

Kedoshim 5776

May 13, 2016

# A Taste of Torah

## National Priesttime

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Many a time, a naturally-gifted orator and brilliant scholar has left his audience bewildered and confused due to his or her inability to keep focused on the topic at hand. Too much information unrelated to the general theme is enough to provide mental indigestion. What then, can we ask, is the wisdom behind the seemingly unrelated topics that we find in the Book of Vayikra? Our Sages refer to the Book of Vayikra as *Toras Kohanim*, Laws of Priests, but the laws of the Tabernacle, its *kohanim* (priests) and offerings are by no means the only topics discussed therein. Our parsha is a prime example of this phenomenon. We find many interpersonal laws, some sacrificial laws and the conclusion of the parsha that focuses on forbidden unions. The question begs to be asked: What's the connection?

The story is told about Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz (1873-1936), legendary *mashgiach* (spiritual overseer) of the yeshiva of pre-WWII Mir, Poland. Some of the students in the yeshiva returned for the new semester riding bicycles, which at the time were considered frivolous. Rabbi Levovitz asked them to return home! He then explained his demand, using Parshas Emor (next week's Torah reading) as his source. Parshas Emor begins with special laws regarding *kohanim*, proceeds to discuss laws of invalidating blemishes of animal offerings, continues on to *kiddush Hashem* (the general obligation to sanctify Hashem's Name) and then goes on to Jewish holidays. This parsha teaches us, said Rabbi Levovitz, that not all people, places and times are equal. Special emphasis is placed on the *kohanim* because of their special status in the Jewish Nation. Animals earmarked for offerings need to be blemish-free, and there are situations in our lives that oblige us to sanctify G-d's Name. Festivals are times that require extra measures of observance among every member of the Tribe.

A yeshiva, as well, continued Rabbi Levovitz, requires a different attitude, and entering a yeshiva as one does on vacation is grossly improper.

Extending this concept slightly further, we can try to understand the basis of the entire Book of Vayikra. Our nation is referred to (in Shemos 19:6) as "*mamleches kohanim*" - a kingdom of priests. This means that we are all, to some extent, in a special category which requires special appreciation and care. Actual *kohanim* are even more unique, and have their own guidelines which accompany their special status. However, in a general sense, it may be that the Book of Vayikra is the one which sets the tone for a broader *Toras Kohanim*, the laws of the entire Jewish People, who are to be a *mamleches kohanim* in general - not just the actual *kohanim* who served in the Mishkan (Tabernacle). The diverse topics of our parsha, and that of the entire Book of Vayikra, are the necessary processes in the formation of our people into Hashem's special nation!

During these days, as we count toward the Holiday of the Giving of the Torah, Shavuot, I'd like to add a fascinating end-note to the aforementioned idea. The Gemara (Horayos 13a) rules that one must honor a *mamzer talmid chacham*, a Torah scholar whose birth was through an illegitimate union, even more than a *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest) who is an ignoramus! This is derived from the verse (Proverbs 3:15) which describes Torah as more valuable than "*peninim*" (literally: pearls). The Sages homiletically interpret *peninim* as referring to "He who goes in *lifnai v'lifnim*," into the innermost section of the Temple. This refers to the Holy of Holies, which was only entered by the *Kohen Gadol* as part of the Yom Kippur service. It has been noted that the *Kohen Gadol's* entrance into the

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## Stories For The Soul

### Finding the Right Balance

A baker and a farmer made an arrangement: The baker received a pound of butter daily from the farmer, and the farmer would be given a one-pound loaf of bread by the baker. After some time, the baker noticed that the pieces of butter he was receiving from the farmer, which were supposed to weigh a pound, seemed lighter. He began to weigh the butter, and the scales agreed with his assessment.

The baker angrily went to complain at the local courthouse. The judge summoned the farmer, and sternly informed him, "The baker claims your pieces of butter do not have the agreed-upon weight. Here is the butter you gave him - and it weighs less than a pound!"

"That's impossible, Your Honor," replied the farmer, "I weigh it carefully every time I give him the butter."

"Maybe your weights are incorrect!" glowered the judge.

"My weights?" said the farmer in amazement. "I don't have any weights! I never use weights."

"If you have no weights," said the exasperated judge, "how do you weigh the butter?!"

"Your Honor," said the farmer innocently, "it's quite simple. When the baker brings me the one-pound loaf of bread, I place the bread on one side of the scale, and add butter to the other side until the scale balances."

The Torah makes it very clear that it is very important to have honest weights in business. One who is dishonest may well find that, one way or another, it will come back to bite him.

## Kollel Happenings

### ENSURING YOUR PHILANTHROPY ISN'T GOING WRONG AT JUNE 1<sup>ST</sup> TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Bruce DeBoskey, J.D., Philanthropic Strategist with The DeBoskey Group, and Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab, Dean of the Denver Community Kollel, as they generate an approach for your generosity. June 1<sup>st</sup>, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

### LEARN-A-THON & SIYUM ON JUNE 5<sup>TH</sup>

Join the communal completion of an entire tractate of Talmud in the course of one hour of Torah study! Men, sign up and study a preassigned section of Tractate Sotah with a class or chavrusah. Women, sign up and attend a special study session.

The siyum will be part of the completion of an entire order of Talmud, Seder Nashim, that is being completed by Daf Yomi participants around the world.

### 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](mailto:rmh@denverkollel.org).

# Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

**Last week we asked:** What prayer, due to its special holiness, is recited on only one day a year? (*Ne'ila* is not the correct answer!)

**A:** The Magen Avraham (565:5, quoting the Maharil) writes that the prayer of "*Ha'aderes viha'emuna*" should only be recited publicly on Yom Kippur. The reason, explains the Maharil (Laws of Yom Kippur), is that "many [mystical] names and secrets are incorporated therein." The Aishel Avraham (by Rabbi Avraham David Wahrman of Butchatch, Orach Chaim

281:1) defends the custom of many Nusach Sefard congregations who recite it aloud during their Shabbos morning prayers, but writes that he personally would say it quietly to satisfy the above-mentioned ruling.

**This week's question:** On the Shabbos preceding Rosh Chodesh, the custom is to insert special prayers. What part of this prayer is of relatively recent origin?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email [ryz@denverkollel.org](mailto:ryz@denverkollel.org).

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbi Yitzchak Alfasi – the Rif, Part V

The Jewish communities of Spain and North Africa lived in relative peace and prosperity during the Rif's lifetime, as they were not generally persecuted and were very much a part of the Moslem society in which they lived. This allowed these great giants of Torah to study and teach largely undisturbed by communal turbulence.

The Rif was one of a number of prominent Torah scholars of the era who bore the name Yitzchak. One of these was Rabbi Yitzchak ben Baruch Albalia (1035-1094).

(An interesting sidenote: The Albalia family had lived in Spain for a millennium before Rabbi Yitzchak appeared on the world scene. It is said that the first ancestor to settle in Spain, Baruch, was sent there by Titus after the destruction of the Second Temple. Baruch was an aristocrat of Judaea and an expert silk weaver. He was relocated to Spain, which was then under Roman rule, along with several other prominent Jews. He was to help develop the silk industry there, and was also made governor of the province of Murida.)

There were some scholarly but sharply-worded disagreements between the two Torah giants, and this created ill will.

On his deathbed, Rabbi Yitzchak Albalia

told his son, Baruch, to go to the Rif and inform him that he forgave him for the strong words that had passed between them, and that he begged the Rif to forgive him, as well. He then told his son to ask the Rif, in his name, that he take young Baruch under his wing.

Baruch followed his father's directives, and the Rif was greatly moved by the message. The Rif took care of the teenaged Baruch as if he were his own son, despite the hostility that had existed between him and Baruch's father. The young man became a great Torah scholar and later became the head of the yeshiva in Cordova, Spain.

The Rif passed away in 1103 in Lucena. But his impact continues until today. The Rif's commentary can be found in the back of any standard edition of the Talmud, and it is studied by Jews worldwide. That work, and the many responsa he wrote, have made him one of the most influential authorities in determining practical halacha. His students' works, as well as their molding of future generations of Torah leaders and, by extension, Jewish communities throughout the world, makes us the direct beneficiaries of the Rif's greatness, a millenium after he flourished.

## A Taste of Torah

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Holy of Holies is the paradigm of the three measurements of holiness: person, place and time. Yet, the holiest human being in the holiest place in the world on the holiest day of the year pales in contrast to a person

of less-than-ideal origins whose existence has been transformed into a spiritual one through Torah study. May we merit to continue gaining holiness with our study of Torah and performance of mitzvos.

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