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The Inside Story

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm z"l (Originally delivered March 20, 1965)

Our sages, who normally adhere strictly to principle and are unconcerned with popular reactions and public opinion, show a remarkable divergence from this method in a comment that has relevance to this morning's Torah reading. The end of our Sidra tells us about the מילואים, the consecration of the Priests for their service in the Temple. In addition to the various ceremonies that had to be performed, they were commanded, ומפתח אוהל מועד לא תצאו שבעת ימים, *"and from the door of the tent of meeting shall ye not go out for seven days."* For a full week they were required to stay within the "tent of meeting," that miniature sanctuary which was later to become the institution of the Temple. The Talmud (Yoma 2b) derives therefrom other laws as well, among them that the כהן גדול, the High Priest, had to remain within the Temple for seven days before Yom Kippur. Every year he was to set aside this week and remain completely within the Sanctuary, in a chamber known as the לשכת פרהדרין, there to prepare himself for the holiest day of the year.

Now, as we all know, any room or house which serves as a residence requires that we affix a mezuzah to the doorpost. Nevertheless, for certain reasons, the Temple rooms were exempt from this obligation of mezuzah. Hence, the לשכת פרהדרין did not require a mezuzah. However, R. Judah (Yoma 10b) is of a somewhat different opinion. He maintains, together with his colleagues, that no chamber of the many within the Temple required a mezuzah. The לשכת פרהדרין, the chamber where the High Priest stayed for seven days, similarly did not require the mezuzah insofar as the law was technically and officially concerned. However, R. Judah maintains that the Rabbis promulgated a special decree requiring only of the לשכת פרהדרין that it be adorned with a mezuzah. The reason offered by R. Judah is amazing: שלא יאמרו כהן גדול חבוש בבית האסורים, so that the people will not say, "the High

Priest is imprisoned in the Sanctuary!" R. Judah feared that when the people congregated during the High Holy Days around the Temple, they would notice that after the Priest went into the Sanctuary until after Yom Kippur, he did not emerge for seven full days. Not noticing a mezuzah on the doorpost, and therefore not considering the לשכת פרהדרין as his personal residence, they might be led to the fantastic conclusion that as a result of some inner court politics the High Priest was incarcerated in the Sanctuary! Therefore, in order to avoid such a public misinterpretation, let there be a mezuzah affixed on the doorpost on the לשכת פרהדרין, so that the people will consider this chamber as the High Priest's residence and not regarded him as a prisoner within the Temple walls. This decree, according to R. Judah, was made, as we moderns would be wont to say, to safeguard the "image" of the Priesthood.

More remarkable than this rare example of the concern for the opinion of the unlearned masses, is the vast difference between the real facts and the distorted impressions. Here was the כהן גדול, the cynosure of all eyes, the focus of the attention of all Israel as they gathered in Jerusalem on the holy days, representing his people Israel before his Creator in Heaven, engaged in spiritual exercises of the highest order, reaching the very zenith of his career in this marvelous consecration of his whole personality to the great spiritual tasks that lay ahead of him on Yom Kippur – what greater joy, what more poignant delight? Yet, an uninstructed public that cannot emancipate itself from its petty and prosaic prejudices, comes to the bizarre conclusion: כהן גדול חבוש בבית האסורים! They do not see the High Priest engaged in the normal insignificant details of their own trivial lives, no going in and no going out, no rushing to work and no coffee breaks, no entertainment and no luxuries, and so they assume that the High Priest is locked up within! Were it not for that mezuzah on the doorpost of his chamber, the public indeed might consider

the High Priest imprisoned!

How does such a jarring discrepancy come about, that people can consider a man in jail when he is at the heights of his joy, that they behold a burden when he experiences a blessing? The answer, it would seem, depends on how you view the sanctuary of Judaism: as an insider or as an outsider. If you look at the Sanctuary from the point of view as an insider, you gain a totally different view from that of an outsider. If you are an outsider looking in, a spectator, you can never experience that which the insider does: the subtle joys, the daily delights, the sense of newness and rebirth. Viewed from without, the Priests appear as prisoners, when in fact they are the princes of the Lord! From without, all one can see is the High Priest חבוש בבית האסורים, incarcerated; whereas the High Priest as the insider experiences the feeling of being – as the Torah puts it – לפני ה', "before the Lord" – a rare opportunity for an ennobling and elevating awareness of God's ineffable Presence. But this an outsider cannot know, any more – to borrow and modify a parable from the Baal Shem Tov – than one who looks into a room from the street, beyond sound-proof windows. He does not see the musicians who stand on the side, and he does not hear the music; he sees only people dancing. Inside, the dancers hear the music, and they respond with the joyous rhythm of their whole bodies. But he, the outsider, sees only meaningless gesticulations, and what appear to him as the weird convulsions of the demented.

This tendency to be an outsider is a fact of life in general today. Social thinkers from psychologists and sociologists to philosophers comment regularly about the phenomenon of "alienation." It affects every aspect of thought and activity of contemporary man. A recent philosophic conference, well reported in the press, came to this conclusion: today we know more than ever before – but we understand less. We have become statistic dilettantes who peddle figures but are alien to life's profoundest experiences; who can quote prices and facts and costs and numbers, but who have failed to take the plunge into life's bitter-sweet mysteries.

And how eccentric and distorted is the view of the perpetual outsider! For instance, one who does not sense the historic drama of the struggle for human equality and dignity in our days, may view the Northern civil rights enthusiasts who travel to Selma to demonstrate as publicity-seekers or, at best, unfortunate young people who have foolishly traded in the conveniences of home for the discomfort and danger of a civil rights demonstration.

He is completely oblivious to the thrill experienced by the insider, that joy of participation in a great human cause that penetrates to the marrow of the bone. Similarly, outsiders find it hard to understand why American Jews are so agitated about the lack of matzohs for Russian Jewry, about the fact that 300,000 Jews in Kiev will this year have no matzoh. They fail to appreciate that this is more than merely a secular democratic protest for the freedom of religion; were it but that, we would have many other things to object to, and not only concerning the oppression of Judaism. But matzoh, as an insider appreciates, is the awareness of being a link in the historical chain that goes back to antiquity; it is, as well, the symbol of fellowship with other Jews in the present, even those beyond the Iron Curtain; and it is the hope, that just as once before Israel experienced יציאת מצרים, so will it someday experience יציאת רוסיה, the exodus from Russia, and all other houses of slavery in modern days.

Indeed, when it comes to religion, especially Judaism, this difference between those within the Temple and Torah and those without it become more pronounced. More than once do I recall from my experience being introduced to a well-meaning stranger as an Orthodox Jew or Rabbinical student, or Orthodox Rabbi. To my infinite annoyance there spreads on the face of the stranger the look of incredulosity, and he says: "Orthodox – and you so young?" As if Torah were an affliction brought on by old age, a kind of spiritual geriatrics. How frustrating and often how futile to have to explain that to be "frum" is not to be a fossil, and to be religious is not to be a relic. How amusing and yet how tragic to have to explain that we observe Torah not because we are חבוש בבית האסורים, not because parents force us or circumstances coerce us or because of habit of fear or need, but because we love and desire to live a meaningful Jewish life לפני ה', "before the Lord."

No doubt many of those here today have had similar experiences. Someone learns you are an observant Orthodox Jew, and he clucks his tongue in sympathy, feeling genuinely sorry for you, and responds in a half-admiring and half-pitying tone: "You observe the Sabbath, with all its restrictions? You cannot smoke or travel or write?" And we must explain: Sabbath is for us not a day of gloom and restriction, but one of עונג, unadulterated joy, when (without being an ecstatic mystic) an ordinary observant Jew can experience נשמה יתרה, the "additional soul" that comes from a day of pure rest and re-creation, when we feel liberated from the tyranny of all the pettiness that surrounds us during the week. Or someone discovers

that you believe in and practice the laws of “family purity.” And again the incredulous reaction, with a mixture of pity and admiration: “You really practice these ascetic regulations denying your basic drives?” And we have to explain so patiently: No, it is no asceticism, but a healthy and vital self-discipline, which ennoble the animal within us and purifies and sublimates it, and makes of marriage a dream, not a nightmare. So, we observe Kashrut and we expect no awards and want no sympathy for it. It simply is part of our life of קדושה, the practical program of Jewish holiness and differentness. And the very fact of the observance of Kashrut away from home, with all the minor inconveniences it entails, that by itself gives us the feeling of being at home everywhere!

Indeed in every area of life, the outsider sees not only size and number rather than content and quality, the conventional rather than the moral, the fashionable rather than that which is indeed dignified, opinions rather than ideas. He beholds a synagogue and can see only the membership and budget and activities and aesthetics. But he lacks that which the insider knows in the depths of his being: the heights of joy, the touch of mystery and grandeur, the whisper of the echo of the sound of the voice of God. No, we are not walled in the sanctuaries; we are welling up with hope, with courage.

For לפני ה', “before the Lord,” means that in this society which suffers such a solitude we do not experience that oppressive loneliness, for even if man abandons and neglects us, we know that God is with us. In this automated society with its tyranny of numbers and progressive depersonalization, this means that man, unlike so many of our new products, is not disposable and replaceable. It means that we have a function in the divine economy and a purpose in life. This indeed is the secret and reward of a genuine Jewish life!

Therefore, in order to avoid this fallacious and misleading conclusion about Jewish life, to prevent people from thinking that the pious Jew is a prisoner in a jail called Judaism, what must we do?

First, we must affix the mezuzah on the פת הדרין; that is, we must do all we can to inform those not heretofore exposed to Jewish life, the outsiders, of the particular quality of Jewish experiences. We must present it

as dignified, decorous, and aesthetic.

Secondly, we who are insiders must reassure ourselves. For a minority generally tends to adopt a view of itself held by the majority, the outsider. While occasionally this is a healthy practice and restores perspective, it must never become the standard way of self definition. It is self-destructive always to view oneself through the eyes of others. I know too many observant Jews who always prefer to see themselves as others see us: from the secularist and Reform to outright assimilationist Jews, from the benevolent anti-Judaists to the vicious anti-Semites. When that happens, we begin to apologize for our beliefs, for our heritage, for our very selves; then we wallow in self-pity about the heavy burden that destiny has fated for us; then we begin to abandon real Judaism for what has been called “symbolic Judaism,” with its few ceremonies for special events and an occasional synagogue attendance – but nothing more. So let us remember: no apologies and no self-pity! We are not captive in the sanctuary of Judaism – we are its custodians. Torah is for us not a burden but a blessing.

Finally, while we are not missionaries, we ought to invite our fellow Jews who look in from without – to come in. A wine connoisseur does not judge the quality of a sample by the shape of the bottle or the print on the label or the personality of the salesman. There is only one test: taste it! To look is not enough. So does the Psalmist declare: טעמו וראו כי טוב ה', “taste and see that the Lord is good.” It is not enough just to see – one must also “taste.” You cannot appreciate Judaism until you taste it and experience it and live לפני ה', “before the Lord.” Then it is unnecessary to be stimulated by artificial enticements, by the unnecessary mezuzah, by the superficial prop.

ברוך הבא בשם ה' ברכנוכם מבית ה', blessed are those who come in the name of the Lord, seeking the Lord; we bless you from within the house of the Lord – and invite you in!

Here, לפני ה', before the Lord, you will discover that you are not in a prison, but in a palace full of pure spiritual pleasures and exquisite delights and the joy of life.

Taste and see – and you will discover “that the Lord is good.”

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Something's Burning

Rabbi Joshua (The Hoffer) Hoffman z"l

In the beginning of parshas Tzav, the Torah tells us that the olah, or burnt-offering, must stay on the flame that is on the altar all night, until the morning, and that the fire on this altar must be kept aflame on it (Vayikra 6:2). A few verses later, this requirement is repeated, and a prohibition not to extinguish the flame is added: "The fire on the altar shall remain aflame on it, it shall not be extinguished; and the kohein shall kindle wood upon it every morning..." (Vayikra 6:5). In fact, the Rambam, in his Sefer HaMitzvos, counts as two separate mitzvos the positive requirement to keep a flame going on the altar constantly, and the negative command, not to extinguish it. On a simple level, these mitzvos served a functional purpose, assuring that a flame would always be available for use in the Temple service. However, the rabbis tell us that in any case a fire descended from heaven to accomplish this, but, still, there is a mitzvah to bring a fire from *'hedyot'*, or a common, earthly source. The Sefer HaChinuch, moreover, writes that this earthly fire burned on a separate pile of wood that was arranged on the altar. What, then, was the purpose of this fire?

The author of the Sefer Hachinuch explains that the fire which descended from heaven constituted a miracle. However, even in the Temple, God wanted there to be some natural element involved in the process, as well. This is God's way of performing major miracles, to couch His major miracles in natural settings, so that they appear to have occurred according to the natural order. In a similar way, he continues, we find that even though it was God who caused the Yam Suf to split, He drove the sea back by a strong east wind the entire previous night (Shemos 14:21). Interestingly, Rabbeinu Bachya ben Asher, in his commentary to parshas Beshalach, offers a similar explanation for God's causing of the east wind to blow before He caused the sea to split. The reason that God couched this great miracle in a natural form, he continues, was to give those who wish to deny God's providence an opportunity to do so. Rabbi Avigdor Nebenzahl, in his Sichos, or talks, to parshas Tzav, without citing Rabbeinu Bachya's remarks, offers this approach as one way of explaining the Chinuch's principle of God's wishing to hide His major miracles in a natural format. By hiding these miracles to an extent, explains Rabbi Nebenzahl, God enables man to maintain his free will in face of the overwhelming evidence of divine providence. In a second

explanation of the Chinuch's principle, Rabbi Nebenzahl suggests that man's culpability for not being impressed by God's miracles and not following the demands of the Torah after witnessing these miracles is mitigated by the fact that a natural factor was intermingled with them.

I find great difficulty in understanding the Chinuch's principle, according to either of the two explanations offered by Rabbi Nebenzahl, as applied to the fire on the altar. While the principle is readily understood, according to either of the explanations, in regard to miracles such as the splitting of the Yam Suf, which occurred outside of the mishkan, it does not seem reasonable within the mishkan itself, since the entire purpose of the mishkan was to establish God's presence among the people! Moreover, Rabbi Avrohom Yeshaya Karelitz, known as the Chazon Ish, wrote, in his commentary to Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah, that it is precisely because there was such an overwhelming sense of divine providence in the mishkan that the Torah's penalties for heretics were so great, and why there is a mitigating factor in regard to our attitude to such people today, in the absence of these open miracles. The author of the Chinuch himself, in fact, appears unsatisfied with his first explanation, and goes on to offer another one. According to this second explanation, fire represents a force in the nature of man, the chief of the four elements in man according to ancient science, and the blessing that man achieves from God corresponds to the kind of effort he invests, through use of this inner fire, in carrying out God's will. Although this approach is rooted in a view of man's inner nature that is based on a scientific system no longer followed, Rabbi Nebenzahl, in a footnote to his talk on parshas Tzav, points out that this approach accords with an understanding of the sacrificial service that he presented in a talk on parshas Vayikra. The interested reader is referred to that essay. I would like to suggest a different way of understanding the requirement of maintaining a constant fire on the altar, which is not based on either of the approaches of the Chinuch, but which does have implications for the sacrificial system, in general.

In parshas Vayakehil, before informing the Jewish people about the command to build the mishkan, Moshe tells them about Shabbos. He tells them that performing melacha on Shabbos incurs the death penalty, and tells them specifically that they should not kindle fire on Shabbos. Why is that melacha, or forbidden category of

work, known as ‘havarah,’ or kindling, singled out from all the others? There is a dispute in the Talmud whether it is singled out to indicate that, alone among the rest of the thirty-nine categories of forbidden labor, it does not incur the death penalty, or to show that each of the thirty-nine melachos of Shabbos is treated individually, incurring its own penalty when committed. According to the first opinion, we can understand why havara is singled out, since it is the only melacha that does not incur the death penalty. However, according to the second opinion, the lesson taught by singling out havarah could have equally been taught by singling out any one of the melachos. Why, then, was havarah chosen as the one melacha that represents all of the melachos of Shabbos?

Rabbi Zvi Dov Kanotopsky, in his work *The Depths of Simplicity*, mentions the remark of Rav Yosef Dov HaLevi Soloveitchik, zt”l, that fire was the instrument by which the golden calf was made. In the aftermath of that unfortunate episode, after repenting for their failing, the people had the image of that fire in their minds. That is why, whereas before that episode, Moshe first mentioned the mishkan to the people, and then Shabbos, after the episode he first mentioned Shabbos, and then the mishkan. Before the people worshipped the eigel, explained Rav Soloveitchik, one could speak to them of all the theological implications of the mishkan before discussing the principles of Shabbos. After the eigel, however, emphasis had to be placed on observance of Shabbos, which reinforces our acknowledgment of the fact that God created and controls the universe. With that thought uppermost in their minds,

the people would not again use the potentially destructive force of fire to form a forbidden image. Based on Rabbi Soloveitchik’s understanding of the imagery of fire as evoking the specter of idolatry, I believe that we can better understand the purpose of the obligation to keep a fire kindled on the altar on a constant basis.

We noted in last week’s message that according to the Rambam, sacrifices were meant to wean the people away from the idolatrous practices they were used to in Egypt. We explained, based on Rabbi Moshe Narboni and others, that idolatry in this context must be understood, in a deeper sense, as the tendency of man to attribute events in the world to any force outside of God. Bringing a sacrifice to God serves as our acknowledgment that everything in the world belongs to Him, including ourselves, as represented by the animal we are offering up. In this context, we can understand why a fire needed to be lit on the altar on a constant basis. The fire that the kohein kindled each day evoked the image of the fire that was used to form the eigel that was used to defy God. Now, in the mishkan, it was kindled on the altar to be kindled there next to the fire that descended from heaven, thus indicating that just as that fire comes from God, so, too man’s creative efforts, as symbolized by fire, which can forge utensils to be used in human activity, have their source in God, who gives the abilities he possesses to do his work. This thought serves as a constant reminder to man not to misuse the gifts that God has given him and use them to rebel against Him, as the nation did when it made the golden calf.

Building On the Past

Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh (Transcribed and adapted by a talmid from the YUTorah shiur presented at Gruss Kollel in Yerushalayim on March 31, 2023)

Parshas Tzav begins with the mitzvah of Terumas ha-Deshen. And the pasuk relates how it was done: *Ve-lovash ha-kohen mido vad u-michnesei vad yilbash al-besaro ve-heirim es-hadeshen asher tochal ha’eish es-ha-olah al-ha-mizbe’ach ve-samo etzel ha-mizbe’ach*. The first avodah of the day done in the Bais Ha-Mikdash was to take a scoop of ashes, left over from burning the korbanos of the previous day, and put them next to the mizbe’ach. So why is it necessary to do this Terumas ha-Deshen, and what makes it so important?

Sefer ha-Chinuch explains this in a very practical way. We do it to clear the leftover ashes from the mizbe’ach—because you must clean up after yourself, and it’s not

proper K’vod Shomayim to have the mizbe’ach dirty. Additionally, a clear surface would add to the quality of the fire burning on the mizbe’ach.

However, Rav Hirsch gives a more symbolic interpretation here and points out that if you look at the pesukim carefully, there are two different mitzvos here. There is Terumas ha-Deshen—a special and symbolic mitzvah of taking one scoop of ashes every morning and putting it next to the mizbe’ach. And there’s a Siluk ha-Deshen—taking all the ashes mi-chutz la-machane el makom tahor when too much builds up on the mizbe’ach. And those are two different things. So what do we learn from this? Rav Hirsch explains very beautifully: You must

clean off your yesterday's ashes to do well today. Everyone knows that when you wake up in the morning, you can't beat yourself up over what happened yesterday—you can't cry over spilled milk. And conversely, you can't rest on your laurels if you did everything right yesterday. Every day, you must serve Hashem from scratch—*bechol yom yihyu be-eynecha chadashim*. However, in Judaism, we do not believe that every day, you start human history, the history of Am Yisroel, or even your individual story from scratch. We believe in Mesorah. We believe that our job is to be a link in the chain that continues from Har Sinai all the way to the ultimate *Geulah le-asid la-vo*. Says Rav Hirsch: You might think that you should just sweep the mizbe'ach every day and start over from scratch. However, that is not enough. You must take one scoop of ashes, which Rav Hirsch compares to the *kometz ha-mincha*. You take a representative sample of yesterday's ashes. And what do you do with them? You don't put them *mi-chutz le-machane*. You don't forget about them. They stay right next to the mizbe'ach as a permanent reminder. Not only that, but we also know that there's a rule in halachah: *kol she-naase mitzvaso yatza midei meilah*. When you finish doing a mitzvah with something, there's no more issur of meilah—it loses some of its kedushah. However, Chazal darshen from the word *ve-samo* that the Terumas ha-Deshen keeps its full kedushah forever. That scoop that you put next to the mizbe'ach is kadosh forever. It's never *yotzei midei*

meilah. Why? Says Rav Hirsch: Every day, we have a new *tafkid*, a new avodah. But we can only accomplish it because we're building on what happened yesterday. Yes, I have my avodah. We each have our tafkid in life—*chelkeinu be-Sorasecha*. But I can only do that based on continuing what the generations before me did—and every day building on what came before. We believe that what we do is significant. We strive to reach newer heights and accomplish new things. But we can only do those new things if we build on the past. Therefore, every morning, kohanim take a scoop of the ashes of yesterday's korbanos and put them next to the mizbe'ach. And it's not *yotzei midei meilah*. It never finishes its tafkid. It's there to remind us that whatever avodah we are doing today is building off yesterday. Whatever avodah we're doing in our lives, whatever chidushim Hashem wants from us—our unique contribution—is only significant and sublime if we do that with yesterday's ashes *etzel mizbe'ach*, next to today's mizbe'ach. We are always looking at them. We are always building on yesterday. We are always inspired by what happened beforehand, feel a responsibility to preserve the past, and continue to build on that. And if we can strike the balance of the new days' avodah with *ve-samo etzel ha-mizbe'ach*—keeping your eye continually on what happened before us—then we can serve Hashem in the best possible manner. And hopefully, we will be zocheh to once again see the actual Terumas ha-Deshen in the newly rebuilt Beis Ha-Mikdash, *be-meheirah be-yameinu*.

Harmonious Passion

Rabbi Dr. Mordechai Schiffman

The opening of Parshat Tzav emphasizes that the outer altar must be aflame with a perpetual fire. The priests were required to keep the fire burning, utilizing wood mixed with the parts of the burnt offering. If the fire were to go out, they would be in violation of two negative commandments, as indicated by the repetitiousness in the verses: “*The fire on the altar shall be kept burning, not to go out ... A permanent fire shall be kept burning on the altar, you shall not extinguish it*” (Lev. 6:5-6).

Interpreters looking for deeper symbolism found it here. Fire represents the desire, warmth, illumination, and inspiration of a life infused with Divinity. This passion needs to burn continuously. Just like tending to the actual fire required constant vigilance and attendance, maintaining the metaphoric blaze and avoiding “burn out” is not a simple process.

In conceptualizing passion, psychologist Robert J.

Vallerand distinguishes between two types: harmonious and obsessive. Harmonious passion occurs when a person authentically and freely desires to pursue an activity. The person remains in control and can maintain congruity with other parts of life. Harmonious passion is correlated with increased learning, enhanced performance, and higher satisfaction with life.

In contrast, obsessive passion often controls us. Even though we might be motivated to engage in an activity, we often lose the impetus when external contingencies like social approval get in the way. This more unyielding drive can lead to internal conflicts, negative emotions, and maladaptive consequences such as suboptimal performance, burnout, and an inability to integrate the passion with other parts of our lives.

With this framework in mind, we can explore how the constant flame on the altar symbolizes harmonious,

rather than obsessive passion. As mentioned, harmonious passion is not inspired by external or public validation. The continuous burning required the altar to be tended to at night as well, when the Temple was officially closed. As Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz notes, while sometimes this ceremony took place with great pomp and circumstance, it also entailed “hours upon hours of Temple service done entirely in private” (*Talks on the Parsha*). Passion cannot exclusively be in response to the validation of others. It must be nurtured even in the still of the night and in the silence of solitude.

Other indications of harmonious passion are its integrality with our core sense of identity and its congruency with other aspects of our lives. According to Rabbi Yohanan, quoted in the Talmud Yerushalmi, “*You shall not extinguish it*” teaches that even while traveling, the flame must not go out (Yoma 4:6). Rabbi Yosef Greenwald, quoted by Rabbi Baruch Simon in his *Imrei Baruch*, offers a homiletic message related to authenticity. To keep one’s passion for the Divine ignited while grounded and centered around inherently religious dwellings is not necessarily challenging. It is when one traverses away from those protective environments that one is challenged to keep the fire for God and Torah burning. The passion is indeed harmonious when it maintains aflame in diverse, transient, and challenging situations.

In their book *The Passion Paradox*, Brad Stulberg and

Steve Magness outline several strategies to cultivate harmonious passion. One key component is developing a mastery mindset, which includes an internal desire to improve continuously. They note that both after big wins and tough losses, there is often resistance to keep up the motivation to get back to work. The “simplest and most effective” strategy to building the mastery mindset is “showing up and doing the work” every single day, even after successes and especially after failures.

Perhaps this lesson is reflected in the other opinion quoted in the Talmud Yerushalmi. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi teaches that the word “permanent” indicates two more situations where one might think the flame does not have to be kept lit, but the law still requires it: “Permanent, even on the Sabbath; permanent, even in impurity.” Even after spiritual success as symbolized by the Sabbath, and even after spiritual failures as reflected in impurity, the fire needs to be maintained. After wins, one cannot collapse into complacency; after losses one can’t descend into resignation.

In all, the necessity to keep the fire burning continuously on the altar provides a potent paradigm for harmonious passion. By cultivating intrinsic motivation instead of pursuing external validation, by staying authentically fervent in different settings, and by constantly pursuing growth after both successes and failures, we can indeed live an illuminated life infused with an unextinguishable burning desire for the Divine.

Respect the Uniform

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Every night, the previous day’s korbanot are burned on the mizbeiach (altar). In the morning, a kohen removes the ashes and disposes of them outside. (Vayikra 6:3-4) In our parshah, Hashem instructs the kohen to wear his special bigdei kehunah uniform to remove the ashes from the mizbeiach, and to change into “other clothes” for the disposal. [For a different understanding of the text, see Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Temidin uMusafin 2:10.]

Rashi writes that changing out of the uniform is not a requirement; it’s *derech ertz*. As the Maharal explains, Rashi means that this is “common sense.” Rashi writes, “The clothing that a servant wears when cooking his master’s meal isn’t the clothing he wears when pouring his cup.” But Ramban disagrees, contending that the kohen is obligated to change his clothing. Why does Ramban insist that changing clothing is not simply common sense?

Based on a comment by the Maharal, we might suggest that Rashi and Ramban are debating the proper attitude toward the bigdei kehunah.

- As far as Rashi is concerned, a kohen may wear his elevated uniform to take the ashes outside, and if it becomes dirty then he should change out of it for subsequent avodah (service). There is no sin in dirtying the uniform in the first place, so long as the kohen doesn’t use a dirty uniform for the avodah.
- Ramban is not satisfied with that approach. By distinguishing between the clothing worn for the ashes and the clothing worn for the avodah, the Torah teaches sensitivity. The uniform is not simple thread, but a manifestation of our relationship with Hashem, and we will not permit ourselves to make it dirty in the first place.

Ramban’s point is relevant for all of us, even without a

Beit HaMikdash. The Tur writes (Orach Chaim 91, 98) that our davening is parallel to the avodah, and the clothes we wear for davening are parallel to the bigdei kehunah. We could do as Rashi suggests, using our davening clothes for other purposes as well, and just changing before davening if our clothing becomes dirty. But we might consider (and

The Inextinguishable Fire

Mrs. Michal Horowitz

In this week's parsha, Parshas Tzav, the Torah continues to instruct us regarding the role of the kohanim in the Mishkan, as well as the *avodas korbanos* (sacrificial rites and services) that they perform. There are further halachos delineated regarding korbanos (such as *pigul* - korbanos brought with erroneous intent; forbidden fats and blood; and laws of *tumah* and *taharah* in the realm of korbanos). The Torah tells us about the service that was performed during the seven days of *milu'im* (inauguration of the Mishkan), which culminates in next week's parsha, Shemini, with the 8th day of the chanukas ha'Mishkan, on Rosh Chodesh Nissan.

In this week's parsha, in regard to the *mizbayach ha'necho'shes* (the copper altar where the animal sacrifices were brought) the pasukim tell us:

וְהָאֵשׁ עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ תֹּקֵד-בּוֹ לֹא תִכָּבֶה, וְיֵעָרַף עָלֶיהָ הָעֹלָה, וְהִקְטִיר עָלֶיהָ חֲלֵבֵי הַשְּׁלָמִים - *And the fire on the altar shall burn on it; it shall not go out. The kohen shall kindle wood upon it every morning, and upon it, he shall arrange the burnt offering and cause the fats of the peace offerings to [go up in] smoke upon it; the mizbayach shall not go out* (Vayikra 6:5-6).

Chazal teach that even though a heavenly fire descended onto the pyre on the top of the altar, nevertheless, it was a mitzvah for the Kohanim to light the fire themselves, and ensure it was never extinguished. At the time of travel, the fire was covered with a special cover (like an overturned pot) and it crouched beneath the cover like a crouching lion. It was truly a fire that was never extinguished. In fact, the Sages teach us in Pirkei Avos that in the Beis Ha'Mikdash, one of the ten miracles was that *וְלֹא כָבוּ גִשְׁמִים* - *the rains never extinguished the fire of the altar pyre* (Mishna Avos 5:5). The Bartenura (ibid) explains why this was such a great miracle: *וְלֹא כָבוּ גִשְׁמִים* - *even though the altar for animal sacrifices was in an open ('revealed') space, and not under an awning or cover, nevertheless, the rains did*

this is the Tur's recommendation) following Ramban's sensitive approach, and designating specific clothing for davening, which we use for nothing else. Even if we cannot designate an entire outfit for davening, we could identify a particular garment. This would emphasize the special character of our relationship with Hashem.

not extinguish the flame.

The Rambam (ibid) similarly explains:

כבר ידעת שהמזבח היה באמצע העזרה ... והיה מגולה לשמים ועם כל זה לא היו מכבין הגשמים אש המערכה ולא היה מפזר הרוח את עמוד העשן העולה מן הקרבת - *it is known that the altar was in the middle of the courtyard, and it was open under the heavens, and despite this, the rains did not extinguish the altar fire on the pyre, and the wind did not disturb or displace the column of smoke that rose from the sacrifices.*

B"H we all know the strength of winter rains in Jerusalem, so when we contemplate the winter weather, we can truly better appreciate how great this miracle was. In the biggest downpour and torrential winter rains, the fire was never extinguished and the smoke never blew in any direction other than upwards! This is an open and revealed miracle.

As korbanos are accepted by Hashem, Who in His great mercy, accepts a substitute instead of sinful man (see Ramban to Vayikra 1:9), what aspect of our own personal avodas Hashem (service of G-d) can we learn from continuous and constant fire of the mizbayach that was never extinguished?

When it comes to our relationship to Torah and mitzvos, our love for Am Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael, our thirst for always learning and growing more in chochmas ha'Torah (the wisdom of Torah), thereby coming closer to HKB"H, it is clear that the fire and passion of Yahadus - and all that it encompasses - must never be extinguished within ourselves. Even in the proverbial 'rainy times' in life, even when the world is storming and the 'winter rains' and 'winter winds' whip themselves into a frenzy around us, when nothing makes sense and it seems as if, chas v'shalom it can and never will be, Am Yisrael will be extinguished, our flame, our fire, our commitment to Torah, to the neshama, to our nation and Land, will never, ever be snuffed out. If a korban is an offering instead of man, we must appreciate the Divine Mercy of Hashem, Who will always take us back and it is He Who ensures our eternal flame, which represents our eternal survival.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, the Rav, zt'l, teaches, "The Ramban writes, at the beginning of Vayikra (1:9), writes that when the Torah uses the word *korban*, it means human sacrifice and not that of an animal. The Torah, of course, abhors and rejects human sacrifice - but only as far as its physical implementation is concerned. Man belongs to G-d. All our possessions, all our talents, all our thoughts, all our feelings - everything belongs to G-d. There is not a single thing in human life which does not belong to Him. There is not a single thing which G-d does not want man to offer Him, including man himself, including his own existence. An animal is a very inadequate substitute for the real and genuine *korban*, which is human sacrifice.

"Yet the Torah says that man can substitute something else for his own being. What the Torah is really out to achieve, of course, is observance of all the *mitzvos*. G-d is interested not so much in human sacrifice as in human restraint, human control, human surrender, human

submission. If man is ready to sacrifice his life, and spiritually surrender to G-d, then he can bring a substitute for himself. G-d knows man, his frailties, his weaknesses, his indecision, and his self-love; and because of His compassion, His *middas ha'rachamim*, G-d substituted animal sacrifice for human sacrifice.

"R' Shimon ben Azzai observed that whenever the Torah speaks of *korban* there is no mention of *Kel* or *Elokim* (*Elokim* denotes G-d of Exacting Justice); only Hashem, the Tetragrammaton, is mentioned (Menachos 110a). *Shem Hashem* means *rachamim*, mercy. If G-d dealt with man in accordance with strict justice, He would require of man (one thing): himself" (*Abraham's Journey*, p.69).

May we merit to witness the immediate redemption of our nation, our Land and our holy city, when the Beis HaMikdash will be rebuilt and we will offer *korbanos* from Har HaBayis once again, as a *rei'ach ni'cho'ach* lifnei Hashem.

Shareholders in Israel

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

The guidelines surrounding the Mishkan *korbanot* and rituals were repeated twice. The first round of instructions parshat Vayikra, was directed to the rank and file, while a parallel list in parshat Tzav, was commanded directly to the Cohanim. Even though the general population wasn't directly involved in the Mishkan ceremonies they were still handed their own list of instructions. Hashem wanted every person to feel individual agency over the Mishkan experience, so that the Mishkan would not become an impersonal and heavy institution. Maintaining the dignity and sanctity of the Mishkan demands that only trained priests officiate in the daily ceremonies. If the Mishkan turns into a freeway with everyone independently ad-libbing, it loses its transcendence and gravitas. Restrictiveness is vital to the Mishkan, but it was still crucial that every Jew possessed agency and was personally invested in this house of Hashem, else it would become detached, bureaucratic, and irrelevant.

Similarly, everyone was invited to the inauguration of the Mishkan. The induction of the Mishkan was launched with a seven-day vigil, known as the week of *milu'im*, during which the Cohanim could not leave the precincts of the Mishkan. During this intense period, they practiced the various *korbanot* and rituals, so that they would become proficient once the Mishkan opened for business. Additionally, the seven-day vigil afforded the Cohanim time to mentally

prepare for this solemn project. Though only Cohanim were directly involved in the seven-day vigil, the entire population was invited to attend its opening ceremonies.

From a purely logistical standpoint it was challenging to fit three million people into the Mishkan. Yet, despite the technical obstacles it was important to include everyone in the *milu'im* experience so that the average Jew, who wasn't a priest, would not feel sidelined by the large and rigidified Mishkan. By inviting everyone to the gala inauguration, everyone was given agency, and all felt personally invested in the project. We became shareholders in the Mishkan, not spectators.

Agency in Israel

Traditionally, Israeli citizens felt deep agency of their country. Israel was a new country, still in its embryonic stages and still forming its social, political and religious identity. Living through the early chapters of the modern state of Israel was deeply meaningful, as we were conscious about forging something new. Compulsory national service provided every Israeli with a seat at the table and an individual role in defending the country and in enriching daily life. National service provided us with a high engagement level in the affairs of our country. If Israelis were known to be vociferous and politically contentious it was because they possessed ownership and agency of their

country. Sometimes too much ownership, but ownership none the less.

Shifting Away from Agency

As life in Israel shifted, our individual agency diminished. There was a pocket of about thirty years during which our country experienced spectacular and dizzying growth, as we transformed into a global economic powerhouse and a military superpower. Our fledgling little country had arrived on the grand international stage. We became fabulously successful, but the country felt less personal, and more institutional. Our heimish little country transformed from a “little engine that could” into a colossal superpower.

As Israel became large and seemingly self-powered, we started taking her for granted. We assumed that the country was stable enough and secure enough to run “on its own”. As we lost personal agency in day-to-day experience, life in Israel felt more humdrum and less meaningful.

Restoring Agency

October 7th reversed this trend. Having been plunged into an existential war, we were forced to take greater agency over the future of our state. The sound of our revitalized agency echoed in the exhausted voices of soldiers who battled in Azza for months, while separated from their families and professions. Declaring their firm intention to pursue this battle to its conclusion, they defiantly announced: “If we don’t protect our homes who will?”. The October 7th massacre stripped away any illusion that our country is self-powered, and that day reminded us that each Israeli citizen has a personal stake in Israel.

While national identification with government institutions runs low, patriotism and enthusiasm for our security forces runs high. This will dramatically affect the future political map of Israel, but for now, is a reflection of how empowering personal agency can be. The government is an “institution”, while our security forces are everyone one of us.

During this war our entire country has served a modern “*milu'im*” and it hasn’t been for only eight days. For five months, teachers, hi-tech executives, doctors, lawyers, shopkeepers, men, and women have kept a sacred vigil protecting our homeland from violence. And it hasn’t been merely a practice session for the real show. Everyone has served side-by-side defending our country, and tragically and too often fell in battle together. If we don’t defend our homeland who will? If we don’t build this country who will?

Despite the immense sadness and heart-breaking

tragedy of the past five months, they were filled with meaning and soulfulness. It turns out that personal agency and becoming directly involved is not just a more effective policy, but is also more meaningful. For the past five months we have been tired and anxious, but have been filled with meaning and magnitude.

International Shareholders

The war has also provided agency to Jews who reside outside of Israel. They too, took the state of Israel for granted. As flights to Israel proliferated and hotels multiplied it became easier than ever to land in Israel for a few days, enjoy the people and the food, visit family and the Kotel and jet back to regular life. Fortunately, tourism became a booming industry, and traveling to Israel was no longer a pilgrimage.

Older readers still remember the crowded and suffocating old airport at Ben-Gurion. It wasn’t pleasant to arrive at, but the second you landed you immediately knew you were in Israel. The heat, the smell and the cramped lines left no doubt. When the modest terminal was, thank God, replaced by the current modern and shiny airport, landing in Israel became similar to landing anywhere else. Once pilgrims, Jewish visitors to Israel now became tourists.

Restoring Agency Abroad

Over the past few years, it has become clear that Israel is no longer something which any Jew can take for granted. The shift in mentality began during the corona pandemic when, for a few months, the doors of our homeland were closed to non-Israeli citizens due to health concerns. The unexpected and new reality, that their homeland was no longer just a few hours away was jolting for many. Of course, two years later the savage attacks of October 7th further recast the relationship between non-Israeli Jews and the state of Israel by reminding everyone of just how fragile and sometimes dangerous life in Israel still was.

During the past five months visits to Israel have been very different from the vacations of the past. Shopping and restaurants have been replaced by volunteerism and trips to charred remains of communities in the South. Jews traveling to Israel have, once again, become pilgrims rather than tourists. Tourism is a luxury while pilgrimages are personal, and provide us with agency.

The war has reminded every Jew, both Israeli and non-Israeli, that they are shareholders Israel and not external spectators. The country isn’t self-powered but dependent upon us. The war has restored our agency.

Rav Soloveitchik on Tzav: Candid Confessions

Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider (Excerpted from *Torah United, Teachings on The Weekly Parashah From Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, and The Chassidic Masters* (Ktav, 2023))

A prerequisite of halachically valid teshuvah (repentance) is vidui (confession). At least three biblical verses substantiate its necessity, its centrality even. The earliest source for the obligation to confess can be traced to the laws of the sacrifices, the subject matter of both Parashat Vayikra and Parashat Tzav. In them, the Torah requires the offeror to lean their hands on the animal and confess (Leviticus 5:5).

Beyond the context of sacrifices, the Torah later says that “if a man or woman commits any of man’s sins... They must confess the sin they have committed” (Numbers 5:6-7). The Rambam codified this in the very first law of his laws of repentance: “This refers to verbal vidui. This vidui is a positive commandment.”¹

Finally, the Ramban understood a passage near the end of the Torah to refer to teshuvah: “For this commandment that I command you today is neither beyond you nor distant from you... It is exceedingly close to you, in your mouth and in your heart to do” (Deuteronomy 30:11,14). Beyond context, a clue that this refers to teshuvah is that it says “in your mouth,” which can be interpreted as a reference to the integral verbal component of vidui.²

Having established that vidui is a sine qua non for teshuvah, we must now probe the whys and wherefores. What makes verbal expression of our sins so integral to repentance? Why would the Rambam declare our regret over the past and commitment to future change of no halachic consequence without confession?

Vidui’s Indispensability

Rav Soloveitchik drew a comparison to property law, which has the principle, “matters of the heart are inconsequential” (מִדְּבָרִים שֶׁבִּלְבָב אֵינוֹ דְּבָרִים).³ In the Rav’s words:

*Feelings, emotions, thoughts, and ideas crystallize only after explicit verbal expression. A man knows and thinks many ideas which he cannot bring to his lips. Man can construct many psychological defenses within himself, refusing to acknowledge harsh reality. Vidui forces man to admit the facts as they really are, to express the painful truth.*⁴

In this context, the Rav quoted the shocking informal proclamation made after the passing of Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi, the compiler of the Mishnah: “Whoever states that Rebbe died shall be run through with a sword.”⁵ The truth of his death was too painful to hear expressed. “Man buries

the truth as long as the truth is not verbalized.”⁶ Vidui ensures that we do not fool ourselves or evade the harsh reality of our failings. Without facing the unvarnished truth, any resolutions we make are not grounded in reality.

Furthermore, vidui is intrinsic to repentance precisely because of the emotional distress it causes. It is terribly painful to admit facts as they really are. “Our natural inclination,” the Rav said, is “to run and hide.” We prefer to discount the lingering spiritual pains of sin, no different from our attitude to the nagging symptoms of a potentially serious illness, and push off doing what needs to be done.⁷ It is agonizing “to tear down the screen, to put into words what our hearts have already determined.”⁸ This can explain why the Rambam adds to his formulation of the vidui the word *boshti*, “I am ashamed.”⁹ The emotional pain is so searing that it is cathartic and cleansing. Only then is change possible.

For these reasons, vidui should be more expansive than the barebones formulation provided by the Rambam and other halachists. It should be an outpouring of the soul from a wellspring of deep contrition. The Rambam states: “Whoever confesses profusely (בִּלְהַמְרִיבָה לְהַתְדוּחַ) and elaborates on this is worthy of praise (הָרִי זֶה מְשׁוּבָח).”¹⁰ These words echo what we find in the Haggadah about the mitzvah of recounting the story of the Exodus on Pesach night, “Whoever narrates profusely... is worthy of praise” (בִּלְהַמְרִיבָה לְסַפֵּר... הָרִי זֶה מְשׁוּבָח). In both instances there is a set text, but we are to set it to the tune of our personal feelings and words.

God’s Extended Hand

Part of what supplies the confidence for pouring our hearts out in vidui is knowing that our words will not fall on deaf ears. God listens and compassionately helps us return to our true selves and to Him.

In her memoir about her upbringing in the Soloveitchik home in Lithuania, Shulamith Soloveitchik Meiselman, the Rav’s sister, described her father Rabbi Moshe Soloveichik delivering his addresses on Shabbat Shuvah, the Shabbat before Yom Kippur. He would admonish the people of the town “for the evil they committed, for turning away from the path of righteousness, for not caring for the poor, the orphans, and the widows.” Still, “at the same time he would assure the town’s Jews that God is merciful and gracious and never forsakes the sinner.”¹¹

The Rav followed in his father’s footsteps. In his

discussion of vidui, he emphasized God's everlasting patience and mercy, too. The Talmud wonders why the verse states God's name twice, "Hashem, Hashem..." (Exodus 34:6), and answers that the first refers to God before man sins, and the second to God afterwards.¹² Rabbeinu Tam said that these refer to "two attributes" of God.¹³ The Rav explicated his opinion:

*When man sins, he creates a distance between himself and God [...] The end result of sinning is the driving out, as it were, of the Holy Presence. But who, then, will take care of the sinner after the Holy One removes Himself and the sinner is left alone? [...] Who will extend a helping hand to rescue him from the quicksand into which he has sunk?*¹⁴

The Rav answers his own question with a quote from the High Holiday prayers: "You extend a hand to sinners and Your right arm stretches forth to receive the penitent." According to the Rav, the verse indicates that sin pushes God away from the sinner, but the Shechinah, the loving and motherly attribute of the Almighty, always remains ready and willing to help the sinner return.¹⁵ As the Talmud says, "Whenever the Jewish people sin they should come before me with this liturgy, and I will forgive them."¹⁶

Yet there appears to be at least one prominent exception to this categorial statement in one of the most troubling stories recorded in the Talmud. Of the thousand or so sages that dot the pages of the Talmud, the one who most notoriously came to reject his religious commitment to Judaism was Elisha b. Avuyah, known as Acher. This name was first given to him by a harlot he visited, who exclaimed that he could not possibly be the sage Elisha b. Avuyah but must be "someone else," in Hebrew, *acher*. The name stuck. His star student Rabbi Meir ran after him and called upon him to repent, but Elisha did not respond because he heard a voice calling, "'Repent, wayward children' (Jeremiah 3:14)—everyone except Acher."¹⁷

The Rav brilliantly reanalyzed this passage to mean the opposite of what it sounds like. God was actually extending a hand to Elisha b. Avuyah. Only Acher could not repent, but Elisha would be welcomed back with open arms. So long as he identified as Acher, he would not be able to do teshuvah. Only when he realized that Acher did not define him, that he was truly Elisha inside, would he find his way back. The verse tells the rebellious "children" of God to repent, and indeed any and all can do so, if they accept that they are God's child and not someone else. Not someone estranged from themselves and from God. The Talmud reports that Acher did eventually confess and died crying. Rabbi Meir said, "My master departed while doing teshuvah."¹⁸

Exploring the Rav's Insight

The Jewish people have an unusual custom on Yom Kippur: we chant our confessions. Why do we recite the litany of wrongdoing to a not particularly doleful tune? The Rav observed that this only occurs when the community comes together to collectively renounce our sins. The individual, on the other hand, weeps during vidui. The collective is a microcosm of the Jewish people, of *Keneset Yisra'el*, which is assured forgiveness. "The Jewish people do not come to plead for atonement; it claims it as its right."¹⁹ The melody reflects our confident reliance on God's promise of clemency.

We look forward to a time when sin will evaporate from the earth, but until then each of us has faith that we have the capacity to properly express the vidui and to do complete teshuvah. As the Rav remarked, "Not only is the Jew capable of repentance, it is his final destiny."²⁰

1. Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah, 1:1. Rabbi Yosef Babad wrote in his *Minchat Chinuch* that according to the Rambam only vidui, and not teshuvah is a mitzvah. This is because it is inconceivable for a Jew to remain sunk in sin without wanting to repent, obviating the need for any divine legislation. The Rav found it hard "to accept this supposition expounded by *Minchas Chinuch*, and my father my teacher told me that my grandfather rejected it outright, citing the fact that the Torah, in a number of places, explicitly refers to repentance as a precept. [...] Do we really need evidence of this sort? Can one contemplate the possibility that confession be considered a precept while repentance is not? What would be the significance of confession without repentance?" (Weiss, *Insights*, 148–149).
2. Ramban on Deuteronomy 30:11. See further Parashat Nitzavim, "Better to Have Sinned."
3. Kidushin 49b.
4. Chumash Mesoras Harav, 3:23.
5. Ketubot 104a.
6. Chumash Mesoras Harav, 3:24.
7. Soloveitchik, On Repentance, 195.
8. *Ibid.*, 95.
9. Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah, 1:1.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Soloveitchik Meiselman, *Soloveitchik Heritage*, 145–146.
12. Rosh ha-Shanah 17b.
13. Tosafot ad loc., s.v. עשרה מדות.
14. Soloveitchik, On Repentance, 84–85.
15. *Ibid.*, 86.
16. Rosh ha-Shanah 17b.
17. Chagigah 15a.
18. Rabbi Y. Y. Jacobson, "The Holy Heretic," based an address of the Rav in 1961 to Mizrahi in Atlantic City, N.J., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zsO3KIZsnok> (accessed April 11, 2021). See Talmud Yerushalmi, Chagigah, 2:1.
19. Soloveitchik, On Repentance, 119.
20. Koren Mesorat HaRav Siddur, 165.

Making “Margins” in Our Lives

Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

והאש על המזבח תוקד בו לא תכבה, ובער עליה הכהן עצים בבוקר
בבוקר...אש תמיד תוקד על המזבח, לא תכבה.

And the fire on the altar shall burn upon it, it shall not be extinguished, and the kohen shall place firewood upon it each morning... An eternal fire shall burn on the altar, it shall not be extinguished. (6:5-6)

The Torah here commands ensuring that the fire on the mizbei'ach continually burns, without ever being extinguished. In fact, as Rashi (6:6) writes, one who extinguishes the fire on the mizbei'ach is liable for transgressing two Torah prohibitions, as the command לא תכבה is written twice. Moreover, the kohanim were required to place firewood on the mizbei'ach each morning to guarantee the undisrupted presence of fire on the mizbei'ach.

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos (5:5) lists ten miracles which occurred in the Beis Ha'mikdash, including לא כיבו גשמים – the rain never extinguished the fire on the mizbei'ach. The mizbei'ach was situated outdoors, in the courtyard of the Beis Ha'mikdash, and was thus exposed to the elements. Miraculously, the fire on the mizbei'ach continued burning even during the winter rains that fell in Yerushalayim. In order to ensure that there would be an אש תמיד, a consistent presence of fire on the mizbei'ach, Hashem performed a miracle each time rain fell, maintaining the fire.

Rav Yisroel Meir Druck, in Lahavos Eish, raises the question of why Hashem chose to perform this miracle, rather than simply arranging that rain would never fall directly over the mizbei'ach. What might be the

significance of this miracle – having rain fall on the altar without extinguishing the fire?

Rav Druck explains that this miracle conveys a vitally important lesson relevant to the “fire” of passion and enthusiasm that is to consistently “burn” in our hearts, at all times.

Hashem did not stop the rain from falling over the mizbei'ach in order to show us that we can never expect to avoid the “rain” that threatens to “extinguish” our “fire.” Our “fire” of passion is “rained on” very often. Sometimes it will be a cynical, sarcastic person who ridicules our idealism, or who introduces doubt and uncertainty into our minds. Sometimes it will be a challenging circumstance that deflates us, and leads us to negativity and despair. Sometimes it will be disappointment and setbacks as we try to grow and improve. Sometimes it will be practical obstacles that get in the way of our progress or achievement. So many things can threaten to “put out the fire,” to eliminate our zeal and our enthusiasm.

Every time we feel like we're running into a wall, that our efforts to achieve are not succeeding, we need to remember the miracle of the fire on the mizbei'ach. We need to resolve not to allow the “rain” to “extinguish” the fire, and to retain our commitment and our passion despite the challenges that we confront. Just as God made the fire in the Beis Ha'mikdash strong enough to withstand even the most torrential rainstorm, so must our religious devotion be strong enough to withstand the many different challenges that we will invariably face.

Do Sacrifices Have Any Relevance for Us Today?

Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

This week's parasha, parashat Tzav, continues the Torah's description of the various sacrifices that were offered in the Tabernacle. Parashat Tzav focuses on a series of offerings, including the daily burnt and meal offerings, as well as the guilt, peace and thanksgiving offerings.

While it may be intriguing to learn about these ancient practices, the question remains: Now that we have no Temple and no offerings, can any of these themes be relevant to contemporary times?

The Midrash Tanchuma, Vayishlach 9, cites Rabbi

Yitzchak who asks: Now that we no longer have prophecy, priesthood, sacrifices, Temple, or the altar, how do we achieve atonement after the Temple has been destroyed? Rabbi Yitzchak answers, that the only tool left to us to achieve atonement is our ability to pray. Similarly, the Talmud in Berachot, 15a, states that one who takes care of his bodily needs, dons tefillin, recites the Shema, and prays, is considered as if he has built the altar and offered a sacrifice upon it. Therefore, it is not at all surprising to find that the Talmud in Berachot, 26b, proclaims: תְּפִלּוֹת קִנְיָן, the daily fixed prayers have been established to

parallel the daily fixed sacrifices.

Prayer, however, is not the only means of compensating for our inability to offer sacrifices today. Learning Torah, as well, is considered by the sages to be an appropriate substitute. The Talmud in Menachot, 110a, cites the verse found in Leviticus 6:18: *זאת תורת הַחֹטֵאת*, *this is the law of the chatat, sin offering*. Says Rabbi Yitzchak, anyone “involved” in the “Torah” of the “sin offering,” studying the laws of the chatat, is considered as if he himself has brought a sin offering. We find a similar interpretation with respect to the *אָשָׁם*, *Asham*—the guilt offering (Leviticus 7:1). Rava is cited as saying that anyone who studies Torah, has no need for burnt offerings, meal offerings, sin offerings or guilt offerings, since the study of the sacrificial rite is the equivalent of bringing sacrifices.

In ancient times, a most important element to assure that a sacrifice was properly offered was the willingness and enthusiasm with which it was offered. The Midrash Rabbah on Leviticus, 27:10, cites G-d as saying: “If you’ve brought [the offering] with willingness and happiness, then it is My offering.” To bolster this thought, our rabbis point to the verse in Leviticus, 6:2, that proclaims: *זאת תורת הָעֹלָה, הָעֹלָה עַל מוֹקְדָהּ עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ*, *this is the law regarding the elevation offering; it is the elevation offering that stays on the flame on the altar... all night until the morning*. Implied in this verse, say the rabbis, is the directive that a person learn Torah with heartfelt enthusiasm, with “flames” similar to the ones

that glow on the altar where the sacrifices were brought.

The second essential ingredient required for a successful sacrificial offering was *כוונה*—*kavanah*—sometimes translated as awareness or direction of thought. There are many stringent laws that govern the acceptability of offerings that are brought by those who have improper thoughts. Since each particular type of offering had a mandated time by which it had to be eaten, any person bringing a sacrifice, intending to eat it outside the legally allotted times, rendered the entire sacrifice invalid. Similarly, say our rabbis, since, due to the destruction of our Temple we no longer have sacrificial offerings, and our prayers serve in lieu of sacrifices, improper thoughts nullify our tefillah (prayer) as well.

In response to the Midrash’s question whether the sacrifices have any relevance to us today, we say resoundingly, yes, they do! But only if we make them relevant. With proper enthusiasm, proper awareness, and with well-directed thoughts, through prayer and Torah study, we can, in effect, resurrect the Temple and rebuild the altar.

The prophet Hoshea 14:3 declares: *וְנִשְׁלְמָה פָּרִים שִׁפְתֵינוּ*, *let us pay for the bullocks with the words of our lips*. Even though today we are only able to offer up prayers in lieu of sacrifices, we may still be able to achieve great spiritual heights, and with this exalted spirit, merit to see the Temple rebuilt, soon in our days.

Fresh Offerings

Rabbi Johnny Solomon

Tucked away within the instructions pertaining to the sin (chatat) offering are the laws of ‘kashering’ utensils where we read: ‘An earthen vessel in which [the sin offering] was cooked shall be broken, but if it was cooked in a bronze vessel, that shall be scoured and rinsed with water’ (Vayikra 6:21). However, to fully understand this verse a little background is necessary.

Every offering has a certain prescribed time in which it must be eaten - after which all remaining food is called ‘Notar’ - forbidden leftover food - which may not be eaten. Here we are being taught that if any ‘Notar’ food (which, as Rashi notes, is not limited to leftover sin offerings but, in fact, applies to all offerings) is left in a utensil, then the utensil absorbs this forbidden flavour. In such a situation, if the utensil is made of earthenware which absorbs flavour but cannot fully exude any flavour that it has absorbed, then it must be broken. However, if the utensil is made of

metal which both absorbs and exudes flavour, then it may be ‘kashered’ by scouring and rinsing it.

So far, all we have done is explain this verse. However, a question is raised by Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Ferber (1879-1966) in his ‘*Kerem HaTzvi*’ commentary which itself demands a further review of how halacha treats forbidden flavours.

In general, when a flavour has been absorbed into a utensil, it dulls and spoils over time to the point that we refer to that flavour as ‘ta’am pagum’ (spoilt flavour). This is why whenever we kasher utensils, we generally wait at least 24-hours between their most recent usage and kashering the utensils so that the flavour becomes ‘pagum’ (spoilt).

With this in mind, the question raised by Rabbi Ferber is why doesn’t the Torah simply instruct us to wait 24 hours after Notar has been placed in an earthenware vessel, at which point it should technically be possible to use

earthenware vessel?

In his answer, Rabbi Ferber refers to an insight offered by Rabbi Aryeh Leib ben Shmuel Gershon (1652-1729) in his 'Leviyat Chen' commentary on Parshat Tzav which itself is derived from a teaching in Pirkei Avot 5:5 where we are taught that the meat of the sacrificial offerings miraculously stayed fresh and did not putrefy.

As Rabbi Aryeh Leib explains, if this is the case with respect to the offering itself, so too is it the case with respect to the remnant flavour of the 'Notar'. Accordingly, the concept of 'ta'am pagum' does not apply to sacrificial offerings and therefore this is why an earthenware vessel that has absorbed the flavour of Notar must be broken. What this teaches us is that the very instruction about how we treat an earthenware vessel in which Notar flavour has been absorbed already hints to the miraculous way in which the sacrificial meat remained fresh (nb. if one

were to ask why earthenware vessels which have absorbed prohibited but non-sacrificial flavour are forbidden after 24 hours, it is to avoid confusion with vessels which were used less than 24 hours ago, and to avoid deliberately acting as such).

When we read about the sacrifices, we can sometimes get so engrossed in the details that we forget the majesty and miracles that took place in the Mishkan and Temple. But as we see from here, even the smallest of details recorded in the Torah bear witness to the miraculous events that took place in the Mishkan.

Overall, we learn from here that just as the sacrifices remained fresh and imbued flavour, so too, our prayers and the rest of our divine service should always be fresh, dynamic, and convey a positive 'flavour' in terms of what it means to serve God with pride.

Daniel Perez: The Living Bridge between Purim and Pesach

Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Brander

We find ourselves between the two holidays, Purim and Pesach, which differ greatly in their storylines. The opening story of the Jewish people puts God front and center. Nature defying miracles, from the river turning to blood to the splitting of the sea, reflect the wondrous character of that moment in history. God is front and center, the prime mover of the story. It is no surprise that the name of Moshe does not appear in the Haggadah (except for once in a later addition to the Haggadah text). In our annual recounting of the story of the Exodus, it is God who took the people of Israel out of Egypt and any intermediaries are not recognized.

Yet the opposite is true of the Purim story, among the final events recorded in Tanach, described by the Gemara (Yoma 29a) as '*sof kol hanisim*,' 'the last of all the miracles.' In Megillat Esther, it is God who is absent; not a single explicit mention of the Divine can be found in the entire text of the megilla, with the focus and even the megilla's name fully featuring human actors. At face value, the story is merely one of political machinations, in which the human actors successfully orchestrate a plan to save the Jewish people.

These two models of redemption, that of Pesach and that of Purim, are described in kabbalistic writing as *it'aruta de-l'eila*, 'awakening from above' and *it'aruta de-le-tatta*, 'awakening from below.' On Pesach, it is God in the heavens who dramatically acts on our behalf, to bring

redemption. But there are moments in our history, like Purim, which are marked by the awakening from below -what we might call bottom up, grassroots redemption. These are moments when it is we the Jewish people who, inspired by the Divine, take matters into our own hands to bring redemption for our people.

These two holiday episodes in our history share common elements of observance which join the experiences together. Both are celebrated through the shared quality of giving. For Purim, which we just celebrated, it was Matanot Le'vyonim, giving gifts to the needy, not to mention Mishloach Manot, spreading goodwill within the community through the exchange of food baskets.

Likewise, even before Pesach arrives, we have the mandate of Kimcha d'Pischa, the supplemental collection of charitable funds to assist those facing financial difficulties preparing for Pesach. What's more, the Seder opens with an invitation addressed to all those who are hungry, and the Korban Pesach itself, the Paschal sacrifice, was meant to be eaten only in a chabura, a gathering of people who partake together in the sacrifice and its accompanying festivities.

It would seem that both forms of redemption, *it'aruta de-l'eila* and *it'aruta de-le-tatta*, take as a prerequisite our own willingness to look out for those around us. Only solidarity can direct us towards achieving our own redemption,

and only unity can win over God's favor and divine intervention. Whenever we celebrate our redemption, our first and primary step must be to join together in community, creating a culture of unity and cooperation within Klal Yisrael.

A guiding halakhic principle emphasizes "*zirizim makdimim*," we hurry to perform mitzvot (Pesachim 4a). This should dictate that during a leap year in which there are two months of Adar, Purim should be celebrated in the first one. Yet we purposely delay the celebration of Purim until Adar II, juxtaposing the celebration of Purim to Pesach. This is done to highlight that the holidays of Purim and Pesach have a common spiritual core: the redemption of our people, celebrated through a halakhic mandate of concern for the other.

At the shiva for Daniel Perez z"l, the son of Rabbi Doron and Shelley Perez whose murder on October 7th, while defending the communities under attack, was recently confirmed and who was laid to rest last week, I remarked that the prayers on behalf of Daniel's sacrifice reflect the solidarity and sense of responsibility for Klal Yisrael which is the prerequisite for our redemption. We can feel in these times the *it'aruta de-le-tatta*, redemption driven by the stirrings of our own hearts and our resolve as a people to act, which has led to unbelievable demonstrations of

heroism by men and women, on the frontlines in Gaza and in the North. It has also led to tremendous generosity of purpose and spirit in Jewish communities throughout Israel and the diaspora.

Daniel z"l embodied these ideals of *gevurah* and *it'aruta de-le-tatta* in his commitment to serve his country and protect the people of Israel by proudly donning the priestly vestments of the IDF as he saved hundreds.

In our commitment to help bring all the hostages home and the remains of loved ones, a goal which has not yet been actualized, we have all been engaged in acts of prayer and *chesed* in their names, and we must continue to do so. As we recited Shema Yisroel together with Jews across the world this past Thursday, it remains our fervent hope that as we make our way to Pesach, the Jewish people's spirit of solidarity and the bravery of soldiers like Daniel z"l should inspire the will of God, *it'aruta de-l'eila*, to swiftly bestow upon us the return of those who have been kidnapped and for the final blow of destruction to be delivered upon our enemies.

May Daniel ben haRav Doron and Shelley, and all those who have given their lives in acts of ultimate courage and sacrifice, be a blessing for all of us and serve as the living bridge that helps to bring the final redemption.

The Place of Joy

Rabbi Maury Grebenau

In our parsha there is a jarring tone at a moment when we expect incredible joy. After much work collecting and building the Mishkan is complete. For the first time Aharon and his sons are dressed in the priestly garments so painstakingly made and they approach to bring the very first sacrifice. Can we imagine the excitement of the moment? The feelings of thankfulness, of joy, of connection with Hashem? We expect this will be quite the sacrifice to express what is going on. Perhaps a thanksgiving sacrifice? Maybe an OLah that is completely burned to Hashem to show our elevated level? None of the above. Surprisingly the first sacrifice is the Chatas – the sin offering (Vayikra 8:14).

The Chizkuni points out that this sacrifice is mentioned back in parshat Titzaveh but it is only called a sin offering here. What is the message of focusing on the fact that this sacrifice is a sin offering and why would this be the choice for inaugural korban of the Mishkan?

In some ways this type of pause is reminiscent of

the moment under the Chuppah when a relationship between two people is being elevated to the next stage and we paradoxically break a glass. There too it seems anti-climactic to do such a thing when we should be experiencing great joy and gratitude. Tosfot (Brachot 31a) explains that this custom is rooted in two stories in the Gemara about rabbis who noticed the party getting out of hand at a wedding and shattered an expensive glass in order to make a point and reign people in. Perhaps the Chatas as inaugural korban is a similar reminder not to get carried away in our joy. But if we are not supposed to be joyful at a wedding or the inauguration of the Mishkan then when should we be happy? What is the deeper message about how we should relate to happiness.

I believe the deeper message is to understand that we should relate to joy as an avenue and not an end in and of itself. At a wedding there is tremendous joy and excitement over the future home we get to see beginning to flower. But what better message for this new couple than the fact that

such joy is not the foundation of their relationship. They should certainly find joy in their partnership but that is not the goal. They should use their joyous union to be better and do better in the world than the sum of what either of them could do alone. In the case of the Mishkan as well, it is a happy occasion to celebrate Hashem in our midst and our hopes for a close relationship. But the joy of our the Mishkan is not the goal. We must be ready to use that joy as a way to deepen our relationship with Hashem and bring us to even higher levels of connection.

There is a bewildering Aggadatan (narrative portion of the Talmud) that tells the story of two apostates named Sason and Simcha who argue which of them is superior. Rav Avahu (Sukka 48b) answers them both by quoting verses from TaNaCh to show that Sason is a coat to go out in and Simcha is a receptacle to draw water so neither of

them are important. I once heard that the message of this Gemara is exactly the point we are making here. Simcha and Sason are different types of happiness and we could become very focused on deciding what exact type of happiness is best to pursue. However, this

misses the point which is that happiness is a means and not an end. Simcha and Sason are coats that allow us to go out into the world and make a difference and receptacles that allow us to hold important matters. Neither of them is “important” as a goal. When we are missing the joy in our life we are not functioning at full capacity and are not able to bring our unique gifts and abilities into the world or appreciate the great blessings that are bestowed upon us. May we all be blessed to be able to find joy in life and harness it properly in order to do real and meaningful work in this world.

Chatzi Shiur – Not Doing (Forbidden) Things in Halves

Rabbi Immanuel Bernstein

כָּל חֵלֶב שֹׁר וְכֶשֶׂב וְעֹז לֹא תֹאכְלוּ

Any fat of oxen, sheep or goats you shall not eat (7:23)

Although one does not incur a punishment (e.g. *malkos*, lashes) for eating something forbidden by the Torah unless he eats a kezayis (olive-volume) of that food, nevertheless, even less than that amount, known as chatzi shiur (a half measure) is also forbidden from the Torah. The source for this prohibition, as expounded by the Toras Kohanim to our our pasuk, are the words חֵלֶב, “any fat” which are expounded to mean “any amount of *chelev* (fat),” i.e. even less than a kezayis.

This drashah is cited by the Gemara in Maseches Yoma (74a) where it also mentions a basis for the prohibition of chatzi shiur based on *sevara* (reasoning). The *sevara* invokes the concept of *חֻזֵּי לֹא יִצְטָרְפוּ*, “fit to combine,” and states as follows: Since a half-measure of a forbidden food is fit to combine with another half measure to equal a full measure that incurs punishment, it stands to reason that the half-measure itself should be forbidden.

Tosafos (ibid. s.v. *keyvan*) raises a simple question:

Generally speaking, whenever there is a reason based on logic, a teaching from the pasuk to that effect is considered unnecessary and hence, redundant. This being the case, why do we need the drashah of חֵלֶב to prohibit chatzi shiur when it is already covered by the reasoning of “fit to combine” as expressed by the Gemara?

“Fit to Combine” – Understanding the Concept

The Meshech Chochmah responds to Tosafos’ question by stating that although the idea of chatzi shiur generally can be explained by the reasoning of “fit to combine,” a special drashah was required for the case of *chelev* specifically. In order to understand why this is so, he prefaces by analyzing the concept of “fit to combine” itself. The basis of this idea is that although a half-measure carries no punishment, it is inconceivable that it is actually permitted by the Torah. The very fact that consuming a shiur of this food would incur liability indicates that the food itself is inherently objectionable, for otherwise, why would increasing the amount consumed make it a punishable offense? It should be the equivalent of consuming two half-measures of permitted food! It is only with regard to punishment that we consider the amount consumed, for that reflects the severity of the person’s transgression.¹ In other words:

- While the punishment for eating forbidden foods may be dependent on the quantity consumed,
- the prohibited nature of that food itself is a function of an objectionable quality within that food – in any amount.

Why is Chelev Forbidden?

Having thus understood the idea of “fit to combine” as the logical basis for the idea of chatzi shiur, we now proceed to consider Tosafos’ question as to why a special drashah from our pasuk was needed for chatzi shiur of *chelev*. The answer, says Meshech Chochmah, lies in the way the Torah

presents the punishment for this prohibition. Pasuk 25 states:

כִּי כָל אֹכֵל חֶלֶב מִן הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר יִקְרִיב מִמֶּנָּה אִשָּׁה לַה' וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הָאֹכֶלֶת מֵעַמֶּיהָ.

For anyone who eats the fat of (the species of) an animal from which one may bring a fire-offering to Hashem, the soul that eats will be cut off from its people.

The Torah appears to be stating that the objectionable nature of eating chelev lies in the fact that it is something which is eligible to be offered on the mizbeyach. In other words, the prohibition stems not from the repugnant nature of chelev, but, on the contrary, from its exalted nature as something which should be offered to Hashem.

What does this have to do with chatzi shiur?

The halachah states that any item offered on the mizbeyach requires a minimum of a kezayis in order

to fulfill the mitzvah.² This being the case, the general reasoning of “fit to combine” would not apply, for we could reason that since the essential problem with chelev is that it should be offered on the mizbeyach, not consumed by people, an amount less than which could be offered on the mizbeyach (a kezayis) should be permitted! It is for this reason we need a special drashah to prohibit a chatzi shiur of chelev, to teach us that even less than an amount that could actually be offered on the mizbeyach nonetheless partakes of the objectionable quality diverting it for human consumption.

1. The Meshech Chochmah adds that, in this respect, it is no different from the idea that if a person were to eat two kezayis's of the same forbidden food he would incur two sets of malkos (in a case where he was warned by witnesses regarding each kezayis).
2. See Menachos 26b.

Haftarat Tzav: The Temple of the Lord are These

Rabbi Allen Schwartz (From *From Within the Tent: The Haftarah, Essays on the Weekly Haftarah from the Rabbis and Professors of Yeshiva University*, YU Press, 2011)

The haftarah of Parashat Tzav begins with an astonishing reversal of the topic of its Torah portion. Parashat Tzav, like Parashat Vayikra before it, lists a broad array of the instructions of the sacrificial order. Yirmiyahu dismantles a major component of that order in the very first verse of the haftarah by exhorting his people to eat their burnt offerings even though the Torah prohibits their consumption. He exhorts his people with the words:

“Oloteikhem sefu al zivcheikhem ve-ikhlu basar” – “Add your burnt offerings to your other sacrifices, and eat the meat!”

The olah is called a burnt offering precisely because it is not eaten; it is totally consumed on the altar. Yet Yirmiyahu advises his people to eat olat. And if that was not enough, he continues with a diatribe against the sacrificial order that is unparalleled in Tanakh.

Yirmiyahu certainly would not be the only prophet who railed against the Israelites' scrupulous attention to the detail of the sacrifices while ignoring the interpersonal laws of the Torah. Consider these exhortations:

‘What need have I of all your sacrifices?’ says the Lord. ‘I am sated with burnt offerings of rams, and suet of fatlings, and blood of bulls; and I have no delight in lambs and he-goats. That you come to appear before Me, who asked that of you? Trample My courts no more; bringing oblations is

futile, incense is offensive to Me. New moon and Sabbath, proclaiming of solemnities, assemblies with iniquity, I cannot abide. Your new moons and fixed seasons fill Me with loathing; they are becoming a burden to Me, I cannot endure them... (Yeshayahu 1:11–14)

For I desire goodness, not sacrifice; obedience to God, rather than burnt offerings. (Hoshea 6:6)

I loathe, I spurn your festivals, I am not appeased by your solemn assemblies. If you offer Me burnt offerings – or your meal offerings – I will not accept them; I will pay no heed to your gifts of fatlings. (Amos 5:21–22)

Yet Yirmiyahu goes one step further in the second verse of our haftarah, where he explains why he feels the burnt offering might as well be eaten:

For when I freed your fathers from the land of Egypt, I did not speak with them or command them concerning burnt offerings or sacrifice. But this is what I commanded them: Do My bidding, that I may be your God and you may be My people; walk only in the way that I enjoin upon you, that it may go well with you. (Yirmiyahu 7:22–23)

This is astonishing. How could this be a haftarah of a parashah that is fully dedicated to the sacrificial order?

The fact is that we rarely read it. Parashat Tzav in a non-leap year is almost always Shabbat Ha-Gadol, when we replace the regularly scheduled haftarah with the final words of Malachi; and in a leap year it is almost always

Shabbat Parashat Zakhor, which is read on the Shabbat just before Purim along with its own special haftarah. Incredibly, both these haftarot have sacrificial themes, as well.

The real answer to our dilemma, however, is in a close reading of Yirmiyahu's words. He said that God did not reveal anything about sacrifices to our ancestors on the day He brought them out of Egypt. This is technically true. While we were certainly told to commemorate the redemption from Egypt with a paschal offering, this did not constitute a sacrificial order. That would have to wait until the command to construct a sanctuary at the end of Sefer Shemot, as well as the commandments in Sefer Vayikra which teach us how to serve in the Sanctuary. In fact, there is a broad corpus of law interrupting the redemption from Egypt and the eight weekly Torah portions dedicated to the sacrificial order. That corpus of law is contained in Parashat Mishpatim. The Torah gave primacy to the interpersonal laws of Parashat Mishpatim, ahead of the laws of the sacrifices that would follow. Thus, technically speaking, Yirmiyahu is correct. The day we left Egypt, we did not receive a Divine directive regarding sacrifices. The order of the law in the aftermath of our redemption shows how misled and mistaken the Israelites in Yirmiyahu's time had become with regards to their prioritization of Jewish law.

R. Efraim Linschitz, in his commentary, Keli Yakar, ingeniously derives this message from the very first verse of Parashat Mishpatim.

"Ve-eileh ha-mishpatim asher tasim lifneyhem" –

"And these are the statutes that you shall place before them."

The simple reading of "lifneyhem" is "before the Israelites"; however, Keli Yakar, in his homiletic style, renders the word to mean "before the section of korbanot" which follows. The Keli Yakar explains that the Torah consciously taught the statutes in Parashat Mishpatim before the sacrifices in the next eight parashiyot. This is also manifest in the fact that the fourth order of the Mishnah, Nezikin, which teaches interpersonal law, precedes the fifth, which teaches sacrificial law.

The lesson to be learned from this is clear: There can be no holiness or purity in Israel if we are not in observance of the laws governing our interpersonal behavior. This teaching is in accordance with Yirmiyahu's message earlier in the same chapter. He confuses his listeners with an enigmatic message, not to accept the lies of false prophets who declare:

The Temple of the Lord

The Temple of the Lord

The Temple of the Lord are these.

Rashi, citing the Targum Yonatan, explains that the lies refer to assurances to the masses that all they need to do for personal salvation is to attend at God's Temple three times a year for a pilgrimage. Rashi adds that others had taught that all we need to do is to pray, bow, and offer sacrifice, and all will be well. The Radak sees the threefold repetition of the word "Temple" as referring to the three parts of the Temple, the Ulam, Heikhal, and Devir. He sees the repetition as a sign that the people in Yirmiyahu's day took solace and refuge in the physical structure of the Temple and thought that it would save them from the Babylonians. Lastly, the Malbim renders a message that fits with our haftarah perfectly, by pointing out the end of verse 7:4, the word "heimah." According to the Malbim, this word serves to introduce what constitutes the true Temple, as described in the next two verses. While the current Temple of the Lord has ceased to serve as a true Temple in light of the Israelites' sinful ways, the ways of the true Temple of the Lord, in contrast, "are these," the words of the very next verses:

Now, if you really mend your ways and your actions; if you execute justice between one man and another; if you do not oppress the stranger, the orphan, and the widow; if you do not shed the blood of the innocent in this place; if you do not follow other gods, to your own hurt... (Yirmiyahu 7:5-6)

This confusion of priorities with regards to sacrifices was precisely Shaul's problem in Parashat Zakhor, and Shmuel set him straight when he rebuked Shaul, saying, "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obedience to the Lord's command? Surely, obedience is better than sacrifice, compliance than the fat of rams." Shaul thought that an animal sacrifice could make up for his moral backsliding, but that is not the proper way to approach repentance. Mishlei best represents this idea, declaring, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination."

The haftarah of Shabbat Ha-Gadol begins with a hope to return the sacrificial order to the way it was at first, before it fell into misuse. We all recognize Malakhi's opening statement of that haftarah as our own closing prayer at the end of our daily supplication:

וְעִרְבָה לַיהוָה יְהוּדָה מִנְחַת וִירוּשָׁלַם עוֹלָם כִּימֵי וּבְשָׁנִים קְדָמֹנִית

Then the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem shall be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of yore and in the years of old.

That is the way God wanted it the day He took us out of Egypt.