Unaccustomed As I Am...

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

What does the word 'Jew' mean? 'Jew' is a translation of the Hebrew 'Yehudi' which comes from the same root as the word 'l'hodot.'

'L'hodot' is an interesting word. It has two meanings. It can mean 'to give thanks,' and it can mean 'to admit.'

What does admitting have in common with giving thanks?

When a person says 'thank you,' he is, in essence, admitting. He's admitting that he is in the debt of the other person for a kindness he has received. Unless we can admit that we have received something, we can never really say 'thanks.'

If we are called 'Jews,' if that's who we are, it must be that those two qualities, of admitting, and of giving thanks, are integral elements of the collective persona of the Jewish People.

When a person escapes from a life-threatening danger, the Jewish custom is to make a special meal of thanks to Hashem.

But why do we thank Hashem specifically in this way? Why don't we give charity? Why don't we put up a plaque?

In this week's Parsha we learn of a category of offerings that were brought in the Beis Hamikdash called Korban Shlaminim (Peace Offering). These were eaten partly by the kohanim and partly by those who brought them.

The general rule was that the offering had to be eaten entirely within 36 hours — two days and one night. However, the exception was the Korban Todah, the offering that was brought to thank Hashem for being delivered from grave danger. The time period for the consumption of the Korban Todah was a maximum of just 24 hours — one day and one night until midnight.

Why was the time period for eating the Korban Todah so much shorter than other Shlaminim? The question becomes even more pointed when you take into account the tremendous amount of food that had to be consumed with the Todah — 40 loaves of bread.

The answer is that when the person who brought the Todah saw how much food there was, he would invite his friends to a meal to celebrate and rejoice with him.

Naturally the main topic of conversation would be the great deliverance which was the cause of the meal, and the host would thus recount the miraculous circumstances of his delivery.

Specifically he would be called upon to deliver words of Torah and thanks to Hashem for his delivery.

When a person has to get up and speak in front of a crowd the usual result is that his heartbeat quickens, his palms become moist and his throat dry. He is forced to think carefully about what he is going to say and how he is going to say it.

Through this process of re-analysis, the recipient of the miracle re-examined every detail of his miraculous escape, with the result that not only would he inspire his audience with his tale, but he himself would come to a higher realization of the good which Hashem had bestowed on him.

Warning: Heart - Do Not Extinguish!

A continual fire shall be kept burning on it; it must not be extinguished." (6:6)

The Torah prohibits extinguishing the fire of the Altar; on the contrary, the fire must be attended to and wood and kindling added as necessary, so that the flame ascends constantly.

If it is forbidden to put out even a single coal on the physical Altar (Zevachim 91), how much more is it forbidden to put out even a single burning spiritual ember on the spiritual Altar, the Jewish heart.

The yearning for holiness, the flame in the heart which aspires longingly upward, homeward, must be constantly added to; aided and strengthened through reason, wisdom and discernment, with the illumination of mitzvos and the light of the Torah.
The Torah addresses Aaron and his sons to teach them additional laws that relate to their service. The ashes of the "Korban Olah" — the korban burnt on the Altar throughout the night — are to be removed from the area by the Kohen after he takes off his special linen clothing. The Olah is brought by someone who forgot to perform a positive commandment of the Torah. The Kohen retains the skin. The fire on the Altar must be kept constantly blazing. The "Korban Mincha" is a meal offering that is made from flour, oil and spices. A handful of it is burned on the Mincha Altar, and a handful of "Olah" is brought by someone who forgot to sprinkle the blood of the "Asham," the "guilt-korban" for certain transgressions. The details for the "Shlamim," various types of peace korbanos, are described, including the prohibition against leaving the remains of the "Todah," the thanksgiving korban, uneaten until the morning. All sacrifices must be burned after they may no longer be eaten. No sacrifice may be eaten if it was slaughtered with the intention of eating it too late. Once they have become tamei (ritually impure) korbanos may not be eaten, and they should be burned. One may not eat a korban when he is ritually impure. Blood and Cheilev, forbidden fats of animals, are prohibited to eat. Aaron and his sons are granted the breast and shank of every "Korban Shlamim." The inauguration ceremony for Aaron, his sons, the Mishkan and all of its vessels is detailed.
PARSHA Q&A?

1. In verse 6:2, Hashem tells Moshe, “‘Tzav’ (command) Aaron...” When is the word ‘Tzav’ used?
2. Until when may the fats and limbs of an Olah be placed on the Mizbe’ach?
3. If, while removing the ashes from the Mizbe‘ach, the Kohen finds limbs that were not consumed, what must he do with them?
4. What was the first Korban (sacrifice) brought each day?
5. If someone extinguishes the fire on the Mizbe‘ach, how many Torah violations have been transgressed?
6. When a Kohen is inaugurated to serve in the Beis Hamikdash, what offering must he bring?
7. How often must the Kohen Gadol bring a Korban Minchah?
8. What is the difference between a “Minchas Kohen” and a “Minchas Yisrael”?
9. When is a Kohen disqualified from eating from the Chatas (sin offering)?
10. What is the difference between a copper and earth-enware vessel regarding the removing of absorbed tastes?
11. Can an animal that has already been dedicated for an Asham be replaced with by another animal?
12. List three types of Kohenim who may not partake of the Asham.
13. List three types of Kohenim who have no share in the skins of the Olah offering.
14. In which 4 instances is a Korban Todah brought?
15. How does a Korban become “Pigul”?
16. How does the Torah punish a tamei person who eats a Korban?
17. What position did Moshe fill during the seven days of the inauguration of the Mishkan?
18. How many days prior to Yom Kippur must the Kohen Gadol separate from his family?
19. What other service requires that the Kohen separate from his family?
20. What are the 5 categories of Korbanos listed in this Parsha?

Bonus Question?

“This is the law of the flour offering: The sons of Aharon shall bring it near...” (6:7) “This refers to bringing the flour offering to the Altar.” — Rashi From here we see that the ‘sons of Aharon,’ — the kohenim — are commanded to bring the flour offering to the Altar. But in last week’s Parsha Rashi states (2:2) that the kohen’s obligation starts only after the flour offering is already brought to the Altar. This implies that a non-kohen may bring the offering to the Altar. How can this apparent contradiction be resolved?

I Didn’t Know That!

If a person feels unenthusiastic about Torah study or mitzvah observance, he should say the verse, “A continuous fire should burn on the Altar, do not extinguish it (6:6).”

• Rashbaz (Thanks to Rabbi Sholem Fishbane)

Haftorah: Yechezkel 36:16-38

Parshas Parah

Heart Of Stone

“One who aspires to purify himself spiritually, is given help from above.”

The period before Rosh Chodesh Nissan is especially favorable for purification. This is one of the reasons that we read Parshas Parah at this time of the year. But there is a more basic reason: In the time of the Beis Hamikdash, it was on the 15th of Nissan that the Korban Pesach was brought by all of the Jewish People. Parshas Parah deals with the laws of purification that were needed to purify the Jewish People from contact with a dead body — a necessary preliminary to entering the Beis Hamikdash and bringing the Korban Pesach. The Haftarah describes the time of Mashiach, when Hashem will “sprinkle purifying waters on the Bnei Yisrael” and remove from them all the impurities that have encrusted their souls.

“I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh instead.” (46:26) Hashem’s mitzvos are our life blood. When we neglect them, our hearts freeze over, severed from their lifeline. We become spiritually rigid. Our hearts atrophy, coarsen and eventually become as rigid as stone.

And because we then have made ourselves a heart of stone, we don’t realize that this is why we have so little faith. How can a heart of stone have faith? We don’t realize that our complaints against the Almighty come from a rock chamber entombed in our chests. Eventually it will be too late for a ‘bypass.’ Hashem will come and give us a heart that is soft, that cries, that wants to hear the word of Hashem and beats in time to its Maker.
**Weekly Daf**

**ERACHIN 14 - 20**

**DAMNING WITH PRAISE**

One should never speak in praise of another person for one is likely to end up speaking ill of him.

This rule is difficult to understand because we find that our Sages (Eruvin 18b) have told us that one should speak only partial praise of a person in his presence and his full praise when he is not there. It also seems to contradict many incidents in the Talmud of sages speaking in praise of individuals.

Two different resolutions are offered for this problem.

1. Rashi explains that the ban is only on speaking excessive praise, because either he or his listener is then inevitably tempted to say “but he has this fault.”

2. Rambam (Hilchos Deios 7:4) limits this ban to speaking praise to an audience which is hostile to the one being praised, since this will trigger a put-down on their part.

The explanations offered by these commentaries run into a problem when this rule is quoted in an incident involving Rebbe (Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi) and a scribe by the name of Yehuda Charta. Rebbe expressed admiration for the beautiful scripts of a Tehillim scroll which he assumed was the work of his son, Shimon. When Rabbi Shimon told him that it was the work of Yehuda Charta, his father reprimanded him for speaking praise of a person in violation of the aforementioned ban. It is rather difficult to see in Rabbi Shimon’s revelation of the scroll’s authorship either the ‘excessive praise’ of Rashi or the ‘hostile audience’ of the Rambam.

Rabbi Shmuel Shtrasson (Rashash), in his commentary, which appears in the back of the widely used Vilna edition of the Talmud, suggests that Rebbe felt that his son should have considered him to be a hostile audience as a result of an embarrassment he had earlier suffered because of a divorce document which that scribe had written.  

* Erachin 16a

**THE SERPENT’S PLEASURE**

In the hereafter all the beasts will gather and thus challenge the serpent: “The lion and the wolf eat their prey but what pleasure do you have from killing a man by injecting your venom?” The serpent will reply by challenging them to explain what pleasure does the man who wags an evil tongue have from hurting his victim.

This fascinating dialogue may be better understood against the background of the curse which Hashem pronounced upon the serpent for tempting the first woman to sin by eating from the Tree of Knowledge (Bereshis 2:14-15).

“Upon your belly you shall move ... and I will create enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed, which shall strike at your head while you strike at his heel.”

Before this curse, say our Sages (Sotah 9b), the serpent walked upright on legs. After his demotion he is envious of man who still enjoys that dignified posture. Lacking the ability to raise himself to man’s height, he is steadily trying to bring man down to his level by injecting his venom into the heel of his human rival.

The serpent will explain to the other beasts that he is acting no differently than any man who speaks evil of another. The man of evil tongue is envious of his neighbor, and rather than struggle to raise himself to his rival’s level he tries to bring him down in serpent-like fashion by speaking ill of him.

* Erachin 15b

**PARSHA INSIGHTS**

**UNDER COVER**

“Command Aaron and his sons, saying ‘This is the law of the elevation-offering...’” (6:2)

Each of the organs of sense have a covering protecting them from that which is undesirable.

The mouth has lips which can prevent the mouth from issuing improper speech. The ears have lobes which can be used to block the entrance of unseemly words. The eyes have lids and brows. Thus it is with all the organs of perception.

With one exception.

The mind has no protection. Thoughts have no visor. They can come and go at will. Therefore it takes an extra degree of alacrity and alertness to guard against improper thoughts.

Rashi comments on the above verse that when the Torah uses the word ‘command’ it always implies ‘alacrity.’ In the Talmud, Rabbi Shimon states that where there is a ‘chisaron kis’ the Torah mandates an extra degree of alertness.

‘Chisaron kis’ can mean literally ‘a loss of pocket’ — a monetary loss. In most offerings, the kohenim were given part of the animal to eat. However, in the Korban Olah, where the entire offering was burned and the kohen received nothing, the kohenim needed to be commanded an extra degree of alacrity.

However, ‘chisaron kis’ can also mean ‘lacking a cover.’

The elevation-offering was brought as an atonement for improper thoughts.

The mind has no barrier, no cover; and thus where there is no protection, an extra degree of alacrity and zeal is required.

Sources:

• Unaccustomed As I Am... - Abarbanel;
  Rabbi Yitzchok Ezrachi in Mizmor Lesodah by Rabbi Daniel Travis
• Warning: Heart - Do Not Extinguish! - Oros HaKodesh
• Under Cover - Sichos Tzaddikim in Mayana shel Torah
HITTING GRASS

Jaymi Victor
<jv53012@navix.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Hello! I have a question for you. The quote that I have incorporated into my signature line [text added to the end of an e-mail message - Ed.] is a quote that I have seen in a couple of different places, but I have never seen a reference back to the original source. What is the source in the Talmud or Midrash? Thanks in advance.

Jaymie Victor
>“Every blade of grass has an angel bending over it saying, ‘Grow, grow.’”
*************************

Dear Jaymi Victor,

“Said Rabbi Simon: ‘Every single blade of grass has a corresponding ‘mazal’ in the sky which hits it and tells it to grow.’” This statement is found in the Midrash Rabba, Bereshit 10:6.

I heard from Rabbi Moshe Shapiro, shliita, that from this Midrash we see that some things need a ‘hit’ in order to grow.

There’s story told about Rabbi Avraham Kook, zatzal and Rabbi Aryeh Levine, zatzal. They used to study the Torah together and often they would study outside. On one occasion Rabbi Levine plucked a flower from a tree. Rabbi Kook was upset and told him that in all his days he had never plucked so much as a leaf from a tree, based on the above mentioned Midrash.

THE 2,000 DOLLAR QUESTION

Chaim Bernfeld
<hy.b@worldnet.att.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
This is a thing that happened. A friend of mine asked me to post this question on the Internet. He is in the construction business. A third person (a neighbor) found out he was on his way to a certain warehouse to pick up something so he asked him to pick up something he purchased there and bring it home to him (I think some tiles). He gave my friend $8000 which was the agreed price for the tiles. When my friend got there (I don’t exactly know why) he started bargaining and the seller agreed to give him the tiles for $6000. Question: According to halachah who gets the $2000 difference? Thank you

Dear Chaim Bernfeld,

I asked Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg, shliita, who ruled that the two thousand dollars goes back to your friend’s neighbor. The neighbor never relinquished ownership of this money; he merely entrusted it with your friend. Your friend didn’t spend it on the tiles, so it goes back to his neighbor.

Now, if things had been slightly different, your friend would have profited: If, instead of a lower price, your friend had received more tiles, the extra tiles would have been split between your friend and his neighbor.

The difference between these cases is as follows: In the first case, the point in question is the extra money. Since the neighbor is the original owner of the extra money, and he never lost his ownership, he gets it. In the second case the point in question is the extra tiles. Neither the neighbor nor your friend is the original owner.

So who gets the extra tiles in the second case? Although the intention of the tile-seller was probably to give them to your friend, the Sages decreed that the bonus be split with his neighbor whose business transaction ‘caused’ the extra tiles.

Sources:
• Shailot and Teshuvot Shevet HaLevi 5:214
• Ketubot 88b
• Choshen Mishpat 183

YIDDLERIDDLE

Last week we asked: “What word in Hebrew is spelled ‘Vav Vav Vav Vav’?”

Answer: “And his hook” The Hebrew word for ‘hook’ is ‘vav’. It is spelled with two letters: ‘vav’ and ‘vav.’ The letter ‘vav’ as a prefix means ‘and.’ The letter ‘vav’ as a suffix means ‘his.’ Hence, the word spelled ‘vav vav vav vav’ means ‘and his hook.’

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PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 6:2 - It is used to indicate a command that urges performance now, and for future generations.
2. 6:2 - Until morning [dawn].
3. 6:3 - Return them to the Mizbe’ach.
4. 6:5 - The Tamid offering.
5. 6:6 - Two.
6. 6:13 - A Korban Minchah – A tenth part of an ephah of flour, half of it in the morning and half in the afternoon.
7. 6:13 - Daily.
8. 6:15 - The Minchas Kohen is burnt completely. Only a kometz (handful) of the Minchas Yisrael is burnt, and the remainder is eaten by the Kohanim.
9. 6:19 - If he is tamei (spiritually impure) at the time of the sprinkling of the blood.
10. 6:21 - In a copper vessel the absorbed taste can be removed through “scouring and rinsing”, while in an earthenware vessel it can never be removed.
11. 7:1 - No.
12. 7:7 - a) A Tvul Yom – A tamei person who has gone to the Mikveh and is awaiting sunset to become Tahor (spiritually pure); b) A Mechusar Kipurim – A Tamei person who has gone to the Mikveh but has yet to bring his required sacrifice to become Tahor; c) An Onan – a mourner prior to the burial of the deceased.
13. 7:8 - a) A Tvul Yom; b) A Mechusar Kipurim; c) An Onan (see answer 12 for more detail).
14. 7:12 - a) After a safe arrival from an ocean voyage; b) After a safe arrival from a desert journey; c) After being freed from prison; d) After recovering from illness.
15. 7:18 - The person slaughters the animal with the intention that it be eaten after the prescribed time.
16. 7:20 - With Kares (spiritual excision).
17. 8:28 - He served as the Kohen.
18. 8:34 - Seven days.
19. 8:34 - The burning of the Parah Adumah (red cow).
20. Olah (6:2); Minchah (6:7); Chatas (6:18); Asham (7:1); Shlamim (7:11).

Bonus Answer!

Bringing the flour offering to the Altar is a mitzvah, but it is not an absolute requirement. That is to say, the offering is valid even if it is not brought to the Altar. Only a kohen can fulfill the mitzvah of bringing the offering to the Altar. If a non-kohen brings the offering to the Altar, the mitzvah has not been fulfilled, but the offering is valid nonetheless.

* Moznaim L’Torah

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