

A PARASHA THOUGHT

When Encouragement
is Needed

This week's Torah portion begins with Hashem telling Moshe to instruct Ahron and his sons about the laws of the *korban olah* (a completely burnt animal offering). The term used to command Ahron and his sons to bring these offerings, "tzav," connotes an extra need for encouragement and urging.

Rashi explains the need for the extra urging as being that extra encouragement is always necessary in situations incurring financial loss. One explanation given regarding the financial loss referred to here is that the *korban olah*, being completely burnt, does not provide any meat for the *Kohen* to consume. In other words, Hashem specifically told Moshe to urge and encourage Ahron and his sons to bring these offerings out of a concern that they would otherwise be lax about them due to the financial loss involved.

The question which begs to be asked is that Ahron and his sons were on an extremely elevated spiritual level, to the extent that Rashi writes (*Shemos* 6:26) that in some ways Ahron was Moshe's equal. That being the case, how do we understand the concern that the first *Kohanim* in history, handpicked by G-d, wouldn't properly fulfill their obligations because of financial loss.

Rabbi Elya Lopian addresses this question in his *sefer*, *Lev Eliyahu*. The explanation he offers is that human beings, no matter how great, have all been created with inherent weaknesses and vulnerabilities.

We find this idea expressed in *Pirkei Avos* (2:5), which tells us, "Do not trust yourself until the day you die," meaning that as long as a person is alive he should not feel that he is above sin. Even the greatest person can fall prey to his *yetzer horah* (evil inclination). In fact, the Talmud (*Sukkah* 52a) reveals that the greater a person is, the stronger his *yetzer horah* becomes, due to it having more of an interest in causing him to fall.

It is for this reason, writes Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, that if people do *teshuvah* (repent) and then find themselves continuing to act improperly, it does not mean that their *teshuvah* was insincere. Rather, after doing *teshuvah* they achieved a higher spiritual level, and correspondingly received a more intense *yetzer horah*. Therefore, they may have failed their **new** *yetzer horah*, but they only were tested with it because of the higher level they reached after doing *teshuvah*.

Hashem recognizes the weaknesses He hardwired in to human beings, which might prevent even the greatest people from fully fulfilling His commandments. It is for this reason, says Reb Elya, that Hashem told Moshe to encourage Ahron and his sons about the *korban olah*.

Through bearing this insight in to human nature in mind, and using it to avoid situations which would be detrimental to our spirituality, we should be able to serve Hashem in the best possible way.

Have a great Shabbos! 🌍



RABBI
MORDECHAI
BERINSTEIN

LEARNING WITH THE KOLLEL
(CHOSHEN MISHPAT)

WITH
RABBI MEIR MINSTER

The book of *Vayikra* is also known as *Toras Kohanim*, because it contains the *mitzvohs* relating to the *korbanos* (sacrifices) and all the special rules regarding the *Kohanim*. The culmination of the special status of the *Kohanim* is stated in *Emor* (21:8), where the Torah says *vekidashto* – and you shall sanctify him. According to the Gemara in *Moed Kattan* (28b), this means that the *Kohen* takes precedence in every matter of sanctity, including to begin [reading from the Torah] first, to recite the blessing first [at a meal], and to take the preferred portion first.

Based on this imperative, the *Chachmas Shlomo* (*Choshen Mishpat* 15:2) assumes that a case involving a *Kohen* must be moved to the top of the docket in a Jewish court. He wonders, however, why this idea is not mentioned in the *Shulchan Aruch* or by any of the commentators. He does comment that he thinks he once saw one of the commentators to the Talmud explain that idea of "beginning first" cited above in the Gemara actually means beginning first in the courtroom rather than reading first from the Torah. Regardless, he feels that the conclusion is inescapable, and a *Kohen's* case must come first. In fact, he argues, that the source for the law that the case of a *Talmud Chachom* is heard first – which is mentioned in the *Shulchan Aruch* – is built on the fact that the *Kohen's* case comes

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LEARNING WITH THE KOLLEL (CHOSHEN MISHPHAT)

CONTINUED

first. So why is the *Kohen's* right not mentioned in *halacha*?

He conjectures that it is because we are not certain of the lineage of the *Kohanim* today. He wonders though, that if the *halacha* reflects the contemporary reality, why is the law of the *Talmud Chachom* mentioned in the *Shulchan Aruch*, because he assumes that we don't have a true *Talmud Chachom* today either. He remains with the question.

(The question of whether the law of giving precedence to a *Talmud Chachom*, in fact, applies today is discussed further in the *Pischei Teshuvah* (15:1), where he brings many opinions on the matter.) 🕒



A SHINING EXAMPLE

RABBI EPHRAIM SKOLNIK

Moshe Brown was visiting the *kever* (grave) of Rebbi Nachman of Breslov in the city of Uman, Ukraine. As Moshe entered, he saw a young man that stood out; he had the most beautiful and unique-colored hair that he had ever seen. The man had a long ponytail as well as long *payos* (side locks). Clearly there was a story there. Moshe approached the man and said, “nice to meet you, what brings you here?” “I live in New York and I just came to daven,” the man replied. Realizing there was more to the story, Moshe pushed on. “If you don’t mind me asking, what actually brings you to Uman? Why do you have *peyos* and a pony?” “If you really want to know, I’ll tell you,” replied the man. “I had a very tough childhood and could never sit through school. At the age of 14 I left my parents’ house and went to live with my grandmother, who loved me and cared for me. I completely abandoned Judaism but she still loved me. A few years later I opened my own business and was very successful. I recently came back to Judaism and I am now 21 years old, have a large and successful business and am fully religious.” “Okay,” said Moshe, “that is really nice. But why the

TEFILLA TIDBITS

RABBI YAAKOV MARCHUK

The first of the *Birchas Hasachar* (morning blessings) is the *bracha* of *Binah*. The *Meforshim* (commentators) explain that there are two meanings to this *bracha*: 1) Thanking Hashem for the rooster that crows to differentiate between morning and night; 2) We thank Hashem that He gave us the understanding to differentiate between morning and night. Rav Shimshon Pincus, *tz”l*, explained this on a deeper level: day and night are a metaphor for the good and bad in this world. Light represents the good of this world, while darkness represents the bad. In this *bracha* we thank Hashem for giving us the ability to realize what’s truly important, and to not get caught up in the hype of the physical world. (*Nefesh Shimshon Siddur Hatefillah*, p 107) 🕒

payos and long hair?” “Well, a few months ago I started visiting people in the hospital. I was visiting a teenage girl with cancer in the hospital. She was losing her hair and wanted a wig, but she had such a unique color that they couldn’t find one. Looking at her few strands left I realized that she had my hair color so I decided to grow my hair for her. I knew my long hair would cause my parents a lot of pain so I came to Uman to pray and learn away from everyone for a few months until my hair grows long enough for a wig. In a few more weeks I will cut it my pony and go back to New York.” 🕒

THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE ZOHAR

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

The Testimony of Rabbi Yitzchak of Akko (Part I)

Rabbi Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai (Chida) in his renowned and indispensable work *Shem ha-Gedolim* (under the heading *Zohar*) relates a fascinating story about the discovery of the *Zohar*. He writes that he has seen written from the rabbi, Rav Avraham of Rovigo the following:

I found in an ancient manuscript of the *Zohar* owned by my teacher Rabbi Moshe Zacuto, the following note:

I have found it written in truth that the chief kabbalist Rebbi Nechunyah ben ha-Kaneh wrote the *Sefer ha-Bahir* and that, after him, Rebbi Shimon bar Yochai composed the *Zohar* and other works. After the death of Rebbi Shimon, his son Rebbi Elazar, and that generation, the wisdom of the *Zohar* perished until Hashem prompted a certain king from the East to dig up a certain place in search of a treasure. A box containing the book of the *Zohar* was found. The king summoned the wise men of Rome but they responded that the book of the *Zohar* is profound and beyond our understanding. The king then summoned the Jews, but they too said that the book was beyond their comprehension. The king asked if there are any Jews in the world who can understand it. The Jews responded that in fact there was such a Jew in Toledo. The king sent the manuscript with his couriers to Toledo. When the rabbis of Toledo saw the book, they rejoiced greatly and sent lavish gifts to the king. This is how the book of the *Zohar* came to be returned to the Jewish people. 🕒