



Vayikra 5775

March 20, 2015

A Taste of Torah

The Gift of Giving

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Theft is a terrible thing. And performing a mitzvah with ill-gotten funds is certainly frowned upon, and may even invalidate the entire mitzvah. But there are certain mitzvos where the Torah specifically demands that the item being used not be obtained through thievery. One such instance occurs in this week's parsha, when the Torah discusses one who wishes to bring a *korban*, an offering, upon the Altar. The Torah states (Vayikra 1:2), "Adam ki yakriv mikem korban LaShem," "When a man among you brings an offering to Hashem." Rashi (ibid.) comments that the word "Adam," "man," seems superfluous; he explains that the verse is an allusion to Adam Harishon, the first human on Earth. Just as Adam, upon bringing his sacrifice, did not bring the animal from stolen goods (as there was no one to steal from), so, too, we cannot bring an offering obtained through theft.

In other places, the Torah uses a more direct way of pointing out the need to avoid theft, by using terminology such as "take for yourself," which indicates it must belong to the person performing the mitzvah, and not be stolen. But here, the Torah uses a rather roundabout means to get the point across; why is there a need to invoke Adam in order to inform us that stolen animals won't make the cut?

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler (1892-1953) explains that a human, in his relationship with other humans, can either be a giver or a taker. Theft is the ultimate act of being a taker; it involves taking something that belongs to another without his or her consent. What made Adam Harishon unique was that he could not take from others; the entire world was his. The only thing he could do was to

give to others.

A *korban*, says Rabbi Dessler, is when a person wants to give something to Hashem. It is therefore an absolute prerequisite that the *korban* come from a place of giving, not of taking. Adam Harishon, upon bringing his *korban*, was a giver, as he had no opportunity to be a taker. The Torah teaches us that every *korban* brought must replicate Adam's *korban* by being an act of giving. Bringing an animal that was stolen from another is not merely invalidated due to the fact that it is stolen goods. It lacks the most basic trait of a *korban*, the requirement that it be an act of giving, for it involves the ultimate act of taking; it is thus unacceptable as a *korban*.

While we do not have the merit to offer *korbanos* today, the lesson they teach us is a vital ingredient in how we live our lives. It is incumbent upon us, as Jews, to strive to be givers in everything we do. Even when we engage in "taking," we can make it an act of giving.

Our Sages teach that one's table is like an Altar. Although eating may seem like an act of self-indulgence and taking, when a person provides food for the poor, not just for himself, the table now becomes a repository of providing for others, not just for oneself. If a person eats for the purpose of being healthy, having energy and feeling satisfied so that he can go about his day with the proper vim and vigor, eating is an act of giving, not of taking.

So it is with everything we do in life. With the proper focus and intent, we can transform all we do into an act of giving, even when it requires us to take for ourselves.

Stories For The Soul

The Bread in the Ark

A poor, simple Jew was present when his Rabbi gave a sermon regarding the *Lechem Hapanim*, the bread that was placed on the *Shulchan*, the Table, in the Tabernacle and Temple. The Rabbi explained that when the bread was placed on the *Shulchan* every Shabbos, Hashem was very happy with the special challos provided by His children. Today, concluded the Rabbi, we do not have a Temple where we can bring such challos, but we must find another way to make Hashem happy.

The simple man went home and told his wife that he had a splendid idea: They would bake two challos every week, and place them in the *Aron Kodesh*, the Holy Ark, right next to the Torah scrolls. This would surely make Hashem happy, they reasoned.

And so it was, that Friday, the man's wife baked two beautiful, specially-made challos, and the man placed the challos in the *Aron*. That night, after all had departed following the evening services, the man returned to the *Aron* to see if Hashem had accepted their gift. And, lo and behold, the challos were not in the *Aron*! The man rushed home and joyfully informed his wife that Hashem had accepted their challos; their Shabbos took on a new level of joy and intensity, and they promised to continue bringing the challos every week.

Unbeknownst to the simple couple, the *shamash* (attendant) in the synagogue was, at that time, very pressed for money, and there was no food in the house for Shabbos. That very Friday, he had prayed to Hashem to provide him with food. And, as he prepared the synagogue on Friday afternoon, he discovered two Heaven-sent challos in the *Aron*! Full of praise and thanks to Hashem for the miracle, he rushed home with the challos.

And so it went every week for many months; the simple Jew and his devoted wife would prepare the challos and place them in the *Aron*, sure that Hashem was taking them, and the *shamash* would remove them, thinking they were a Divine gift to him and his family for Shabbos.

Until, one Friday, the Rabbi happened to be studying quietly in a corner of the synagogue when the simple Jew walked in and opened the *Aron*. The Rabbi asked the Jew what he was doing, and the fellow replied that, after hearing the Rabbi's inspiring sermon, he had decided to make Hashem happy with his own challos, and

Continued on back side

Kollel Happenings

LABOR UNIONS AT WEDNESDAY'S TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Scott Wasserman, Chief of Staff to Lt. Governor Joe Garcia and Former Executive Director of a Public Sector Union, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they work their way through this touchy topic. March 25th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP at info@denverkollel.org.

LEARN 2 LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. For more information, contact rmh@denverkollel.org.

INSIDE THE ALEPH-BAIS

There is a unique fascination with the Hebrew language and the aleph-bet. Mystical sources explain that the letters of the aleph-bet are the building blocks of the whole world. Discover the world of the aleph-bet with Rabbi Heyman in this informative, dynamic class. For time and location, contact rmh@denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By: Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: When *Birchas Kohanim* is not recited (either due to custom or because there are no *kohanim* present), the *shaliach tzibbur* (person leading the services) recites a short prayer and the verses of *Birchas Kohanim* instead. At *mincha*, however, when *Birchas Kohanim* is not normally recited, it is omitted. There are two exceptions to this rule, when this prayer is recited at *mincha*, even though *Birchas Kohanim* would not normally be recited. What are they?

A: 1) At *mincha* on Yom Kippur, although *Birchas Kohanim* itself is not normally recited, if a *kohen* were to ascend to recite it, he would not be sent away. Therefore, the *shaliach tzibbur* recites the prayer during *mincha*. (*Rema Orach*

Chaim 129:2)

2) On a regular fast day, *Birchas Kohanim* would be recited at *mincha gedolah* (within 2 ½ hours of sunset); there is debate amongst the authorities whether or not the *kohanim* recite *Birchas Kohanim* if *mincha* takes place before that time. Nonetheless, the *shaliach tzibbur* recites the prayer during *mincha*, regardless of when it is recited. (see *Ishei Yisrael* 44:23)

This week's question: What are the four customs (all currently practiced) as to when one recites the shorter blessing of *shalom rav* as the final blessing of *Shemoneh Esrei*, instead of the lengthier *sim shalom*?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org

Ask the Rabbi

Symbolism & Connection to Passover Seder

Laurie in Toronto, Ontario wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I am responsible for answering questions at Pesach, but one that was asked of me I can't answer. Why is there so much significance to the number four in the Haggada: For example: Four questions, four sons, four glasses of wine.

Dear Laurie,

The "four" concept relates to the four promises G-d made to Moses in the verse: "I will take you out of the forced labor in Egypt, and free you from their slavery; I will liberate you and I will take you to be My own nation." (Exodus 6:6-8). Each of the four phrases in this verse describes a unique stage of redemption.

Four represents exile, being scattered to the "four corners of the earth." Correspondingly, there are four levels of redemption from exile.

Four also represents growth, spreading out in all four directions. Pesach is the time of the birth of the Jewish nation, who are to fulfill G-d's blessing to Yaakov to "spread out to the West, East, North and South." (Genesis 28:14) Pesach is also in the spring, a time when G-d's blessings are seen to increase in the world.

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Stories For The Soul

Continued from front side

that Hashem had accepted his offering.

The Rabbi was quite displeased upon hearing this, and he berated the poor man for his foolish naiveté. As he was finishing up his stinging rebuke, the *shamash* walked in and made his way to the *Aron* to retrieve his weekly *challos*. The Rabbi inquired as to what the *shamash* was doing, and the true story quickly became clear.

The Rabbi laughed and told the now-bewildered men how foolish they had been, and both men returned home, dejected, to inform their wives of their gullibility. It was a far less joyous Shabbos that the two couples celebrated that week.

After Shabbos, an emissary of the great

kabbalist the Arizal summoned the Rabbi to the Arizal's home. The Arizal informed the Rabbi that, due to his actions, he was going to die that week. He explained that the pure and sincere intentions of the simple Jew and his wife, as well as those of the *shamash*, had brought great joy before Hashem, despite their lack of knowledge. By insensitively criticizing them, the Rabbi had brought Hashem's happiness to an abrupt end.

In this week's parsha, the Torah lays down the rules and regulations of the various types of *korbanos* (offerings). While it is vital to observe the many details of the sacrifices, purity of intent is also a major aspect of bringing a *korban* to Hashem.

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