapter 33 to the end, Yechezkel focuses mainly on consolation for the devastated Jews, predicting their redemption and salvation.

What is the message of our haftorah?

Our haftorah describes Yechezkel’s vision regarding a future Beit haMikdash to be built, and the sacrifices to be brought therein on certain special occasions. The first date mentioned is the first day of Nisan, in which a young bull should be sacrificed as a korban chatat [“sin offering”]. The haftorah continues to describe other holidays and their sacrifices, all of which are performed by the *nasi*, a political leader.

The Sages were troubled by the fact that the listed sacrifices are not the ones prescribed for those dates in the Torah itself. For example, Yechezkel says that on the first day of Nisan we will sacrifice one bull as a korban chatat, but the Torah requires us to sacrifice a korban olah [“burnt offering”] on that day.

The Talmud (Menachot 45a) records a disagreement among the Sages as to the resolution of this problem. Rabbi Yosi says that Yechezkel’s offerings are special sacrifices, brought as part of the *miluim* investiture of a new Beit haMikdash. According to that view, Yechezkel referred to the dedication of the second Beit HaMikdash, and the *nasi* involved was Ezra. Rabbi Yehudah, in contrast, believes that Yechezkel was describing the service in the third Beit HaMikdash, and at that time Eliyahu will explain to us how to reconcile it with the halachot known to us from the Torah. Perhaps Rabbi Yehudah would identify Eliyahu himself as the *nasi* responsible for these offerings.

What is the connection to Parshat HaChodesh?

The special maftir for “HaChodesh” is read on the Shabbat preceding the first of Nisan, and so the obvious connection between the maftir and our haftorah is the special sacrifice

identified in our haftorah for the first of Nisan.

There may be another connection, as well. The maftir of HaChodesh presents the first mitzvah given to the Jews as a nation, to calculate the calendar. This commandment requires political institutions; the ability to decide how to count months and years exists only if the whole nation accepts the authority of those who make the decision. Indeed, the institution of a separate calendar was a major step in the nation’s voyage towards independence and self-government.

Our haftorah presents the other side of this coin: the responsibility of the authorities, political or spiritual (see Rashi to Yechezkel 45:17), to the people. As our haftorah says, “And the burnt offerings and the grain offerings and the libations on the Festivals and on the New Moons and on the Sabbaths, and on all the times fixed for meetings of the House of Israel, shall devolve on the *nasi*; he shall prepare the sin offering and the grain offering and the burnt offering and the peace offering, to effect atonement for the House of Israel.” (45:17) The *nasi* is assigned a mission of great responsibility, the atonement for the house of Israel.

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613 Mitzvot: #365-367**The Sotah Ritual**

One of the most incomprehensible mitzvot in the Torah is the law of the sotah, described by the Sefer haChinuch in mitzvot 365-367.

The Torah (Bamidbar 5:11-31, as explained in Masechet Sotah) says that if a married woman is secluded with a man who is not her husband for a period of time in which relations could have taken place, and this is a man who already is suspected of impropriety with her, and she denies any wrongdoing, and her husband has no similar guilt, then she brings a special, plain barley flour-offering to the Beit haMikdash. A kohen reads to her a section from the Torah describing the laws of sotah and then erases it into water, and then she drinks the water. If the woman is guilty, the water supernaturally harms her from the inside; the Talmud (Sotah 28a) adds that the man with whom she did this is similarly supernaturally punished. If the woman is innocent, then she receives supernatural rewards, including, according to the Torah’s text (Bamidbar 5:28), pregnancy.

Much of this ritual is perplexing. For example:

- The biblical law of *yichud* has been broken by this man and woman who were secluded together. Under the Torah’s standard rules, there should be a trial in beit din, and a penalty should be meted out to the guilty parties.
- The ritual itself violates biblical law. In erasing a portion of

the Torah into the water, the kohen erases G-d’s Name, violating a biblical prohibition.

- The Talmud seems most uncomfortable with the ritual. Talmudic sages (Sotah 2b-3a) condemn a husband who warns his wife lest she be alone with a particular man; giving this warning is actually prohibited.
- Despite the stark biblical account, it appears that this is a voluntary ordeal. As noted by *Sefer haChinuch* (365), a woman could not be compelled to participate in this ritual; she was able to decline to participate.
- Perhaps most perplexing is the ritual’s invocation of the supernatural; is there any other mitzvah, let alone judicial process, which so entirely relies upon Divine intervention in human affairs as its basic mechanism?

One interesting approach is to understand that this is not a judicial proceeding at all; rather, it is a rite intended to bring peace in a troubled marital relationship. As *Sefer haChinuch* explains it, the Torah lends the authority of the Beit haMikdash to a woman who wishes to clear her name of suspicion and redeem a troubled relationship.

There is much more to say, of course...

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Biography

Rabbi Yaakov Kanaievsky

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Chaim Peretz Kanaievsky was a Chernobyler chasid and shochet who lived in the village of Hornostaipil, about 100 kilometers north of Kiev, toward the end of the 19th century. His first wife passed away when he was sixty years old; on the counsel of the Rabbi, he remarried. The couple's first child, born in 1899, was named Yaakov Yisrael; the world would come to know him as "The Steipler Gaon".

At the age of eleven, Yaakov was sent to learn in Novardok, where he gained a reputation for scholarship and diligence. In 1918, the Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Yosef Yoizel Horowitz, appointed him to establish a branch of the yeshiva in Rogatchov, but there Yaakov Yisrael was conscripted into the Red Army.

Numerous stories are told regarding young Rabbi Kanaievsky's commitment to mitzvot while serving in the army. He remarked on the satisfaction of being beaten because of his commitment to Shabbat observance, and he is said to have avoided wearing a warm uniform during the Siberian winter out of concern for *shaatnez*. Eventually he was discharged, with damaged hearing; some versions attribute this to childhood typhus, others due to the cold to which his ears were exposed while in the army.

Upon being discharged, Rabbi Kanaievsky moved to Bialystok, where he continued to learn and began to publish works of Jewish law. He became Rosh Yeshiva of the Novardok yeshiva's branch in Pinsk, and he married Miriam Karelitz, sister of the Chazon Ish. In 1934, Rabbi and Rebbetzin Kanaievsky made aliyah, moving to Bnei Brak, where the Chazon Ish already lived. For the next fifty years, Rabbi Kanaievsky dedicated himself to studying and publishing Torah, teaching students and counseling the many who approached him for aid. Rabbi Kanaievsky passed away in 1985; more than 150,000 people participated in his funeral.

Rabbi Kanaievsky's best-known work is his *Kehilot Yaakov* collection of novellae on the Talmud. His letters have been published in volumes entitled *Karyana d'Igrita*, and descriptions of his practices have been published in *Orchot Rabbeinu*. Rabbi Yaakov Meir Greenwald consulted Rabbi Kanaievsky frequently on matters of mental and emotional health; he collected the correspondence and published it, with commentary, in a sensitive and insightful work called *Eitzot v'Hadrachot*.

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Torah and Translation

Dealing with Feelings of Guilt

Eitzot v'Hadrachot pg. 87

based on the letters of Rabbi Yaakov Kanaievsky

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

ממדת כוחות הנפש הוא שכשהאדם עושה דבר שלא היה לו לעשותו או חושב מחשבה שלא היה לו לחושבו, מיד מתעוררים בו רגשי אשמה. ובאמת יש תפקיד חשוב לכוח-נפש זה שהוא מעורר את האדם ותובע אותו לא לשוב לחטא או להתנהג בענין זה עוד. וזה האופן הנורמלי.

ואולם האדם אשר נכשל בחטא... ומרגיש רגשי אשמה עד כדי שיעסיקו את מחשבותיו כל היום, וכל הזמן הוא עושה חשבונות מדוע ועל מה קרה ככה וכדומה, ואינו יכול לרכז מחשבתו, ואינו לומד ומתפלל כראוי כיון שמחשבתו טרודה ואינה נותנת לו שום מנוחה – ידע שאין זה רצון הבורא יתברך, ואין זה אופן הראוי להשתמש בכוח זה.

והעצה: שכל משך היום לא יחשוב ולא ידאג כלל על מה שאירע, רק יקבע לעצמו זמן מוגבל ביום כמו רבע שעה, שדוקא אז באותו הזמן הקבוע יעשה חשבון הנפש כמו שכתב האר"י ז"ל שדאגת עוונות אינה ראויה כי אם בשעת הוידוי ולא בשעת התפלה ותלמוד תורה, שצריך להיות בשמחה. ורק אז יעשה חשבון הנפש על פי דברי חז"ל והרמב"ם ז"ל בהלכות תשובה בהתבוננות ושימת לב, ויחשוב אז על ענייני עזיבת החטא וחרטה וקבלה על העתיד.

ומיד אחר עבור הזמן יחזור ללימודו בשמחה רבה ומתוך הודאה להקב"ה על חסדו הגדול, שנתן לנו עצה נפלאה זו על ידי מצות תשובה להסיר מעלינו צער ופגמי הנפש, וכל היום כולו לא יחשוב על זה כלל ורק יעסוק בתורה בנפש פניצה, וירגיש שמחה מופרזה כשלבנו מלא בחכמה.

Among the traits of the spirit is this: When a person does something he ought not to have done, or he thinks a thought he ought not to have thought, immediately, feelings of guilt are awakened in him. In truth, this spiritual trait plays an important role, awakening the person and demanding that he not return to sin or act in that way again. This is the normal mode.

However, one who stumbles in sin... and experiences feelings of guilt to the point that they occupy his thoughts all day, and who continually analyzes why and for what reason this happened and the like, and who cannot focus his thoughts, and who does not learn and pray properly because his thoughts are disturbed and don't give him any rest – he should know that this is not the desire of the Creator, and this is not the proper way to use this [spiritual] trait.

Advice: All day, he should neither think nor worry at all about what happened. He should only establish for himself a fixed time of day, about a quarter-hour, and only during that set time should he make a spiritual accounting. As the Ari z"l wrote, worry over sin is suitable only during the time of *viduy* [confession], not during the time of prayer and Torah study, which must be experienced in happiness. Only then [during that set time] should he make the spiritual accounting, as described in the words of our Sages, and the Rambam in his Laws of Repentance, with contemplation and the focus of his attention. Then he should think about abandoning the sin, regretting and commitment for the future.

Immediately after the time passes, he should return to his learning in great joy, out of gratitude to G-d for His great kindness, giving us this marvelous strategy via the mitzvah of repentance to remove our pain and our spiritual defects. All day, he should not think about this [sin] at all, and only involve himself in Torah with a willing spirit, and he should feel boundless joy when his heart is full of wisdom.

27 Adar 2 is Shabbat

For more than thirty years, Israel and Egypt were essentially in a state of war. After intense negotiation, the two nations signed a peace deal on 27 Adar 2 (March 26), 1979. This deal was brokered by US President Jimmy Carter, and was signed in Washington, D.C. by Egyptian President Anwar El Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin.

The agreement contained a number of important features. These included a commitment by both parties to recognize one another as sovereign states, a plan to normalize their political relations by exchanging ambassadors, and an Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula. In exchange for the withdrawal of Israel from the area, Egypt agreed not to militarize the Sinai area. Egypt also agreed to allow Israeli ships to pass through the Suez Canal, and to acknowledge the Strait of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba as international

waterways. This agreement made Egypt the first Arab state to officially recognize the State of Israel.

While the peace between Israel and Egypt has lasted since the treaty was signed, the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 led to fears in Israel about the future of the treaty. The relationship has always been one of “cold peace”, and annual aid of 1.3 billion dollars from the US to Egypt has encouraged them to keep the status quo. Nonetheless, a real possibility for the death of this treaty looms. The Deputy chief of Egypt’s largest party, the Muslim Brotherhood, has said that they would not recognize Israel’s right to exist, and that the treaty is non-binding and should be put to a referendum. The former Egyptian president, Mohammed Morsi, had vowed to respect the Egypt-Israel peace treaty. With the political winds swirling, the treaty currently remains intact, but only time will tell if that will remain true.

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Highlights for March 29 – April 4 / 27 Adar 2 – 4 Nisan

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
TUES-THURS. 6 AM	R' Josh Gutenberg	Daf Yomi	BAYT	
SHABBAT MAR 29				
Before minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Daf Yomi	BAYT	
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah 38b Bishul Akum	BAYT	
SUNDAY MAR. 30				
8:45 - 10 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Halachah and Law: Bankruptcy and Jewish Law	BAYT	CPD for lawyers Open to non-lawyers
9:15 AM	R' Shalom Krell	Kuzari	Zichron Yisroel	With light breakfast
8:00 PM	R' Baruch Weintraub	Questions in Contemporary Israel: Women in the IDF On-line shiur in Hebrew: http://www.torontotorah.com/online		
MONDAY MAR. 31				
8:00 PM	R' Josh Gutenberg R' Mordechai Torczyner	Parshah Medical Halachah: Shabbat	Shaarei Shomayim	Community Beit Midrash Night
8:00 PM	Rav Shlomo Gemara	Prophets of Israel: Yoel	Bnai Torah	
TUESDAY APR. 1 Rosh Chodesh Nisan				
12:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Living Midrash	Shaarei Shomayim	
8:30 PM	Adam Frieberg	Exploring Laws of Shabbat	Shaarei Tefillah	
WED. APR. 2				
1:00 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Book of Yehoshua	101 Tangreen Circle	For women only
8:00 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Pesach: Seder & Haggadah	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Community Beit Midrash Night
9:00 PM	R' Yehoshua Weber	Respona: Kol Isha		
THU. APR. 3				
8:50 AM	R' Aaron Greenberg	Laws of Shabbat	Yeshivat Or Chaim	University students
FRI. APR. 4				
10:30 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Contemporary Halachah	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced shiur

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