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LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Herschman

Duty of Conscientiousness

The *parsha* ends with commandments that find their atonement through the same offering – the *korban asham*, the guilt offering. These include *meilah* – mundane use of a sacred object - and *safek* – uncertainty with regard to certain severe transgressions. The common denominator of these three mitzvahs is that the offender displays indifference about the legality of his property and actions.

If a person inadvertently commits *meilah* – by using a sacred object or by transferring it to another’s possession – this shows that he has not distinguished properly between the sacred and the profane in his possession. The duty of guarding a sacred object should have moved him to make an exacting and careful separation. Interestingly, *inadvertent* misappropriation of a sacred object profanes it, whereas *willful* misappropriation does not. In that case, the object maintains its sanctity.

Safek, which makes one liable to bring a guilt offering, reveals the same attitude of indifference. The typical example of this *safek* is when one has two pieces of meat before him, where one is forbidden *cheilev*, punishable by *karet*, and the other is permissible – and he eats the forbidden meat, thinking it is the permissible one. The very existence of the uncertainty proves that he lacked a proper measure of conscientiousness, for he failed to separate properly between the permitted and the prohibited so as to keep far from sin. Interestingly, when one is uncertain whether a *single* piece before him is prohibited or forbidden, he is not liable to bring a guilt offering. The fact that the forbidden and permissible could be placed side by side evidences a greater carelessness.

From these laws, we learn that both the Sanctuary and the Law fear indifference more than transgression. The Sanctuary is exalted far above transgressors – they will never be able to detract from its sanctity. Indeed, their very opposition attests to sanctity. But the inadvertent acts that result from indifference – thoughtless inattentiveness – are a far greater threat.

In mitzvah observance, uncertainty that perhaps a transgression was committed is more serious than certainty of it! When the carelessness is a product of extreme indifference, Torah observance is at the height of vulnerability.

The Torah expects us to watch our step, and take reasonable precautions to safeguard the commandments. If we are careless and haphazard about our actions – so that doubt arises as to whether or not we have acted lawfully – then we already “bear sin.” But if we are conscientious and vigilant, we have been true to our duty.

▪ Sources: Commentary, Vayikra, 5:26

Q & A

Questions

1. Who does the word "eilav" in verse 1:1 exclude?
2. Name all the types of animals and birds mentioned in this week's Parsha.
3. What two types of sin does an olah atone for?
4. Where was the olah slaughtered?
5. What procedure of an animal-offering can a non-kohen perform?
6. Besides the fire the kohanim bring on the altar, where else did the fire come from?
7. At what stage of development are torim (turtledoves) and bnei yona (young pigeons) unfit as offerings?
8. What is melika?
9. Why are animal innards offered on the altar, while bird innards are not?
10. Why does the Torah describe both the animal and bird offerings as a "satisfying aroma"?
11. Why is the term "nefesh" used regarding the flour offering?
12. Which part of the free-will mincha offering is burned on the altar?
13. The Torah forbids bringing honey with the mincha. What is meant by "honey"?
14. When does the Torah permit bringing a leavened bread offering?
15. Concerning shelamim, why does the Torah teach about sheep and goats separately?
16. For most offerings the kohen may use a service vessel to apply the blood on the mizbe'ach. For which korban may he apply the blood using only his finger?
17. Who is obligated to bring a chatat?
18. Where were the remains of the bull burned while in the wilderness? Where were they burned during the time of the Beit Hamikdash?
19. What two things does a voluntary mincha have that a minchat chatat lacks?
20. What is the minimum value of a korban asham?

Answers

1. 1:1 - Aharon.
2. 1:2,14, 3:12 - Cattle, sheep, goats, turtledoves (torim), and doves (bnei yona).
3. 1:4 - Neglecting a positive command, and violating a negative command which is rectified by a positive command.
4. 1:5 - In the Mishkan Courtyard (azarah).
5. 1:5 - Ritual slaughter.
6. 1:7 - It descended from Heaven.
7. 1:14 - When their plumage turns golden. At that stage, bnei yona are too old and torim are too young.
8. 1:15 - Slaughtering a bird from the back of the neck using one's fingernail.
9. 1:16 - An animal's food is provided by its owner, so its innards are "kosher." Birds, however, eat food that they scavenge, so their innards are tainted with "theft."
10. 1:17 - To indicate that the size of the offering is irrelevant, provided your heart is directed toward G-d.
11. 2:1 - Usually, it is a poor person who brings a flour offering. Therefore, G-d regards it as if he had offered his nefesh (soul).
12. 2:1 - The kometz (fistful).
13. 2:11 - Any sweet fruit derivative.
14. 2:12 - On Shavuot.
15. 3:7 - Because they differ regarding the alya (fat tail). The lamb's alya is burned on the altar but the goat's is not.
16. 3:8 - The chatat.
17. 4:2 - One who accidentally transgresses a negative commandment whose willing violation carries the karet (excision) penalty.
18. 4:12 -
 - a. Outside the three camps.
 - b. Outside Jerusalem.
19. 5:11 - Levona and oil.
20. 5:15 - Two shekalim.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Turning the Corner (Part 2/2)

As we've already discussed, there's a whole bevy of words in the Hebrew language that all mean "corner." Because of the plethora of relevant words, I split this article into two parts, with Part 1 discussing the words peah, keren, and zavit. Now, in Part 2, we will discuss the words pinah, miktzoa, katzeh, atik, and demeshek. Let's cut to the chase!

The word pinah appears only twice in the Pentateuch: Both instances are when the Torah lays out the schematic of the Altar in the Tabernacle. In those passages, the Torah calls for making "horns" (keren) at the four corners (pinah) of the Altar (Ex. 27:2, 38:2). In both of these verses, the word pinah is rendered by Targum Onkelos as zavit, a word with which you should already be familiar. The word pinah also appears another twenty-eight times throughout the rest of the Bible.

Mordechai Zer-Kavod (in *Daat Mikra* to Nechemia 3:24) writes that the primary meaning of pinah in the Bible is not actually "corner," but rather "raised location." Hence, the terms rosh pinah (Ps. 118:22), pinot v'gevohot (Tzeplania 1:16), migdalim hapinot (II Chron. 26:15). The ehven pinah (literally, "corner-stone") is presented as the opposite of the even mossad ("foundation stone") in Jer. 51:26, because the latter is underground, while the former is all the way on top. Thus, the pinah refers to something which is prominently placed.

If I understood him correctly, Rabbi Pappenheim differentiates between zavit and pinah by explaining that a zavit refers to the inner part of corner, while a pinah refers to the outer part of a corner. For example, imagine the corner of an exterior room in your house. When you look at that corner from inside your house, you might refer to it as a zavit. But if you were looking at that corner from the street, it would be called a pinah. Based on this, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that when building, a pinah must be stronger than the rest of the structure, because it is exposed to the outside and is more likely to be damaged than other parts of the edifice. Taking this a step further, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that important people who assumed leadership positions are called pinot (Judges 20:2) because they too have to be higher quality than the rest of the people. See responsa Rashba (vol. 4 §278) who presumes that the words pinah and zavit are synonyms.

Rabbi Pappenheim further explains that the word pinah derives from the bilateral root PEH-NUN ("frontside/surface"), which also gives us the words panim/pnei ("face"). From that root derives the verb panah ("turning/facing"), whereby one positions oneself in such a way that a different side is facing frontwards. The term pinah as "corner" is an expansion of this meaning, because if one followed the perimeter of a given area and reached a pinah, one would have to "turn" the corner in order to continue following the perimeter.

Interestingly, Rabbi Pappenheim also suggests that the word peninim (often translated as "pearls," but more accurately "precious stones") refers to a multifaceted "gemstone" that has been polished in such a way that one looking at it can see its multiple faces and the "corners" formed at the intersections of those planes. Rabbi David Chaim Chelouche (1920-2016), the late Chief Rabbi of Netanya, offers etymological connections between peah and pinah, tracing both to the monoliteral root PEH (with the extra letter

ALEPH added to peah, and the extra NUN, to pinah). The core meaning of that root is "end/edge," with peah referring more broadly to the edge of a specific area, and pinah referring to an edge of two sides of a specific area.

To read the rest of this article, visit us at: http://ohr.edu/this_week/whats_in_a_word/

PEREK SHIRA: The Song of Existence

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

THE SONG OF WILD ANIMALS

Wild Animals say: “Blessed is He Who is good and does good.”

Unlike domesticated animals, which are fed by their masters in exchange for their various services, animals of the wild are not cared for by man. Nonetheless, the Creator does not forsake them. He provides on a daily basis for the myriads of beings that are dependent upon Him alone and have nothing to give Him in return. They thus sing, “Blessed is He Who is good” – altruistically good – “and does good.”

When Adrianus Caesar destroyed the great Jewish city of Beitar, he erected tens of thousands of its corpses as a fence for his vineyard. A double miracle occurred: One is that they did not rot, and two is that seven years later a different king came to power and gave permission for the “fence” to be dismantled and the corpses to be buried respectfully. Upon seeing these miracles, Rabban Gamliel enacted the blessing, “Who is good and does good.”

In light of the above explanation that this blessing describes the altruistic nature of Hashem’s kindness, we may suggest that it was enacted then because the miracles performed on behalf of the corpses of Beitar demonstrated to the world that Hashem’s kindness is altruistic, as the dead can never reciprocate. For this reason, the Sages call kindness performed for a dead person “chessed shel emes” – true kindness.

In order to emulate the true kindness of our Creator, we must be willing to open our scope of kindness beyond that which gives us a good feeling and good returns. Anonymous kindnesses may go unnoticed by people, but specifically because of this, Hashem notices them the most. Whenever we extend kindness for the sake of kindness, we give expression to the kindness of Hashem Himself – and we give voice to the Song of the Wild Animals.

Sources: Malbim (cited in Hakol Yeshabchucha; see also Shemos 23:11); Bereishis Rabbah 96:5

*In loving memory of Harav Zeev Shlomo ben Zecharia Leib

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Book of Vayikra (Leviticus), also known as *Torat Kohanim* – the Laws of the Priests – deals largely with the *korbanot* (offerings) brought in the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting). The first group of offerings is called a *korban olah*, a burnt-offering. The animal is brought to the Mishkan's entrance. For cattle, the person bringing the offering sets his hands on the animal. Afterwards, it is slaughtered, and the *kohen* sprinkles its blood on the Altar. The animal is skinned and cut into pieces. The pieces are arranged, washed and burned on the Altar.

A similar process is described involving burnt-offerings of other animals and birds. The various meal-offerings are described. Part of the meal-offering is burned on the Altar, and the remaining part is eaten by the *kohanim*. Mixing leaven or honey into the offerings is prohibited. The peace-offering, part of which is burned on the Altar and part eaten, can be from cattle, sheep or goats.

The Torah prohibits eating blood or *chelev* (certain fats in animals). The offerings that atone for inadvertent sins committed by the *Kohen Gadol*, by the entire community, by the Prince and by the average citizen, are detailed. Laws of the guilt-offering, which atones for certain verbal transgressions and for transgressing laws of ritual purity, are listed. The meal-offering for those who cannot afford the normal guilt-offering – the offering to atone for misusing sanctified property, laws of the "questionable guilt" offering, and offerings for dishonesty – are detailed.

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TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Nazir 44-50

A Half or a Quarter?

“For these ritual impurities a nazir must cut his hair... and for a half of a lug of blood.”

This halacha that a *nazir* who is under a roof with a half of a lug of blood must shave and reset his count of *nezirut* is taught in our *mishna*. However, a *mishna* in Masechet Ohelot teaches that it takes only half this amount, a *revi'it* (quarter) of a lug to render a person under the same roof ritually impure. This additional measure of requiring a half of a lug for a *nazir* to shave is a special measure that is known as a “*halacha l’Moshe m’Sinai*.” (Tosefot)

▪ *Nazir 49b*

Responding to Challenge

Rabbi Yossi said in amazement, “People will say that Meir is dead, Yehuda is angry and Yossi is silent. What will happen to the study of Torah?”

A *beraita* that begins on the previous *daf* gives the background story for this statement. When Rabbi Meir passed away, Rabbi Yehuda was worried that Rabbi Meir’s students might be too “feisty” since they followed Rabbi Meir’s rulings which often conflicted with those of Rabbi Yehuda. Rabbi Yehuda requested that his students not allow entrance to Rabbi Meir’s students who might pull out “all stops” in order to vindicate their Rabbi and prove Rabbi Yehuda wrong.

Sumchus was a student of Rabbi Meir who managed to enter Rabbi Yehuda’s lecture. He proceeded to challenge Rabbi Yehuda, and Rabbi Yehuda displayed anger at his students for allowing Sumchus entrance. He also refuted every challenge.

When Rabbi Yossi, a student of Rabbi Yehuda saw his teacher’s anger, he made the above pronouncement: “People will say that Meir is dead, Yehuda is angry and Yossi is silent. What will happen to the study of Torah?” Rabbi Yossi did not stop there but went on to side with the challenges posed by Sumchus and explained why they were legitimate.

▪ *Nazir 50a*