

PENINIM ON THE TORAH

PARSHA BOOKLET

Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

PARASHAT TZAV

The fire on the Altar shall be kept burning on it, it shall not be extinguished; and the Kohen shall kindle wood upon it every morning; he shall prepare the elevation offering upon it; and shall cause the fests of the peace offerings to go up in smoke upon it. A permanent fire shall remain aflame upon the Altar; it shall not be extinguished. (6:5,6)

Horav Bentzion Yadler, zl, relates that a simple Jew once visited one of the distinguished Baalei Mussar, Ethicists. He complained of a heavy heart, a depressed soul, because it was becoming increasingly difficult for him to properly observe all of the mitzvos. The demands of his far-reaching business were compelling and the balancing act of Torah/mitzvos versus success in commerce was taking its toll on his observance. Heaven forbid should it be taking its toll on his business - only on his religion. This is why I referred to him as a "simple Jew." "Rebbe," he asked, "What should I do? I cannot go on like this." The wise man told him to visit a certain village populated mostly by farmers, and there he would discover the solution to his problem.

The man immediately left for the village. The first person he met was standing atop a wagon filled with timber, stacking each log side by side and on top of the other. "Excuse me, my friend," the farmer called out. "Could you do me a favor and hand me one of those logs on the side?"

"I am sorry," the man replied. "I cannot help you. The logs appear too heavy for me to lift." Since he was a city dweller, lifting and carrying logs was unusual for him. The heaviest object that he typically lifted was his pen.

The farmer looked at the man and said, "If you had replied, I do not want to help you," I could live with that. You have no obligation to help me, but do not say, 'I cannot help.' If you want to do it, then you could. You simply do not have the desire to help. Nothing, absolutely nothing, stands in the way of one's will!"

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

This random meeting came to an end and, at the end of the day, the businessman returned to his home. The next day, he went to visit the wise man and related what had occurred. The Baal Mussar listened and then said, "Remember what the farmer told you. It will be a beacon of guidance for you and, incidentally, it answers your question. A person's will is his most important attribute. It is the anchor that keeps him moored in place. It is the linchpin that secures a person to Torah and mitzvos. No such excuse exists as business matters. If you want to be a Torah Jew, then you will become one, and nothing will stand in your way. If you find excuses that prevent you, it means that you really do not want to be observant. It is all up to you - and what you want."

The Alter of Novardok, Horav Yosef Yoizel Horowitz, zl, was wont to say: "There is no such thing as 'not able;' there is, however, such a thing as 'no desire.'"

How does one achieve this elusive desire to grow, to be observant, to study Torah, to understand that life for a Jew means one thing - and one thing only? Rav Bentzion relates that he asked this question of the Maharil Diskin, zl, who told him, "Study mussar, ethics and character development, with great diligence and act modestly." This was indeed the practice of the Maharil. As his student, Horav Zerach Braverman, zl, related, his rebbe always carried Rabbeinu Yonah's Shaarei Teshuvah in his Tallis bag.

Horav Tzvi Michel Shapiro, zl, would often say, "If one seeks the easy way to become a yarei Shomayim, G-d fearing Jew, he should not study mussar. Thus, he will appear in his own eyes as a frum, observant, G-d fearing Jew. It is only after he studies mussar with intensity that he will begin to realize how distant from this goal he really is.

Rav Bentzion interprets the significance of studying mussar into the pasuk which enjoins us to see to it that the fire on the Altar should constantly be kept burning. The Torah intimates that if one wants to be sure to maintain a constant flame of love for the Torah, a fire of yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven, it is not sufficient merely to not extinguish it with water or actively put out the flame. One must keep on adding "wood," constantly affirming one's commitment through learning mussar, which is required text to maintain the flame.

It is said concerning Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl, the father of the mussar movement, that he reviewed the sefer, Mesillas Yesharim, Path of the Just, by Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzato, zl, for eighteen continuous years, until its words were engraved on the chambers of his heart. He did this so that his character would be refined and the steps he took would be on the correct path - the path of the just.

Many of the great Torah luminaries of the previous generation viewed mussar study as an imperative that must be observed at all costs. Once such gadol, Torah giant, who exemplified this adherence was the Manchester Rosh Yeshivah, Horav Yehudah Zev Segal, zl. He would often say, "I do not know how it is possible to exist without the study of mussar. If I let even one day pass without mussar study, I already sense a bit of arrogance within myself!" He felt that the classic mussar texts--notably the Shaarei Teshuvah; Chovos Halevavos; Mesillas Yesharim; Nefesh Hachaim; and Sefer Chafetz Chaim--comprised the arsenal one needs to protect himself from the harm caused by the yetzer hora, evil inclination.

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

The Rosh Yeshivah felt that one who disregards self-improvement, who is content to fulfill matters of ritual and observance, but has no interest in those mitzvos which relate to character refinement and interpersonal relationships, is in a sense disregarding a critical part of the Torah. He is no different than those members of liberal sects of Judaism who pick and choose mitzvos as they see fit.

The following incident demonstrates the Rosh Yeshivah's lofty level of character refinement, a plateau reached only by a person who constantly engaged in self-examination and improvement, always seeking to build a positive attitude so that he may be free of negativity.

In 1957, the Rosh Yeshivah accepted a boy whose background in religion and Torah study was very limited. His desire, however, was incredibly strong and, therefore, he was accepted. The Rosh Yeshivah and his rebbetzin took the boy into their own home, showering him with love and care. One evening prior to Pesach, Rav Segal was discussing something with the rebbetzin within earshot of their young "boarder," who had been helping with the Pesach preparations. The boy, feeling quite at home, interrupted their conversation to contribute his own feelings about the matter. Rav Segal was displeased with this breach of manners, and he told the boy, "We did not ask you for your opinion." The discussion ended with the Rosh Yeshivah returning to his study and the boy and the rebbetzin returning to their work.

Some two and a half hours later, Rav Segal emerged from his study - his face flushed and his eyes still moist from weeping. He opened a volume of the Rambam Hilchos Deios and read from the text: "Whoever displays anger is considered as if he worshipped idols." He looked at the boy and said, "I want to do teshuvah, repent, and I ask your forgiveness from having shown anger towards you." The boy replied that he harbored no negative feelings as a result of what he felt was nothing more than constructive criticism. Nonetheless, Rav Segal was not satisfied until the boy expressed his forgiveness.

There is another aspect to the mussar imperative: it helps us to develop a closer bond with the Almighty. Let me explain. Rav Segal would study mussar early each morning as a preparation for Shacharis. One morning, a student looked on as the Rosh Yeshivah repeated for more than an hour the words of the Mesillas Yesharim in Perek I, "that man was created for the sole purpose of rejoicing in G-d and deriving pleasure from the splendor of His Presence." The pleasure which Rav Segal derived from serving Hashem was clear to all. It was the pleasure of a pure neshamah, a pristine soul, whose personality had been refined to perfection through decades of relentless effort. Mussar was the crucible; the neshamah was the product. This enhanced his relationship with the Almighty, bringing him closer, increasing his love for--and joy in--serving Hashem.

This brings us to the next point. I have always wondered how someone of the caliber of Moses Mendelsohn, who in many ways is considered the inspiration and progenitor of the German Enlightenment--a movement that was directly responsible for the assimilation and eventual spiritual demise of hundreds of thousands of Jews--ended up with such an ignominious epitaph. As a talmid, disciple, of the Korban HaEidah, Horav David Franckel, zl, one would have expected a totally opposite result. What happened to his learning? Where did he go wrong? What

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

motivated his children to apostasize themselves? Indeed, we have no Jewish remnant left to his memory.

I think the root of his downfall was his lack of learning mussar. To him, Torah was chochmah, wisdom, an intellectual pursuit--no different than science, mathematics and philosophy. He did not equate Torah with its Source. The joy inherent in serving Hashem through Torah learning and mitzvah observance was lacking from his life. Learning was progressive intellectualism. It had nothing to do with a Jew's purpose in life. He treated Judaism as a rational religion comprised of ceremony, considering the Torah to be nothing more than a religious textbook.

His yearning for secular knowledge was the result of insecurity, a lack of pride in his heritage. He thirsted for the German way of life and thought. He wanted to be accepted. Had he studied mussar and focused on self-improvement, he would have realized that all of his yearnings were founded on his own personal issues - not on Judaism. He was the problem - not the religion. Mussar would have shown him the way. Regrettably, he was not willing to look.

This is the law of the feast peace offering that one will offer to Hashem. If he shall offer it for a Thanksgiving offering. (7:11,12)

The Korban Shelamim, Peace-offering, comes in two forms: the Shalmei neder unedavah, free-willed offerings that one brings to the Mizbayach; and the Shalmei todah, Thanksgiving-offerings, which is in a sense, obligatory, since one brings it as an expression of gratitude to the Almighty. It is a free-will offering which one feels compelled to bring. The Korban Todah is distinct from the Korban Shelamim in two aspects. The Torah requires the Korban Todah to be accompanied by four types of baked loaves, thirty made of leavened flour, and ten of unleavened flour. Four of these loaves are eaten by the Kohen, with the remaining thirty-six shared by the owner and those joining him. This law does not apply to a Korban Shelamim. It does not require any accompanying loaves. Second, the allotted time for consuming a Korban Todah is only one day and part of the night until chatzos, midnight. One is permitted to eat the Korban Shelamim for two days and one night. Given the fact that the Todah has all of these accompanying breads, the time allotted for eating seems a bit demanding. One would expect the Torah to grant an extension to the individual who has so much to eat. Instead, he has even less time than he does for the Korban Shelamim. Why?

The Netziv, zl, in his Haamek Davar writes that this was established by design, so that the one paying gratitude via his Korban Todah would invite his family and friends to share in consuming his korban. As a result, his miracle, the reason for which he is bringing the Korban, will be publicized, creating a heightened Kiddush Hashem, sanctification of Hashem's Name.

This is the reason that the Bircas HaGomel, blessing recited in place of the Todah, the blessing of gratitude, is recited only in the presence of a minyan, quorum of ten men. This way the miracle is publicized, and Hashem's Name is sanctified.

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

Horav Avigdor HaLevi Nebentzhal, Shlita, suggests this as the reason that the blessing of Horav es riveinu, "Who takes up our grievance," which is recited following the reading of the Megillah, must be said in the presence of ten men, in order to increase the publicity concerning the miracle which occurred on Purim. Likewise, we find that the lighting of the Chanukah menorah should take place at a certain time and place in which it will receive optimum notice.

Alternatively, another reason is given that the Korban Todah must be consumed on the day that it is offered. Human nature has it that time cools emotion. What excites a person one day will not necessarily stimulate the same enthusiasm on the next day. A person who is spared death will invariably be extremely animated the first day. As time goes on, the excitement begins to wane, the status quo sets in, and he becomes complacent about his future. The Torah wanted the Korban Todah, which is the expression of one's gratitude to the Almighty, to be offered when the individual is at the height of his appreciation, when he acknowledges the miracle with intensity, excitement and fervor. This is why the entire Korban must be consumed in one day - the day it is offered, so that the miracle that catalyzed this event will be fresh in his mind. Indeed, the Bircas HaGomel should l'chatchilah, initially, be recited within three days after one was spared.

The excitement surrounding the reading of the Megillah on Purim night is not the same the next day. The prayers of Rosh Hashanah are not as intense on the second day. The Birkas Shehechyanu is recited only for those mitzvos that are not commonplace - such as Pidyon HaBen, Redeeming of the First Born, but not on Tefillin, which we do every day. A Shehechyanu is made for a fruit that we have not eaten in a year. That is human nature. We become complacent; we get used to something; the adventure is gone and with it, the necessary emotion to properly express our feelings of elation.

The Korban Shelamim is not motivated by emotion; rather, it is a product of seichel, rational thought. A person acknowledges the need to move closer to Hashem. He decides to do something about it, and brings a Korban Shelamim as an expression of his commitment. It is not an issue of seizing the moment, but rather of carrying out a determination rooted in a well considered decision.

What is left over from the flesh of the feast offering shall be burned in the fire on the third day. And if some of the flesh of the feast offering was intended to be eaten on the third day, it is not acceptable, the one who offers it may not intend this - it remains rejected. (7:17,18)

In the Talmud Pesachim 85A, Chazal make what appears on the surface to be a startling statement. The hands of an individual that come in contact with either Pigul, a sacrifice in which the Kohen has improper intentions, thus invalidating it, or Nosar, the flesh of a sacrifice that was left over and not consumed in its prescribed time, become tamei, ritually contaminated. One of the reasons given for this Rabbinic tumah is chashdei Kehunah, a suspect among the Kohanim. Rashi explains that in the event that there would be a Kohen who was angry at the person offering the sacrifice, he might render it Pigul to spite the owner. Now, due to the tumas yadayim, contamination of the hands, it would serve as a deterrent. Since Pigul is ritually unclean, it would mean that the Kohen is compelled to immerse his hands in a mikveh after coming in contact with pigul. He will not want to trouble himself to do this; therefore, he will not render the Korban into Pigul. Tosfos explain that even a wicked Kohen, who would harm another

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

Jew financially, was nonetheless extremely meticulous with regard to the laws of tumah, ritual contamination, and taharah, purity.

What Chazal are teaching us is mind boggling! A Kohen has no qualms about rendering a Korban invalid, thereby incurring a financial loss to another Jew; yet, he would be deterred from acting out his diabolical plan if it involved a little tircha, trouble, to himself. He does not want to go "out of his way" to immerse his hands in a mikveh. The little bit of tircha saves him from sin. This is incredible!

Horav Avraham Grodzenski, zl, feels that Chazal have delved into the human psyche, understanding it from a more profound standpoint than we do. The slightest strain, the smallest inconvenience, is sufficient reason for some - even Kohanim - who are unusually alacritous, to refrain from being proactive in sin. We have before us a battle of wills: the will to do evil, to hurt a fellow Jew who no longer finds favor in our eyes; the opposing will, not to bother oneself. In other words, I will sin if it is convenient, if it is not too demanding on my time or energy. In this scenario, sin loses out. The flip side is that we see how a little bit of tircha can affect someone, causing him to "decide" not to go forward. Does this apply to a positive act? Will tircha preclude mitzvah performance? Quite possibly, for some, it might. How careful we must be of our true intentions, examining the "reasons" we give for not acting. Are they the real reasons, or are we simply masking our laziness? That is the question. Clearly, everyone has his own "individual" answer.

The flesh that touches any contaminated thing may not be eaten. (7:19)

The Baal HaTanya, zl, notes what seems to be a paradox regarding the laws of tumah, ritual contamination, and taharah, purity. We find that when something tahor, clean, touches a davar tamei, unclean object, it becomes tamei. Likewise, when an object touches something holy, the kedushah, sanctity, of the object affects it, rendering it holy. In other words, simple contact, touching between two objects, has an immediate effect which creates a halachic transformation within the object that is touched.

There is a difference between the two: i.e. unclean touching clean; holy touching that which is not yet holy. When something comes in contact with an unclean object, a mere touch suffices to render the second object tamei. When something touches kedushah, a simple touch is insufficient. It needs blichah; its taste must be absorbed. The "relationship" is more than mere contact. It needs a more binding and thorough union.

The Torah is teaching us a profound lesson. The Baal HaTanya sees this as an ethical message concerning relationships among people. In order to be influenced by kedushah, mere "touching," simple contact, popping in and out at one's leisure, is insufficient. It will not contribute much to the person who is searching for a life of higher meaning, deeper content, and holier endeavor. He must suffuse himself into the kedushah in order for it to leave an enduring impact on his life. In contrast, for one to become tamei, spiritually defiled, it does not take a lot -

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

mere contact. When one comes into association with the wrong group, gravitates toward a friend whose goals and objectives are not in sync with the Torah way of life, he takes the chance of falling into the same abyss of moral/spiritual corruption as his newly-found friend. A positive influence must be developed; a negative impact occurs through exposure. How careful we must be with regard to falling prey to such an experience.

Ahallelah Hashem b'chayay, azamrah l'Elokai b'odi I will praise Hashem during my lifetime, I will sing to my G-d as long as I exist.

The K'sav Sofer explains the sequence of the pasuk, "I will praise Hashem during my lifetime," as "I praise Hashem because I am alive", coinciding with the Yalkut Shimoni that exhorts a person to praise Hashem al kol neshimah u'neshimah, for every breath that we breathe. "I will sing to my G-d as long as I exist" - this idea alone, the mere fact that I am alive, is sufficient reason for me to praise Hashem, so surely I must praise Him for all the good with which Hashem has blessed us.

In an alternative explanation, attributed to Horav Yitzchak, zl, M'Volozhin, Ahallelah Hashem b'chayay, is a reference to one's youth, when he feels alive, when all of his strength and faculties are in full bloom. At that point, he clearly feels a sense of joy in being able to enjoy his life to its fullest. When he ages, however, when his body no longer has its original vigor, when pain accompanies him constantly and he is frail and infirm, he no longer has the ability to "live" life to its fullest. He merely exists, not yet "gone," but not alive in the full sense of the word. He is odenu, "still" among the living. This is the meaning of azamrah l'Elokai b'odi, "I will sing to my G-d," b'odi, "while I am 'still' alive." In addition, a person must learn to recognize the incredible act of chesed, lovingkindness, that Hashem grants us during our twilight years.

Command Aharon and his sons saying, "These are the laws of the burnt-offering." (6:2)

The Torah uses the word, tzav, command, in an atypical manner in this pasuk. The pasuk should have begun with the word, dabeir, speak, or, emor, say, to Aharon. Why did it begin with the word, "command"? Rashi explains that these laws require greater emphasis, so the Torah expresses them in stronger language, because they involve the loss of money. The Ramban questions this statement, since the Kohanim were permitted to keep the skin of the animal used from a Korban Olah. If they did not lose money, why did the Torah require such strong terminology? The Taz responds that the Kohanim were generally able to partake of the meat of the offerings, which does not apply to the Olah. Therefore, to keep only the skin meant a considerable loss for them.

It is important that we digest this statement. Neither Aharon HaKohen nor his sons were ordinary people. As Kohen Gadol and brother of Moshe Rabbeinu, Aharon was imbued with a profound love of mitzvos. Did he really need an extra warning to remind him to execute this mitzvah properly? A deeply spiritual person, he certainly transmitted to his offspring the idea that wealth is not measured by a few dollars, but rather by spiritual achievement. Is there a remote

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

possibility that they would have been reluctant to perform the mitzvah of offering a burnt-offering simply because it did not bring in as much cash flow as other korbanos?

Horav Henoch Leibowitz, Shlita, feels that Rashi is underscoring the powerful impact that money has on all of us. Clearly, Aharon would not have refused to bring a burnt-offering just because it incurred less profit. There is a distinct possibility, however, that he would have been less zealous than he might have been for another, more "lucrative," korban. Perhaps, his enthusiasm might have waned because deep inside his subconscious he felt a monetary loss. Aharon's zerizus, sense of alacrity, in carrying out the mitzvah might have been hindered as a result of the monetary loss. It would not have been a major hindrance, but a hindrance nonetheless. In order to forewarn Aharon and prevent him from falling into the trap that money presents, the Torah emphasized the mitzvah.

The Rosh Yeshivah quotes the Kli Yakar, who cites an incident from the Talmud Yerushalmi which supports this idea. A group of thieves robbed Rabbi Yochanan of his money. He went to the bais ha'medrash where Reish Lakish asked him a question pertaining to halachah. Rabbi Yochanan did not respond. Reish Lakish repeated the question only to invoke a similar response. Finally, Reish Lakish asked, "Why do you not answer?" Rabbi Yochanan replied, "All of the limbs depend on the heart, and the heart depends on the wallet." In other words, the great sage was implying that, since his money had been stolen, his mind would be preoccupied with his loss. Thus, he was not able to respond properly to the query.

We see from this episode that the venerable Rabbi Yochanan, the great tzaddik and gaon, distinguished in piety and scholarship, was so profoundly impacted by the loss of his money that he was temporarily not in control and unable to render a clear perspective of the halachah. It seems mind-boggling! Apparently, every person, regardless of his stature and virtue, has a natural attachment to money. Thus, when he loses it, it makes a mark on his psyche.

As much as we work on ourselves to develop a sense of priority regarding the significance of the spiritual over the material, we are still affected. The powerful pull of money, the grasp of the almighty dollar, does not leave us. We have to battle constantly to transcend that gravitational pull or succumb to its effect.

Chazal teach us in the Talmud Bava Basra 165A: "Most people stumble into some form of theft." The Mesillas Yesharim explains that while it does not mean actual grabbing money from people, it refers to rationalizing the "use" of other people's money either through questionable financial practices or through other inappropriate methods of lining our pockets. Anything that is not above board is tainted with thievery. Chazal are talking about "most" Jews, which is a reference to all of "us." The powerful attachment to money is an irresistible and universal desire which affects the high and mighty, as well as the simple and small. When it takes hold of one's jugular, it does not let go. It is only satisfied when it sees "green."

The Rosh Yeshivah concludes with an exhortation for our generation. Certainly, if Chazal made this statement, then how much more so is it true today when we measure a man by his material success. We live in a world in which the dollar reigns supreme, in which a person's house, car, and clothes and where he vacations greatly determine his status in a community. With

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

these pressures constantly on our minds, it is all the more important that we are extremely vigilant in each and every one of our financial dealings - not only with our co-religionists, but even with those who are not. Have we forgotten the meaning of -- and punishment for -- causing a chillul Hashem, desecration of Hashem's Name? There used to be a time when people took pride in their honesty and when integrity was a character trait that was cherished and held in high esteem. Today, we brag about what we can get away with, how we pulled the wool over someone's eyes and how we "saved" some money. We worry about the kashrus of our food, but neglect to be concerned about the kashrus of our money. The Torah goes out of its way to emphasize the need for vigilance. We should take this message to heart.

The Kohen shall put on his fitted linen tunic, and he shall put on linen breeches on his flesh...he shall separate the ash. (6:3)

The daily avodah, service, in the Bais HaMikdash began with terumas ha'deshen, the separation of the ashes, of the previous day. The Kohen would don his priestly vestments, scoop up a shovelful of the ashes that had been left over from the previous day and place them on the floor of the courtyard, on the eastern side of the Mizbayach, Altar. The Mishnah in Yoma 22 maintains that while the privilege of performing most of the priestly services in the Bais HaMikdash was decided by a goral, lottery, the terumas ha'deshen was not. It was basically done on a first come, first served basis. In the event that there were a number of Kohanim "competing" for the privilege, they would use an interesting method. All of those who vied for the opportunity to serve would race up the thirty-two amah ramp (Kevesh) of the Altar. Whoever reached the four amos on the top of the ramp first won the privilege to serve.

This was all fine until one incident in which two Kohanim raced up the ramp. As both lurched forward to the top, one deliberately pushed the other, who proceeded to fall off the ramp, breaking his leg. When the Bais Din realized that the system was inherently dangerous for the Kohanim, they decreed that the goral process of selection would now be applicable to the terumas ha'deshen.

In a shmuess anthologized by Rabbi Sholom Smith in his new collection of shmuessen entitled, Horav Avraham Pam, zl, he addresses this problem. I am always amazed how a Rosh Yeshivah of Rav Pam's stature can focus on the areas of human endeavor that are often ignored. That sensitivity, however, distinguishes between the individual who is a mentch and the individual who is not. The tragic incident that occurred between the two Kohanim underscores a serious problem. A person is obsessed with a serious desire to perform a mitzvah. The problem is that in his overwhelming desire to do good, he does not care on whom or on what he steps. The Kohen wanted to grab the mitzvah of terumas ha'deshen - at any expense - even if it meant breaking the other Kohen's leg. His motivation was pure mitzvah, since no money was to be gained and no honor was to be derived from his action. It surely was not the most glorious of mitzvos. Yet, in his haste to do a mitzvah, he caused pain for another Jew.

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

Now, we have to ask ourselves: Is this what Hashem wants of us? Did Hashem give us mitzvos to refine our character or to soothe our egos while we step on others? When we do not carefully weigh our attitude toward a mitzvah, we can inadvertently perform an aveirah, sin. If our actions cause someone else harm, then our actions manifest a negative connotation.

The Rosh Yeshivah would often relate an incident that occurred concerning the Chafetz Chaim which illustrates this idea. The Chafetz Chaim was an individual who went out of his way to perform kindness for anyone. His love of chesed, loving-kindness, was boundless - except when it was at the expense of others. The popular expression, "give a shirt off someone else's back," did not apply to him. Yes, he helped others, but only at his own expense.

Once the distinguished Lubliner Rav, Horav Meir Shapiro, zl, had occasion to spend Shabbos in Radin. He sent a message to the Chafetz Chaim asking if he could eat the Friday night seudah, meal, at his home. The Chafetz Chaim replied that he would be honored to have the distinguished rav and rosh yeshivah share a meal with him. The messenger returned to the Chafetz Chaim with another request: Would it be too much to ask that at the seudah, Shabbos meal, the women would eat either at a separate table or perhaps in another room (a practice not uncommon in some chassidic homes when there are guests present who are not family members). Could the Chafetz Chaim accommodate him? The Chafetz Chaim replied that, regrettably, he could not comply with his request, and, as such, he would be compelled to withdraw the invitation. He said, "I gave my wife a Kesubah, marriage contract, in which I agreed to fulfill the Shulchan Aruch's obligations of every husband: to eat his Friday night meal with his wife (Even HaEzer 70:2). How can I ask her to relinquish her right to have this?"

An incredible story! While I know that a story such as this will touch upon people's sensitivities - both pro and con, left and right - it teaches a number of lessons. First, the Lubliner Rav had a strong chassidic upbringing. Therefore, despite the opportunity for him to share a meal with the saintly gadol ha'dor, the Chafetz Chaim, he had demurred, refusing to change his tradition. Likewise, the Chafetz Chaim felt that, despite the great mitzvah of hachnosas orchim, welcoming guests, and the opportunity to accord kavod ha'Torah, pay respect to one of Klal Yisrael's pre-eminent Torah luminaries, he could not deprive his wife her due. In fact, he even refused to ask her permission to do so, knowing fully well that she would probably have agreed wholeheartedly to do so. Chesed is wonderful, but not at the expense of one's wife - or anyone else.

We cannot emphasize enough the importance of weighing one's actions to determine if they conform to mitzvah criteria or not. In fact, Rav Pam posits that there is halachic basis for this. The Rema in Orach Chaim 581:1 rules that a baal tefillah, chazzan, who leads the services for Selichos or the Yamim Noraim, High Holy Days, should ideally be a talmid chacham, Torah scholar of high moral standing, who is married and at least thirty years old. The baal tefillah has a formidable task to inspire the congregation and to entreat Hashem for mercy and forgiveness on their behalf. Therefore, he should meet these requirements. Nonetheless, the Mishnah Berurah writes that if selecting this person (who has all the necessary requirements) will cause a machlokes, controversy, in the shul, whereby there will be those who will not be "enthusiastic" about him, then the talmid chacham should decline from davening - even if it means that the

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

other choice is someone of lesser spiritual stature. It is no mitzvah to have a proper chazzan at the expense of some people's feelings.

Stories are told of great talmidei chachamim who would curtail the divrei Torah delivered at their Shabbos meal in order to allow the poor guests that they had invited to eat as quickly as possible. These people had not eaten all day and were hungry. To stretch out the meal with Torah comments might enhance its spirituality, but would not be fair to the hungry man who was waiting all day to eat. Life constantly presents situations in which we must decide if what we are about to do is really a mitzvah. Stopping to think before we act is always advisable. It can make the difference in defining whether our actions are really worthy of being considered a mitzvah.

This is the law of the feast Peace-offering. (7:11)

The Zohar HaKadosh writes that no sacrifice is as dear to Hashem as the Korban Shelamim, Peace-offering, because it "makes peace" between Above and below. This is a well-known statement describing what is achieved by the Korban Shelamim and, thus, the reason for its name: Peace-offering. It brings about peace. It still, however, begs for greater explanation.

Horav Yaakov Yisrael Lugasi, Shlita cites the Toras HaAvos, who posits that if a Jew is "pleased" and accepts everything that Hashem does with him, however the Almighty acts toward him, he is fulfilling the criteria expected of a Jew. We are to be pleased with our lot, because it represents Hashem's decision. The avodah, service, of a Jew is to accept and acquiesce with whatever Hashem determines is right for him.

This is the underlying motif of a Korban Shelamim. A Jew offers this sacrifice out of a sense of voluntary acceptance of Hashem's actions toward him. He is grateful to Hashem. The Almighty, in turn, is pleased with this Jew, because he is reaching the zenith of service to Him. They are both at peace with one another.

We do not comprehend Hashem's ways, but then, it is not for us to understand. There are so many factors -- past and present - that are components in Hashem's decision. Our function is not to understand, but to accept-- with grace and equanimity-- His decision concerning us. When we are pleased with Him, He is pleased with us. Regrettably, such an attitude evades many of us. We accept what we feel is positive and we kvetch, groan, and-- even at times-- express our displeasure with what we have determined to have negative connotations.

Let me add some food for thought. If we learn to be pleased with Hashem's actions concerning our welfare - even when we do not understand them-- Hashem might act accordingly regarding our less rational actions. How often do we act on the spur of the moment, without aforethought, and the results leave something to be desired? If we want Hashem to consider us in a positive light, we might begin by doing the same concerning what He decrees for us. We cannot act with a double standard.

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

Take Aharon and sons with him, and the garments and the oil of anointing. (8:2)

The vestments worn by the Kohanim served to set them apart from others when they performed the holy service. Anyone who viewed them bedecked in these princely vestments understood that the nature of their service was sublime. The clothes they wore sent a message to the people indicating that the one who was wearing these garments was on a high spiritual level. The fact that the Kohanim wore special vestments when they performed the Avodah, service, in the Sanctuary bespeaks the nature of the service and implies to us that the clothes we wear when we serve Hashem should reflect the solemnity and sanctity of our service. If we may be so bold as to suggest that as Torah Jews we are on call 24/7 in the service of Hashem. This mission should be reflected in the manner in which we dress and conduct ourselves. Dignity for the One Whom we serve and self-respect for ourselves should be the proper criteria for determining the style we choose. One who does not dress for the occasion demeans himself and casts aspersion on the quality of his service.

Perhaps the fact that these vestments are worn during a holy service in the Bais HaMikdash generates sanctity within them. This idea may be understood with an episode that occurred concerning the K'sav Sofer, which is cited by Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita. A Jew in the city of Pressburg became gravely ill and was hovering at death's door. The most prominent physicians were consulted, to no avail. Various drugs were administered, and his condition did not change. It was always the same response. A doctor would visit, check the patient, peruse the chart, and shake his head negatively. He could do nothing.

The members of the family were G-d-fearing Jews who understood that one does not give up hope. One places his trust in the Almighty, the Rofeh kol basar, He Who heals all flesh. They went to the rav of the city, the venerable K'sav Sofer. After relating the patient's history and the present situation, they implored him for a brachah, blessing, that would intercede in the Heavenly Tribunal, so that their father would live.

The K'sav Sofer listened and suddenly took off the scarf that was wrapped around his neck, handing it to the family members. "Here, take this scarf and place it on the forehead of the patient, and with the help of Hashem, he will arise from his illness," said the K'sav Sofer. The rav promised. Hashem listened to his entreaty, and the patient was cured.

The students who were permanent fixtures in the K'sav Sofer's home questioned him concerning the "holy" scarf. Did he "treat" it with the holy Names of Hashem? Was it immersed in Kabbalah, mysticism? The K'sav Sofer shook his head and said, "I have been wearing this scarf for some time. It rests on my shoulders, as I constantly study Torah. It is a part of my ritual of Torah study, and Torah is the greatest healer of all ills. I feel that this scarf contains within it the medicinal and therapeutic qualities necessary to heal the patient. It has soaked up and absorbed so much Torah that it can heal."

If a simple garment that was worn by one of the gedolei ha'dor, Torah luminaries of the generation, while he studied Torah lishmah, for its own sake, had these qualities, certainly the

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

Priestly vestments which were "designed" by Hashem and made by dedicated Jews l'shem Shomayim, for the sake of Heaven, retain a high element of Kedushah, sanctity.

Command Aharon and his sons, saying: (6:2)

Chazal explain that the term tzav, command, which is a more emphatic term than the usual form of instruction, is used here to teach that the Torah is urging the Kohanim to be especially zealous in performing this service. The Korban Olah, Burnt-offering, is such that the entire animal is consumed, leaving nothing for the Kohanim. Since this is a korban that involves a certain monetary loss-- primarily because the Kohanim who are sustained by the korbanos receive nothing from the Korban Olah--the Kohanim must be strongly encouraged to participate in this korban. Furthermore, this exhortation must be constantly reiterated to future generations.

What is the reason to suspect future generations of greater laxity concerning this korban? Was there something different about their perspective of the Korban Olah? Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, explains that the underlying perspective concerning korbanos, as Hashem dictated it, was that when a person offers a sacrifice, he should not disregard the primary function of the korban, and focus on the secondary, subordinate function of the korban. For instance, the primary focus of korbanos, their core principal, is one's kavanah ha'lev, intention of the heart, his overwhelming desire to purify himself, and thus he comes closer to Hashem. That is the principal purpose of korbanos. Everything else is secondary. This is why Hashem did not "listen" to Kayin's sacrifice. He erred in thinking that Hashem sought the physical sacrifice, that it was the animal and not the kavanah, intention, behind the korban which counted. Likewise, Shaul Ha'Melech was admonished by Shmuel Ha'Navi for leaving over the herds of cattle and sheep belonging to Amalek. "Hashem does not seek animals - He wants us to listen to His voice."

During the tekufah, period, of the First Bais HaMikdash, this was a common error. Klal Yisrael brought sacrifices and sacrifices, but they were missing the essential prerequisite for korbanos: the kavanah behind the korban. As the period of the Second Bais HaMikdash approached and continuing on during its tenure, the people began to listen, but, regrettably, they went to the other extreme. They decided that if teshuvah, repentance, and good intentions were so important, why bother with the korban? Just repent! Once again, the Neviim exhorted them, but this time it was for their lack of offering sacrifices. Having a good heart is important, but action is also necessary. Even if a person is able to achieve the ultimate level of kavanah, it does not replace the actual korban.

In other words, one must do both: offer the sacrifice with the appropriate accompanying kavanah and teshuvah. We now understand the reason for the zeeruz l'doros, urging for future generations. The focus was on the period of the Second Temple when people said, "Why waste a good animal when the real purpose of this korban is the intention?" They made it sound like they really cared, but, in truth, their only concern was for their wallets. They did not want to spend the money.

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

Is it much different today? We look for ways to circumvent spending money, expending time and energy for spiritual objectives using time-hallowed excuses: "Hashem only wants our good intentions;" or "As long as I have the right kavanah, it is not important to spend that much time articulating the words clearly," or "I can daven quickly, because Hashem knows what is deep down in my heart." These are all excuses for which we need ziruz, urging.

Command Aharon and his sons, saying (6:2)

Interestingly, in the previous parshah, whenever the Torah spoke to the Kohanim, it always said, "Bnei Aharon," the sons of Aharon. Here, with regard to the Terumas HaDeshen, the taking of the Ash, it addresses Aharon and his sons. Why is Aharon underscored in the service of taking and returning the Ash from the Altar? The Midrash sheds light on this anomaly. Apparently, when Klal Yisrael sought to create the Golden Calf, Aharon denigrated their actions, telling them that the molten idol was worthless and had no powers whatsoever. This was counted against him, because had they thought that the calf had some spiritual substance to it, their actions might have been somewhat mitigated. Now that they had been told that this calf was nothing more than a worthless idol, their actions were particularly baneful. They were no longer shogegim, acting without malice and without intention to do wrong. They were meizdim, guilty, with malice and aforethought. They sinned purposely. Thus, Hashem did not want to mention Aharon's name concerning the Kohanim. Moshe Rabbeinu complained, "Is it possible that the well is hated, but its water is loved?" he asked. In other words, Aharon's sons are a product of their father. How can they be distinguished while he is shunned? If they are honorable, it is because of him and he should, therefore, be recognized.

Moshe supplemented his claim with another question. "The wood of the Maarachah, pyre on the Altar, could be derived from any tree other than an olive vine, because these trees produce outstanding, important fruit. Thus, we see that the tree is spared because of its fruit. Should not Aharon be recognized because of his sons?" Moshe responded that Aharon's name would now precede that of his sons, which is why Parashas Tzav begins, Aharon, v'es banav, "Aharon and his sons." We revert back to our original question: What characteristic of the taking of the Ash makes the Torah choose it as the point of reference from which it emphasizes Aharon's stature as the first and most prominent Kohen?

There is no question that the taking of the Ash and its removal from the Sanctuary were important parts of the service which could only be performed by a Kohen. Nonetheless, it was only a preparatory service which preceded the actual service. Prior to offering that day's korbanos, sacrifices, the Ash from the previous day's sacrifices had to be removed. The fact that the Kohen donned fresh vestments was not a prerequisite, but rather, logistically necessary, so that he would not soil his regular vestments. After all is said and done, the avodas haDeshen, the service connected with the Ash, was important, but not as significant as the actual sacrificial service.

Perhaps we now understand the connection between Aharon's facilitation of Klal Yisrael's sin - an act that was more preliminary than intrinsic to this inductive service of the taking of the

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

Ash. Just as Aharon's error was not in the actual service of the Golden Calf, but in its expiation of the sin, so too, should his atonement be in a service that assists and advances the sacrificial service.

Horav Avraham Kilav, Shlita, cites a Midrash which indicates that this service was selected by design, due to its great significance, relating the compelling lesson that is to be derived herein. Chazal tell us that Rabbi Yanai was traveling and met a man who was dressed in finery reserved for a Torah sage. He invited the gentleman to join him for dinner saying, "Rebbe, will you join us for a meal?" The man acquiesced. During the meal, Rabbi Yanai brought up a number of Torah topics to which the individual did not respond. Apparently, his choice of clothing did not represent his true essence. When it came to bentching, Rabbi Yanai honored his guest with leading the bentching. The man responded, "Let Yanai lead the bentching in his own house." His lack of respect for the Tanna once again demonstrated that this man was not what he purported to be. He certainly dressed for success, but in what area was he successful? Apparently, he was not even proficient in bentching!

Rabbi Yanai then asked him to repeat after him the following: "A dog ate the food of Yanai." The Talmud in Shabbos 155A explains this statement. Hashem knows that a dog's food is limited. He, therefore, allows his food to digest slowly for three days. In other words, Hashem takes pity on the dog and feeds him out of a special chesed. So, too, was this man fed by Rabbi Yanai out of a sense of chesed, rather than worthiness.

"How did you merit to eat in my home?" Rabbi Yanai asked. "I never responded to one who spoke inappropriately to me. Also, if I ever saw two people in dispute, I would attempt to intervene and make peace between them," the man replied.

When Rabbi Yanai heard this, he said, "Your derech erez, respect and obedience are so exemplary, and I called you a dog! Concerning you, the pasuk in Tehillim 50:23 says, "And one who orders (his) way, I will show him the salvation of G-d." This means that one who is meticulous in the area of (his) way, derech erez, will see Hashem's salvation. This is consistent with the comment of Rabbi Yishmael bar Rav Nachman, "Derech erez preceded Torah by twenty-six generations."

This Midrash implies that in order for one to achieve status in Torah, he must be developed in the area of derech erez. Derech erez prepares the world for Torah. This is why it preceded Torah. The man that Rabbi Yanai met had an incredible z'chus, merit, one that superseded his lack of Torah knowledge. His outstanding ethical character, the respect and obedience that he manifested in his daily interaction with people, earned him the status of ben Torah, although he lacked proficiency in actual Torah knowledge.

Derech erez prepares the world, so that it can accept the Torah. It refines a person. Every Jew has a cheilek, portion, in Torah, either by studying it or by preparing for it. To a certain degree, the former takes precedence over the latter. Aharon HaKohen prepared his sons for Kehunah, the Priesthood. It was because of him that they ascended to this position. He was, therefore, rewarded with the opportunity to prepare the Mizbayach, Altar, for the daily service.

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

The preparation for such a lofty service makes the service. Just as the preparation for Torah through derech erez transforms the nature of the Torah study.

Indeed, this middah, attribute, of derech erez, was so much a part of Aharon that it guided and gave a sense of direction to all of his other wonderful character traits that played a prominent role in his selection as the Kohen. Moshe was the quintessential leader, teacher of the Jewish People. His unparalleled closeness with the Almighty elevated him to an unprecedented level of holiness. This caused him to view everything from the perspective of Middas Ha'Din, attribute of Strict Justice. Aharon HaKohen was the consummate father figure to the nation. His boundless love for-- and sensitivity to-- each and every Jew gave him the ability to view every situation through the prism of Middas Ha'Chesed, the attribute of Mercy. The Kohanim who serve in the Bais HaMikdash must act with chesed or some of the korbanos will not achieve acceptance, because, after all, if the attribute of Strict Justice were employed, some people just might not be worthy of atonement and forgiveness. This character trait of chesed was inherent in Aharon and transmitted to his descendants. He prepared them for the lofty service of administering to the spiritual needs of Hashem's People. Thus, the service of preparing the Altar for the daily avodah should naturally be his.

If he shall offer for a Thanksgiving offering. (7:12)

The Torah recognizes an individual's responsibility to pay gratitude to Hashem after he survives a life-threatening experience. He offers a Korban Todah, Thanksgiving offering, to express his gratitude to the Almighty. The Korban Todah must be eaten quickly for a day and a night, and it is accompanied by forty loaves which must be consumed during the allotted time frame. To facilitate this, one invites his friends and relatives to share in his good fortune, thereby increasing kavod Shomayim, the honor of Heaven. Gratitude is probably the most important character trait a person can internalize into his psyche. One who understands the significance of gratitude learns to thank Hashem for the many blessings in his life. Indeed, the Hebrew term ha'koras ha'tov means to recognize, to acknowledge the good that one receives. One who introspects and delves into his life will clearly see how Hashem has helped him in so many ways. In fact, he will even realize that he can now view those instances which seemed to have had a negative connotation from a positive perspective. This will lead to happiness and a life replete with joy.

Sharing the loaves with one's family and friends is a wonderful way to demonstrate one's gratitude to Hashem for two reasons. First, the greater the crowd, the more compelling and pronounced is the gratitude. There is a second aspect to having a crowd. A person should learn to share his good fortune. One who is truly happy, seeks to share this happiness with others. It is not just about gratitude. It is about happiness. One who is a mentch, a decent human being, seeks to share his positive moments, his good fortune, with others. This is how he achieves true happiness: with others. I recently read a story about such a man.

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

Years ago, there were no lotteries in America. There was a lottery, however, in Ireland. It was called the Irish Sweepstakes. The immigrant Jewish community had little or no money, having recently arrived in this country as survivors from the fires of the European Holocaust. The individual who is the hero of our story was poorer than most, but he worked hard, raised a family and adhered to Torah and mitzvos. He had one hope: one day he would win the Irish Sweepstakes and then all of his problems would be solved.

One year, this man's dream came true: He won! He took his winnings and sponsored a grand Kiddush. It was the grandest Kiddush that the mother city of Judaism - Boro Park - ever saw. Every type of cake, herring and fish was served. There was enough libation to keep people happy for quite some time. Cholent and kugel was doled out by the bowl. It was truly a simchah of epic proportion, perhaps not by today's ostentatious standards, but then the Jewish people still felt that they were in exile. In those days, everybody knew everybody, so everyone came and enjoyed. They ate and imbibed - and ate and imbibed. A jolly good time was had by all.

Now, one would think that such a lavish Kiddush represented only a small percentage of this man's winnings. Regrettably, this was not true. He had won a grand total of one hundred and twenty dollars! The Kiddush certainly cost more. Why did he do it? Why did he make a Kiddush and invite the entire Boro Park, ultimately paying much more than he had won? It was because he finally won, and he wanted everyone to know about it and share in his good fortune. He finally had something that he could share with others. After having suffered the terrible misery and deprivation of the Holocaust, he came to this country and worked toward once again establishing himself, rebuilding his life and raising a family. He succeeded, and he sought the venue to thank the Almighty. The Irish Sweepstakes provided that venue. His Kiddush was his way of sharing his happiness and good fortune with others. What better way to thank Hashem than to share one's joy with other Jews? That is what ha'koras ha'tov is all about!

Moshe Rabbeinu was not to strike the water of the Nile, to initiate the plague of blood, due to a sense of gratitude that he was to maintain to the water for protecting him as an infant as he lay in the basket. Likewise, he could not strike the earth for the plagues of frogs and lice because of the earth's role in hiding the Egyptian that Moshe had killed. Ha'koras ha'tov must be extended even to inanimate objects due to the effect our actions have on our subconscious. Thus, Chazal say that one should not throw stones at a well that has supplied him with water. He must maintain his gratitude. One who is imbued with the Torah's definition of gratitude sees to it that he extends his appreciation to everything and everybody from whom he derives any form of benefit.

The following two vignettes should illuminate our perspective concerning this most important middah, character trait. A group of youngsters noticed a rat in their house. They immediately grabbed a broom and took chase after the intruder. Their grandfather noticed this and implored them emphatically to stop and leave the rat alone.

"But, Zaidy, we must get rid of the rat!" they protested.

"Children I am asking you to leave it alone," the grandfather implored.

"But Zaidy, rats are unhealthy. They carry diseases," they complained.

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

"Children, let me explain why I am asking you to leave the rats alone," the grandfather said.

"A number of years ago, I-- together with many of our people-- was a prisoner to the accursed Nazis in the concentration camps. We were treated in a most diabolical manner and subject to constant misery and pain. This was during the day. At night, we would return to an ice-cold barracks, starved, tired and freezing. The only way to generate heat was by lying against each other. The problem with this was that the person at the end of the row had only one person next to him to keep him warm. His back was entirely exposed to the cold. I was the one at the end of the row. I would have succumbed to the cold had it not been for the rats. They were also cold. At night, they would lie against me in order to keep themselves warm. While they warmed themselves, they also warmed me. For this I have ha'koras ha'tov. I owe them. Please do not hurt the rat."

Horav Yisrael Gustman, zl, was a giant in scholarship and spirit. His indomitable faith shined forth brilliantly, especially during the Holocaust years when he was subject to the most cruel and inhumane experiences. Indeed, he once remarked that he had recited Viddui, the confessional prayer one says as he is preparing for his final moments, one hundred times. His love of Torah study was manifest in his incredible diligence, never wasting a minute from his precious study. Yet, he would personally water the garden in his yeshivah in Rechavia. Why? Why did one whose every minute of Torah study was invaluable take the time to perform a menial act of watering a garden, a deed that could have been carried out by anyone? It was out of a sense of gratitude to the various grasses and shrubs that had sustained him during the war. On a walk in the forest prior to the outbreak of the war, his rebbe, the venerable Horav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski, zl, had pointed out to him which grasses were edible - information that saved his life. His sense of ha'koras ha'tov took precedence because, without these grasses, he would not have remained alive.

*This is the law of the Sin-offering... An earthenware vessel in which it was cooked shall be broken; but if it was cooked in a copper vessel, that should be purged and rinsed in water.
(6:18,21)*

The taam k'ikar, taste particles, of the Sin-offering remain forever embedded in the earthenware vessel, rendering the vessel forbidden after one day and night, after which the korban becomes nosar, leftover. Just as the korban must now be burnt, the taste-permeated earthenware vessel must also be destroyed. This occurs when the vessel is broken. Since this rule applies to all korbanos, we wonder why the Torah chose to write about it in connection with the Korban Chatas, Sin-offering?

The Kli Yakar suggests a parallel between the purification process of a contaminated vessel and the purification ritual of one who has sinned. Certain vessels absorb the forbidden food in such a manner that they cannot be purged through intense rinsing. These keilim, vessels, must be broken. There are also such vessels that can be purified through vigorous rinsing.

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

Likewise, there are sinners whose sin has permeated him, so that it is ingrained in him. The sinful behavior has become a matter of habit, a lifestyle that is accepted and validated. Such a sin must be purged through shivron lev, a broken heart, with complete regret for the past and a resolute, positive commitment for the future. There is also the individual who has sinned by performing a simple indiscretion. While no sin is to be viewed as "simple" or light, if it has not become ingrained, it is much easier to purge. Indeed, we find that one who has spoken lashon hora, evil speech, should study Torah. If he is not able to study, he should lower himself and work on developing his humility.

Now that we no longer have a Bais Hamikdash to atone for our sins, a clear distinction exists between the Torah scholar who can effect his atonement through Torah study and the common person who must reflect on his behavior, employing the medium of shivron lev to bring about his atonement. It is not that Torah study is the panacea for all sin. It is just that by studying Torah properly one will ultimately neutralize his negative character traits which comprise the root of all sins.

This is why the Torah writes the laws concerning vessels that are ritually contaminated near the laws of the Korban Chatas. This conveys to us that when there will no longer be a Bais Hamikdash with its korbanos, an individual's path towards atoning his sins will be similar to that of a vessel that needs to be purified. One who is proficient in Torah study, who is willing and prepared to devote himself to learning, parallels the copper vessel which only needs intense rinsing, inside and out. This is accomplished by his total immersion in the sea of Torah, which is compared to water which is clear. Thus, tocho k'baro, its external image reflects its inner essence. Torah study does that to a person, cleansing and purifying him from within and from without. The individual to whom Torah study is a distant and unfamiliar venture will have to resort to shivron lev, a broken heart, and a renewed sense of humility. When he realizes his lowliness, his sinful behavior becomes more apparent, and his repentance and atonement will necessarily follow.

If he shall offer it for a Thanksgiving-offering. (7:12)

One who has survived a life-threatening crisis brings a Korban Todah, Thanksgiving-offering, out of gratitude to Hashem for His beneficence. Regrettably, many of us wait for that crisis to occur before we realize that our obligation to offer gratitude to the Almighty is an ongoing one. One who is not cognizant of this obligation ignores one of the primary character traits that a human being must develop. How does one offer gratitude to the Almighty? What can we give to Him? Let me cite a famous story that occurred concerning the saintly Horav Moshe Leib Sassover, zl, which will shed light on this question.

It was revealed to Rav Moshe Leib from Heaven that in a small village in Hungary there was to be found a young neshamah, soul, who was of an exemplary character, both morally and spiritually. He needed to go there to retrieve this soul and give it the opportunity to develop spiritually in a proper environment. The Rebbe immediately prepared for the journey. He

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

traveled through towns and forests, finally arriving at a meadow. In the middle of this meadow was a hill upon which geese were roaming. A young boy, who was not more than ten years old, was watching over the geese. The boy beheld these geese, the lush, green meadow; the calm, blue sky; and he became enraptured. He lifted his eyes Heavenward and proclaimed, "Ribono Shel Olam! I love You so much! Thank You for everything! Thank you for the shining sun, for the flowing breeze. Thank you for granting me life and health. Thank you for giving me the ability to see all of the beauty that You created."

The young boy continued, and Rav Moshe Leib just sat there in pleasant shock, listening attentively: "Ribono Shel Olam! How can I repay You for all of Your kindness? How can I thank You for inspiring the people of this community to select me to watch their geese? Now I have a means of supporting my widowed mother. Hashem, if You would have geese - I would watch them for nothing!"

Rav Moshe Leib sensed that this boy was truly at a loss to express his full gratitude to Hashem. He wanted to do so much - but he was limited. Then he said, "Ribono Shel Olam, You certainly are aware that if I knew how to daven, I would pray my heart out to You in gratitude, but, alas, I cannot. If I knew how to study Torah, I would gratefully do so incessantly. Regrettably, I can neither daven, nor can I learn." A few moments went by, during which the young boy seemed to be lost in thought. Then, suddenly, he jumped up and exclaimed, "I know something that I can do to show my appreciation. There is something in which I am more proficient than anyone my age in the village. I can somersault! I will somersault in Your honor. This will be my gratitude."

The young boy began a series of acrobatic moves, somersaulting all over the meadow, ultimately landing at Rav Moshe Leib's feet. The Rebbe warmly embraced the boy. With tears rolling down his face, he implored the boy to gather the geese and come with him. They went together to the boy's home, where Rav Moshe Leib asked the mother to allow her son to come with him. "I will pay all of your expenses for the following year, but please permit me to teach your son Torah," entreated the Rebbe.

The mother agreed, and the young boy went with the Sassover Rebbe. He was as bright and diligent as he was sweet and innocent. In a short while, he became proficient in his Torah studies. It was not long before the young boy became a young man with a following. People flocked to him from all over, as his fame as a tzaddik v'kadosh, righteous and holy person, spread. Yes, this was the genesis of the holy Horav Yitzchak Aizik, zl, the Kaliver Rebbe.

It all began with a young boy's desire to express his gratitude to Hashem. He understood the need, because he was cognizant of all of the ways in which he benefited from Hashem. He was overwhelmed with a love and desire to express his feelings of indebtedness to Hashem in some way, to acknowledge and demonstrate how thankful he was. He lacked, however, the medium for conveying this feeling. He could not daven; he could not learn. So, he did what he did best: he somersaulted. Gratitude borne from innocence - that is what he manifest.

We do not have to do this. We can daven; we can learn. What would it take? An hour per day of dedicated learning to Hashem or davening with the proper kavanah, devotion and

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

concentration, or just davening with meaning and feeling. We know that we cannot possibly repay Hashem for all that we receive, but it would be nice if we would try to do so with all of our hearts.

If he shall offer it for a Thanksgiving-offering. (7:12)

It is at a time when a person is spared from a life-threatening situation that he perceives and realizes that Hashem watches over him at all times. Under ordinary conditions, however, we tend to forget the Hashem factor in our lives. Therefore, if things just happen to go right, we lose sight of our obligation to pay gratitude to the Almighty for our continued existence. In truth, our life should be replete with an overwhelming urge to thank Hashem, for we know not how our life might have been shortened at every juncture in time. The Gaon, zl, m'Vilna interprets this idea into the words of the Baal Haggadah,; Tzei u'l'mad mah bikeish Lavan, "Go out and study that which Lavan sought to do against our ancestor, Yaakov." When we take a cursory view of Lavan and his behavior towards Yaakov, we do not really discover anything so drastic or evil. We see a tough, unscrupulous businessman who would do anything to gain a dollar. Cheating and underhandedness were ways of life for him, but we do not see Lavan trying to destroy Yaakov, as claimed by the Baal Haggadah. This threat does not surface throughout the narrative.

The answer is that we do not look with "both eyes," perceiving with depth and clarity, in an attempt to realize all of Hashem's hidden favors. The simple act of our daily endeavor may be fraught with danger - if we think about it. This is the message concerning Yaakov and Lavan: Yes, superficially it does not appear that there was anything sinister about Lavan's behavior. When one is tzei u'l'mad, "go out, and study," however, when we delve deeply into the story, we realize that all of Lavan's machinations and trickery were not merely corrupt business practice - he was actually out to destroy Yaakov. Hashem shielded Yaakov and smoothed out the bumps in the road, making it appear as if everything was fine. He allowed Yaakov to live in relative peace and tranquility. This does not mean that there is nothing for which to be thankful. On the contrary, having health, peace and tranquility is the greatest indication of Divine supervision. We just have to "go out and study."

Many of us go through life with our eyes closed. We do not take notice until something hits us squarely in the face. There are those that read and study ethical works, but have no clue that it might be addressing them. Then, there are those who look, see, study and learn from every experience. The following story portrays how a great man perceives even the most mundane occurrence, deriving a valuable lesson from it.

Horav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, zl, the Bais HaLevi, was once walking with a group of his students on the road, when they passed a procession of three horse-drawn wagons of hay one behind the other. The Bais HaLevi turned to his students and said, "If you will note, the horse pulling the third wagon is eating hay from the wagon in front of him. The lead horse has nothing to eat from, but benefits from the fact that the second horse eats from his wagon, thereby

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

lightening his load. The middle horse benefits the most, since his load is being diminished by the third horse, and he gets to eat from the wagon of the first horse.

"This scene supports the idea that either extreme of anything is rarely beneficial. The Rambam lauds the mean of virtue, choosing the middle road, pointing out that in most instances moderation is superior to extremism."

While this forum is not the place to discuss the issue of moderation versus extremism, we do observe how one can view an everyday experience and learn a meaningful lesson from it.

This is the law of the Elevation-offering, the Meal-offering, the Sin-offering, and the Guilt-offering; and the inauguration-offerings, and the Peace-offering. (7:37)

In the Talmud Menachos 110a, Reish Lakish asks why does the Torah say: "This is the Torah, law, of the Elevation-offering..." Why is the word "Torah" used to describe the halachos applying to the various korbanos? This teaches us that if someone studies the laws pertaining to a korban, it is viewed as if he had actually offered that korban. Horav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, Shlita, cites a Midrash from which he infers that there are three types of attitudes which prevail when one offers a korban. Likewise, there are three coinciding attitudes which manifest themselves in one's approach to Torah study.

The Midrash relates that King Aggripas once wanted to sacrifice 1000 Korbanos Olah. He instructed the Kohen Gadol that on that day no other korbanos were to be accepted from anyone. A poor man approached the Kohen. In his hands he had two turtledoves, the fowl that is usually used by a poor man. "Please sacrifice these for me," he asked. "I am sorry," replied the Kohen, "I have been ordered by the king not to accept any other korbanos today." "Please, my master, Kohen Gadol, you must listen to me," the poor man countered. "Everyday, I capture four turtledoves; two I sacrifice, and two I sell. If you do not sacrifice them for me, you will be cutting into my livelihood."

The Kohen Gadol took the two birds and sacrificed them. That night King Aggripas had a dream in which a Heavenly message was conveyed to him. "A poor man's sacrifice preceded your sacrifices today." When the king heard this, he went to the Kohen Gadol and asked for an explanation. "Did I not instruct you not to offer any other korbanos?" the king asked the Kohen Gadol.

"Yes, my king, you did, but this poor man came and begged me, saying that I was impeding his livelihood. I had no other recourse but to offer his birds," explained the Kohen Gadol.

King Aggripas replied, "Yafeh asissa, you did the right thing." Regarding the korban of that poor man, David Hamelech says in Tehillim 22:25, "For He has neither despised or loathed the supplication of the poor."

We find another type of korban which Kayin offered, "And Kayin brought an offering to Hashem of the fruit of the ground" (Bereishis 4:3). From the contrast between the simple description of Kayin's offering and the more specific description of Hevel's offering, "And as for Hevel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and from their choicest" (Bereishis 4:4),

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

Chazal derive that Kayin's offering was from the inferior portions of his crop, from the surplus - not from the choicest, as his brother saw fit to offer.

We have before us three divergent attitudes: the korban of Aggripas, the korban of the poor man, and the korban of Kayin. Apparently, Aggripas' korban was one of choice. He offered his best in quality, and quantity was not an issue. On the other hand, it was not much of a challenge for Aggripas to make this commitment. Certainly, he did not have to undertake any major financial responsibility to afford this korban. It did not entail borrowing money from anyone. Surely, he must have had thousands of animals left over after this korban was offered. Then there was the korban of the poor man who believed be'emunah sheleimah, total trust, that if his korban was not accepted, it would hinder his livelihood. Then there was Kayin's korban, from his leftovers, from his inferior crops.

We find a distinct parallel in our commitment to Torah study. There are those who are kovea itim, establish and set aside time every day to study Torah, with the belief that their well-being and the well-being of their families are dependent upon this devotion. Their livelihood hinges upon their Torah study. The merit that they accrue will be their advocate for receiving Hashem's favor. It takes overcoming challenge; it involves incredible commitment, but he understands the score: Torah study gains him access to success, both material and spiritual.

There are also those individuals who devote a set amount of time to Torah study, but not if it means overcoming obstacles and challenges to their time and lifestyle. They set up Torah study around their schedules; they do not fit it into their schedules. The commitment is there, but it has to work in harmony with their "comfort level."

The third form of commitment is the one manifest by Kayin. After everything has been done: he has returned from work; he has eaten a filling supper; he has read the paper or engaged in any other form of media communication; after he has satisfied all of his personal physical and mundane diversions, he reminds himself that he has to attend a shiur, lecture, which lasts for an hour. He, of course, shows up for the last fifteen minutes, because he mimics Kayin by offering his surplus. To that type of korban, the reaction is, "But to Kayin and his offering He did not turn" (Bereishis 4:5).

An individual who, with regard to appeasing his spiritual dimension, is assuaged with a minimum achievement is what Rav Elyashiv calls a Yehudi dayeinu, a dayeinu Jew. He is the kind of person who views the Baal Haggadah's statement, "If He would have brought us close to Har Sinai, and not given us the Torah - Dayeinu - it would have been enough," as a relief or a form of "Why did He have to do it?" We would have been just as happy without the Torah - without the Shabbos - without the Bais Hamikdash. Dayeinu - the bare minimum would have sufficed our needs.

A person should take the attitude that if he does not fulfill his part of the commitment, he is endangering his livelihood. One who is satisfied with the minimum in one area of the Torah, will, over time, become increasingly satisfied with a minimalist approach to the rest of the Torah. When he realizes that his life, both physical and spiritual, is contingent on carrying out his commitment, he will see success in all of his endeavors.

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

Command Aharon... this is the law of the Olah, Elevation-offering. (6:2)

Rashi cites Chazal who explain that the more emphatic term tzav, command, implies that the Torah is urging the Kohanim to be especially zealous in performing the Olah service. It also implies that this enjoinder must be repeated constantly to future generations. Rabbi Shimon adds that this exhortation is especially relevant to mitzvos that involve a financial loss, such as the Korban Olah. Simply, this is because the Olah is completely burned so that no part of the animal goes to the Kohanim. The commentators offer various other reasons for the monetary loss incurred in a Korban Olah. Veritably, the Olah Hatamid, which is the korban in question here, was a korban tzibbur, communal-offering. Thus, it was purchased from communal funds. Since this is the case, what great monetary loss was involved? Each Jew contributed a few coins to the treasury. Does this represent such a great financial loss that it must be emphasized and repeated to future generations?

Horav Moshe Shapiro, Shlita, notes that Hashem has designed human nature so that a person finds it difficult to part with his money. Chazal tell us that righteous individuals care as much about their material possessions as they do about their bodies. We find Yaakov Avinu risking his life to return for a few small jars. Why is this? What allure is there to money that it is held in such high esteem? He explains that whatever money one has amassed comes at the expense of time expended, and nothing is as valuable as time. In fact, those who spend their money freely, do not value the time they put into earning it. This does not mean that one should not spend money, or, even worse, that one should refrain from giving tzedakah, charity. Indeed, one may spend whatever his heart desires, as long as it is well thought out and a necessary expenditure. For example, if a person spends a huge sum of money for a home, it should be a home that he feels that he needs, so that whatever he spends is worth the investment. The primary consideration is that one should value his money, because he values the time he has expended earning it.

Rav Moshe cites Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, who related an incident he had heard from the Ponevezer Rav, zl. When the Ponevezer Rav, zl, studied in Kollel Kodoshim in Radin under the leadership of the Chafetz Chaim, zl, his chavrusa, study partner, was Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl. One day, they wanted to look up a sefer which the Chafetz Chaim cited in his Shaarei Tzion. They went to the Chafetz Chaim, who, after greeting them and listening to their request, replied that he did not possess the sefer in question. They were taken aback to hear this, for, after all, the Chafetz Chaim had cited the sefer. The Chafetz Chaim explained that when he needed the sefer, he borrowed it and had since returned it. When he finished speaking, the Chafetz Chaim put his head against his bookcase and groaned. Observing this action, Rav Elchanan, said, "Rebbe is probably upset that he does not possess the sefer." "No," replied the Chafetz Chaim. "it is just that when I look at my bookcase filled with sefarim, I wonder if there is any sefer that I really did not need. This sefer costs money, which represents time, and, if so, I have wasted valuable time. This is why I groaned," continued the Chafetz Chaim.

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

This is how one should view his possessions. To waste money is to waste time, and time has the greatest value.

*This is the law of the feast Peace-offering... if he shall offer it for a Thanksgiving offering.
(7:11,12)*

Someone who has survived a life-threatening situation brings a Korban Todah, Thanksgiving-offering, to express his gratitude to Hashem. David Hamelech says in Tehillim 50:23, "He who offers confession, honors Me." Every other korban is brought for a sin that the individual has committed. He brings the Korban Todah out of a sense of appreciation, a feeling of gratitude for the Almighty's rendering of his good fortune. The Korban Todah honors - and pays tribute to - Hashem. This is the essence of hakoras hatov, appreciation: recognizing the good fortune that one has received from Hashem. One perceives that his good fortune was not simply "good luck," but rather, he believes that Hashem has protected him during his period of crisis.

Chazal tell us that four categories of people who have survived a near disaster are required to bring a Korban Todah: These include one who has survived: a desert or any other potentially hazardous journey; a dangerous imprisonment; a serious illness; a sea voyage. In each of these circumstances, Hashem has taken the person out of the abyss of danger and protected him. How does he repay Hashem? He brings a korban honoring the Almighty for his beneficence.

In the Talmud Sanhedrin 94a, Chazal say that originally Hashem had planned to designate Chizkiyahu Hamelech to be the Moshiach, until the Middas HaDin, Attribute of Strict Justice, charged that Chizkiyahu had never sung Shirah, a song of praise, to Hashem. Incredible! No one prior to Chizkiyahu achieved such distinction - not even David Hamelech! Chizkiyahu had it all. He could have ascended to the zenith of spiritual leadership - to become Moshiach Tzidkeinu, to put an end to all our suffering, to prevent millions of Jews throughout the millennia from suffering, deprivation and death. But, as Horav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi, Shlita, notes, he had one failing: he did not offer his gratitude to the Almighty for the many miracles that had sustained him.

The middah of hakoras hatov is of critical importance. It must be an intrinsic component of an individual's personality. He must recognize every bit of good that he receives, acknowledge its source and offer his gratitude. One who does not do this, regrettably, does not perceive Hashem in every aspect of his life. Moreover, one who recognizes Hashem's guiding hand in his life can never be bitter. Everything emanates from Hashem. He gives you life and health - and if He does not - at least you know the decree is from Him. It is His decision.

Rav Ezrachi cites Rashi's commentary in Devarim 32:6. The pasuk reads: "Is it to Hashem that you do this, O vile and unwise people?" Moshe Rabbeinu questions how Klal Yisrael could have been so vile and unwise as to sin against Hashem, Who did everything for

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

them. How could they be such ingrates? They were vile in their lack of gratitude and unwise in not considering the future, the dire consequences of rebelling against Hashem. Sin results from one of two causes: a lack of acknowledgment of the past, or a lack of realization of the consequences in the future. One who appreciates Hashem's favor would never repudiate the Almighty. Likewise, one who thinks about the outcome of his actions would never sin against Hashem. It all boils down to hakoras hatov, recognizing, acknowledging, appreciating everything that Hashem does for us.

There is no doubt that Chizkiyahu thanked Hashem for each and every miracle of which he was the beneficiary. He did not, however, spring forth spontaneously with a song of praise. Hakoras hatov is a constant awareness of Hashem's tov, goodness and favor, which should result in an immediate and instinctive unrestrained reaction of praise. The Moshichiyus that would have been Chizkiyahu's was never actualized because his reaction was delayed. Our exile continues as a dire consequence. The greater one's spiritual stature, the more that is expected of him. The Middas HaDin prevailed against a king who had achieved so much distinction.

There were gedolei Yisrael whose lives consisted of perennial celebrations of Hashem's beneficence. Horav Simcha Wasserman, zl, exemplified this ideal. He had a special appreciation for the Gaon m'Vilna's commentary to the pasuk in Mishlei 15:15, "All the days of the poor are bad, (while) those of good heart (find life) a constant party." The Gaon explains that this is consistent with Chazal's axiom in Pirkei Avos, "Who is rich? He who is satisfied with his lot." The poor man in Mishlei is a reference to one who is greedy, who is never satisfied with what he has. All of the wealth and pleasures in the world are not sufficient for fulfilling his perceived needs. Thus, throughout his life, he suffers from discontent. Someone who is content with his lot, who finds satisfaction with everything Hashem bestows on him, is always in a state of joy. He is in a constant state of euphoria, achieving on a regular basis what the malcontent feels only when his insatiable avarice is temporarily satisfied.

Rav Simcha was a person who was always in a state of celebration of life. He had no ambition for wealth and luxury, but he was always fulfilled. He devoted himself to his mission of Torah dissemination, caring about nothing else. He and his rebbetzin were unfortunately not blessed with children of their own. His rebbetzin's attitude summed up his life's endeavor: "If Hashem did not give us children, it is for the sake of what you are doing. You must continue with what you are doing until you are able to influence people in the way you want to influence them, until you are able to educate them in the way you want to educate them. And you should continue your work until many yaldei Yisrael, Jewish children, are our children."

He never considered himself as a "giver." Instead, he always recognized each and every person's gift to him. If someone had given time or effort, he always gratefully acknowledged that fact. In fact, his last two words to a close talmid who conveyed his best wishes for a speedy recovery were, Ah dank, a groisen dank, "Thank you, thank you so much." This was the essence of his life.

In a classic narrative about hakoras hatov under the most grueling and questionable situations, I cite a famous incident that occurred concerning the Bluzhever Rebbe, zl, in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp towards the end of World War II. In preparation for

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

Chanukah, the female inmates smuggled shoe-dye that could serve as fuel out of the camp factory. They pulled threads out of sweaters and spun them into wicks. On the first night of Chanukah, the Rebbe led a secret Minyan for Maariv. Scores of Jews, risking their lives, joined together for the lighting of the Menorah. The Rebbe recited the three berachos, blessings, and lit the Menorah.

Included in the crowd was a non-believing Jew, a Polish Bundist, who had long ago become alienated from belief in a Torah way of life. He turned to the Rebbe and asked, "Rabbi Spira, how can you utter the words of the Shehechyanu blessing, saying, 'Blessed are You... for having kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season?' How can you pay gratitude for having been kept alive for this time of death, torture and hunger? Is this life? Are you not making a mockery of our suffering?"

The Rebbe looked deep into the disenchanted Jew's eyes and replied lovingly, "I, too, was wondering how I could joyfully say these words, but then I looked around at the assembled Jews. Despite the terrible suffering, they insist on remaining active Jews, participating in mitzvos even at the risk of losing their lives. Have you ever in your life witnessed such courage and faith? For that alone, to be able to witness such incredible people, such amazing conviction, we thank the Creator. No! We Jews do not give up! We are proud and grateful to have lived to see thousands of Jews who have not given up, who will never give up, who are living proof that we will one day rebuild anew."

To be able to recognize and acknowledge the good when others see only the negative is hakoras hatov at its zenith.

When one brings his feast Peace-offering to Hashem, he shall deliver his offering to Hashem from his feast Peace-offering. (7:29)

This pasuk seems to be redundant. If one brings a feast Peace-offering, obviously he will deliver his offering from his feast Peace-offering. After all, what else should he bring? There is one offering and one "bringing." Furthermore, what is the meaning of the phrase, "He shall deliver his offering to Hashem from his feast Peace-offering"? It should have said simply, "He brings his offering to Hashem." What is the meaning of "from" his Peace-offering? Does he not bring the Peace-offering all at once?

The Sifsei Kohen explains that one who brings a Peace-offering to Hashem should not assume that he has fulfilled his entire obligation to pay gratitude to Hashem. No! It is only "from" his Peace-offering. It is only part of his obligation. Indeed, one who has been spared from a crisis should reflect every day on his good fortune. It is not a one-time deal; it is a commitment for life. This is emphasized by David Hamelech in Tehillim 116:12, "How can I repay Hashem for all His kindness to me?" There is no end to what we owe Hashem. Every moment that we are alive we owe Him again and again.

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

How do we repay Hashem now that we have no Bais Hamikdash and no opportunity to offer korbanos of thanksgiving? The Kav HaYashar posits that it is incumbent upon any person who has been saved from a crisis either to correct something in his life or to initiate a good deed or endeavor that will be noticeable, so that people will be aware that he is expressing his gratitude to Hashem in place of a korban.

Moshe brought Aharon and his sons forward and he immersed them... He placed the Tunic upon him... he dressed him in the Robe... (8:6,7)

If we peruse the Chumash, we note that six pesukim are devoted to Moshe Rabbienu dressing and preparing Aharon and his sons for their investiture into the Kehunah. There is no question that we attribute sanctity and meaning to the manner in which the Kohanim were dressed and prepared. Was it necessary, however, for Moshe, the leader of Klal Yisrael, to perform this function? It seems that such an elementary endeavor as dressing the Kohanim could have been performed by someone other than the most distinguished member of Klal Yisrael. Although it might have been important for Moshe to do the anointing of the Mishkan and its vessels, why "trouble" him to dress the Kohanim?

Chazal teach us that the vestments worn by the Kohanim have great significance. In fact, without the Bigdei Kehunah, Priestly vestments, they are considered like zarim, regular Jews. One would assume that the vestments must have had a significant element of kedushah, holiness, to them. Horav Baruch Mordechai Eizrachi, Shlita, posits that while this was certainly true, there was an added factor to this kedushah - the manner in which they were dressed. When one has been dressed by Moshe Rabbeinu, it becomes an entire new experience.

We seem to ignore this part of our daily function. We arise, get dressed and continue on with the day. There is a procedure for getting dressed, which shoe to put on first, when to tie the shoelaces; don the right shoe, don the left shoe, tie the left shoe, and then tie the right shoelace. All this is spelled out in the Shulchan Aruch - for a reason: The way we get dressed makes a difference. Likewise, the individual who dresses the Kohanim creates a difference. When Aharon or his sons prepared to perform the avodah, service, in the Sanctuary, it made a difference that they were dressed by Moshe, rather than by someone else. They would realize that not only were they wearing the holy vestments, but, they were actually being dressed by Moshe Rabbeinu!

This dressing represented a form of chinuch, dedication, for the Kohanim, similar to the anointing of the Mishkan and its vessels prior to their being used. This was Moshe's invocation of the Kohanim.

We can take this idea a bit further. While the content of our children's education, and the manner of instruction, are certainly of primary significance, we must also recognize the extreme importance of the individual who imparts the lesson: the rebbe. There are many ways to define a rebbe: his character, ability and mission. Since, however, Moshe Rabbeinu was the first rebbe, so to speak, since he was the one who first taught Torah to Klal Yisrael, we should use him as the

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

paradigm of the quintessential educator. Moshe is known by the title of Rabbeinu, our teacher, incorporating in this title his role and position as leader of Klal Yisrael and also alluding to the mission of those who would follow after him. Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, notes that the Hebrew language employs a number of terms which describe the art of education. They are: lameid, learning by practice and habituation; shanein, the terse, precise and incisive manner in which a teacher impresses upon his pupils the ideas he wants them to acquire; lekach, focusing on the students' taking, retention and grasping of the subject matter, understanding that a student can only grasp what the teacher himself has been able to "take" for himself; horeh, the root of the words moreh and Torah, which defines the work of teaching as a spiritual act, indicating that the role of the teacher is to be one who enriches the spiritual organism of each student with seeds that will develop and yield fruit as the student matures; last, rabbah, from which we yield the term rebbe or rabbi, from the root to increase or to multiply.

With regard to learning, this last term might imply that the teacher is one who is more or greater than his students. In Torah education, however, it is a term which focuses on the teacher's mission: to increase or multiply the student's knowledge. Rav Hirsch goes one step further. He feels that a rebbe must seek to reproduce himself in his students, to mold the character and spirit of the students in his own image. Obviously, this implies that a rebbe who takes his work seriously makes it his first objective to work ceaselessly upon his own mind and his own character. He must mold himself to become the sort of person - both intellectually and spiritually - whose reproduction would be desirable in order to add to human well-being. Thus, the true "rebbe" works to improve himself, because he sees himself as a conduit to transmit the Torah in the same manner as Moshe Rabbeinu.

What was Moshe's manner of teaching? Chazal teach us in Pirkei Avos: Moshe kibeil Torah m'Sinai u'mesarah l'Yehoshuah, "Moshe received the Torah from Har Sinai and transmitted it to Yehoshua." He did not inject himself into the Torah. He gave it over pristine, pure and unadulterated, in the same manner that he received it. He made sure that he maintained himself as the proper keili, vessel, conduit, for this transmission. That is why he was the humblest man on the earth. He saw himself as the transmitter, the medium, the conduit between Hashem and Klal Yisrael. He maintained his character, because if the vessel is soiled, the water inside it will likewise become tainted.

The devoted mechanech, educator, who is both morally and intellectually suited for his calling, understands that his profession, more than any other, is directly involved in shaping and molding the spiritual and moral future of Klal Yisrael. His partnership with the student's parents contributes to his student's moral and spiritual success in life. Wherever his student will one day present himself worthily in theory and practice, it will be the "rebbe's" character and work that is rabbah, "reproduced" in his student. Thus, he will thus continue to grow through his students long after he himself has been removed from the picture - just like our quintessential rebbe, Moshe Rabbeinu.

The fire on the Altar shall be kept burning on it. (6:5)

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

What is the meaning of the word, bo, on it? It should simply have said, "The fire should be kept burning." It is obvious that this is a reference to the Altar. This question was asked by the Gerer Rebbe, zl, the Imrei Emes, as a young boy, of his grandfather, the Sefas Emes. The Sefas Emes' response was a challenge to his brilliant grandson to answer the question himself. The Imrei Emes replied that, quite possibly, the Torah was telling us that the Kohen himself has to be filled with a fiery passion. The fire representing the korban should burn fiercely within him to the point that, as the flame rises, so should the flame burn concurrently bo, within him.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates that a Yerushalmi Jew, Reb Shimon Kohen, was such a person. In fact, as he lay mortally wounded, a victim of an Arab suicide bomber in the Machane Yehudah market, he recounted with a fiery passion how Hashem brought him to the fire that consumed his life.

He explained that, typically, he had no reason whatsoever to frequent the Machane Yehuda Shuk. For a number of years he had owned a fruit stand in the Shuk. Five years earlier, he had closed down the stand and decided to spend his newly-found time studying Torah in a nearby Kollel. He maintained a ritual to visit the market every Erev Shabbos to wish Gut Shabbos to the other vendors. On that fateful Thursday - not Friday - he said to his wife, "I want to go to the market today to wish my friends Gut Shabbos."

"Why are you going to the market today?" asked his wife. "It is only Thursday. You never go on Thursday."

He had no answer for her. He just went because he felt compelled to go that day. Under normal circumstances, he would have to wait between twenty and thirty minutes for the bus to arrive. This had gone on for thirty years! The bus had never come on time. For some "strange" reason, today, the bus arrived moments after he came to the bus stop. For thirty years, it had taken forty-five minutes for the bus to travel the distance from Reb Shimon's apartment to the market. Today, it took only seventeen minutes. For thirty years, whenever Reb Shimon came to the market, he had gone to his right, because that was where all the fruit vendors were situated. Today, he was thirsty, and he went to the left, so that he could first quench his thirst. Moments after he purchased his drink, the bomb exploded right near the place he should never have visited - under usual circumstances.

Apparently, today was not a typical day. Reb Shimon lay there in the emergency room, mere moments before he was to take leave of this world, recounting to his wife how everything that had transpired that day was for one purpose - so that he should become a sacrifice to Hashem. He lay there in bed and accepted Hashem's decree, realizing that His reasoning was beyond his ability to grasp. This was a person in whom Hashem's fire burnt brightly.

A repeatedly baked meal offering, broken into pieces, you shall offer it as a satisfying aroma to Hashem. (6:14)

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

A Korban Minchah is a simple sacrifice which, due to the simplicity of its contents - flour, oil and frankincense - is usually brought by people that are on the lowest rung of the financial ladder. The Korban Minchah is broken into pieces, so that the pieces will be small enough for the Kohen to perform the Kemitzah. Horav Aharon Bakst, zl, adds that the pittim, small pieces, were to create an image of more than was really there, so that the pan appears to be fuller than it is. The purpose: to show compassion for the poor man. The same idea applies with a korban ha'of, fowl-offering. The Kohen is instructed to split the bird with his bare hands. One does not remove the feathers prior to burning the entire bird. Why are the feathers left on the bird? Rashi explains that if the feathers were removed, the poor man, who is usually the individual bringing a fowl-offering, would be humiliated by its puny size. After all, once the feathers are removed, very little bird is left. It is better to endure the foul smell of burning feathers than to hurt the feelings of a poor Jew.

A powerful lesson can be derived from here. The mitzvah of chesed demands that one not only perform kindly to others, but also sees to it that he finds a way to do so in such a manner that he retains the individual's self-esteem. Even if the benefactor is subject to humiliation and adversity, it is better that he suffers than hurts the feelings of another Jew - even if it is during an act of chesed. If we do not perform the act correctly, it is not chesed. To help someone in such a manner that he consequently experiences a humiliating incident is to distort the entire concept of chesed. Unquestionably, while the poor man's fowl is burning on the Altar, the stench that permeates the entire area is overpowering - but that is what chesed is all about. No one ever asserted that an act of loving-kindness has to be tailor-made to fit the mood and personality of the benefactor. It is supposed to help the beneficiary. He is the only one for whom we are obligated to show concern.

There is a powerful story that occurred concerning a gabbai tzedakah, charity collector, and the Sanzer Rav, Horav Chaim Halberstam, zl, that should be related. Rav Chaim once came to a small town. As he was walking through the community, he felt himself gravitating to one of the homes. "The scent of Gan Eden emanates from this house," Rav Chaim declared. "I must enter to discover what is producing this unique fragrance."

This happened to be the home of Reb Pesach, the town's tzedakah collector. Rav Chaim knocked. He was welcomed in with the greatest look of shock and reverence. "I must find the source of the unique aroma that permeates your home," Rav Chaim said, as he walked around the small home. "I have found it," he exclaimed, as he pointed to a large box. They immediately opened the box to discover nothing but some old clothes, most of them unusable. On the bottom of the box, beneath the rags, they discovered a priest's garb.

"What is this?" Rav Chaim queried. "What did you do with this priest's vestments that earned it the aroma of Gan Eden?"

Reb Pesach sighed and related the following story: "As a tzedakah collector, my day never ends. As soon as I finish raising funds for one person in need, another situation arises that needs my attention. Awhile ago, I came home after an unusually difficult day to find a poor man at my door, crying bitterly that he had no money for food. He was deeply in debt, and his lenders

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

had lost patience with him. I told him that I commiserated with his pain, but what could I do? I had already made my rounds for the day. I could not return to the same people again.

"Woe is to me," the poor man cried. "I have no good fortune at all. Is it my lot to see my wife and children starve to death before my eyes? Please help me!" What could I do? I went out again and begged the local community to open up their hearts to this destitute Jew. No sooner had I returned, then another man came to my house with a similar request. How could I turn a deaf ear on his pleas? On the other hand, how could I return a third time to my supporters? That would be the height of chutzpah. These people had been kind and benevolent, but I could not take advantage of them. Then I thought of an idea, a strange idea. If it were to work, it would be worth everything.

"I went to the town bar to which I usually went to ask its owner for a contribution. I had already been there twice that day. Now, I returned for a different purpose. I was going to solicit the patrons, people who were far from caring, people who were frivolous and had no respect for anyone. They did, however, have money, and I would ask them for it. With the help of Hashem, I would succeed. It was my last hope."

"I went inside with feelings of trepidation. The spokesman for the rowdy group was a spoiled, young, rich boy. He called me over and began ridiculing me, "You're back again, old man? Why waste your time?" "I do not think it is a waste of time. I have come to solicit you on behalf of a man who is poverty-stricken and has no way of extricating himself from his overwhelming debts. In order to ease his life and give him some piece of mind, I am asking you to contribute to this most worthy cause. I am prepared to do almost anything to obtain your donation."

"I have an idea," the man replied. "We used to have a priest in town, who recently passed away. I have his vestments. I want you to put them on and walk through town dressed like the priest. If you do that, I will give you the necessary funds that you seek."

"I said to myself," Reb Pesach continued, "'The worst that people will say is that Reb Pesach has lost his mind. It is worth it, if it will generate the funds that I seek for this poor man.' I did it. I donned the priest's vestments and walked all over town, hounded by laughter and shame. When I returned, the man took out his wallet and gave me the money I needed.

"When I removed the vestments, I thought to myself, 'These garments were used to perform a mitzvah; I am going to save them.' That is why they have been laying at the bottom of this box."

Tears began to streak down Rav Chaim's face as he heard the end of the story, "Take these vestments and put them away in place of your tachrichim, burial shrouds. They will accompany you to Gan Eden. No prosecuting angel will be able to harm you while you are wearing these vestments. They exemplify the zenith of loving-kindness."

So it came to pass, many years later, when the Polish government sought to make a road through the Jewish cemetery, they disinterred a number of graves. Reb Pesach's was one of them. The Chevra Kadisha, Jewish sacred burial society, noticed that when they moved his remains

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

from his grave, his entire body - with the exception of one leg - was completely whole. Nothing had decomposed, except for part of one leg - which was not covered by the priest's vestments, because it had been torn.

Chesed means a willingness to suffer abuse and humiliation to help another Jew. Reb Pesach did, and he was rewarded in kind.

If he shall offer it for a thanksgiving offering. (7:12)

Ibn Ezra explains that one must bring a thanksgiving offering when he has been saved from a tzarah, anguishing ordeal. Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl, gives a penetrating insight into the concept of todah, gratitude, from which we should all learn. A young man whose wife had just given birth to a baby girl a year after their chasunah, wedding, came to the Rosh Hayeshivah and asked if he should make a kiddush, festive reception, in honor and appreciation of the event. Rav Shach replied, "If your little girl had been born after eight years of marriage, would you still feel compelled to ask this question? Certainly not! You would have realized the importance of showing gratitude and giving praise to the Almighty. Now that Hashem has been benevolent and spared you the anguish of running to doctors to pursue every opportunity to have a child, should the display of gratitude be decreased?"

What a powerful statement! How many of us thank Hashem only when something or someone we value is almost taken from us, but fail to recognize His sustaining powers and His every day, every moment benefits? We say every day in the Tefillah of Modim, "For our lives, which are committed to Your power, and for our souls that are entrusted to You; for Your miracles that are with us every day; and for Your wonders and favors in every season - evening, morning and afternoon." Many of us say this Tefillah by rote, without concentrating on its meaning, until Hashem subtly gives us reason to understand its message.

If he offers it for thanksgiving, he shall offer it with the thanksgiving sacrifice. (7:12)

In Parashas Vayikra, Moshe Rabbeinu was instructed regarding the various korbanos, with the specific purpose to convey the laws to Klal Yisrael, so that they would know what sacrifices to offer on various occasions. In Parashas Tzav, the Torah addresses the Kohanim, instructing them in the intricacies of these korbanos. The question that confronts us is: Why is the Korban Todah, Thanksgiving-offering, placed in Parashas Tzav and totally omitted from Parashas Vayikra? It seems from its placement that the Korban Todah is focused with greater intensity on the Kohanim than on the rest of Klal Yisrael. Why?

The Korban Todah was brought by an individual, "in recognition of a miraculous deliverance from harm, such as: those who travel at sea, or through the desert; who are released from prison, or who recover from illness. Horav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zl, explains that these

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

conditions are occasions in one's life when he becomes acutely aware of Hashem's guiding hand, directing events in his life. These occurrences convey a profound message to a person: miracles occur. Hashem directs the universe in such a manner that, for the most part, the miracles remain subtle and covert. Every once in a while, however, a person recognizes that the miracles that have happened in his life are a sampling of the larger picture of miraculous events. The average person is not privy to overt miracles.

The Kohanim however, were witness to Hashem's Divine intervention into what we are used to referring to as "nature," on a daily basis. They felt Hashem's Imminent Presence in this world - constantly. In Pirkei Avos 5:5, Chazal tell us that there were regularly ten visible miracles in the Bais HaMikdash. Thus, the idea of expressing our gratitude to Hashem for His beneficence has greater application to the Kohanim who routinely experienced Divine intervention through visible miracles. The Torah, therefore, places the Korban Todah in Parashas Tzav.

We might add another reason for placing the Korban Todah in the parsha that addresses the Kohanim. Using Rav Yosef Chaim's thesis that the Kohanim experienced miracles on a regular basis, rendering them more attuned to miracles, we may suggest another reason for impressing upon them the significance of the Korban Todah. One who experiences miracles on a regular basis not only develops a profound awareness of Hashem's Divine intervention, but also the fear that he might become accustomed to miracles, almost to the point that he expects them, forgetting that they are an incredible gift. Sometimes we need reminders to "motivate" our sense of appreciation, to realize that it is all a gift.

This is likewise true of anyone who has been the beneficiary of Hashem's special favor. We become accustomed to it. We forget that it was a gift that can be abrogated at any time. While we certainly appreciate Hashem's gifts, all too often our gratitude is short-lived. We must remember that the actual gift might be limited in time.

It is appropriate to cite a compelling statement from the Kav Hayashar. Taking note of the fact that we no longer have the Bais HaMikdash and the ability to offer a Korban Todah, we must do something to demonstrate our hakoras hatov, appreciation, to Hashem. Therefore, "one who has been the beneficiary of Hashem's compassion and kindness; if he was saved from thieves, from a fire, or from the clutches of death; if he was gravely ill and healed, it is incumbent upon him to do something good or perform an act of kindness, where it will be noticeable that this is in lieu of a korban to Hashem." The Kav Hayashar adds that this applies to everyone, because which Jew can say he has never been saved from something terrible? Perhaps it might serve us all well to analyze our life's occurrences and pay tribute to the Almighty for shielding us in the past, as well as, hopefully, safeguarding us in the future.

Command Aharon. (6:12)

In general, the Torah introduces the commandments regarding the korbanos with the less emphatic term, amarta, say, or daber, speak. Regarding the Korban Olah, Burnt offering, the command is emphasized with the word tzav, command. Chazal explain that the Kohanim are

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

being urged to be especially zealous in performing this service and to reiterate its significance to future generations. Rabbi Shimon adds that this exhortation is expressly applicable to commandments that involve a chisaron kis, monetary loss, such as the Korban Olah, which is entirely burnt on the Altar, leaving nothing for the Kohanim.

The concept of chisaron kis has several connotations and, indeed, the various commentators take different approaches towards interpreting it. The Satmar Rebbe, zl, renders Rabbi Shimon's statement homiletically as a reference to the Torah studied by one who is in severe financial straits. What relationship is there between chisaron kis and zos Toras haOlah, "This is the Torah /law of the Elevation / Burnt offering"? Chazal teach us that when one studies the laws of the korbanos diligently, it is considered as if he actually offered the korban. Studying Toras haOlah is k'ilu hikriv Olah, as if he had actually brought the offering.

Chazal teach us to be especially mindful of bnei aniyim, children of the poor, for from them will come forth Torah. In his commentary to the Talmud Nedarim 81A, the Ran explains that due to their financial distress, they achieve a level of erudition unrivaled by their more financially secure brethren, because they have nothing else with which to occupy their time and because they have a strong sense of humility.

This, claims the Satmar Rebbe, is the underlying meaning of Rabbi Shimon's statement. The Torah places greater emphasis on "the individuals" whose lives are relegated to chisaron kis, monetary loss. They will achieve a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the Toras haOlah.

What does "poor" mean? Does it indicate a lack of money? Or is it possible that one could be poor, so abjectly poor that he has nothing, yet he finds something to share with someone else? I recently read a story in Rabbi Paysach Krohn's latest book in the Maggid series that gave me a new perspective on poverty and wealth. The story is about Reb Yisrael Klein, zl, a Belzer chassid and designated baal korei, Torah reader, in the Belzer Shul. Shortly after Reb Yisrael was niftar, passed away, and his family was sitting shivah, a man came in to be menachem avel, comfort the bereaved. The following episode occurred.

The man that entered the room knew no one. He stood in the background, waiting for an opening up front, where Reb Yisrael's sons were sitting. He slowly went forward and took a seat at the side of one of the sons and waited to be acknowledged. He waited for a few minutes and when one of the sons looked up at him, he said, "I came here tonight out of a sense of hakoras hatov to your father. It is only because of him that I am a frum Yid today.

"It goes back many years to the dark, painful days of the Holocaust. I was a sixteen year old boy lost, scared and hungry, interned in the infamous Auschwitz concentration camp. I was going from garbage can to garbage can in search of whatever scraps of food I might find. I was terrified that I would die of hunger very soon if I did not get some food. As I was searching, I noticed another fellow, somewhat older than I, who was also searching from place to place. That fellow was your saintly father.

"He came over to me and asked, 'What are you looking for? Perhaps I can help.'

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

"I am starving," I told him. 'I need some food, anything, I do not care what it is, as long as I can eat it.'

"He looked at me forlornly and said, 'I, too, am looking for food, but I have not succeeded in finding any.' He then came close to me, put his arms around me and said, 'This is what I can give you,' he said, 'a hug, because I love you. I love you because you are a Yid, and the Ribono Shel Olam also loves you, just because you are a Yid.'"

The man struggled to continue his story, momentarily stopping to dab at a tear running down his cheeks. "I went through much upheaval after that fateful day. There were moments when my faith in Hashem was challenged, and I might have given in, but I always remembered your father's warm, loving embrace. His special words glowed within me, and they gave me support to keep on going. I eventually settled in Eretz Yisrael. I have led an observant lifestyle only because of your father."

A poor man might not have money, but he still has one commodity that can never be taken away from him: himself. We do not realize that sharing warm feelings and caring words with another Jew is as important as - and in some circumstances, more important than - financial support. The right words can save a life.

If he shall offer it for a Thanksgiving offering. (7:12)

The imperative to pay gratitude to Hashem Yisborach and to everyone that benefits us is a compelling one. Fortunate is he who is able to show that appreciation. I have been writing about hakoras hatov - recognizing the benefit we receive and demonstrating that recognition - for many years, but I never thought I would publicly convey my personal hakoras hatov to HaKodesh Baruch Hu Shehechiyani v'Kimani, uGemalani Kol Tuv.

Chazal teach us that the Korban Todah was accompanied by forty loaves of bread, so that the beneficiary would be "encouraged" to invite people, so that he could relate Hashem's chassodim, kindnesses, to them. I, likewise, take the medium of the Peninim to express my gratitude and hopefully to educate others so that what happened to me will either not happen to them or that they will act with haste in order to live to talk about it.

Parashas Tzav coincides with Parashas Terumah in my writing cycle. On Friday night, Parashas Terumah, my life changed - because it almost came to an end. Nissim min haShomayim guided a few hours that felt like an eternity. I went to bed that night with no indication of any impending problem. Suddenly at 3:20 a.m., I woke up with an excruciating pain in my upper ribcage, just below my throat, that emanated full-circle to my back and neck. It was like no pain that I had ever previously experienced. The intensity and suddenness were so incredible that I understood that something was wrong. I immediately got dressed, woke my wife, and called 911. I figured that if I was acting in undue haste, the medics would tell me this. I had the Siyata diShmaya to maintain the presence of mind not to delay, but to act immediately.

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

I was "fortunate" that the E.M.S. crew came immediately; the emergency room physicians were waiting when we arrived, and the members of the catheterization team were immediately placed on call. At 5:30 a.m., I was already being wheeled into the cardiac catheterization lab for the first of two procedures.

I write all of this because the Peninim is Baruch Hashem read by many people, and I feel that my greatest hodaah, offering of gratitude, is to help others not to experience a similar episode. I look back, and I wonder what zchus I had to survive. I have no idea if it played a role, but I have always felt that "Shabbos" would protect me. For the past seventeen years, I have made an effort to walk down to the hospitals on Shabbos to visit patients that are either known or referred to me. I have made a point to emphasize the significance of not leaving a Jew alone in a hospital setting for Shabbos. Hashem gave me the energy to walk, a family with the patience to tolerate it, and the resolution to continue doing what is the right thing, even though it was difficult at times.

Perhaps my zchus was the fact that I would publicly convey my experience, so that other Yidden will live. My cardiologist tells me that "time is muscle." The faster one receives cardiac intervention, the less heart muscle is damaged. For "some reason" I did not wait, and at the first sign of pain I called 911. Most people do not do this. They search for antacids or painkillers, anything but make the call that could save their lives.

I never thought that I would use Peninim as a vehicle for expounding about diet. There is no question that a low-salt, low-fat diet is not as palatable as its counterpart, but living to see your children and grandchildren grow up is certainly an option I would not trade for a piece of kishke.

Last, we are taught that Hashem prepares the refuah, remedy, before the makah, illness. We should do the same. Prepare zchusim; give Hashem reasons to keep you alive. Make yourself necessary. Provide a service for others that is vital, even if it is not comfortable or "plaque worthy." Furthermore, the Manchester Rosh Hayeshivah, Horav Yehudah Zev Segal, zl, writes that we often take the gifts of good health and life for granted, while bemoaning things that are trivial by comparison. For this and other reasons, it is good to visit a hospital from time to time. Aside from fulfilling the mitzvah of Bikur Cholim, visiting the sick, and giving encouragement and succor to someone in need, one comes in contact with people who only yesterday have been well and are unfortunately ill today. This serves as a vivid reminder to be forever grateful for the gifts of good health and life.

I close with a thought from Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, from his commentary on the Siddur. He explains that hodaah means more than "thank you." It is a confession of our indebtedness. Hence, the tefillah, Modim, is an expression of our indebtedness to Hashem, especially for the following: Al chayeinu hamesurim beyadecha, "for our lives which are entrusted into Your hand." We must constantly realize that our entire lives are in His hand - from birth until our very last breaths. We live and die by His will. I add that, while we live our lives b'derech hateva, following conventional medicine, we must never forget - and always give thanks to - Hashem, because it is only through His will that we exist.

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

V'al nishmoseinu ha'pekudos lach, "for our souls which are in Your care." We pay gratitude to Hashem for guarding the neshamah, which He deposited within our bodies at birth and will retrieve at the moment of death. Throughout this period, He guards it.

V'al nisecha shebechol yom imanu, "for Your miracles which are with us every day." This is a reference to the nissim nistarim, hidden miracles, which comprise so much of our lives. We are not aware of the major illness we might have contracted or the dangerous situations we go through in our daily lives. Each of us could easily relate a number of examples.

V'al nifleosecha v'tovosecha shebechol eis - erev, vaboker, v'tzaharayim. "And for Your wondrous deeds and bestowal of goodness, which occurs at all times - evening, morning, and afternoon." In its simple interpretation, we pay gratitude to Hashem for all of the hidden miraculous events which constantly occur, for which we express our thanks thrice daily in the tefillos of Maariv, Shacharis and Minchah.

Rav Schwab, however, offers a compelling alternative approach to understanding these three periods. He maintains that they are a reference to the moods or circumstances in which one may find himself. Erev: one may find himself in an "emotional state of erev." It is like evening, dark, black and unknowing. He feels that his life is declining, either due to age or mazel. Nothing seems to go right. He feels a sense of hopelessness; he is at the "end of his rope."

Boker: a person may be in a boker state of life when he notices a glimmer of light rising into his life. Little by little, things begin to fit into place and turn around for him.

Tzaharayim: a person experiences the tzaharayim state of his life. The sun is shining brightly. Everything he touches turns into success. He has the feeling of being on "top of the world."

In this sense, we pay gratitude to Hashem Yisborach for our lives which He holds in His hands, regardless of the state of being our lives are in at the time. We trust and affirm that He holds the key to our existence. It is because of His will and kindness that we are alive. Regardless of the state in which a person finds himself, being alive is in itself the greatest gift from Hashem.

I began writing this Peninim in the hospital and finished it a few days later at home. I thank the reading public for indulging me, and I fervently hope that I have made an impact. If my experience will save another life, then it will all have been worthwhile.

If he shall offer it for a Thanksgiving offering. (7:12)

Parashas Vayikra addresses all of the basic information regarding the korbanos. Parashas Tzav elaborates on the korbanos and the various halachos which concern the Kohanim in executing the avodas hakorbanos, service of the sacrifices. It is interesting to note that only one korban - the Korban Todah, Thanksgiving offering, is totally omitted from Parashas Vayikra,

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

mentioned for the first time in Parashas Tzav. Why is it mentioned for the first time in Parashas Tzav, which is addressed to the Kohanim?

Horav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zl, distinguishes between two levels of gratitude. He cites the Talmud in Berachos 7b which states that upon naming her son Yehudah, a name derived from *hodaah*, gratitude, our Matriarch Leah was setting the standard for gratitude. No person before her had ever given thanks to Hashem. Chazal's assertion is somewhat puzzling. What about Adam HaRishon and Noach who preceded Leah with their expressions of gratitude?

The Kesav Sofer explains that while people did, indeed, offer gratitude to Hashem, even before Leah, their expressions of gratitude were offered as a result of a miraculous salvation. Leah, however, was the first person to thank Hashem for a purely natural event, such as childbirth. To perceive the miracle in everyday life is a higher form of appreciation. Rav Yosef Chaim explains that due to their interminable devotion to Hashem, their constant exposure to the *kedushah*, holiness, of the Bais Hamikdash, and their relative abnegation from the more material pursuits of life, the Kohanim had a more profound spiritual sensitivity of the Divine guidance and Providence that lies in everyday occurrences. Hence, it would be they who would be the most likely to express feelings of gratitude to Hashem.

This is the law of the elevation-offering. (6:2)

Learning the laws of the *korbanos* is equivalent to offering a *korban*. Chazal tell us that whoever studies Torah is considered as if he offered a *Korban Olah* or *Minchah*. In the Talmud Megillah, Chazal tell us that when Haman was preparing to fulfill King Achashverosh's command that he take Mordechai through the city riding on a horse, he found Mordechai studying the laws of *Kemitzah*, the scoop performed during the *Korban Minchah*, with a group of Jewish children. Haman said to them that their studying the laws of *Kemitzah* precluded his evil decree. In other words, studying about the *Korban Minchah* was the great *zechus* which protected Klal Yisrael in Shushan.

Horav Arye Leib Shteinman, Shlita, makes a profound observation based on Chazal's statement. If one were to conjecture the reason that the Jewish People of that era were saved from annihilation, he would certainly suggest that the outpouring of prayer, coupled with three days of fasting, engendered their salvation. Yet, Chazal do not assert this. They attribute the salvation to the Torah study of *tinokos shel bais rabbon*, Jewish school children.

This is an incredible statement. How are we to accept the fact that Haman rendered "daas Torah," perspective based upon Torah wisdom? After all, he was saying that their Torah study - and not the prayer and fasting - catalyzed their salvation. Rav Shteinman explains that, indeed, Haman was able to make such a statement because of his present condition. For Haman, the archenemy of Mordechai and the Jews, to be compelled to give Mordechai unparalleled honor was a denigrating, humiliating and depressing experience. One who experiences broken-heartedness is able to perceive the *ohr ha'emes*, light that emanates from pure truth - even if he is as wicked as Haman ha'rasha. At this moment, when one descends to the abyss of depression,

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

when he is stripped of the facades of arrogance, he is able to see the truth that until moments ago had eluded him. This is the awesome power of a lev nishbar, broken-heart.

A permanent fire shall remain aflame on the Altar; it shall not be extinguished (6:6)

The Talmud Yerushalmi in Meseches Yoma 4:6 makes a striking statement in regard to the injunction that the fire on the Mizbayach never be extinguished. They say that even during the masaos, when Klal Yisrael traveled, the flame must constantly be burning. Ha'Drash V'Ha'Iyun renders this statement homiletically. When a person is at home, calm and relaxed, when his life is in order and everything is going smoothly, he is protected against circumstances that might sway him from the correct path of observance. First, things are going well; he has no reason to waver in his commitment to Hashem. He has no emotional pull to drag him away. Second, he is in his community, among his friends and associates with whom he has an established acquaintance. He would not do anything that would warrant their critique. Certainly, he would do nothing that would cause him needless embarrassment.

The situation changes drastically when one is on the road, in a strange place where he is not known, where whatever improper behavior he might be tempted to commit will go unnoticed and unchallenged. The temptation is great, the hazard of falling into the abyss of impropriety is very real.

This is the underlying meaning of David HaMelech's praise in Sefer Tehillim 128:1, "Praised shall be he who maintains his fear of the Almighty even when he is on the road, dwelling in strange unknown places." If he succeeds in preserving his spiritual status quo, then he is truly a yirei Shomayim, one who fears Heaven.

The Torah alludes to this when it commands us to sustain the fire on the Mizbayach at all times - even during periods of travel. Upon the mizbayach of the heart, the altar of man's spiritual consciousness, the flame - the fire of one's passion and commitment - should burn brightly, even when he travels and the challenges to his commitment are unnerving.

This is the law of the feast-peace-offering... If he shall offer it for a Thanksgiving offering, he shall offer with the thanksgiving offering unleavened loaves... and the flesh of his feast thanksgiving offering must be eaten on the day of its offering... (7:11,12,15)

One who survives a life-threatening experience brings a Korban Todah, thanksgiving offering, as an expression of gratitude to Hashem. He thereby proclaims unequivocally that Hashem is responsible for his rescue. The Korban Todah is actually a Korban Shelamim, peace offering, with two distinctions: The Todah is eaten for a day and a night, while a Shelamim is eaten for two days and a night. The Korban Todah must be accompanied by forty loaves of bread/matzoh. In his commentary Haamek Davar, The Netziv z.l., explains that the extra "food" that must be consumed with a Korban Todah, coupled together with the decreased amount of time allotted for its consumption, is by design. In order to complete this huge amount of food in the allotted time frame, one must invite friends and associates to join in the thanksgiving

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

celebration, thereby publicizing Hashem's miraculous deed. He also adds that the individual who offers the korban should separate four loaves, designating them specifically for the Kohanim, the Torah scholars of the generation. By doing this, he will have included talmidei chachamim, which is a requisite for the Bircas HaGomel, blessing of gratitude.

Horav Shmuel Truvitz, z.l., explains the necessity of having Torah scholars present at the celebration in the following manner. He cites the Ramban in his commentary to the Torah at the end of Parashas Bo, who writes, "The purpose of all mitzvos is to bring us closer in our belief in Hashem. Indeed, this is the purpose for prayer in the synagogue where we congregate to supplicate Hashem as a group - so that we will all together recognize Hashem and concede to His monarchy... From the great wonders and miracles, one learns to understand that everything is a miracle from Hashem, even the covert everyday occurrences/miracles are from Him. One who does not concede that everything is from Hashem - the small, hidden wonders as well as the overt, magnificent miracles, does not have a portion in Hashem's Torah."

We derive from the Ramban that appreciating Hashem's part in a miracle, and recognizing the source of one's salvation, is not sufficient. One must also apply this miracle as a springboard, as a vehicle for understanding that everything is a miracle. The patient who survives a traumatic and difficult life-threatening surgical procedure is no less the beneficiary of a miracle than the one who survived a cold - or the one who did not get sick at all. It is all from Hashem! The great miracles should inspire us to reflect on the everyday miracles which we often ignore.

We now understand the purpose in having at least two Torah scholars present at a thanksgiving celebration. They will open our eyes; they will teach us how Hashem's beneficence reaches out to us in more ways than we understand. Gratitude is important, but we must go beyond gratitude to recognition that there is so much more for which to be thankful.

David Hamelech says in Tehillim 50:23, "He who offers confession honors Me; and one who orders (his) way, I will show him the salvation of G-d." Horav Akiva Eiger, zl, explains that when man offers a Korban Todah as gratitude to the Almighty, he is preparing the derech, way/path, for the yeshuas Elokim, G-d's salvation. As a result of this acknowledgement of gratitude, he will merit more opportunities for gratitude. Horav Truvitz explains this based upon Rashi in Sefer Bereishis 2:5, "Now any tree of the field was not yet on the earth... for Hashem had not sent rain upon the earth and there was no man to work the soil." Rashi explains that there was no man yet to appreciate the value of rain. When Adam came, he realized that it is a necessity for the world, so he prayed for rain. The rain then descended from the Heaven, and the trees and different types of vegetation began to sprout.

We glean from Rashi that, specifically because Man recognizes the source of his bounty and offers his gratitude, he merits to receive more blessing. This is not the case with one who is not modeh u'makir b'tov, who does not confess and recognize the good that Hashem has brought in his behalf. He lacks the key for continuing the blessing. Horav Truvitz makes a profound analogy to a person whose father is both very wealthy and very compassionate. He is prepared to grant his son anything that money can buy. He asks only one thing: that his son recognize and appreciate the source of his gift. If he does so, then the sky is the limit. He will shower his child with every form of goodness. Consequently, the child who has the common sense to act

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

appropriately is basically opening the "faucet" from which will flow the wonderful bounty. We are Hashem's children. If only we recognize Hashem as the generous source of all that we have, then we can hope and aspire for greater assistance. What we receive is commensurate with the gratitude which we express.

If he shall offer it for a Thanksgiving-offering. (7:11)

Ha'koras ha'tov, recognizing and appreciating the favor one received from others, is the staple of a healthy society. Indeed, one who does not recognize and appreciate the good of which he is the beneficiary is a contemptible person and a danger to the preservation of a humane society. The effect of ha'koras ha'tov is far reaching and profound. It is important to add that the catalyst for our beneficence should never be the gratitude we receive in return. Our intention should be purely altruistic: simply because it is the right thing to act with kindness. The responsibility for appreciation is upon the beneficiary who, if he is a mentch, will reciprocate in kind. The following narrative illustrates that if we do the right thing because it is right, the gratitude will materialize at times when we least expect it, but when we most need it.

Near the city of Danzig there lived a wealthy Chassidic rebbe by the name of Rabbi Shmuel Shapiro, rav of the Polish village of Prochnik. The Rebbe would take his daily morning stroll, bedecked in a tailored black suit, wearing a distinguished looking top hat, carrying a walking cane, and accompanied by his son-in-law. During the Rebbe's walk, he made a point to greet every person: man, woman and child, Jew and non-Jew alike. Each one was greeted with a warm smile and a cordial, "Good morning." Over the years, the Rebbe became acquainted with most of the townspeople by way of his daily ritual, and he would always greet each person by his proper title and name.

Near the outskirts of the town, in the fields, the Rebbe would daily exchange greetings with a Herr Mueller, a Volksdeutsche, ethnic German. Herr Mueller worked in the fields, obviously not the most esteemed position. Yet, the Rebbe would quickly go out of his way to give him a resounding, "Good morning, Herr Mueller," to which he received a quick response of, "Good morning, Herr Rabbiner," accompanied by a good natured smile.

Life was idyllic - until the war began. Suddenly, the non-Jews no longer recognized their Jewish neighbors. Old friends became hated enemies, as the Volksdeutschen quickly were inducted into Hitler's army. The Rebbe's strolls became a thing of the past, and Herr Mueller's simple garb disappeared as he now donned an S.S. uniform. The fate of the Rebbe was much like that of the rest of Polish Jewry. He lost his family in the death camp of Treblinka, and - after great personal suffering - was himself deported to the dreaded Auschwitz concentration camp.

One day during a selektion at Auschwitz, where the fate of an inmate was determined by the wave of a baton, the Rebbe, along with hundreds of other Jews, stood in line awaiting his fate. Would they live or die? The Rebbe was dressed in the striped camp uniform, in pain, disheveled and bedraggled. His head and beard shaven, his eyes feverish from starvation and

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

disease, he looked like a walking skeleton. "Right, left, left, left," the feared voice in the distance called out, as it sent the broken Jews to their death. The voice grew nearer as the Rebbe "progressed" in line. Suddenly, the Rebbe had a sudden urge to move forward and look into the face of evil - into the face of the man who played G-d. He pushed himself up and looked right into the eyes of the man who stood there wearing white gloves and carrying a small baton which he waved right and left, deciding who would live and who would die. He raised up his eyes and heard his voice saying, "Good morning, Herr Mueller!"

"Good morning, Herr Rabbiner!" responded a human voice beneath the accursed S.S. cap, rightfully adorned with a skull and bones. "What are you doing here, Herr Rabbiner?" The Rebbe did not respond. A faint smile, however, began to appear on his lips. Quickly, the baton pointed to the right. The Rebbe was saved. The next day, he was transferred to another camp. He survived the war, and years later he would remark, "This is the power of a good morning greeting." I think it also shows us the power of ha'koras ha'tov, even for a lowly Nazi, who realized that the man who stood before him was one person who had treated him like a human being.

The Kohen shall don his fitted linen tunic, and he shall don linen breeches on his flesh. (6:3)

The Kohen was to wear vestments made of "bad" - linen. Linen grows from the ground in individual stalks, similar to human hair. Rabbeinu Bachya explains that the individualistic nature of each grain signifies the concept of achdus, unity. They reflect an inner harmony, a unified essence. As the grandson of Aharon, the Kohen serves as the paradigm of unity. Aharon HaKohen was the "ohev shalom v'rodef shalom," one who loved peace and pursued peace." He reached out to his fellow man to generate inner peace by bringing him closer to Torah.

Horav Mordechai Miller, Shlita, notes that the Torah also refers to these vestments as "Bigdei Lavan," white vestments. Other than the fact that the natural color of flax/linen is white, is there any other significance to the "color" of these vestments? He cites the first pasuk in Sefer Devarim, in which the Torah refers to the geographical location at which Moshe rebuked Klal Yisrael. "These are the words that Moshe spoke to all of Yisrael, on the other side of the Jordan, concerning the wilderness, between Paran and Tofel and Lavan..." Rashi says that there is no place that is named Tofel or Lavan. He contends that both words are references to the complaints about the manna: Tofel is a derivative of tiflus, deprecation or slander; and Lavan, white, is the color of the manna. Moshe reproached them for their complaints about the "white" bread from Heaven. In his commentary on Chumash, the Avnei Nezer offers a profound rationale for the manna's white color. White is the color that contains within it all of the colors of the spectrum. It is missing nothing. One was able to experience every taste within the manna. Thus, the manna was white, reflecting its unified character.

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

White is the color of unity, representing total harmony. It is the color of peace, worn by the Kohen, the representative of Klal Yisrael, when he performs the service in the Bais Hamikdash. Teshuvah, repentance, is a journey into oneself, into one's inner being. Teshuvah is the search for the chelek Elokai Mimaal, the component which is a part of Hashem Above, the neshamah, soul. One attains the apex of teshuvah when he reaches the point at which he is in total harmony with himself. The Navi Yeshaya says, "If your sins will be like crimson, they will become white as snow." Teshuvah is a process in which one "whitens" himself as he achieves total inner unity and peace.

White symbolizes simplicity because it includes all colors. It needs nothing else, because it has everything. One who has found that inner light, that white light, needs nothing. He is in perfect harmony with himself and with the Almighty. Horav Miller cites the Talmud in Kesubos 17a in which it states that when Rabbi Dimi came from Bavel to Yerushalayim he said, "Thus they sing before the bride in the west, no powder and no paint, and no waving of the hair, and still a graceful gazelle." The greatest beauty is that which does not need outer enhancements. True beauty shines forth from within.

The Kohen Gadol would enter the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, clothed in simple Bigdei Bad - Bigdei Lavan, white linen vestments. This was the zenith of his service, the most sublime moment of his year - and he was dressed in simple white garments. He represented the entire Jewish people - unified together in teshuvah and tefillah, prayer. All focused together on this one day towards one goal, one G-d. This was his avodas Yom Ha'Kippurim, a goal to which we should all aspire all year.

This is the law of the elevation-offering, the meal-offering, the sin-offering, and the guilt-offering; and the inauguration-offering and the feast peace offering. (7:37)

The Midrash notes that the Korban Shelamim, Peace-offering, comes at the end of the sequence of korbanos. This implies that peace is of supreme significance, for it reconnects man with his Maker, with his fellow-man, and with his own conscience. Horav Eliyahu Munk, zl, explains that peace is neither a simple fact of creation nor a part of natural law. It is not a pacifistic doctrine to which one must adhere even at the expense of sacred principles. Peace is not, as some would suggest, a compromise of values and ideals; rather, it is a sense of harmony in which everything fits together. Peace requires constant effort to overcome the challenges and conflicts that would undermine universal harmony. Shalom, peace, therefore, appears at the close of our most significant prayers: Shemoneh Esrai, Kaddish, Bircas Hamazone.

In Meseches Derech Eretz Zuta, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi contends that peace is like leavening in the dough; it gives rise to movement and progress within society when society is in

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

such discord that it cannot function. We have only to study history to see the veracity of this statement evidenced.

Take Aharon and his sons with him...He poured from the oil of anointment upon Aharon's head...Moshe brought the sons of Aharon forward. (8:1,12,13)

Hashem commanded Moshe to sanctify and induct Aharon and his sons into the Kehunah, Priesthood. Hashem chose Aharon and his four sons - Moshe's brother and his four nephews - over everyone to serve in the holy Priesthood. We can understand why some people might question the choice of Moshe's close relatives. Let us understand why Amram and Yocheved merited to have such special children and grandchildren: Moshe, Aharon and Miriam and their offspring who stood at Klal Yisrael's helm. What was their unique zechus, merit? Why was Aharon selected to be Kohen Gadol and progenitor of the Kehunah? We can go one step further: Does a contemporary Kohen possess a quality that he inherited from his great ancestor, Aharon, that is not to be found in his counterpart among the Levi or Yisrael?

Horav Avigdor Halevi Nebentzhal, Shlita, explains that it is based upon chinuch, education. Two elements comprise education: self-education; and educating others, such as children and students. When we refer to education, we traditionally refer to the act of infusing others with knowledge, both scholarly and moral knowledge. The idea of self-education is, for the most part, exclusively for the Torah-oriented milieu. Simply put, for one to be -- or to seek to be -- educated, there has to be either a teacher or someone who will inspire him to change his present pattern of behavior. It just does not happen automatically. Why would anyone undertake a lifestyle that runs counter to everything he had previously believed in, unless he was blessed with the capacity to realize that the Torah is the blueprint for life through which one can attain perfection?

We now ask ourselves what is more important, self-education or educating others? One major difference distinguishes the two; the success factor is not dependent upon the education, but rather on the student, his diligence, determination and desire. On the other hand, one who places his focus on self-education has the teacher for a student. Thus, the success factor is dependent upon himself. One should, therefore, be aware that the role he serves as educator to others is secondary to his own personal education. Students leave after awhile; even children grow up and out. The student who is very close to his teacher is only there for a good part of the day - but never always. One's own education is never-ending. The truly devoted student, who never leaves, who is always being infused with knowledge, is none other than oneself.

It would, therefore, make sense that one should expend all of his efforts on behalf of the perfect student, the one who will study under him twenty-four hours a day, throughout his entire life - himself! Indeed, common sense would demand that one should exhaust his entire efforts on

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

self-education. Regrettably, that is just not the case. We find excuses to divest ourselves of this responsibility. We have time for ourselves - but we must address the problems at hand. How can I spend time on my personal self-growth when my child needs me? Furthermore, we find it easier to educate others than to work on ourselves. Parents from the finest homes seek rebbeim, tutors, for their children; they go to all lengths to provide for the educational development of their children, while ignoring their own spiritual and academic growth.

They are missing the point. They fail to realize the most basic premise in education. One must first be mechanech, educate, himself, before he can inspire others. Why is it that in the secular world the concept of continuing education has received positive response, but as parents who are preparing the next generation, we ignore our responsibility for self-growth? One who seeks to inspire others, to inculcate in his children and students Toras Hashem, must prioritize his time and use it effectively for his own learning. An inextricable bond exists between father and son, generation to generation, that is transmitted. If the color of one's eyes and other physical features are passed down through generations, should not spiritual features be likewise transmitted?

We have no idea of the incredible impact that one generation has on the next. Indeed, an ancestor's character trait, regardless how minute, will span generations and appear as an inherent component in a descendant's personality. Horav Nebentzhal cites a number of instances throughout Tanach which demonstrate this principle. We will cite two instances in Chazal which clearly indicate this reality. In the Talmud Shabbos 23b, Chazal teach us that he who loves the rabbis will have rabbis for sons; he who honors the rabbis will have rabbis for sons-in-law. Chazal are teaching us that the love a father manifests for Torah scholars is an emotion that is not only heartfelt; it is an innate part of one's personality which is translated into action even generations later as his offspring develop this same love for rabbis. One who gives honor to Torah scholars evinces a natural admiration for them, to the point that his daughter feels the same way. By her very nature, she becomes predisposed towards marrying a talmid chacham, because it is part of her psyche. Every heartfelt virtue possessed by the parent is transmitted to their offspring!

There is another instance of this type of "bequest" that is remarkable. In the Midrash Tanchuma, at the end of Parashas Ki'Setze, we are taught the source of Amalek's incredible strength and hold over our people. Indeed, the Zohar Ha'Kodesh writes that the most difficult battle prior to the advent of Moshiach was the battle with Amalek in the wilderness, immediately after Klal Yisrael left Egypt. Moshe Rabbeinu had to call upon his spiritual reservoir to defeat Amalek. Wherein lay Amalek's power? What virtue did he have that nearly overwhelmed Moshe? It was Timnah, his mother, the pilegish, concubine of Elifaz, Eisav's son, who had a holy spark that was nurtured in the end and stood guard over Amalek. She sought to be accepted by the Patriarchs. They determined that she was not fit for Am Yisrael. While that was certainly true, there was a tiny, minuscule glimmer of sanctity in her request. This spark protected her and grew remarkably until it became a staggering force. Klal Yisrael's battle with Amalek was a battle of spirit against spirit.

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

Let us now reflect: If a spark of kedushah, embedded in tremendous forces of impurity, can have such an effect on many generations later on, how much more so are we able to imbue our offspring with our positive qualities?

Moshe did as Hashem commanded him; and the assembly was gathered. (8:4)

The Kotzker Rebbe, zl, once interpreted this pasuk satirically. We see from here that Moshe first followed Hashem's command, fulfilling everything that was asked of him. It is only afterwards that the people assembled before him. Regrettably, today we assemble before some of our "spiritual" leaders before they have proven their devotion to Torah and mitzvos. Being a spiritual leader carries with it specific and demanding criteria, the most significant of which is adherence to Torah and mitzvos. Tragically, some of us are not that demanding of our spiritual leaders. Perhaps, we feel that if we limit our expectations of them, they will likewise not be very demanding of us.

Moshe took the oil of anointment... he anointed the Altar, and all its utensils, and the laver and its base in order to sanctify them. (8:10.11)

Moshe anointed Aharon and his sons, as he inducted them into the Kehunah. He also anointed all of the holy utensils that were used in the Mishkan. The process of anointing elevated the utensils to a level of sanctity in accordance with their function in the Mishkan. It makes sense that a ladle, that heretofore had been a piece of metal and now would be used to accept the blood of korbanos, would need to be prepared and sanctified for its new station. There seems to be a demand for all vessels to be anointed - even those that did not serve in such a significant capacity. The Kiyor, Laver, for instance, was used by the Kohanim to wash their hands and feet prior to performing the avodah. In this case, the subject of the anointing was not a vessel that was used for actual service, but rather as a basis for the service. It is a preparation for the actual avodah. Yet, it needed to be anointed. We infer from here that even the foundation of the service must go through the ritual of anointing as a preliminary for the service.

If it would stop with the Kiyor, we would posit that the foundation for the service also must go through a process of hachsharah l'kedushah, preparation for sanctity. What are we to say, however, to the fact that the Laver's base was also anointed? The base served no function other than having the Kiyor rest upon it. Why was it anointed? Horav Avigdor Halevi Nebentzhal, Shlita, derives from here a profound lesson in avodas Hashem, serving the Almighty. Everything - even the yesod ha'yesodos, foundation of foundations - connected with avodas Hashem, must be pure and holy. Even the preparatory vessels must be sanctified - no element may be

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

overlooked. Rabbi Chiya would plant flax to make traps, to capture deer, from which he would prepare the parchment upon which he wrote the Torah that he would teach Jewish children. Is that not an extreme? He sought to teach us that even the hachanah, preparation, must be totally imbued with kedushah from its very beginning. Every step of the way, every aspect of this Torah, must be holy from its most initial stages through its most profound study and observance. The Hebrew word hachanah is a derivative of the word "kan" basis, foundation. The hachanah must go so far that even the substructure is permeated with kedushah. This applies to every aspect of sanctity, be it Torah study, mitzvah performance, or the "mundane" aspects of Torah life, such as organizations and institutions. Everything must be "al taharas ha'kadosh," pure and holy.

This article is provided as part of Shema Yisrael Torah Network
Permission is granted to redistribute electronically or on paper,
provided that this notice is included intact.

For information on subscriptions, archives, and other Shema Yisrael
Classes, send mail to parsha@shemayisrael.co.il
Shema Yisrael Torah Network
info@shemayisrael.co.il
<http://www.shemayisrael.co.il>
Jerusalem, Israel
972-2-532-4191