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PENINIM ON THE TORAH

PARSHA BOOKLET

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PARASHAT VAYIKRA

He (Hashem) called to Moshe. (1:1)

Although Moshe Rabbeinu had reached the unprecedented spiritual plateau of being able to speak "face to face" with the Almighty, he did not enter the Kodesh HaKodoshim, Holy of Holies, unless he was called by Hashem. Chazal use this as a source for an important dictum: "Any talmid chacham, Torah scholar, who does not possess daas, knowledge, has a worth less than an animal's carcass." Strong words. Apparently, daas is a significant prerequisite for the talmid chacham. Surely, it was Moshe's derech ertz -- good manners, etiquette, and decency-- that did not permit him to come "calling" on Hashem without first being issued a summons. It was not his daas. What does knowledge have to do with refinement and proper demeanor? Why do Chazal denounce the talmid chacham who lacks daas, rather than the one who lacks derech ertz?

Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl, illuminates this concept for us after first explaining the true meaning of daas, knowledge. We often come across three terms: chochmah; binah; daas. These denote three distinct levels of knowledge, with daas the third and highest level. Chochmah and binah are levels of understanding that remain relegated solely to the area of the mind. For example, how often do we find individuals who preach one thing, but are loathe to "practice what they preach"? Why is this? How does one expound one idea for others, but refuse to live by it himself? It occurs when one studies and even achieves proficiency in a subject, but does not integrate his erudition into his essence. It remains solely cognitive, within the chambers of his mind.

The converse is true concerning daas. The word daas, which is translated in English as knowledge, has a much deeper meaning in the Torah vernacular. Daas is knowledge that has become intrinsic to one's being. Daas is not confined to the mind, but flows through the individual's essence. It inspires and imbues his every thought and movement. Every step that he takes is governed by his daas. Thus, a concept that he has comprehended on the level of daas will be reflected in the manner in which the individual lives, as well as in his total demeanor.

Moshe's derech ertz was not simply an exercise in etiquette, the result of what one considers appropriate conduct. No, Moshe's derech ertz was the outcome of his profound daas, his depth of understanding of the Torah and the assimilation of this knowledge into every fiber of his being. Every movement that Moshe took was dictated by his daas. Chazal emphasize the significance of talmidei

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chachamim, Torah scholars, elevating the Torah they study to the exalted level of daas, whereby it becomes a part of them. Their Torah knowledge should not remain abstract but, rather, the motivating factor behind their every action.

We suggest that this might be the meaning of daas Torah, the wisdom that is derived from the Torah. A gadol baTorah, one who has achieved distinction in Torah, is an individual who not only has amassed an incredible amount of erudition, but who has been able to transform himself into a veritable vessel comprised of Torah. Every part of his being reflects the Torah he has learned. The Torah guides and governs every movement that he makes. Hence, the decision he renders is daas Torah, the wisdom of the Torah. The Torah is not only in his mind; it dictates his thought process, so that it produces a Torah-oriented decision.

Man is the only creature capable of refining his understanding, thereby transforming it into daas. If he fails to do so, if he studies, but relegates his knowledge to the confines of the mind, he has dismally failed to achieve his primary goal in life. He has failed! An animal, on the other hand, cannot possibly attain the level of cognition available to humans, but it at least fulfills its purpose on this world. Thus, a talmid chacham, a scholar, who has not fulfilled his purpose in life because he left his knowledge trapped in his mind is worse off than an animal's dead carcass, for he did not fulfill his G-d-given potential in life, while the animal did.

He (Hashem) called to Moshe. (1:1)

Parashas Vayikra commences with the word, Vayikra, which expresses Hashem's call to Moshe. Rashi distinguishes the term vayikra, used when Hashem speaks to Moshe Rabbeinu, from vayikar, which is a derivative of mikreh, meaning chance/happenstance, and is also related to spiritual contamination. Rashi explains that when Hashem speaks to Moshe it is a seminal, "planned" experience, reflecting the highest level of His love for the Rabban Shel Kol Yisrael. The term, vayikar, however, represents impermanence, something that just occurred. Hashem is not really interested in speaking with Bilaam. It is something that He "happened" to do. The Avnei Nezer adds that when Hashem speaks with Bilaam, it is neither direct, nor "face to face." Hashem speaks to the "place" where Bilaam is situated. Bilaam just happens to hear what Hashem says. Thus, no change occurs vis-?-vis Bilaam, since he is not affected by the experience. After the dialogue, he reverts to his original impure essence.

The Shem MiShmuel explains his father's commentary saying that the level one achieves through nevuah, prophecy, is the result of the character traits and total demeanor of the navi. Moshe manifested the attributes essential to achieve prophecy. Bilaam refused to change. Although he wanted to receive a prophetic vision, he did not want to do so at the expense of his reprehensible lifestyle. Therefore, Hashem spoke "around" him, rather than to him. He cites the Zohar HaKadosh that compares Bilaam to a leper who visits the king. The king refuses to permit him to enter his palace, for fear of it becoming contaminated. Instead, the king leaves his throne room and goes outside the palace to meet with the leper. Not so, when the king's friend arrives. He is allowed to enter into the king's innermost chamber to meet the king.

The very fact that the transitory and random comprise an attribute that is equated with Bilaam indicates that one of the primary principles of kedushah, sanctity, is stability and permanence. Tumah,

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spiritual contamination, is a negative quality that is intrinsic to the unstable and unanchored. The deep-rooted and resolute cannot be swayed regardless of the strength behind the winds of change. The wicked, however, who are not firmly anchored in solid conviction, are easily induced, because they themselves waver back and forth from one set of beliefs to another.

When a person offers a meal-offering to Hashem. (2:1)

The Torah uses the word nefesh, soul, to describe a person, rather than the usual term, adam, man, because the individual who offers the meal-offering is undoubtedly one of limited means. Therefore, his offering reflects a major sacrifice on his part, almost as if he were giving a part of himself. It is for this reason that Hashem declares, "I will regard it as if he offered his soul." In his sefer, Panim Yafos, Horav Pinchas Horowitz, zl, questions the Korban Minchah's designation as the sacrifice brought by the abject poor. At first glance, one would suggest that the korban ha'of, fowl, was even less expensive than the meal-offering. The fowl-offering consists of a dove or turtledove without any added ingredients. The bird itself is the complete korban. The Korban Minchah, however, requires one-tenth of an eifah of fine flour and a lug of oil and frankincense. When the ingredients are calculated, the meal-offering is more expensive. Why then do Chazal stipulate that this is the korban of the dal she'b'dalim, poorest of the poor?

The Sefas Emes adds to this when he notes that a Korban Minchah may not be brought by partners. It must be the sacrifice of an individual. The fowl, however, may be brought by more than one person. Thus, the Minchah is not necessarily the least expensive sacrifice.

The Chasam Sofer addresses this question, offering a response that goes to the root of the Korban Minchah, the individual who offers it, and what goes through his mind in preparation for bringing this korban. The poor man does not have a penny that he can call his own. He has no money with which to purchase a sheep, a fowl, or even a meal-offering. Nonetheless, in his desire to bring a free-willed offering to Hashem, to somehow make a gesture of gratitude to the Almighty Who has given him "so much," he decides that he will take off a drop of flour from his meager piece of bread. It will be a smaller slice, but he will have saved a drop of flour that over time will suffice for a korban. Every time his wife bakes a small challah, because that is all they can afford, he instructs her to make it yet smaller. We must save for a korban. Therefore, every week their challah is smaller than usual, and their "savings" are placed in a small container, set aside for the korban. He does the same with the little oil he collects every week, until soon he has all the required ingredients. He can now go to the Bais HaMikdash and proudly offer his korban. It took him some time, but he is here!

When we keep the above in mind, is it any wonder why Hashem has such exceptional appreciation for the one who brings a Korban Minchah? It is the result of a long, deliberative process that demonstrates the poor man's total devotion to this korban. It is not what one brings; it is how one brings it, and what goes into the preparation, that leave the ultimate impression.

When a person offers a meal-offering to Hashem. (2:1)

Interestingly, of all those who bring a voluntary offering, it is only the one who brings a Korban Minchah, meal-offering, that is described as a nefesh, soul. Rashi explains that the one who has brought a meal-offering is probably a poor person who cannot afford more. Hashem says, "I will regard it as if he offered his soul."

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The Midrash relates an incident in which a woman brought an offering of flour to the Kohen to have it offered as a sacrifice. The Kohen regrettably took a terrible attitude towards this poor woman's offering and began to embarrass her; "Look what they bring as an offering. What is there to eat? What is there to sacrifice?" That night, the Kohen had a dream in which he was admonished never to humiliate anyone who brought a korban, sacrifice, regardless of its diminutive size or value, because what the poor offer is really their nefesh, life. It takes so much for them to scrape together the means for bringing the korban, they are literally offering themselves. The Midrash concludes that, actually the idea is a kal v'chomer, a priori logical deduction. If one is not really offering a living creation, the Torah nonetheless writes that it is as if they offer a nefesh and should be considered as having offered a nefesh, referring to his own life.

The Midrash is basically emphasizing the significance of korbanos and the place they have in Jewish life. One who has the proper intentions when he offers a korban has the ability to elevate this sacrifice in his stead. It takes his place as if he had been sacrificed. We often do not think of the sacrifice people make in maintaining their commitments as Torah Jews. For some, it is the tzedakah, charity, they give. For others, it is the tuition they pay to schools so that their sons and daughters receive a Torah education. For many, this continues on long after their children are married and have children of their own. That is what being an observant Jew is all about: knowing one's priorities and being prepared to make sacrifices for them.

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, relates a powerful story that so impacted the community in which it occurred, that they recorded it in the perpetual history of the Chevra Kadisha, sacred burial society, of Vilna. In the cemetery of Vilna there is a grave with the following inscription on its headstone: "Po nitman, Here lies, Ploni ben Ploni, who left this world on yom ploni and was laid to rest on yom ploni." After the inscription, there is a pasuk from Shlomo HaMelech's Eishes Chayil (Mishlei 31:10) engraved on the bottom of the stone: Kapah parsah l'ani, v'yadeha shilcha l'evyon. "Her palm, she opened to the poor and her hands, she stretched out to the needy." This is a poignant and meaningful inscription - for a woman. Eishas Chayil is a tribute which is traditionally used to describe the quintessential Jewish woman. Why is this pasuk used in connection with a man? It is not as if there is a dearth of pesukim available to laud the achievements of a man.

After careful deliberation, the following story was discovered written in the pinkas, ledger, of the city's Chevra Kadisha. Apparently, the deceased had lived his entire life in the Vilna area and was well-known for his charitable bequests. He was an individual who loved -- and thrived on-- giving whatever he had to the poor. He was very wealthy and his fame as an incredible baal tzedakah, philanthropist, spread, bringing in its wake the poor from all the surrounding cities. This not only did not bother our hero, it encouraged him. He reveled in the opportunity to help others. Indeed, as his wealth increased, so did his charitable donations. He just loved to give.

This went on for many years until his business began to waver. The market was no longer the same. People were not as willing to buy, and his great wealth began to decrease with the day's market report. Soon his liquid assets were at the point of no return. Then his properties, stocks and material possessions were sold for whatever cash they could raise. During this entire time, he kept on giving out tzedakah to the needy. Perhaps his contributions were smaller, but he nonetheless continued to give. When he bottomed out, he was left with his palatial mansion and whatever silver was in the house. There was no longer any money left for the poor.

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Meanwhile, the question that was raging throughout the streets of Vilna was: What did this man do to sustain such a serious punishment? He was an individual of impeccable character who gave everything to the poor. Why should he be punished so? This question extended beyond the streets into the hallowed halls of the city's spiritual leaders, the rabbanim and dayanim who adjudicated Jewish law for the community. At first, they were also stymied. After discussing the issue at length, they arrived at the conclusion that it was the result of not adhering to Chazal's dictum of, "One who gives charity, should not give more than a fifth of his wealth." This person gave out far more than a fifth. True, he was performing a mitzvah, but when Chazal make a statement they know what they are talking about. When one disregards Chazal -- even for something positive--he may one day disregard their admonitions that have a negative connotation.

The Bais Din, judicial court, of the city decided that the only way of protecting this person from himself, from his profound love of the mitzvah of tzedakah, was to place him under house arrest. He was not permitted to leave his home. This way the poor could not approach him in the street or in shul to request alms.

The poor obviously had a difficult time accepting this rabbinic decree and they continued to come to his house. They would scream by his window late at night when no one was around, begging him for whatever assistance he could give them. He would throw silver pieces and jewelry through the window - anything he could get his hands on, as long as it could be pawned by a poor man. This went on for a while until this too came to an end, because, there was no longer anything left in the house. The man who was once the richest, most benevolent man in the community, was now totally wiped out. He had nothing.

It was the "last night," when, at midnight, two poor men came to his window and begged for alms. The man who had never turned anyone away was distraught: "I have nothing left. I am terribly sorry. I cannot help you." The poor men continued begging, crying to him, "Please, our families are starving. Please help us."

The man was moved. He had to do something. He would turn over his house. Perhaps, he had overlooked a piece of silver or gold. How could he allow their families to starve? He looked, and he found! Hidden beneath a cupboard was one golden spoon. It was quite expensive and could do wonders for a poor man's family needs, but, what could he do with one golden spoon and two poor men?

Suddenly, he had an idea. He would break the spoon, giving one man the handle and the other the spoon. The poor men were overjoyed, because they knew the value of this spoon was far beyond anything they had imagined receiving. They would immediately sell their "individual" portions of the spoon in order to sustain their families for another few months.

The next morning the rich man was no longer among the living. He had returned his pure soul to its Maker that night. It had been his last night on this earth, and he had spent it doing what he loved. This time he did it with the greatest sacrifice. He gave others when he no longer had anything for himself. The Chevra Kadisha sought to memorialize his name and his special deeds - especially his last act of tzedakah, on the last night of his life. They, therefore, inscribed Shlomo HaMelech's meaningful verse on his tombstone.

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You shall salt your every meal-offering with salt. (2:13)

Horav Yaakov Abuchatzera, zl, takes this pasuk further by rendering it homiletically, as a reference to prayer. Now that because of our sins, we no longer have a Bais HaMikdash, prayer takes the place of korbanos. Our tefillos, prayers, are the sacrifices we offer to the Almighty. Therefore, "every meal-offering," every prayer that is expressed by us in place of a korban, should be "salted." It should be accompanied with "salty" tears, because Shaarei demaos lo ninalu, "The gates of tears are not closed." Chazal tell us that with the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash, the Heavenly Gates were closed to us - all except for the gates of tears. Sincere expression which is manifest through tears will penetrate the Heavenly Gates and effect a positive response for our supplications.

We may add that just as salt enhances and preserves, it can, as the Ramban notes, have a detrimental effect on plants, corroding many substances. It all depends on how one uses the salt. Likewise, tears are effective if one cries for the proper and correct reason. Unwarranted weeping can corrode and destroy. Tears of hope will catalyze a message of salvation.

When a man among you brings an offering to Hashem. (1:2)

In his Bircas Peretz, the Steipler Rav, zl notes that many mitzvos in the Torah are not obligatory. Rather, they are given over to man as optional mitzvos which he may - perhaps, should - perform at his discretion. These volitional mitzvos include the first contributions that were asked of the Jewish People, the nidvas lev, heartfelt contributions, for the construction of the Mishkan. This idea applies equally to most korbanos, such as: the Nedavah, free-willed offering; Olah, burnt offering; Shelamim, peace offering; Minchah, meal offering. The Korban Nazir is also not obligatory, but offered at the nazir's preference. We find this idea extended to other mitzvos, such as Terumah, which is given to the Kohen. Biblically, there is no designated amount that one must give to the Kohen. Indeed, even one stalk of wheat exempts an entire silo of grain. This idea applies as well to those contributions mentioned in the Mishnah in Peah, such as, Peah, leaving over a corner of the field for the poor, Bikurim, first fruit offering, Reiyah, pilgrimage, and gemilas chassadim, acts of loving kindness.

The Steipler asks a noteworthy question: If these mitzvos are, in fact, important, why are they not obligatory. If they are not that compelling, why were they given to us? What is the idea behind discretionary mitzvos? He explains that hisnadvat, optional mitzvos, acting on one's own initiative, is a singular experience in avodas Hashem, service to the Almighty. It is the primary principle upon which love for, and awe, of the Almighty may be acquired. From the fact that we have a distinct command to love Hashem, it is indicated that it is within the grasp of each individual Jew to attain this goal. This is difficult to understand, since not all people are alike. Not everyone's heart is beating passionately with a deep and unabiding love for Hashem. How does one achieve this awesome height?

In the second perek of Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah, the Rambam writes that love for Hashem is achieved through analysis and a depth of understanding into the ways of Hashem and His greatness. The Chovos Halevavos adds that one should delve into Hashem's beneficence and His boundless kindnesses. This will engender within him great love for the Almighty. Regrettably, man's timtum ha'lev, occluded heart, does not always allow for these positive feelings to take root and inspire him.

The Mesillas Yesharim explains that just as one's inner-passion and intensity catalyze his physical alacrity toward carrying out an endeavor, so, too, in reciprocity, will his external alacrity

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inspire and awaken within him an intensity, passion and joy for this endeavor. Thus, one who acts selflessly and gives whole-heartedly will generate within himself a sense of love and yearning for what and for whom he is acting.

This sense of reciprocity works in relation to one's love for the Almighty. As inner-love causes the individual to contribute freely and selflessly, so, too, will acts of free-willed contribution give rise to greater love, cementing his relationship with the Almighty. Therefore, the more one contributes on a discretionary and voluntary level, the greater and more concrete will be his love for Hashem. This applies in all areas of endeavor in which one serves Hashem. It may occur during Torah study, in which one delves deeper and expends more time and effort to understand and master the Torah. The greater the effort, the greater will be the love that is engendered within him. Others might manifest their overextending themselves in the area of tefillah, prayer. This intensity and alacrity, the passion and fervor, is beyond the scope of the common prayer service. This self-sacrifice for tefillah will be reflected in the individual's inner love for Hashem. Yet others, will choose gemillas chesed, acts of loving-kindness, for their opportunity to contribute of themselves to Hashem. Kindness takes on many guises, whether it be financial, or giving up time to help those in need, those that are ailing, those who are spiritually deficient, with the list continuing on. As much as one gives up, commensurate with his ability to concede and renounce, he will gain for himself a deeper and more abiding love for Hashem.

The Steipler suggests that this might be the reason that the Torah has included korbanos nedavah, free-willed discretionary sacrifices. These sacrifices elevate one's level of love. Had they been obligatory, the end result of increased love for the Almighty would not have occurred as readily.

Perhaps this is why geirim, converts, and baalei teshuvah, those who have returned to the fold, stand on a higher spiritual plane. They have come to mitzvah observance on their own volition. No one has compelled them to do what they are doing. They were inspired and took the initiative, coming forward to join the ranks of Torah Judaism. They often exhibit greater passion, intensity and conscientiousness in carrying out mitzvos assiduously and punctiliously. They have come on their own and, therefore, have developed a deeper bond with the Almighty.

The Rokeach comments that chassidus, piety, is never again the same as it has been during its inception. Simply, as time goes on, the passion diminishes, the fervor wanes, the intensity dissipates. The Steipler adds that at its inception, piety is an act of hisnadvus, free-willed subscription of one's self to become closer to the Almighty. Hence, the baal teshuvah manifests passion and religious fire. After awhile, his piety becomes a part of his life. He obligates himself to act piously. Once his piety becomes an obligation, it can no longer generate that same inner love and passion as it had at the point of its inception.

The lesson for us is simple: A parent that wants to see his child address his Torah studies with love and enthusiasm should see to it that he is encouraged to turn to these studies of his own volition, out of free-willed, heartfelt desire - not because he is compelled to study. A child that is forced to learn will soon lose his sense of joy and his desire to achieve. Torah study will become something that he must do, he must get it out of the way, a way of life that he is duty-bound to maintain. These feelings of negativity produce negative students and unhappy Jews. Optimism generates initiative, which, in turn, breeds love and enthusiasm about one's work. For what more can one ask?

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And when any soul will offer a meal-offering to Hashem, his offering shall be of fine flour... and he shall bring it to the Bnei Aharon, the Kohanim, and he shall take from it his handful. (2:1,2)

The Talmud Megillah 16a relates an intriguing incident that took place during the Purim miracle. Haman was dispatched by Achashveirosh to find Mordechai, dress him in royal garb and parade him throughout the city. Haman went and discovered Mordechai teaching a class about the laws of Kemitzah to his students. The evil Haman asked the students, "What topic are you studying?" They replied, "When the holy Temple was still in existence, one who pledged a Minchah offering would bring a fistful of flour and gain atonement through it." After hearing this, Haman told them, "Your fistful of flour has come and pushed aside my ten thousand talents of silver."

When Mordechai noticed Haman approaching the study hall, he was gripped with fear. The evil man could only be coming with a single intention, one that would not bode well for Mordechai and his young students. Immediately, Mordechai instructed his students to disperse, lest they be captured with him. He feared the worst was about to occur.

Mordechai was acutely aware of the ingredients necessary to prevail over the Hamans of every generation: Adherence to Torah and mitzvos. Had the Jews maintained their fidelity to the Almighty, they would not have had reason for concern. Regrettably, they had not. Against sound advice, they had attended Achashveirosh's party, indicating that their moral and spiritual posture was seriously declining. Many had already drifted away from the traditions maintained by their ancestors. Assimilation was rampant, to the point that only a small group of dedicated individuals still clung strongly to the Torah and mitzvos. Their rebbe was Mordechai, and they were staunchly committed to him. The question was: Can such a small group of dedicated individuals make a difference? Could they stop the gaping breach in observance which the majority had accepted? What could this small group achieve?

Suddenly, at the point of hopeless despair, Mordechai studied the laws of Kemitzah, the fistful of flour. Here he was able to sense a glimmer of hope. A spark of faint sunshine was penetrating the darkness and gloom that had suddenly enveloped him. The Kohen consumes the entire measure of flour after a small fistful is placed upon the altar. We see from the law of Kemitzah how a small representative amount, which is consecrated for the fire, exempts the entire sacrifice. The incredible effect of this small measure is far-reaching.

Horav Mordechai Rogov, zl, explains that Mordechai derived a powerful lesson from the Kemitzah. If only a fistful of flour can have such a compelling effect, then a handful of sincere students committed to Torah and mitzvos can have the power to consecrate the entire Jewish community in Persia! These dedicated few could have the power to atone for the many who had strayed. Mordechai understood that he should not be overcome with fear, for his students would atone for the others. Their dedication would have the power to dispel the ill effects of Haman's decree.

Haman was no fool. He realized the underlying message of the day's lesson, and he understood its validity. Even the evil Haman recognized that the key to Jewish survival was the existence of a remnant that was untainted and committed to Torah, regardless of its size. As long as this group of young people was prepared to defend the values and virtues of the Torah, then Klal Yisrael would not be lost. This "handful" would consecrate the rest of the nation. That is the lesson of the Kemitzah.

The power of the Kemitzah is the power that comes with dedication, with commitment, with

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self-sacrifice. These qualities take the power of "one" and give it greater strength and greater meaning. It is not what we do or how many are actually involved in carrying out this activity; it all depends on how we act, the sincerity, the determination and the commitment. Rabbi Yechiel Spero writes about Horav Gershon Liebman, zl, legendary Rosh Yeshivah of Novordok in France. Even as an inmate in the infamous concentration camp of Bergen Belsen, he continued his regimen of Torah study and mitzvah observance to the best of his ability, exhibiting almost superhuman powers of devotion and self-sacrifice. His spirit never waned, his devotion never faltered.

It was the first day of liberation, and understandably the camp and its prisoners were in a state of turmoil. The Nazis had shut off the water supply and taken the last morsels of food, causing the deaths of thousands more. Those who still had a modicum of strength left in their bodies went around scrounging for whatever morsels of food they could find. There was one person who, despite all that was going on around him, had curled up in a corner with a Talmud Bava Kamma that he had miraculously obtained and was studying. An American Jewish soldier came upon this sight and was stunned. "How could you be doing this after all your suffering?" he asked.

"We have wasted enough time over the past six years. I have decided to establish a yeshivah the first yeshivah in Bergen Belsen," Rav Gershon replied.

"Who will be the Rosh Yeshivah?" the soldier asked.

"I will," Rav Gershon responded.

The soldier thought that certainly the frail rav was a victim of his suffering and had lost it.

"Who will be the yeshivah's fundraiser?" he jokingly asked.

"That's no problem. I will be the fundraiser," was the quick retort.

"O.K. So you have a Rosh Yeshivah and a fundraiser, but what about students? A yeshivah must have a student body to survive."

"I will be the student," was his emphatic reply. Rav Gershon stood up and explained the following to the young soldier, "When someone seeks to achieve, he must not worry about who, what or when. He must do and trust in the Almighty. Our goal is to be marbeh kavod Shomayim, increase the honor of Heaven. By opening this yeshivah, I am doing just that! There is no question in my mind that the particulars will all follow." Shortly thereafter, the soldier joined Rav Gershon in his yeshivah. That is the power of the Kemitzah.

If he cannot afford two turtledoves or two young doves, then he shall bring as his guilt offering for that which he has sinned, a tenth of an eiphah of fine flour for a sin offering. (5:11)

The Korban Olah V'Yoraid, variable offering, was unique in that it had no designated shiur, measure, for its composition. It basically depended upon the financial status of the makriv, the sinner who brought the offering. If he were wealthy, he would be required to bring a sheep or a goat for his atonement. If these were beyond his means, he could carry out his obligation with two turtledoves or two young doves. If he could not afford even these, he could then bring a tenth-eiphah of flour, and this

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would be sufficient to earn forgiveness for him.

It is important that we understand what type of misdemeanor catalyzed this need for atonement. It was for one of three sins: One who observes a situation that led to a monetary dispute, then denies that he saw this occurrence and swears falsely to this fact, only to admit to the truth later on, brings such a korban. Another instance is one who enters the Bais Hamikdash or eats kodoshim, sanctified food, when he is in a state of ritual impurity. Last, is he who swears falsely concerning something that he either will or will not do or regarding something that either did or did not occur.

In these three cases, the choice of the korban is determined by the sinner's financial portfolio. Chazal teaches us in the Talmud Kerissus 28a that if a wealthy man were to bring the Korban Oleh V'Yoraid designated for a poor man, he is not yotzei, has not fulfilled his obligation. Furthermore, it is considered as if he has brought chullin, unconsecrated flesh, in to the Azarah, Sanctuary, which is a serious violation. The Chafetz Chaim, zl, derives from here that in contemporary times, when we do not have a Bais Hamikdash, we contribute tzedakah, charity, in lieu of certain sacrifices. Hence, just as in ancient times a wealthy man could not absolve himself with a korban reserved for a poor man, so, too, a wealthy man may not acquit himself with the tzedakah that a poor man would normally give. One must give in consonance with what one has. To give based upon the financial status of one who has much less than he does, would be gross chutzpah.

Interestingly, the Chafetz Chaim writes that one can make the same remark concerning two different people, and, in one instance, it is considered innocuous, while in the other case, it constitutes a violation of lashon hora, slanderous speech. For example, if one were to comment that an individual who is involved in commerce spends four hours a day learning Torah, this would be considered exemplary. If the individual had made the same remark concerning a kollel fellow whose vocation in life is to study Torah all day, it would constitute a lashon hora violation.

In his commentary on Chumash, Horav Avraham Pam, zl, anthologized by Rabbi Sholom Smith, says this same idea applies to tzedakah. To report that a wealthy man who is capable of contributing on a grand scale gave a donation worthy of a poor man violates the laws of lashon hora. It is not how much one gives that is conclusive, as much as the donation's consistency with the benefactor's ability to give. If one gives less than he is able to give, this remark would be far from complimentary.

What about a poor man who squeezes out every penny that he possesses in order to bring a korban fit for a wealthy man? Has he fulfilled his obligation? One would think that he has. The Sefer HaChinuch (123) cited by Rav Pam disagrees, explaining that since Hashem has taken pity on the poor man and has permitted him to satisfy his obligation with a tenth-eiphah of flour, it is improper for him to overextend himself by bringing more than he can afford. Rav Pam explains that a person must learn to live within his means. When one spends more than he can afford, he flirts with disaster. Eventually, he will be compelled to satisfy his desire for spending by doing something illegal. One who habitually seeks more than he can sustain has a habit that will most likely destroy him.

Rav Pam feels that the Sefer HaChinuch's remarks--written in a different time and addressed to a different generation-- still carry tremendous weight today. We should underscore their relevance for contemporary society. American Jews have enjoyed a sense of prosperity and standard of living unlike any generation preceding us. There are many wealthy Jews who live a lifestyle which sixty years ago

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was but a distant dream. Yet, by contrast, many Jews are poverty-stricken or hardly able to make ends meet. Their dire circumstances are compounded by their neighbors and friends who have "made it." Sadly, envy is alive and well in the Jewish community. People go out of their way to go into debt, so that they can keep up with others. They purchase luxuries they do not need, for which they remain in debt for years to come. Many of us know firsthand the overwhelming stress placed upon us by financial insecurity. Yet, we continue to overextend ourselves, with no regard to the dire consequences. The Korban Oleh V'Yoraid teaches us an important lesson: live within your means. Do not spend your hard-earned money on foolishness or trivial items that will not enhance the tranquility of your life. Spend within your means and spend on those items that make a difference in the quality of your life.

He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Ohel Moed. (1:1)

One cannot help but notice that the concluding letter, aleph, of the word Vayikra, He called, is written in a miniature form. The commentators, each in his own way, find homiletic insights to explain this change in the text. Chazal distinguish between the way Hashem spoke to the prophets of the pagan nations of whom Bilaam was the greatest and the way that He addressed Moshe Rabbeinu. Hashem's prophecy to Bilaam is introduced with the word vayikar, without the concluding aleph. The word vayikar - which is related both to mikreh, chance, and spiritual contamination - indicates that Hashem's relationship with Bilaam was one of necessity. He certainly did not speak to him out of love. He needed to convey a message, and Bilaam served as the conduit. In his own right, he was not worthy of this unparalleled experience. He was like a microphone or tape recorder through which the words of the speaker emanate outward.

Moshe, on the other hand, was the quintessential Navi, prophet; he had attained the standard of holiness and piety inherent in a Jewish prophet. When Hashem spoke to him, it was on the level of vayikra, a complete, wholehearted communication. Due to Moshe's prodigious humility, he sought to describe his address from Hashem in the same uncomplimentary term of vayikar, which refers to Hashem's communication with Bilaam. Hashem's love for Moshe did not allow for this. Yet, out of a sense of humility, Moshe wrote the last aleph in a miniature form, making it appear that it was only vayikar.

In an alternative exposition, the Kli Yakar opines that the miniature aleph is there by design in order to convey to us that Moshe's prophecy was also to be viewed from the perspective of vayikar, by chance. This is a powerful statement. Is there anyone throughout history that was more worthy of this achievement than Moshe? Certainly, Hashem wanted to speak to him. The lesson that we are to derive is that, even though Moshe was the greatest Navi and no one deserved this honor more than he, we must always realize that, regardless of the status of the individual, nevuah, prophecy, is a gift from Hashem. One receives nevuah because his generation is in need of its message. Thus, the navi serves as the medium for disseminating Hashem's word. On his own, however, he does not warrant this unique experience.

We see this idea reiterated concerning the Golden Calf. Hashem told Moshe, "Go, descend - for your people that you brought up from Egypt has become corrupt" (Shemos 32:7). Moshe had been elevated to his lofty spiritual status only for the sake of the Jewish People. Now that they had sinned and become unworthy, Hashem ordered him to descend from the mountain. "Now that Yisrael has sinned, I do not need you," Hashem intimated. Moshe achieved his position because of Klal Yisrael. If they were not deserving, he was not needed. Klal Yisrael's leadership received a gift from Hashem for a

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purpose. Everything that the leadership accomplishes is a result of this gift. On his own, no one individual can reach the lofty spiritual status required of the leaders of Klal Yisrael.

This lends us insight into Chazal's dictum in the Talmud Rosh Hashanah 25b, "Yiftach in his generation is like Shmuel in his generation." On a spiritual plane, Yiftach certainly did not compare to Shmuel haNavi. Once he was appointed to be a leader of his community, however, he was to be considered the mightiest of the mighty. Since the tzibur, community, needs him, he will be granted special powers from Heaven. Indeed, anyone who is needed by the community receives a special inspirational flow from Above.

If the anointed Kohen will sin, bringing guilt upon the people... the Kohen shall take from the blood of the bull and bring it to the Ohel Moed. (4:3,5)

Concerning every other Korban Chatas, Sin-offering, the Torah conveys explicitly that the Kohen will sprinkle the blood and atone for the sinner. Regarding the Sin-offering of the Kohen Mashiach, we do not find this stipulation. Rather, the blood is brought into the Kodesh, Holy, and sprinkled there without the involvement of anyone else. Why is this? The Meshech Chochmah gives a practical explanation. The purpose of the entire process surrounding a Korban Chatas is so that the sinner will regret his sin. The requirement that the Kohen must assist in sprinkling the blood is to add guilt to the sinner's conscience, something that will hopefully drive home the lesson: You have erred, and now you must regret and atone for your sin.

When the Kohen Mashiach sins, publicizing his error can have a deleterious effect on the people. Once word gets out that the spiritual leader had sinned, people will begin to talk about his failures and weaknesses, instigating a general lack of respect for him and his position. Others might use this negative influence as an excuse to sin personally. Thus, the Torah felt it prudent to allow the Kohen to conceal his error and to obligate him to bring the blood of his offering into the Holy and to sprinkle it personally, without fanfare, without an audience. The Torah's perspective is that the indiscretions of its spiritual leaders should be dealt with in a discreet and confidential manner, thereby avoiding a situation that would lead to a "guilt upon the people," in which the common person will find individual rationale to justify his own iniquity.

If an individual person shall sin unintentionally... he shall bring as his offering a she-goat unblemished for the sin that he committed. (4:27,28)

The korban is a means for expiating the sin and the consequent spiritual blemish that it creates in the cosmos. We cannot conceptualize the effect of our sins on the spiritual realm of the world in which we live. If we were able to realize the taint that our sin catalyzes, we would be much more vigilant in distancing ourselves from any situation that might lead to sin. The following story may leave a lasting impression concerning this thought.

The Apta Rebbe, zl, known as the Ohaiv Yisrael for the sefer which he authored, related that he remembered who he was in his previous gilgul, reincarnation. He lived in the time of the Bais Hamikdash. His name was Rabbi Zerach, a distinguished, pious and learned man. When his students heard this, they asked, "Rebbe, if you were righteous, why were you sent back as a gilgul to live your life over? Is this not a form of punishment?"

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The Rebbe replied, "I was mechallel Shabbos b'shogeg," transgressed and profaned Shabbos unintentionally.

"But if there was the Bais Hamikdash, surely you were forgiven," they countered.

"Yes, there was the Bais Hamikdash, and I brought a korban to expiate that sin. Yet, I had to relive my life in order to correct my spiritual defilement." Indeed, as I speak, I remember the overwhelming shame I experienced when I brought the korban."

The Rebbe then related his ordeal in bringing the korban, "First, I went to the market to purchase an animal to sacrifice. When I requested a seirah, she-goat, the merchant looked at me incredulously and said, "Reb Zerach, one may use a he-goat for a Korban Shelamim, Peace-offering." I replied, "Yes, I know, but I am offering a Korban Chatas, Sin-offering. The merchant looked at me and mumbled, "It just is not right, Reb Zerach - not someone of your status."

"Well, what could I do? I paid for the animal and walked towards the Bais Hamikdash to have it sacrificed. The whole way I felt that everyone was staring at me. To make matters worse, when 'we' arrived at the Har HaBayis, the goat ran off, and I was compelled to chase after her, while everyone stared. Up and down the small side streets I went, asking people if they had noticed a loose she-goat. In response, people asked me, 'Why are you, Reb Zerach, bringing a she-goat. Is that not for a Chatas?' Finally, someone called out, 'Reb Zerach, I found your she-goat. Now you can have your kaparah, atonement.' Can you imagine how this felt? I finally arrived at the Bais Hamikdash and handed the animal over to the Kohen who asked, 'A Korban Shelamim, I presume?' 'No,' I answered, 'it is a Chatas.' He just stared at me in shock. Trust me, my hair turned white that day."

"But, Rebbe," the talmidim asked, "if you went through all of this, and you offered a korban, surely your sin must have been expiated. Why then did you have to return to this world as a gilgul?"

The Rebbe replied, "You have no idea of the extent of spiritual damage that chillul Shabbos catalyzes."

If a man commits treachery and sins unintentionally against Hashem's Holies. (5:15)

Meilah, trespassing against Hekdesh, the Sanctuary or its vessels, is a Hebrew term which implies the unauthorized use of sacred property. In the laws applying to Meilah, we find a distinction between Meilah of an object that is kadosh kedushas haguf, the actual item, whose "body" is sacred; and an object which is only kadosh kedushas damim, its value has been sanctified. Concerning an item which has only kedushas damim, the law states that once it has undergone one Meilah its kedushah, sacredness, is gone. The reason for this is that the individual who had made use of it had intended to remove it from the custody of the Sanctuary. By doing so, he profaned and transferred it out of the dominion of the Sanctuary. An item that is in itself inherently sacred retains its sanctity under all circumstances. Even if it has been the subject of Meilah, it does not lose its status of kedushah. Thus, an object whose value is consecrated can only undergo Meilah once. Afterwards, it is no longer holy. An object which is essentially holy can undergo Meilah as often as a person uses it in an unauthorized manner.

The Bais HaLevi extends this distinction to kedushas Yisrael, the inherent holiness of each and

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every Jew. This kedushah is a kedushas haguf, whereby every Jew has an essential sanctity that permeates his entire essence. This kedushah is irrevocable. Thus, we understand the Rabbinic dictum that, Yisrael - af al pi she'chatah - Yisrael hu, "A Jew - even if he has sinned - remains a Jew." This applies regardless of the gravity of the transgression. Even if a Jew were to worship an idol with the express intention of apostatizing himself from the Jewish People, he nonetheless retains his kedushas Yisrael and does not need to convert back to Judaism when he is ready to repent. On the other hand, prior to performing teshuvah, repenting, he cannot say, "I do not ascribe to the Jewish religion." He remains a Jew, reflecting both the positive and negative implications of the word.

He shall return the robbed item that he robbed. (5:23)

The thief must first return the stolen goods, and only then may he bring a korban to atone for his sin. One does not approach Hashem for forgiveness until he has first appeased his victim. Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates an incredible story about a thief who returned stolen goods, which I feel has its underpinnings in a Midrash in Parashas Toldos. A Sefer Torah was stolen from a Shul. This was an unusual Sefer Torah. It was written by one of Yerushalayim's most prominent sofrim, scribes. It had just been brought into the shul a few days earlier amid much pomp and celebration. The theft catalyzed a depression in its contributor, who had dedicated it in memory of his parents. He had put away money for years, so that he could remember them in this most unique and meaningful manner. He would not give up hope of retrieving his beloved Sefer Torah. It meant too much to him.

One of the members of the shul, who was a "worldly" person with connections throughout the spectrum of society, suggested that he speak with a well-known baal teshuvah, returnee to religious observance, who prior to his teshuvah had been acquainted with members of the lower echelons of society. He would point him in the direction of the thief, or, at least, he might be able to offer advice about locating the missing Sefer Torah. The man spoke with the baal teshuvah, who asked for a few days to spread the word among his "old friends." Perhaps he would be able to strike a chord in the right person's heart and compel him to return the Sefer Torah. A few days later, the baal teshuvah returned to the man and said, "To the best of my knowledge, I have reason to believe that the Sefer Torah will be returned to you shortly."

Two days later, a man wearing a large yarmulka knocked on the door of the donor's home. In his arms, wrapped in a Tallis, he cradled the lost Sefer Torah. "I am the thief who stole the Sefer Torah," he mumbled. "I have come to return it." The donor was overjoyed to see the Torah, but he did not believe that the man who stood before him, wearing a yarmulka, was the thief. How could an observant Jew, wearing a yarmulka, fall to such a nadir of depravity that he would steal a Sefer Torah? This man was probably an agent who was doing the thief a favor.

The thief noticed the incredulous look on the donor's face. "I can imagine what is going through your mind," he said. "Yes, I am the thief. Do not let my yarmulka deceive you. When I stole the Sefer Torah, I was very distant from religious observance. I would never think of wearing a yarmulka. After keeping the Sefer Torah in my home for a week, however, I decided that I had to become a baal teshuvah. I have sinned, and I want to correct and change my life."

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The kedushah emanating from the Sefer Torah had a spiritual effect, transforming a hardened criminal into an observant Jew.

This story reminds me of a Midrash in Parashas Toldos, which relates the story of Yosef Meshissa, an apostate Jew, who was asked by the Roman conquerors to enter the Bais Hamikdash before them. They figured, let a Jew go in first, then we will follow and take whatever we want. They told him that he was allowed to take one item, any item that he wanted for himself. Yosef came out carrying the gold Menorah. When they saw this sacrilege, they said, "This is not made for a common person to use. Go back inside and take something else." He refused. They attempted to persuade him by offering a three-year release from paying taxes. He reiterated his refusal, saying, "Is it not enough that I angered my G-d once, that I should do so again?" When they saw that he was intractable, they placed him on a carpenter's table, which was used for cutting wood. His death was both painful and gruesome. As he died, he screamed out, "Woe is to me that I angered my Creator!"

Any sensible person would wonder what happened here. This was an apostate who left no transgression to the imagination. He had the gall to enter the Bais Hamikdash with impunity. Then, all of a sudden, he refused to return to the place of his first iniquity and, instead, died a baal teshuvah. What catalyzed this sudden transformation? The Ponevezer Rav, zl, explains that it was the kedushah, sanctity, of the Bais Hamikdash. Once Yosef entered the holy site, he could no longer leave as the same person. The holiness of the Bais Hamikdash permeated his essence, and he was no longer Yosef Meshissa, the apostate; he became Yosef Meshissa, the baal teshuvah.

If this is the case, why is it that so many of us have no problem transforming the bais haknesses or bais hamedrash into our private business office, social club, or for any other secular/mundane role? Have we lost sight of the inherent kedushah these holy places manifest? Why do they not inspire us the way Yosef Meshissa was inspired? In Vayikra 5:2,3, the Torah addresses the individual who enters the Sanctuary in a state of tumah, ritual contamination, or eats kodoshim, food of korbanos, in a state of tumah. If he does so intentionally, the punishment is kares, Heavenly excision. If he does so unintentionally, such as he knew of his contaminations but either had a momentary lapse; or he remembered that he was tamei - but he forgot that the Sanctuary or the food is holy - and then realizes what he has done, he must bring a korban. Let us analyze this case. A man stands in the Bais Hamikdash, after having passed through the Har Habayis, Temple Mount, and the various entranceways leading to the Sanctuary - and he forgets that he is in a holy place! How are we to understand this? The surrounding area, the architecture, the Kohanim and the aura that permeate the locale, scream kedushah, holiness, at every juncture. Yet, he forgets that he is in a holy place! This is mind-boggling!

Horav Yosef Sholom Elyashiv, Shlita, explains that it is all the side effects of hergel, habit. If a person becomes familiar with a place, if he is there often, it loses much of its impact. Familiarity breeds contempt. In the Talmud Sanhedrin 52b, Chazal teach us how an am haaretz, common, unschooled person, views a talmid chacham, Torah scholar. At first, he appears as a golden ladle. Once he has conversed with him, he takes on the appearance of a silver ladle. After he has benefited from him, he is viewed as earthenware ladle, which, once it is broken, is no longer mendable. A parallel may be noted with regard to any davar she'bikedushah, holy endeavor. If a person does not make an effort to acknowledge its distinctiveness, viewing it as something new and fresh each time he comes in contact with it, he will soon become acclimatized to it, and it will lose its superiority and preeminence in his

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eyes.

This is what David Hamelech asked of Hashem, "One thing I asked of Hashem, that shall I seek - that I dwell in the House of Hashem all the days of my life, to behold the sweetness of Hashem and to contemplate in His Sanctuary." (Tehillim 27:4) First David asks, shivti b'bais Hashem, "to dwell in Hashem's House," then he asks, l'vakeir be'heichalo, "to contemplate/to visit His Sanctuary." These two requests seem to contradict one another. Rather, David is saying, I know that there is the danger of familiarity and complacency that is endemic with always being in the sanctuary. Therefore, I ask that every time I enter the Sanctuary, it should be like my first visit. The excitement and enthusiasm - the invigorating wholesomeness and passion, the awe and trepidation - associated with entering the Sanctuary for the first time should never leave me.

This is what we should all strive to achieve. The bais hamedrash should become our second home, but that is only with regard to our attendance. Concerning our relationship with our house of worship and study, it should be as if we are entering it for the first time, each time. We should never forget its function, its significance and our place therein.

He (Hashem) called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him. (1:1)

The call came exclusively to Moshe. It was a kria, calling, of love, by which Hashem lovingly summoned His close servant, Moshe, to speak to him. The Midrash cites the pasuk in Mishlei 20:15, "There is gold and many pearls, but lips of wisdom are a precious vessel." The Midrash explains that one who has gold, silver and fine jewelry, but does not demonstrate the ability to act appropriately with decency and humility, does not benefit from all of his wealth. If, however, he possesses knowledge and fine ethical character, he has everything. All of the Nesiim contributed gold, silver and jewels towards the Mishkan. Moshe Rabbeinu was depressed that he did not contribute to the construction of the Mishkan. Hashem told him that his dibur, speech - the words of Torah that emanate from his mouth spoken in the Sanctuary, had greater significance than the contribution of the Nesiim. Why? What was so unique about Moshe's voice that it took precedence over the material contributions brought by the Nesiim?

Horav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi, Shlita, explains that Moshe's voice represented Moshe. There is no greater contribution than the contribution of one's self, his atzmius, essence. Moshe was concerned that he had not done enough, that he had not contributed to the Mishkan as the others did. Hashem replied that there is no greater contributor than one who gives all of himself for a project.

This does not negate the importance of the material contributions that are needed for every undertaking. It is, however, a barometer by which activity on behalf of a project should be measured. The check is not as important as the attitude behind the check.

This attitude must prevail in our avodas Hashem, service of the Almighty. We must give all of ourselves to our work. That is the definition of commitment. A commitment in which one does not commit all of himself is not a commitment. The success of those who endeavor on behalf of Klal Yisrael is directly linked to their extreme level of commitment. We turn to examine a few instances from the lives and achievements of gedolim, Torah leaders, of the previous generation, who exemplified this total abnegation of one's self for the sake of a mitzvah.

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Horav Nosson Wachtfogel, zl, the venerable Mashgiach of Beth Medrash Govoha, was one of the first American students to travel across the Atlantic to study Torah in the Lithuanian yeshivos. He studied in Yeshivas Mir for seven years, during which he developed a close bond with the giant of mussar, ethical discourse, Horav Yerucham Levovitz, zl. During this entire period, he never once saw or spoke to his parents. When Rav Yerucham passed away in 1937, Rav Nosson decided to return to America. While in New York, he met Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl, who was there on behalf of his yeshivah. Rav Nosson presented his dilemma to Rav Elchanan. His rebbe, from whom he had imbibed so much Torah and mussar, was gone. Yet, he felt he could not yet develop spiritually in America where materialism played such a leading role in life.

Rav Elchanan perceived the young man's aspiration towards spiritual greatness, and he realized that one day he would stand at the spiritual helm of American Torah chinuch. With this in mind, the Rosh Yeshivah said, "I feel that you should immediately return to Europe and travel to Kelm to study mussar from Horav Doniel Moshowitz, zl."

Rav Nosson listened in a manner unusual for a man of his young age. His degree of emunas chachamim, trust in a Torah scholar, was so intense that he immediately purchased a ticket to return to Europe. Furthermore, what makes this decision so incredible was that he did not even stop off in Montreal to visit his parents. Instead, he headed directly to the pier to board the first available boat. His decision was made for him by a gadol, and he listened without injecting even one iota of himself into it. Moreover, I think we might add that his parents must have been extremely committed to their son's spiritual growth, for who else would not have insisted that their son "stop by" to say hello? After all, it had only been seven years! I must add that this approach, which will not be understood by everyone, might really not be for everyone.

The Ponevezer Rav, Horav Yosef Kahaneman, zl, was a man with a mission. Respected, admired, adored and idolized, he was the quintessential gadol ba'Torah who had that rare personality that endeared him to everyone with whom he came in contact. He was a living embodiment of Hashem, Klal Yisrael and the Torah. His love for all of Klal Yisrael was unparalleled. His empathy for another Jew was without peer. He built Torah in the face of indomitable challenge. He comforted orphans, gave solace to widows, and was father and mentor to thousands of students. Indeed, his incredible influence was felt by Jews all over the world. When he died he was feeding two-thousand mouths a day, and he was in the process of building seventeen yeshivos. All of this emanated from love for Klal Yisrael and the Torah which sustains it. He lived with one purpose in life, one raison d'etre: to rebuild Torah, to see it flourish again. Seven hundred rabbanim had perished in Lithuania. He was the only one that had been spared. He considered this his mandate. He bore the burden of these seven hundred rabbanim on his shoulders. He never forgot his responsibility as a Jew - and, by example, he taught us never to forget.

Horav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zl, lived his life guided by the directive of Shlomo Hamelech found in Mishlei 3:6, "Know G-d in all your ways, and He will direct your paths." "Every move he made - every turn of his hand, every blink of his eye - was purely and entirely for the sake of Heaven," according to Horav Yehudah Leib Chasman, zl, one of the great mussar thinkers of the previous generation. Every night before he went to sleep, Rav Yosef Chaim would make a complete spiritual accounting of the day. He was a person to whom reverence for the Torah was not just something he spoke about; he lived it. He was extremely fond of his children and grandchildren. Yet, he never kissed them. He felt that since he would kiss the Sefer Torah and other holy seforim with his mouth, how could he then give ordinary, mundane kisses to his children?

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This demonstrates the incredible deliberation and self-discipline that distinguished Rav Yosef Chaim. I must add that I thought twice about including this episode in this paper, since it is a behavior that many of us will not accept with comfort. This might lead to cynicism or criticism. On the other hand, I feel that we do not understand the passion and fervor that Rav Yosef Chaim exhibited when he was kissing the Torah. If we would kiss the Torah, or respect it with the intensity which he demonstrated, we would begin to understand that kissing a child is much different. He was a man who lived for Hashem and dedicated all of himself to the Almighty, a spiritual plateau to which we should all aspire.

When a man among you brings an offering to Hashem... If one's offering is an elevated offering.(1:2,3)

Rashi explains that the Korban Olah, Elevation-offering, that this pasuk of the Torah addresses is an Olah Nedavah, Free-Willed offering. One wonders why the Torah employs the word adam, a name which reflects man's roots from the adamah, earth, implying the baser, earthly aspect of man. On the other hand, concerning the Korban Chatas, Sin-offering in 4:2, the Torah writes, Nefesh ki sechetah b'shegagah, "(When) a soul (person) sins inadvertently." Why does the Torah use adam, which reflects man at his nadir, when referring to a Free-Willed offering, and nefesh, soul, the spiritual component of man, when referring to his shortcoming and sinful behavior? Is not sin the outgrowth of man's earthiness?

In his Simchas Ha'Torah, Horav Simchas Hakohen Shepps, zl, explains that the Torah teaches us that sin creates a spiritual blemish, and also that man has the ability to elevate himself by purifying his base nature. The korbanos give us the opportunity to cleanse the neshamah, soul, from the effects of sin. The Torah emphasizes that the purpose of a korban is not only to cleanse the individual of sin, but it also elevates him to the point that the adam becomes a nefesh. This is the meaning of Adam ki yakriv, "When a man brings an offering." With this offering, he sacrifices the adam/base aspect of himself as he elevates himself to a spiritual position. An adam who brings a korban is no longer simply an adam.

If one's offering is an Olah (Elevation-offering)... He shall bring it to the entrance of the Ohel Moed, voluntarily before Hashem. (1:3)

Rashi explains that the words, "He shall bring it," teaches us that they compel him to bring the korban. If so, what is the meaning of "voluntarily" before Hashem? They force him until he says, "I am willing." Rashi's comment is better understood in light of the Rambam in Hilchos Geirusin 2:20, who says that a person can be "forced" to do something "willingly." He explains that every Jew intrinsically wants to do the right thing. The yetzer hora, evil-inclination, places countless obstacles before him, so that he refrains from following through on his good intentions. Thus, when Bais Din forces a Jew to do the right thing, it is really not incongruous with his true will. They are simply removing those spiritual obstacles which are part of the yetzer hora's machinations, thereby allowing the essential goodness of his neshamah, soul, to do what is proper.

The Chasam Sofer offers an alternative approach that has practical application in contemporary society. He cites the following analogy: A farmer living in a small rural area nestled far away from the

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Torah center of Yerushalayim commits a sin for which he is required to bring a Korban Olah. He is acutely aware that the appropriate thing to do is close the farm, pack his bags and go up to Yerushalayim to bring a korban. This is the prescribed procedure for expiating his sin. The yetzer hora has a problem with this. It cannot permit this man to follow through with his proposed course. It begins the work for which it is infamous, "True, you have sinned, but everybody makes a mistake once in a while. You do not have to be carried away with guilt. Leaving the farm to travel to Yerushalayim is ludicrous. Who is going to tend to the animals and the crops? Korbanos are expensive. Do you have the money to purchase a korban for such an insignificant sin? Do you think you are a greater tzaddik, more righteous, than your neighbor? When was the last time he traveled to Yerushalayim to bring a korban?

Finally, the farmer is able to overcome his yetzer hora, and he sets out on his journey. As he travels, he meets an old friend who questions him concerning his destination. The farmer is more than slightly embarrassed to tell the truth, so he quietly mumbles that he is on the way to Yerushalayim. "What for?" asks his friend. "Do you have a simchah, joyous occasion? Are you celebrating a milestone event?" he continues, his curiosity piqued. "No, I simply have to attend to some business," the farmer replies, thinking to himself, "What will these people think if they know the true reason for my journey? If people become aware of my indiscretion, it would tarnish my name. My children would have a difficult time getting shidduchim, finding a suitable match in marriage."

Every step of the way is an uphill battle. Between the yetzer hora's discouraging words and his own self-doubt, he almost turns back a number of times, but he trudges on to the gates of Yerushalayim. We can just imagine his mood as he passes through the gates of the city. His lack of enthusiasm and desire is taking its toll. He has no choice; he has to bring the korban if he is to receive forgiveness for his sin.

This all changes once the farmer enters the Courtyard of the Bais Hamikdash and is enveloped in its sanctity. He is awestruck with the sight of the "Kohanim performing the Divine service, the Leviim singing, and the Yisraelim at their posts supervising the sacrifices." The imposing sight of the Sanhedrin Hagadol, Great Sanhedrin, in session, impacts him. The atmosphere of absolute truth that permeates the environs of the Bais Hamikdash engenders within him a desire to come closer to Hashem. The yetzer hora's guiles and blandishments seem to lose their power in this holy place. As the farmer gravitates closer, his sense of joy and desire to please are heightened as the yetzer hora's loses his grip on him. He is appreciative of the opportunity to purify himself of the stain of sin that he has carried thus far, and he certainly is not concerned with the expense of time and money involved in offering this korban.

The Chasam Sofer interprets this analogy into the meaning of the pasuk. Veritabily, for many, the trip to the Bais Hamikdash is fraught with challenge. Perhaps we might even view his offering as being brought against his will. Once he enters the sanctity of Yerushalayim, however, and is inspired by the holiness of those whose lives revolve around the city and the Bais Hamikdash, his attitude is completely metamorphosized. He now wants to bring the korban with his whole heart and soul.

Horav Avraham Pam, zl, derives from the Chasam Sofer the overriding significance of living in a Torah environment. When a person lives in a community of Torah-oriented Jews, his own avodas Hashem, Divine service, is greatly enhanced by the living role models which are present for him to emulate. His aspirations and goals are raised, as he strives to grow in Torah and middos, ethical behavior. We must look to our contemporary role models, our gedolim, Torah leadership, for the

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guidance and inspiration they have to offer. They are our role models - our Bais Hamikdash.

When a ruler sins, and commits one from among all the mitzvos of Hashem... that may not be done unintentionally - and becomes guilty. (4:22)

Chazal comment, "Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai said, 'Fortunate is the generation whose ruler brings a Korban Chatas, Sin-offering, for his unintentional sin.'" We wonder at this good fortune. Would it not have been better had the Nasi, ruler, not sinned at all? The Divrei Shmuel, Slonimer Rebbe, zl, explains that this is a reference to the Nasi who performed a mitzvah, but did not execute it with the fervor that is expected of an individual of such an elevated spiritual plateau and station in life. Yes, he performed one of the many mitzvos that Hashem has commanded us to perform, but he now realizes that he is guilty; he carries an onus of guilt for not having done better. He carries this "sin" of "inadvertent" poor mitzvah performance. He did not do enough; he, as Nasi, could and should have acted with greater enthusiasm, more passion and increased fervor. How fortunate is the generation that possesses such leadership who is so demanding of itself, who is deliberate in every action.

Horav Sholom, zl, m'Belz, once traveled to Lublin to spend Purim with his great rebbe, the Chozeh, zl. The Chozeh gave Rav Sholom the honor of reading the Megillah. The reading rendered by the Belzer, which was performed with holy emotion and a burning enthusiasm, gave the Chozeh incredible spiritual pleasure. Indeed, afterwards he said, "I have heard the Purim story as written in the Megillah many times, but never in the manner that this young man has related it." When we perform a mitzvah with hislahavus, fiery zeal, and enthusiasm, it takes on a totally new image.

We may add that one who carries out a mitzvah enthusiastically, with the proper emotion, not only gains eternal spiritual benefit, but he also derives unprecedented pleasure in this world. We often think that a mitzvah's benefits are to be enjoyed in the World to Come when we receive our eternal reward. This is not true, for, indeed, one can glean tremendous satisfaction in this world from mitzvah performance if he only applies himself correctly to carrying it out.

The Shlah Hakadosh, zl, writes that he has seen bnei Aliyah, men of great spiritual ascendancy, who love mitzvos so much that when they would grasp the Matzoh or marror in their hands, they would kiss them. They would kiss the Succah walls as they entered the Succah and do the same for each of the four species. He adds that one should kiss the Tzitzis lovingly when he looks at them. Fortunate is he who serves Hashem with such tangible love and devotion.

Hashem called to Moshe and said to him. (1:1)

Rashi explains that whenever Hashem commanded, instructed or spoke to Moshe, he always preceded his communication with a kria, calling out, to him. Kria is an expression of tenderness and affection. It is an expression used by the Malachei Hashareis, Ministering Angels, as it is written in Yeshaya 6:3, "V'kara zeh El zeh v'amar Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh..." "One angel calls to another, saying Holy, Holy, Holy..." Rashi's comment does not seem to be unique to this pasuk. His explanation that kria is an expression of tenderness and affection could likewise have been written earlier when Hashem called to Moshe from the s'neh, Burning Bush, or prior to Matan Torah, the Giving of the Torah, when Hashem called to Moshe from Har Sinai. Why is the emphasis regarding tenderness and affection and the relationship to angels emphasized here, as we begin the laws of korbanos, ritual sacrifices?

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The Piaczesner Rebbe, zl, explains that as it is written in regard to Akeidas Yitzchak, the Binding of Yitzchak, "He went, took the ram, and sacrificed it as a burnt-offering in his son's place," (Bereishis 22:14) this is true of every animal sacrifice: it takes the place of a human. In this parshah, it is written, Adam ki yakriv mikem korban, "When a man of you brings a korban." The emphasis is placed on the words "of you," because the animal is actually being sacrificed in place of the person. On Fast days, we entreat Hashem that "the fat and blood that we lose as a result of the fast should be accepted as a sacrifice upon the Mizbayach, Altar, to You, Hashem." Indeed, suffering per se cleanses away our sins, because it decreases our strength via loss of our fat and blood. Klal Yisrael's sufferings are a form of ritual sacrifice.

Consequently, Rashi chooses the text which addresses animal sacrifices to emphasize this point: any sacrifice that we make - whether it is of the nature of animal sacrifices delineated in the following text, in which an animal takes the place of a person, or it is a human being's own sufferings - constitutes Hashem "calling" to us. They are expressions of tenderness, of love from Hashem to us.

Despite the Piaczesner Rebbe's best efforts to provide hope, consolation and a degree of inner joy to his followers, in the end he was able to do little to alleviate their suffering. It had become critical for him to address the concept of suffering from a point of theological justification. Basically, what the Rebbe is saying here is that one can offer up his suffering as a form of korban, sacrifice, to Hashem. The call to sacrifice is a call to love. Hence, the suffering that a Jew endures for Hashem is an expression of profound love - which is reciprocated by the Almighty.

The Rebbe concludes his homily focusing on the concept of dibuk chaverim, the bond between Jew and his fellow Jew in fellowship and friendship - especially in times of hardship and distress. Suffering is an occasion for the sufferer to give to others, an opportunity for compassion and empathy. In return, the empathizer reciprocates with prayers and expressions of concern. This mutual interaction has cosmic significance in that it inspires the Ministering Angels to exchange greetings with each other, to call to one another, as evidenced by the pasuk in Yeshaya 6:3.

The Rebbe exhorts his followers to share with and help one another. "Even when one has no material resources, it is still possible to share. Mutual sharing and helping is not limited to giving charity or a loan. When one hears of the troubles sustained by other Jews and does all that he can to help them; if his heart is broken and his blood is frozen; if through his heart's motivation, he is inspired to pour out his broken heart to Hashem on behalf of other Jews, then this, too, is a wonderful gift which he gives to others. We receive the broken heartedness and the repentance, and they, the subject of our prayers, receive the compassion and the good effects which we perform for them, as well as the prayer with which we supplicate Hashem on their behalf."

The Rebbe concludes with a powerful statement, "Although the angels call to one another just as humans do, the angels' words do not emerge from their own suffering. After all, an angel has never experienced a Jew's pain when he is being beaten; or his humiliation when he is being harassed and disparaged; or his terror, and his torment when he has no food." Even if we can do nothing physical for our fellow Jew in need, we can still pray for him from the heart. Caring, expressed in sincere, meaningful prayer - coupled with heartfelt concern - is a genuine contribution which goes a long way. It gives the benefactor a sense of worthiness. He no longer feels helpless. Regrettably, it is much easier to give up than to pray with sincerity and hope until the very last moment. This constitutes tzedakah at

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its zenith.

When a man among you brings an offering to Hashem. (1:2)

We translate the word korban as sacrifice. This translation does not capture the full meaning of the word. Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, explains that the word korban is derived from karov, coming near. One who offers a sacrifice is bringing himself closer to Hashem, elevating himself spiritually by his actions. Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, cites a homiletical rendering of this pasuk by the Ohr HaChaim Hakadosh, which is compelling and provides food for thought.

"When a man among you" chooses to bring closer the hearts of his estranged brethren to Hashem, such an individual is worthy of being called an adam, man. He does not have to offer any korbanos. He will never need to bring a sin-offering, since Hashem will protect him and ascertain that no sin will result from his activities. Hashem wants His children to be near to Him, and He will repay anyone who brings His children home.

Rav Zilberstein elaborates that there are many ways and circumstances in which we can effectively reach out to the alienated, the unacquainted and unaware. They are just waiting for an "invitation" to come closer. One of the most productive forms of outreach is for us to act in the manner in which a frum, observant, Jew is to act. Our code of honor, integrity, decency and menchlichkeit, humanness, will win them over. Once they get to know us for what we are - not what they have been misled to believe - their hearts and minds will open up to us, and, consequently, to Hashem.

In his inimitable manner, Rav Zilberstein cites a fascinating story to support this idea. It was springtime, and a young rebbe was taking his third-grade class for a trip. As they were walking near an orange grove, a car came to a screeching stop near them. The driver, clearly non-observant, jumped out and addressed the rebbe, "Could I ask you and your students for a favor? My brother is laying critically wounded in the hospital. The doctors do not know if he will make it. In fact, they are giving him very little chance for recovery. Could you daven with your students for my brother's recovery?"

As soon as the students heard his request, they all answered affirmatively. The man, tears welling up in his eyes, took out a wad of large bills from his wallet and gave it to the rebbe, "Here, take this for your time. Buy something for your nice students."

"Chas v'shalom, Heaven forbid! We do not take money for helping a fellow Jew. We will be happy to do whatever we can for him. May Hashem listen to our prayers on his behalf and grant him a speedy recovery."

The man took out a card from his pocket and wrote down his brother's name and his mother's name, so they could pray for his recovery. He also added their family name. When the rebbe noticed their last name, he realized that the brother was the head of a major crime family. In fact, he was in the hospital because one of his "competitors" had placed a bomb under his car. Nonetheless, the children prayed for him. He was a Jew. His name was written on the blackboard, and the children dedicated their learning in his merit.

A number of weeks went by and, once again, the rebbe took his young charges for a short trip. Lo and behold, once again the driver of the same car that had approached them last time pulled up, and

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the driver jumped out. He ran over and kissed the rebbe. "Do not ask what happened!" he exclaimed excitedly. "It was a miracle. My brother survived. It was surely because of the tefillos, prayers, of the young children. Thank you! Furthermore, when I told my brother that you refused to take money for your time, saying it was your responsibility to pray for another Jew in need, my brother said that he wants to take a chavrusa, study partner, to learn more about the religion he has neglected to observe." Today, he is on the road to become a full-fledged baal teshuvah.

The lesson is simple. A man whose life revolved around money came to the realization that there are people who value something more than money, people who were happy to help another Jew. This message transformed a hardened criminal into a ben Torah. This is the meaning of a korban that brings others closer to Hashem.

He shall offer an unblemished male. (1:3)

A Korban Olah, Elevation-Offering, must be brought from a male animal. Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, explains that with regard to the activities, mitzvos, that we as Jews are to perform in life, Hashem expects virile independence from all of His children/subjects, male and female alike. The mitzvos for which we have to stand up, transform us into "men." This concept is analogous to manly strength, manly independence, which we are to dedicate to the service of Hashem. It is not the feminine aspect of man which is represented by endurance and tolerance, but rather the vigor and independence, the firm, resolute action that seeks closeness to the Almighty in the Korban Olah.

The korban must be tamim, whole, complete, without blemish. A blemished animal is not a sick animal. It can otherwise be completely healthy and vibrant, but if it has some minor permanent mutilation or abnormality, it is deemed unacceptable for the Altar. The Navi Malachi scourges those who offer blemished animals as degrading Hashem's Name. The Sanctuary - and everyone connected to it - represents the zenith of humanity, the best, most vigorous, strongest and freshest of all that man has to offer. Pulsating life, active life filled with zest and joy: these words described the Sanctuary and those associated with it.

Those who dedicate their lives to the Jew's highest calling, studying Torah, are the most complete specimens of humanity. The "old days," in which people would disparage those who went to Kollel as cripples, lazy individuals who had no initiative or ability to succeed, are over. The spiritual renaissance we enjoy in this country is the product of some of the finest and most complete specimens who have ever given their lives for Torah. They are the zachar tamim, the independent and strong perfect examples of dedication and commitment to Klal Yisrael.

Tamim means perfect and whole. Rav Hirsch asserts that for each and every aspect of our relationship with Hashem, the first and most indispensable condition is that we apply the whole of oneself: our whole heart; our whole soul; our whole material possessions. Any aspect of our being that is lacking in our devotion bespeaks a blemish in the relationship. Achdus, complete unity with the Almighty, demands that we do not hold back any aspect of ourselves from Him. Complete subservience is the result of the negation of any other state of existence. When a Jew comes close to Hashem, he should do so with every fibre of his being, with all of his faculties. One who dedicates all of himself to Hashem is promised a life, to paraphrase Rav Hirsch, "in which even pain and death lose their sting."

We must add that by no means is one who is physically challenged considered blemished. It is

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the dedication and wholesomeness of one's conviction and dedication that counts - not his physical appearance. "There is nothing so whole as a broken heart" is a wonderful and meaningful maxim - one by which we should all live. I would like to take this opportunity to cite a beautiful analogy, one that goes to the very core of handicaps and physical infirmities.

A water carrier in India would serve his master by toting water from the stream to his master's home. He carried the water in two pots, hung on either end of a long pole strung across his shoulders. One of the pots had a small crack, whereas the other was whole. Thus, when the servant reached his master's home, one pot was full while the other was half-empty. This went on for two years. Every day the servant would arrive at his master's home with one full pot and one half-filled pot of water. Naturally, the whole pot felt very good; it was doing a complete job. The cracked pot, however, felt that its imperfection caused it to accomplish only part of its function.

One day, the cracked pot apologized to the water carrier. "I feel terrible," the pot said. "Every day you strain yourself to carry water for the master, but because of my defect, you do not receive full value for your effort."

The water carrier replied, "Do not worry. On our way home today, I would like you to look at the road and notice the lovely flowers that are growing there."

As they returned, the cracked pot indeed noticed the pretty, winsome, wild flowers, the sun glistening off their bright petals. Still, at the end of the road it once again was disconcerted because once again half of its water had leaked out. Again, it apologized to its bearer for its failure.

The bearer said to the pot, "I told you to look at the lovely flowers that line your side of the path. Because I have always been aware of your 'flaw,' I planted flower seeds along your side of the path. Every day as we go home, you have inadvertently watered these seeds. Every day I am able to pick some of these beautiful flowers to adorn our master's table. Were you not just the way you are, our master would not have this beauty to grace his home."

A powerful analogy. Every creation has a purpose - one that is determined by its Creator. Tamim, perfect and whole, is not an external feature. It is an internal characteristic of an individual, reflecting his attitude and devotion to his Creator.

Speak to Bnei Yisrael, saying: when a person will sin unintentionally from among all the commandments of Hashem that may not be done, and he commits one of them. (4:2)

Chazal, in Toras Kohanim derive from the words, "to Bnei Yisrael," that only a Yisrael brings a Korban Chatas, Sin-Offering, for an inadvertent sin. Gentiles do not bring a Korban Chatas. The Bais HaLevi explains that when one sins against Hashem, it is significant whether the transgression is committed b'meizid, purposely, or b'shogeg, inadvertently. When one sins against his fellowman, however, there is no difference. Adam muad l'olam, a man is always responsible for his actions against his fellowman.

When a gentile sins, his sin is only against Hashem. Therefore, if it is inadvertent, he is innocent

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and not liable for punishment. When a Jew sins against Hashem, he is also committing a grave injustice against his fellow Jew, since Kol Yisrael areivim zeh lazeh, all Jews are responsible one for another. Thus, any sin against Hashem is considered a sin against a Jew, because the national character of Klal Yisrael has been impugned by his sin against Hashem. Concerning a sin against a fellow Jew, there is no distinction between shogeg and maizid. Therefore, a Jew who sins inadvertently against Hashem is still obligated to bring a Korban Chatas.

When a man among you brings an offering to Hashem from animals, from the cattle or from the flock shall you bring your offering. (1:2)

If Reuven slaps Shimon across the face for no reason, Shimon's physical pain will not be as great as his emotional pain. Being slapped for no apparent reason is truly an emotional trauma. On the other hand, if Shimon had first struck Reuven with a powerful blow, and then Reuven reciprocated - Shimon would not be that upset. He would understand that he deserves what he has received.

Horav Baruch, zl, m'Kosov applies this analogy towards explaining the concept of mesiras nefesh Al Kiddush Hashem, dedication to the point of self-sacrifice for the purpose of sanctifying Hashem's Name. If a person realizes that he belongs to the Almighty, Who can do with him what He pleases, he will understand that he is obliged to give of his life to sanctify His Name. This is the underlying meaning of the pasuk: "When a man among you brings an offering" - Hashem says to His chosen People, "It should not be difficult for you to sacrifice yourselves for Me, or from the animals from the cattle or from the flock - Learn from the animals, from the cattle and sheep which you freely slaughter to be used as food. They undergo the pain of Shechitah, ritual slaughter. You understand that they must go through this process in order to become food, because this is their raison d'etre, the purpose of their creation. Therefore, surely, you must understand your own obligation to give up everything in your lives for Me." The Torah concludes with the words, "shall you bring your offering." If you understand your position vis-?-vis Hashem, then you will be able to give yourselves up as a sacrifice to Hashem - with love, devotion and a pure heart.

A Jew who has realized that Hashem is the source of all can cope with his own suffering. Conversely, for the Jew who cannot grasp the positive manifestation of suffering, it becomes a two-edged sword, a source of both physical and spiritual pain, a truly depressing force. Kiddush Hashem, sanctifying Hashem's Name, is a privilege which can elevate the simplest of Jews, even the sinners, to an unparalleled spiritual zenith. One who is willing to die for Hashem demonstrates his true love of the Almighty. Horav Yisrael, zl, m'Rizin interprets the pasuk dealing with sacrifices as presenting the fundamental significance of Kiddush Hashem. "When a man among you brings an offering", Only he who brings himself to Hashem as an offering can be called a man.

Despite the apparent readiness of a Jew to die Al Kiddush Hashem with mesiras nefesh when put to the test, we must note that the purpose of man's creation is: that he live; that he observe the Torah and its mitzvos, and that he "live by them" and "not die by them." Indeed, the Kotzker Rebbe, zl, emphasizes that Kiddush Hashem is kiddush hachaim, sanctifying life. He interpreted the pasuk, V'anshei kodesh tiheyu li, "You shall be men holy to Me" (Shemos 22:30) to mean that Hashem says to us, "Let your holiness be human, and may your human acts be holy." This is the holiness demanded of man. Hashem has no need for angels in Heaven. The other world is not to be seen as an escape from the

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responsibilities of life on this world. To paraphrase Horav Naftali, zl, m'Ropshitz, "No Jew can possibly inherit the World to Come except by means of this world." While the Jew's commitment to Kiddush Hashem is unequivocal, what may be of greater significance is the Jew's willingness to sacrifice himself for the Torah and Jewish values, as well as his commitment to transmitting the heritage of Moshe Rabbeinu to the next generation. I take the liberty of citing a story by Rabbi Zechariah Fendel concerning a handwritten page of Ashrei which he found in the archives of the Kibbutz Lochamei ha'Ghetto. The caption beneath the page indicated that this had been written by a concentration camp inmate, as a means to teach his son how to pray.

"A Jew sits engulfed by dark despair, the overriding gloom of the concentration camp. He is one of the fortunate ones, for, indeed, he is privileged to have his son by his side. He cannot satiate his son's craving for food, but, yes, he can give him something else - something perhaps more satisfying - surely more enduring. As indispensable as bread itself, he can give his son something that a Jewish father is instructed to transmit to his son.

"The concentration camp does not supply the materials needed for this endeavor. He looks around and finds a small, dirty scrap of paper. Now, he must fashion a makeshift pencil. With a trembling hand, he etches out the magic formula upon the paper. He looks back and gazes upon his handiwork, "Baruch Hashem, I have completed one more link in the chain. He takes his little son gently by the hand and points to the scribbled letters before him, and he begins to recite the letters. Read after me, my child, the father coaxes his son. Together they read, Aleph, Bais, Gimel, Daled..."

What a powerful example of mesiras nefesh. They do not know how long they will live, but as long as they breathe as Jews, a father has the mitzvah of transmitting the heritage to the next generation. This is more than a mitzvah - it is our source of survival!

Horav Ephraim Oshry gave the following eyewitness account of mesiras nefesh for Torah in the Kovno ghetto. It was February 8, 1942, and the Nazis issued an order for the confiscation and destruction of all seforim, Torah literature, of any kind. After the issuance of the order, many Jews young and old - took extreme measures to protect whatever seforim they could. Young and old, they dug pits in which they hid Sifrei Torah, Tractates of the Talmud, various volumes of responsa, Chumashim and Siddurim. It was the children of the ghetto, however, that exhibited the greatest degree of self-sacrifice. Rav Oshry remembers, "Upon concluding my classroom lesson on the day of the order, I turned to my students and queried, 'Where will we obtain Chumashim and Gemorras for our studies?' They replied with an indomitable spirit shining from their faces, 'Rebbe, do not worry, we will each hide a Chumash and Gemorra, so that we might continue our studies without interruption.' When I heard their response, my eyes welled up with tears. And I reminded my students, 'Kinderlach, what you are about to do is fraught with danger.' 'Rebbe,' they countered, 'it does not matter. If they shoot us with our Gemorras, we will at least have died Al Kiddush Hashem!'"

The next time we hold a Chumash or Gemorra in our hands, we should try to remember this narrative. It might make a difference in the way we learn. If it does not, it might be a good idea to consider why.

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When a nasi / ruler sins. (4:22)

In the Talmud Horiyos 10:b, Chazal make an intriguing statement. They say that the word asher alludes to ashrei, fortunate. This implies that the generation whose leader seeks atonement, even for his inadvertent sins, is truly a fortunate one, for he will repent his intentional sins. We must understand the good fortune in having a ruler that sins - because he becomes a model of someone who repents his sins. Horav Elimelech, zl, m'Lishensk, gives the following explanation: Klal Yisrael is comprised of tzaddikim, righteous, pious Jews, and also peshutei ha'am, common, simple Jews. Due to the vast spiritual dichotomy between the two, it is almost impossible for the tzaddik to come close to the common Jew? How is he to know and be sensitive to the common Jew's brokenhearted feelings when he sins? How is he to help him, if he has never experienced the feeling of dejection that comes with a spiritual failing; the feelings of spiritual inadequacy that one feels when he has fallen short of his expected goal?

Hashem causes the tzaddik to fall prey inadvertently to a minor infraction. He sustains a spiritual setback. During this moment of shortcoming, the tzaddik can sensitize himself to the pain and anguish that accompanies the common Jew during his period of frailty. The sefer Chaim Sheyeish Bahem, cites the Tanna Divrei Eliyahu which offers a powerful analogy. A simple maidservant lost her inexpensive, earthenware pitcher in a well. Due to her inability to retrieve it, she gave up hope of ever seeing it again. Afterwards, the princess went to that well and lost her gold pitcher there. When the maidservant heard this, she was overjoyed. She knew that the princess would instruct her servants to look into the well in order to retrieve her pitcher. Once they were looking for the gold pitcher, they would also recover the maidservant's pitcher. The Steipler Rav, zl, once attended the bar mitzvah of a boy who was totally unknown to him. The great sage was ill at the time and had not left his house for quite some time. It was, therefore, very surprising to everyone that he attended this simchah especially since he had no connection to the family. What was even more astonishing was that when the Steipler entered the hall, he went straight over to the bar mitzvah boy and asked to speak to him privately. One can imagine that this caused quite a stir.

After the Steipler left, the boy was asked what had occurred in the room. The boy was so overcome with emotion that all he could say was, "He came to ask me for mechilah, forgiveness." Later it was discovered that six years earlier, when the boy had been seven years old, he was attending the same shul that the Steipler frequented. One day, during davening, the Steipler noticed the boy learning when he should have been davening. The Steipler proceeded to go over and admonish the young boy for not paying proper attention to his prayers. After all, when one has an "appointment" to speak with the Almighty, he should not drift away and study. There is a time and place for everything. Afterwards, the Steipler discovered that the boy's Siddur was set up in the form of a Gemorra. Actually, the boy was davening - not learning. The sage was despondent that he had wrongly hurt the child's feelings. Since the boy was halachically a katan, a minor, asking forgiveness would be to no avail. He waited six years, until the boy turned bar mitzvah, to ask for mechilah! "Fortunate is the generation whose tzaddikim repent for their 'inadvertent' sins!"

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If a person commits treachery and sins. (5:15)

How does one relate to his non-observant brethren? While there are certainly various approaches and responses to this question, Horav Meir Shapiro, zl, the famous Lubliner Rav and founder of the Daf HaYomi, study of one blatt, page, of Talmud daily, gave the following response. A businessman once lent a large sum of money to his friend, who later went bankrupt. There was no way he could pay back the loan. In such a situation, the lender is willing to take anything that he can, regardless of its value or significance. Whatever he is able to put his hands on is saved. On the other hand, in a circumstance when one lends money and there is a guarantor who guarantees payment on behalf of the borrower, the lender is not concerned; he simply goes to the guarantor and collects his debt, transferring to the guarantor the headache of collecting his debt.

A Jew who does not observe the mitzvos has an enormous debt to pay back to Hashem. He is spiritually bankrupt and has no ability to repay the loan. At such a time, it is incumbent upon the Torah camp, those who have had the perseverance, tenacity and dedication to cling to the faith of their ancestors, to reach out to their alienated brethren and bring them back - one mitzvah at a time. Every little part of the loan that we can collect is important. Simultaneously, it is important that we act as guarantors, because Kol Yisrael areivim zeh lo'zeh. "All Jews are considered responsible /guarantors one for another." We have a filial responsibility to increase our own mitzvah observance as a way of seeking merit and providing inspiration for those that have left the Torah fold.

Rav Meir Shapiro would instruct his students that upon coming in contact with a non-observant Jew, they not come down "hard" on him, but rather coax him along gently as he returns to Hashem. We must realize that mitzvah goreres mitzvah, the performance of one mitzvah engenders the performance of another mitzvah. Be patient - they will come along in due time. Horav Simcha Wasserman, zl, was one of the vanguards of kiruv, the Jewish outreach movement. He succeeded because of his personality. In his quiet, self-effacing, warm and sensitive manner, he exposed thousands to the Torah way. He taught many lessons in regard to outreach, some of which I will take the liberty to cite. Rav Simcha felt first and foremost that learning Torah with someone was the most powerful kiruv tool. Arguing about Yiddishkeit is the first step towards alienating a prospective "client" and only leads to disaster. Each one feels he is right and that only he has the correct approach. Arguments never increase understanding, since neither side is willing to budge. Rav Simcha would say, "Learn with them - and their eyes will open up as they see what you see. Then you will no longer have to explain it to them." The Torah is Hashem's antidote for the evil of the yetzer hora, evil inclination. Until one studies the Torah, he is still captivated by the poison. He must have the antidote. One who studies Torah and still has not straightened out his character is apparently not studying Torah in the correct manner with the proper attitude.

We begin with a little bit of Chumash, a taste of Ethics. As we begin to understand the Torah, it slowly permeates our psyche, penetrating it, refining it, purifying it. One who has fasted for a long time cannot suddenly be given a lot of food. It must be introduced to him in small amounts. The same idea applies to one who has been spiritually starved. He must be spoon-fed small pieces that are "chewable." Perhaps we can encourage the student to make a berachah or recite a blessing prior to studying Torah, so that he realizes that he is really learning Torah, not just hearing some nice stories, instruction in ethical behavior.

This was Rav Simcha's way. He taught Shabbos, and people began observing Shabbos - on their

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own. When asked why even though he did not tell his students to observe, they did so anyway on their own, he explained that it was the Torah that accomplished this feat, the Torah that made them observe Shabbos. He just was astute enough to teach the right areas of Torah that he felt would inspire them to observance.

A young man once came to Rav Simcha and said, "Rabbi, I am soon about to become a father. I would like some advice." Rav Simcha told him, "The first thing is to see to it that your child has a father."

"Do you mean that I should close my store on Shabbos?" the man queried.

Rav Simcha said simply, "Start learning Torah." Today, that home is spiritually beautiful, with the father himself giving a shiur every Shabbos in shul, and his sons outstanding students in yeshivah. This all occurred because he did not force the man to keep Shabbos. He encouraged him to learn, and the Torah did the rest.

Horav Shimon Shkop, zl, once commented that Avraham Avinu had no father or rebbe to teach him Torah. He achieved everything on his own. In the period prior to the advent of Moshiach, there will be a period when people will gravitate to Torah on their own. They will have either a father to teach them nor a rebbe to motivate them. No one will bring them to the yeshivah - no one but themselves. We are living during that period. Let us do something about it - and reach out to those who turn to us. Perhaps Moshiach will come sooner.

The sons of Aharon the Kohen shall place fire. (1:7)

Upon perusal of the text, one will observe that the Torah refers to the Kohanim in three different ways: first is HaKohen, the Kohen, used regarding Olas ha'of, the burnt offering of the fowl; second, the Torah calls them Bnei Aharon haKohanim, the sons of Aharon, the Kohanim; finally, we find regarding placing the fire, the Torah refers to Bnei Aharon, HaKohen, the sons of Aharon, the Kohen. Can we derive a message from these distinct usages?

Horav Moshe Feinstein, z.l., explains that the Torah defines three levels of Kehunah, each one specified for a different function. Once the wood and fire are already prepared the korban may be offered by anyone whom the Torah qualifies as a Kohen. The source of his qualification is irrelevant. When the sacrifice requires additional preparation, then the Kohanim must remember that they are the sons of Aharon, a position that demands exemplary behavior. Their behavior serves as a standard for others to emulate. Last, we note that the Kohanim who place the fire on the Mizbayach, Altar, in order to engender fire to descend from Heaven, are synonymous with Aharon HaKohen. They must learn to perform this sacred act in the same manner as Aharon, their grandfather, did.

Rav Moshe applies this idea to contemporary life. When the generation is observant and everyone is prepared to -- and does -- study Torah, we may learn from anyone and also teach anyone. The fear of inauthentic views of Judaism, which influence people who are ill prepared and not spiritually fortified, does not exist during such a utopian circumstance. During times when the winds of apostasy shake the very underpinnings of our religion, we need leadership that is inspired, adept and

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scholarly. One who teaches Torah is akin to the Kohen, and he must accordingly be suitable for this function. When the times demand that someone breathe a spirit of kedushah, holiness, into the people, that they be infused with a burning passion for Torah and mitzvos -- symbolized by the fire on the Mizbayach -- it is essential that the teacher be on an even more lofty level of kedushah. He must be like Aharon, who never wavered, who rejected any thought of change, whose thoughts and intentions conformed totally with Hashem's views as expounded by the Torah.

If one's offering to Hashem is an elevation offering of fowl, he shall bring his offering from turtledoves or from young doves. (1:14)

Hashem chose domestic animals, which are usually harassed by others, as sacrifices. Likewise, He declared fit among the birds those species which are helpless and attacked by birds of prey. Turtledoves may be offered if they are at least one year old. Regarding doves, the halachah changes. Only a young dove is eligible for sacrifice. Rabbeinu Bachya explains the reason for this. Hashem designated grown turtledoves fit for sacrifice due to their unique trait. When the female's mate dies, she remains loyal to it and never associates with another bird. The fidelity of this bird to its mate teaches us a powerful lesson. Indeed, we are compared to the turtledove in that we remain faithful to Hashem, never turning away from the true G-d for another. Grown doves, on the other hand, are not kosher, since they are overprotective of their mates, and -- out of jealousy-- stir up needless strife.

Chazal want us to take note of these birds and derive a necessary lesson regarding our own character development. Fidelity to a relationship is a requisite for maintaining it. This idea applies to marriage, to friendship, to a rebbe/talmid, teacher/student, relationship, as well as to all areas where a commitment of two parties is intrinsic to the relationship. There is yet another area where fidelity is not only necessary, it is crucial. I refer to the mitzvah of chesed, performing kindness to others. Quite often, when we do the right thing and reach out to those in need, we forget that they begin to rely on us. We might be the first or only person that has shown an interest in them, that has really cared about them. They have yearned for this moment, and now we must follow through. Chesed is a wonderful activity, but, we must remember, it is a commitment and, in many situations, it is a compelling one.

People begin to rely on this commitment, on the fidelity of their benefactor, to the point that it is almost inconceivable to them that their benefactor will not follow through. Whether it is an Erev Shabbos phone call, a Shabbos visit, delivering a supper, or just a constant social gesture of good-will, we must follow through. The following story demonstrates the consequences of this type of dependence.

In 1989, a severe earthquake shook -- and almost flattened -- Armenia, snuffing out the lives of over 30,000 people in the span of four minutes.

In the midst of the utter devastation and chaos, a father rushed to the school where he had brought his son that morning, only to discover that it had been totally demolished. He was in terrible shock. All he could think of was the promise he made each night to his son as he tucked him into bed, "No matter what the circumstances, I will always be there for you." He looked at the utter devastation, and tears welled up in his eyes. What about his promise?

He felt paralyzed, unable to move, as he watched broken-hearted, shell-shocked parents walking around, screaming, crying out, "My son," daughter; my baby!" He looked around. All he saw was

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despair and hopelessness.

What about his promise? He could not let his son down. All of a sudden, he began to act. He remembered that his son's classroom was in the rear right corner of the building. He rushed there and began to dig. Other parents attempted to pull him away. "They are dead. It is useless. You cannot save them anymore. Face reality - it is over!" they told him.

He responded to each parent, "I made a promise to my son. I will keep my commitment. Will you help me find my child?" People ignored him, thinking that out of despair he had lost his mind. He did not care. He had to keep his promise. So, he began to dig - by himself - one stone at a time - one shovel of dirt at a time.

The fire chief arrived and told him, "Go home. We will take care of it. It is dangerous for you." He ignored him and kept digging. The police came and entreated him to leave: "You are outraged and heartbroken. You are not being rational. You are risking your own life. Let us handle it." He did not listen. He had a promise to keep. "Do you want to help me?" he called out. "Or else, let me be. I must search for my son. I promised him," he said.

He kept on digging. Six hours became ten hours. He was determined, as he dug throughout the night. Eighteen hours... twenty four hours - a full day of digging, and he would not stop. His promise gave him hope. He was a man on a mission - to save his son, to keep his promise. Thirty-six hours and suddenly, in the beginning of the thirty-eighth hour, he pulled back a large boulder and heard his son's voice. He screamed his son's name, "Armand!" He heard back, "Daddy? It is me. I told the other children not to worry. I told them that if you were alive, you would come to save me, and when you saved me, they would also be saved. You promised me that 'no matter what happened, I will always be there for you.' You kept your word."

"What is going on in there?" he asked. "There are only fourteen of us left from a group of thirty-three. We are scared, hungry, thirsty and thankful to be alive. When the building collapsed, it made a wedge, like a triangle. That saved us."

"Come on out, my son," the father called to Armand. "No Daddy! Let the other children go out first, because I know that no matter what, you will be there for me!"

An incredible story of determination, resolve and commitment. The persistence of a father in the face of crisis, chaos, suffering and tragedy underscores the depths of chesed and serves as a paradigm. It may not be a Jewish story. It may only be a story. The lesson, however, is explicit: a major component of chesed is fidelity, keeping a promise, maintaining a commitment, being consistent and always being there for those who depend on us.

He shall tear it apart - with its feathers - he need not divide it; the Kohen shall cause it to go up in smoke on the Mizbayach (1:17)

When a soul will bring a meal-offering to Hashem. (2:1)

These two pesukim clearly demonstrate Hashem's empathy and love for the poor and underprivileged. Rashi questions the fact that the feathers of the sacrificed bird is burnt on the

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Mizbayach. After all, no odor is more harsh than the smell of burning feathers. He explains that since this is the sacrifice offered by a poor man, it is of utmost beauty and sanctity. The smell in no way diminishes the spiritual value of the Korban Minchah, meal-offering, Rashi notes that the word nefesh, soul, is not used in regard to any of the korbanos nedavah, voluntary offerings, except for the Minchah. He explains that it is usually the poor man, not able to afford much more, who can only bring a meal-offering. Hashem says, "Although the poor man's offering is modest, I consider it in his behalf as if he had offered his soul. Hashem cares for those who are weak, deprived and alone. He knows that their sacrifice is truly a sacrifice, that they offer up a part of themselves with their sacrifice.

I think that there is a deeper insight into the poor man's gift, the poor man's sacrifice. I recently saw a story, told by a Holocaust survivor, that elucidates the concept of the poor man's sacrifice. The man related that one day, when he was in the concentration camp, another inmate's bread ration was stolen. This was a terrible thing. To have one's ration stolen was literally a death sentence, as the simple crust of bread which he received daily kept him from going over the edge of starvation. What was this poor wretched soul to do?

The man was terrified and heart-broken. How could he survive with nothing to eat? The solution came from his peers. The narrator of the episode and two of his friends broke off a piece of their own meager portion of bread and shared it with the hapless inmate. They saved him, but, as the narrator continued, "We accomplished more than saving a life; we developed a penetrating insight into the essence of what it means to help someone in need.

"Hashem has blessed me, and I have become a wealthy man. I have shown my appreciation through my support of various Torah institutions. Indeed, I have given away hundreds of thousands of dollars over the past fifty years since I was liberated from Auschwitz. Yet, I must make it clear that nothing comes remotely close to that little crust of bread that I gave to the inmate. This is because all the money that I have given away over the years was money I could spare. I always had more money, but could not spare that piece of bread. It was all I had!"

What a powerful lesson. What an incredible insight. While giving tzedakah is praiseworthy and fulfills an obligation, there is no comparison between he who has what to give and he who does not have - but gives anyway. Such a person gives more than money - he gives his soul! We take tzedakah for granted, assuming that what we receive from an individual is derived from a source from which he is free to give. Do we really know someone else's financial situation? Do we know what moves one to give to a specific tzedakah, despite his lack of "extra" funds? I would go so far as to say that it is none of our business. Everyone has his own specific priority and tzedakah for which he has an affinity. We should stop judging people by what and to whom they give. Perhaps, we should stop judging people period.

Every Minchah sacrifice of yours you must salt with salt; you must never annul the salt of your G-d's Covenant. (2:13)

What is the meaning of the "covenant of salt?" Rashi explains that a covenant was forged with salt going back to the Six Days of Creation, a reference to the "waters below," the oceans, whose water is salty. Hashem promised the oceans that they would be offered on the Mizbayach, Altar, either in the form of salt or as the water for the Nisuch Hamayim, water libation, during the Festival of Succos.

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During Creation, the "waters above the firmament" were granted the unique privilege of becoming a part of the Heavenly region. They would always be in close proximity to the Divine Presence. The waters "below the firmament," the oceans that are so much a part of our lives, were relegated to the material world. Clearly, this division lacked equitability. By way of compensation, the "waters below" received a promise: twenty five hundred years later, salt and water would be taken from them and used in the sacrificial service and for the water libation on Succos.

Let us analyze this division of function between the two waters. Hashem offered the oceans a compensation for the privilege He did not grant them, namely that of serving together with the "upper waters" as matting under the Kisei Hakavod, Heavenly Throne. The degree of Divine closeness -- the relationship accorded to the "upper waters" --which would not be theirs was balanced by another form of closeness: they would one day be granted to be offered up to Hashem on the Mizbayach.

While the separation of functions may be equitable, there is one primary difference between the two. The "upper waters" were able to come close to Hashem immediately after their creation, while the "lower waters" were compelled to wait many centuries before their time would come. Where is the "yoisher," justness? Horav Meir Bergman, Shlita, explains that the lower waters were ready and waiting, eagerly prepared to serve Hashem whenever their call would come. Yearning to perform a mitzvah, eagerly longing to fulfill the Divine will, brings us close to Him. We may suggest that longing to perform a mitzvah, being in a constant state of desire to serve Hashem, demands an incredible amount of fortitude and conviction. One who is a mevakesh, who seeks every opportunity to come closer to the Divine, manifests incredible love and devotion. We might even argue that waiting twenty five centuries for an opportunity to serve Hashem is a greater distinction than to receive it immediately, without expending effort. Indeed, if we think about it, waiting for something, yearning for a specific gift from Hashem, whether it is a child or the suitable shidduch, designated mate, increases one's appreciation of the gift when it finally arrives.

When the anointed Kohen shall sin for the guilt of the people. (4:3)

The pasuk addresses the Korban Chatas brought by the Kohen Gadol when he sins unintentionally, in a situation in which that, had his action been intentional, the punishment would have been kareis, Heavenly excision, premature death. We may question the Torah's text. If the sin is the Kohen's, why does the Torah describe it as being l'ashmas haam, the guilt of the people? This wording would seem to preclude any sin committed by the Kohen Gadol.

Horav David Feinstein, Shlita, derives from here that a leader is a reflection of his followers. When the people observe their leader acting inappropriately, it gives them an opportunity to justify their own improper behavior. After all, they can say, "He is so much more powerful and exalted than we are. If he cannot control his base desires, if he can fall prey to his yetzer hora, evil inclination, are we expected to do better?" Likewise, when the people sin, it becomes difficult for the leader to rise above them and perfect his behavior. He needs their support and encouragement.

This is what the Torah is alluding to with the phrase, "for the guilt of the people." If the Kohen has sinned, it is likely because the people have sinned and influenced him. In turn, his sin will leave a negative impression on his followers, making it difficult for them to control their own urges. Hence, the

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guilt of the people is indivisible from his own guilt. It either has begun with the people, or it has begun with the Kohen Gadol. In any event now, regrettably, they are in the same place - for the wrong reasons.

And He called to Moshe (1:1).

Sefer Vayikra is composed primarily of halachos, Jewish laws -- very difficult and demanding laws. Limited narrative appears in the text. It is, therefore, interesting to note that this Sefer specifically has traditionally been used as the starting point for a child's educational journey. Commentators suggest many explanations for the significance of exposing a child to Sefer Vayikra. Is this starting point consistent with educational guidelines? Pedagogues and psychologists offer the critique that confronting such difficult material at a young age is self-defeating. A child should be taught stories, tales, and legends, but not dry halachah -- or should he?

While, undoubtedly, textbooks for young children focus on the simple narrative, the Torah is not merely a textbook. It is the Jew's blueprint for life. Hence, it is important to lay down the rules immediately at the onset of a child's educational development. A child must know that life is not comprised simply of stories and games; rather, life consists of commitment, action and service to the Almighty. Rules and regulations govern a Jew's life. We are not free to do what we please. There are rules to live by, obligations to fulfill, and observances to perform. This perspective might sound overwhelming, but it depends on the way it is perceived. If parents and educators transmit the idea with a positive expression, with excitement, enthusiasm and joy, then the child will respond accordingly. If he cannot present the orientation in this manner, then that person should not be teaching. Life should be vibrant; Torah gives meaning to this vibrancy.

And He called to Moshe (1:1).

Moshe Rabbeinu personified humility in the truest sense of the word. Despite being able to speak to Hashem face to face, Moshe would still not enter the Kodsh Hakodashim, Holy of Holies, unless he had been called. Chazal derive from Moshe's behavior that a talmid chacham, Torah scholar, who does not possess daas, knowledge, manifests a lesser value than an animal's carcass. Chazal's use of the word "daas" begs elucidation. We are addressing Moshe's derech erez, manners, not his knowledge. Why do Chazal critique the scholar who lacks daas, rather than the one who is deficient in his derech erez?

Responding to this question, Horav Mordechai Gifter, Shlita, first defines "daas." The concept of daas is usually found in conjunction with the terms of chochmah, binah, daas -- wisdom, understanding and knowledge. The three represent ascending levels of knowledge, of which daas is the most eminent. Chochmah and binah are both levels of understanding which are restricted solely to the mind. In other words, one may have chochmah and binah, but these attributes may not necessarily be integrated into his lifestyle. The wisdom and understanding that they project are exclusive of their behavior. Daas has a different connotation. Indeed, the English translation for daas, knowledge, does not provide an accurate description of this concept. One who achieves daas possesses a knowledge that governs his every move. It becomes part of one's psyche, as it transforms his personality. Hence, when one comprehends an idea on the level of daas, he will surely live by it.

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Moshe Rabbeinu's derech erez was the result of his daas. It was not etiquette, but rather the manifestation of a profound level of Torah knowledge that governed every aspect of his life. Thus, Chazal emphasize that a Torah scholar elevates his Torah knowledge to the level of daas, so that it controls and directs his every action.

This is expected of man, for man is the only creature capable of achieving such a level of knowledge. This is his purpose and goal in life. If he fails, he is worse off than an animal whose potential is not as high. The animal that does not have daas can still fulfill its potential. A man who lacks daas has failed in his primary goal in life. Hence, such a person is worse off than an animal's carcass. The animal, at least, attains his own potential.

When a man among you brings an offering to Hashem: from animals (1:2).

Horav Shlomo, zl, M'Radomsk, renders this pasuk homiletically. A man who goes about his way with limited closeness to the Almighty, may take a lesson from an animal that becomes consecrated as a sacrifice by virtue of man's utterance. A man points to an animal and says, "Harei zu Olah," "This shall be an Olah sacrifice." He, thereby, sanctifies this animal, designating it to be a Korban Olah merely by the words that exit his mouth. The animal has not changed one iota. It is man's expression, his articulation of his intentions regarding this animal, that effect its spiritual transformation. What does that tell us about man's dibur, power of speech? Imagine how holy his words of Torah or tefillah, prayer, are. Speech is but one aspect of the human condition. It is probably the most powerful of his capabilities, since it distinguishes him from the animal world, but it remains only one dimension of his essence.

"When a man among you brings an offering to Hashem": When a man seeks to bring himself closer to the Almighty - "from animals" - he can learn a lesson from the manner in which an animal becomes holy - through his own speech. When a man realizes the power vested in him, he will become closer to Hashem. Our greatest deficit is our lack of self-recognition, our unawareness of our own unique spiritual qualities.

He shall remove its crop with its innards, and he shall throw it next to the Mizbayach (1:16).

Rashi notes that regarding the Olah, burnt offering of an animal -- which eats only from the feeding trough of its owner -- the Torah states that the innards are washed and placed on the Mizbayach and burnt. Regarding a fowl, however -- which generally takes its sustenance from that which has been stolen -- the Torah demands that its innards be discarded. Hashem does not want to derive any pleasure/benefit from a forbidden object or from something that has been realized through inappropriate means.

In its mussar shmuessen, ethical discourses, Yeshivas Bais Sholom Mordechai cites a number of sources to substantiate this thesis. In the Talmud Megillah 12a, Chazal state that the Jews in Persia during the reign of Achashveirosh were indicted by the Heavenly Tribunal for the pleasure they derived when they participated in the king's feast. While they were compelled by the law of the land to join in the festivities, no one dictated that they had to enjoy it! While attending the feast of a wicked anti-Semite might be necessary, having a "good time" and partaking in the festivities as if one "belongs," is a grave sin.

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Descending Har Sinai, Moshe Rabbeinu observed the Golden Calf together with the revelry that accompanied it. His response was swift and decisive; he broke the Luchos, Tablets containing the Ten Commandments. The Torah seems to emphasize that the Golden Calf alone did not prompt Moshe's action; it was also the revelry, the music and dancing. What does the revelry add to the Golden Calf that intensifies the iniquity? How does one "add" to a sin of such magnitude? In accordance with our thesis, we may suggest that a person may fall prey to his evil-inclination, his mind may even sustain a momentary loss of seichel, common sense. How can one, however, enjoy the fruits of his error? When one obtains benefit, when he has the gall to celebrate his iniquity, he takes the transgression to a new low, to the nadir of depravity and ingratitude. The contemptuousness of his actions is magnified by the enjoyment he sustains.

During World War I, a great hunger reigned throughout Europe. Indeed, people were dying from malnutrition. The leading rabbis at the time permitted people to eat whatever they could, even if the food was not kosher, so great was the famine. The story is told that the Chofetz Chaim once noticed a Jew who, due to extreme hunger, was compelled to eat a piece of non-kosher meat. When the person finished the meat, he proceeded to suck the marrow from the bones. The Chofetz Chaim turned to him and said, "It is permitted to eat the meat, but to suck the bones dry is forbidden." At times we are forced to engage in, or to be sustained by, forbidden foods. This is merely a temporary dispensation due to the extenuous circumstances. It does not give the individual license to take pleasure and derive benefit from it.

In summation, in certain circumstances we are forced to act in a manner which otherwise would be considered inappropriate. We must view these situations as beyond our control. We must, therefore, act in a manner which bespeaks our coerced/negative attitude. Otherwise, it might even seem that we were waiting for such an opportunity.

For you shall not cause any leavening or fruit-honey to go up in smoke as a fire offering to Hashem... you shall salt your every meal-offering... you shall offer salt on your every offering (2:11,13).

Horav Mordechai Gifter, Shlita, offers a profound, yet practical, explanation for the difference between leavening, honey and salt. These condiments have a varied effect on food. Leavening and honey add a foreign taste to food. Salt, on the other hand, enhances food by bringing out the taste of the food itself. Food that has been enhanced by leavening or honey has an artificial taste. Not so food that has been treated with salt. Its own inner taste is brought forth, enhancing it internally. The Torah teaches us to serve Hashem in a manner mimicking the characteristics of salt. Rather than seeking external, artificial means for expressing our avodas Hashem, service of the Almighty, we should conjure up our own unique qualities to serve Him. These inner qualities and talents might be lying dormant, imbedded in our psyche, waiting for that opportunity when they may attain their full potential. It is our duty to "salt" them, so that they achieve their complete potential.

All too often, people get "turned on," inspired, to Torah observance through artificial means. While there is no dispute that different people respond to different methods, it is essential that the artificial not be transformed into reality. These means exist to serve one purpose - to awaken and arouse the Pintele Yid, the Jewish soul that lays dormant, concealed under layers of assimilation and indifference. Once it has been laid bare and given the opportunity to thrive, it should be exposed to bona-fide observance through Torah study and mitzvah performance.

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We may add that Horav Gifter's thesis applies equally to Torah chinuch, education. The teacher should arouse the student's inner qualities and abilities. He should be inspired to use his mind, to think on his own, to take the rebbe's lesson as a springboard for greater depth and understanding of the Torah. A teacher should focus on enhancing the student's mind, as he challenges his acumen and aptitude, thereby motivating him to achieve his full potential.

When a person will sin unintentionally from among all the commandments of Hashem that may not be done (4:2).

The Toras Kohanim states that the phrase, "From all the commandments of Hashem," includes an eishes ish and a niddah, married woman and a menstruant. They add that a married woman is different from a niddah in the sense that an eishes ish is at least permitted to her husband, while the niddah is permitted to no one. It seems that according to the Toras Kohanim, the heter, dispensation, permitting a married woman to her husband is a kula, leniency, in regard to the issur, prohibition, of eishes ish. This is supported by the Talmud in Gitten 83a. How are we to understand this? A married woman is considered a married woman to other men, but not to her husband - or is she?

Horav Moshe Shternbuch, Shlita, cites the Rogatchover Gaon, zl, who explains that when a woman marries, she is designated to a life of kedushah, holiness. She is permitted to her husband only because this is the purpose of her holiness. During those times in which she is ritually unclean, she is thus prohibited to her husband as if she would be an eishes ish. She is in a holy state once she gets married, and she is permitted to her husband only during those times in which she is tahor, ritually clean. Otherwise, she remains in a state of kedushah as an eishes ish. The Rogatchover applies this exposition to explain why in the Sefer Hapardes, Rashi says that if one were to have relations with his wife during the time that she is a niddah, the resulting child would be a mamzer, illegitimate. Most other poskim, arbiters of Jewish law, dispute this, claiming that one is not illegitimate if he is the product of a niddah. According to the previous thesis that a woman is considered an eishes ish even in regard to her own husband, one who has relations with his wife when she is a niddah is also in violation of the prohibition of eishes ish.

Despite the fact that most poskim disagree with this theory, there is, nonetheless, a profound and novel lesson to be derived from here. We have an understanding of the Torah's mandate regarding the husband/wife relationship. It boils down to one word: kedushah, holiness. The act of marriage is called keddushin, because it renders the woman holy. She is holy to everyone. She is, however, permitted to her husband during those times that she can enhance her kedushah through physical relations. The purpose of marriage is to elevate kedushah. That is what Judaism is all about.

He called to Moshe. (1:1)

In this pasuk, the Torah spells Hashem's summons to Moshe with a miniature aleph. The smaller size of this letter makes it stand out as if it were a word by itself. Horav Yosef Zundel Salant, zl, interprets the aleph's size in a novel manner. He cites the Midrash in Sefer Eichah in which Chazal extol the significance of young children in the eyes of Hashem. They say that when the Sanhedrin was exiled from Yerushalayim, the Shechinah did not accompany them. Likewise, when the mishmaros, who were the various "watches" of Kohanim that served in the Bais Hamikdash, were exiled, the Shechinah remained. Only after the tinokos shel bais rabbon, young school children, were driven into

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exile, did the Shechinah cease to dwell in Klal Yisrael. It was only in the merit of the Torah studied by such pure souls as the young children that the Shechinah continued to abide in Klal Yisrael.

Horav Salant suggests that this is the underlying interpretation of the pasuk in Shemos 25:22, "It is there that I will set My meetings with you, and I will speak with you from atop the Kapores from between the two Keruvim that are on the Aron." Rashi explains that when Hashem spoke to Moshe, the Voice came from Heaven to the top of the Kapores. It emanated out from between the Keruvim to Moshe Rabbeinu. Apparently, a strong spiritual significance is attributed to the Keruvim. Chazal teach us that the Keruvim looked liked little children. This implies that in the zechus, merit, of little children, Hashem constricts the Shechinah in order to teach Torah and mitzvos to Klal Yisrael.

We find this idea connected to the giving of the Torah. Referring to the pasuk in Tehillim 8:3, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings You have established strength", the Midrash relates that when Hashem was about to give the Torah to Klal Yisrael, He questioned who was to guarantee its observance. The people responded that they would be responsible to uphold the Torah. Hashem did not accept them as guarantors, noting that they were themselves too heavily in debt to Him. "Who is there that is not indebted to You?" asked Klal Yisrael. "The young children whose commitment is pure and virtuous. They will serve as security that the Torah will be observed. I will give you the Torah through the medium of their mouths. If you do not heed the Torah, I will collect from you the security--the young, innocent children."

Thus, as Hashem's voice emanates from between the Keruvim, it begins with a miniature aleph. At times, the word "aleph" is defined as, "to teach." This implies that Hashem speaks to us in the merit of the "little aleph"--our commitment to teaching Torah to young children. The aleph zeira, is a metaphor for Jewish education. Our resolve to see to it that every Jewish child is provided with a Jewish education is the catalyst for the Shechinah's choice to repose among us. Indeed, we may be so bold as to posit that Hashem's relationship will be manifest with us commensurate with the type and manner of education we avail our children. We will receive in accordance to that which we commit.

He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him. (1:1)

The third Sefer of the five Chumashim opens with a summons to Moshe. Interestingly, the word trehu --Vayikra--"He called" is spelled with a small aleph at the end of the word. The commentators all express their insights into this deviation from the norm. We suggest the following reason for the small aleph, especially in light of its position at the beginning of Sefer Vayikra, which deals with sacrifices.

The Midrash in the beginning of Vayikra minimizes our obligations as Jews. Chazal relate: Hashem says to Klal Yisrael, "I have given you ten pure animals which you may enjoy. Three of these are within your reach: the ox, the sheep and the goat. Did I ask you to go out to the mountains and valleys to find a sacrifice for Me from all ten species? No! It is sufficient if you bring your sacrifice from those three that are readily accessible, those that you tend and feed." The words of this Midrash, although simple, carry a profound message. Hashem does not ask a lot of us. He does not demand that we give everything up to serve Him. Indeed, He asks only a little. He does not ask for all ten species of kosher animals to be used as a korban. He does not demand that we scourge the forest looking for that hard-to find animal. He does not demand that we give up every day of the week for Him--only

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Shabbos. We are to set aside time during the day for prayer--set aside--not devote the entire day. We have to pay the extra price for kosher food, but is that excessive? Pesach might be an inconvenience, but is it a reason to complain? Hashem asks very little of us, because that is all it takes to indicate commitment. Regrettably, the all too popular idiom, "es is shver tzu zein a Yid," "it is difficult to be a Jew," has been exaggerated by those who attempt either to magnify their commitment or to conceal their lack of dedication. One should not view the observance of mitzvos as a major sacrifice. First, as we have just explained, it really is not that demanding. Second, a Jew should view his Jewishness as a privilege, as an opportunity to come closer to Hashem. He should serve Him with excitement, enthusiasm and joy. He should celebrate every moment and opportunity that he is granted to serve Hashem.

Indeed, Horav Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz, zl, was once asked why the children of the first Jewish immigrants to arrive on these shores went off the derech, alienating themselves from their heritage. He responded, "Because their parents kept Shabbos and mitzvos with mesiras nefesh, self sacrifice." What did he mean? One would think that the only way to serve Hashem is with mesiras nefesh! The answer, however, is that while one should serve Hashem with mesiras nefesh, he should not view it as such, and, surely, should not walk around complaining about what he must give up in order to keep Shabbos and be an observant Jew. Children growing up in a home in which the parents are despondent about their lot in life, where they constantly express their dissatisfaction regarding what they have to give up in order to be observant, will not have a strong inclination to follow in their parents' traditions. A Jew must take pride in his heritage, so that he can bequeath to his children a legacy of love, joy, and enthusiasm.

When a person offers a meal-offering to Hashem...And he (the Kohen) shall scoop his three-fingersful from it, from its fire-flour and from its oil, as well as from its frankincense; And the Kohen shall cause its memorial portion to go up in smoke upon the altar... (2:1,2)

The Torah begins the laws of the Korban Minchah, meal-offering. While the Torah lists five varieties of voluntary, personal meal-offerings, they all consist of the same basic ingredients: finely ground wheat flour, oil, and frankincense. Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, infers from the word "minchah," which in the Hebrew language means "gift" or "tribute," that the meal-offering proclaims the owner's acknowledgment that his life and all he has is a gift from the Almighty. Grain, a staple of the human diet, represents our very existence. Oil symbolizes comfort, and the frankincense alludes to joy, both gifts from Hashem. We have only to recognize their source and appreciate them.

Chazal recount a fascinating story in the Talmud Megillah 16. They relate how the wicked Haman was searching for Mordechai in order to carry out the king's decree that he take Mordechai through the streets dressed in royal garb. He found Mordechai teaching Torah to a group of students, specifically about the laws of kemitzah, the three-fingersful offering which was placed upon the Mizbayach. Haman questioned Mordechai, "What are you studying?" "We are studying the laws of kemitzah. In the times of our Bais Hamikdash, one would take a small scoop, place it upon the Altar, and it would serve as an atonement," was Mordechai's response. Haman scoffingly rejoined, "Let your 'kemitzah' attempt to push aside my ten thousand silver talents." Haman was telling Mordechai, "Let us see if your little bit of flour has the power to override my decree backed by ten thousand silver talents."

Obviously a more significant message can be derived from this interchange. Horav Mordechai

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Rogov, zl, suggests a noteworthy interpretation of their dialogue. Despondency and depression must have engulfed Mordechai when he saw the wicked Haman before him. Here was the man whose one goal in life was to use his guile and power to totally destroy every living Jew. What made matters worse for Mordechai was that the single antidote to Haman's decree--adherence to Hashem's Torah--was not prevalent among the Jews. Most of the people had assimilated. They not only went to Achashverosh's banquet, they enjoyed themselves eating whatever foods they desired, acting in a manner unbecoming Torah Jews. Only a small, insignificant group of Jews, "Mordechai's people," resolutely maintained their conviction, not acceding to the dominant, rampant assimilation. What could this small group do? How could they succeed in counteracting Haman's decree?

The lesson of the kemitzah gave Mordechai hope. The bitter cup of fear and despondency transformed into a cup of consolation and encouragement when Mordechai realized that his small group of dedicated and determined Jews was essentially no different than the kemitzah. The Kohanim consumed the Korban Minchah almost completely --almost--except for one little bit: the kemitzah. The only part of the meal-offering which is placed upon the Mizbayach is the kemitzah. Yet, this insignificant "sacrifice" influences the atonement. While it is minute in quantity, its effect is overwhelming! Imagine the power and effect of a small amount if it is sacrificed upon the Mizbayach.

This was Mordechai's lesson. Regardless of their number, in spite of their size, if people are committed and willing to sacrifice themselves for their ideals, then they have the potential to save Klal Yisrael. Our strength has never been in numbers, but rather in conviction. Our power has never been in quantity but rather in commitment to Hashem and His Torah. When Mordechai told this to Haman, his response was atypical. Haman's arrogance was humbled; his strength weakened. He told Mordechai, "You are right. The power of your kemitzah is sufficient to overcome my ten thousand silver talents. I cannot defeat you with physical strength as long as even a small segment of your people remain steadfastly committed to serving Hashem. That relatively small number of Torah observant Jews has the power to undermine all of my efforts.."

It shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things, then he shall acknowledge/confess (to himself) what he has sinned about. (5:5)

We may note that the concept of viddui, confession of guilt, is expressed almost exclusively in the reflexive form: "vsu,vu." Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, explains that Hashem does not need our confession; He has no need for us to notify Him of our guilt. Confession is for the sinner; he must acknowledge his guilt--to himself. The first step towards penance, the initial step of contrition, is hakoras ha'cheit, recognizing that one has sinned--and accepting in earnest the error of his deeds. One cannot begin to think about offering a sacrifice for guilt until he has personally acknowledged his guilt--to himself.

All too often, we deceive ourselves into justifying our actions in an attempt to mitigate our guilt. Obviously, the fact that an individual offers a korban indicates a recognition of guilt. How much of the guilt, however, does he actually concede? One must acknowledge that he has sinned, the extent of the sin, and the true amount of his guilt--without attempting to ameliorate his transgression.

Horav Hirsch adds that it is not sufficient for an individual to merely acknowledge sin--even to himself; he must also admit to "vhkg tyj rat" concede guilt to the specific circumstances that preceded the sin. In order to avoid a repeat performance of the sin, he must recognize the situation and behavior

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that has led up to his downfall.

How different is the Torah's concept of viddui from the generally accepted practice of confession. Chazal view "sharing" one's sins with another human being as something to be rejected, rather than lauded. They view revealing the sins one has committed against Hashem as offensive. The one who is truly repentant views his sins with shame and attempts to hide that shame within his heart. The sin is a matter between the sinner and Hashem! To publicize one's transgression against Hashem is immature and nothing more than an attempt to decrease one's own guilt. Teshuvah is a private matter which should be noticed quietly by others, not proclaimed by the penitent.

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