

WILL G-D APPROVE?

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Shemini

Will G-d Approve?

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Eli, Rachel Adina, Daniel Avraham, Yonatan and Chana Rutstein on the birthday of wife and mother Galit

This week's parashah opens with the dedication of the Mishkan and the death of Aharon's two eldest sons. Following that tragedy, Moshe and Aharon enter into a discussion regarding the propriety of Aharon's remaining sons, who are mourners, eating from one of the sacrifices. The Torah records that Aharon won the day in this debate by arguing, "Were I to eat this day's sin-offering, would Hashem approve?"

R' Shalom Noach Brazovsky z"l (the Slonimer Rebbe; died 2000) observes that the Torah does not quote Aharon as arguing: "Does the Torah permit this?" [Rashi does, however, explain the legal argument that Aharon used.] Rather, Aharon said simply, "Would Hashem approve?" This, explains R' Brazovsky, is a fundamental rule of Torah-living. In the words of Devarim (6:18), "You shall do what is just and good in the eyes of Hashem." It is insufficient to base one's actions on the letter of the halachah. One must go a step further and ask: "What would please Hashem?" [Conversely, of course, that which is contrary to halachah cannot be good in Hashem's eyes.]

It is said in the name of the early chassidic rebbe, R' Yaakov Yitzchak z"l, the "Chozeh of Lublin," that at the instant that the yetzer hara entices a person, Heaven tests him by causing him to forget the halachah that applies to his test. However, the sense of right and wrong that a person has developed through his own toil and a person's desire to please Hashem are his, and these are never taken from him. These pillars alone support a person when the yetzer hara entices him. (Netivot Shalom)

"It happened on the eighth day . . ." (9:1)

The Gemara (Megillah 10b) states that the day on which the Mishkan / Tabernacle was dedicated was as joyous for Hashem as the day on which He had created the world. R' Shlomo Ganzfried z"l (19th century; Hungary; author of Kitzur Shulchan Aruch) explains this as follows:

Hashem's purpose in creating the world was so that He could reside amongst His creations. And, before Adam's sin, Hashem did just that. However, when Adam sinned, he drove Hashem to ascend to the lowest of the seven heavens. When Kayin sinned, Hashem ascended higher still, and so on due to the sins of the generation of Enosh, the generation of the flood, the generation of the Tower of Bavel, the S'domites, and the Egyptians. In all, Hashem ascended to the seventh heaven.

The Mishkan was built so that Hashem could again reside amongst men, as the Torah states (Shoof 25:8): "They will build Me a Mishkan so that I may reside amongst them." Thus, the day on which the Mishkan/tabernacle was dedicated was as joyous for Hashem as the day on which Hashem created the world. (Apiryon)

"And a bull and a ram for a peace-offering to slaughter before Hashem, and a meal-offering mixed with oil; for today Hashem nirah / appears aleichem / to you." (9:4)

Rabbeinu Machir z"l (Spain; 14th century) observes that the Hebrew word "nirah / appears" has the same Hebrew letters as "Aharon" [who brought these sacrifices]. The word "aleichem / to you" has the same letters as the name of the angel Micha-el [who, say our Sages, brings offerings in his role as the Kohen Gadol in the Heavens]. (Avkat Rocheil)

From the same work:

"Do not teisht / drink intoxicating wine . . ." (10:9)

The Hebrew word "teisht" is an acronym for "Tefilat shikor to'aivah" / "The prayer of a drunkard is an abomination." [This alludes to the teaching in the Gemara (Eruvin 64a) that a person who has drunken a little bit may pray, while a person who is intoxicated may not pray.]

"The sons of Aharon, Nadav and Avihu, each took his fire pan, they put fire in them and placed

incense upon it; and they brought before Hashem an alien fire that He had not commanded them."
(10:1)

R' Yehuda Leib Alter z"l (1847-1905; the second Gerrer Rebbe) quotes his grandfather, R' Yitzchak Meir Alter z"l (the Chiddushei Ha'rim) as follows: Nadav and Avihu were great men and certainly had deep thoughts in mind when they offered their sacrifice. Nevertheless, they were punished because they were doing something that G-d had not commanded them to do. We can learn from this that it is not the deep thoughts that accompany a mitzvah that matter so much as the mere fact that one is doing Hashem's Will. Thus, even a simple person who has no idea of the deep kavanot / thoughts that relate to a mitzvah cannot excuse himself from fulfilling the mitzvah.

We read in Shir Ha'shirim (1:2), "Your friendship is dearer than wine." "Wine," says R' Alter, refers to the reasons for the mitzvot. This what our Sages meant when they said that Nadav and Avihu entered the Mishkan intoxicated. In other words, they acted based on their understanding of the reasons for the mitzvot, rather than based on what Hashem actually commanded.

Before performing a mitzvah we say a berachah that contains the phrase, "He has sanctified us through His mitzvot." We are not sanctified by using our reasoning to arrive at our own conclusions about what is spiritual, but rather by fulfilling G d's commandments. (Sefat Emet: Year 5639; as elucidated by R' Aryeh Hendler shlita in Sefat Ha'gan p.139)

"The sons of Aharon--Nadav and Avihu--each took his pan, and they placed incense in it, and they brought before Hashem a foreign fire which He had not commanded." (10:1)

There is an opinion among the Sages that the sin of Nadav and Avihu was paskening / issuing a halachic ruling in the presence of their teacher Moshe. R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1784-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) writes that this verse confirms that view. How so?

Strictly speaking, there was nothing wrong with bringing fire into the Mishkan / Tabernacle. And, it is human nature that when one knows that an action is permitted, he does that action without asking a rabbi if he may. Generally, such behavior is acceptable.

However, when one is in close proximity to Hashem, Who is humble, one must be humble as well. Accordingly, it was wrong for Nadav and Avihu to do even that which was obviously permitted without asking Moshe. This is alluded to in the words, "[T]hey brought before Hashem a foreign fire." Only because they were in the Mishkan, "before Hashem," was their behavior wrong.

R' Kluger adds: Hashem is different from a human dignitary. When one gives a gift to the latter, the recipient does not care whether the gift is given legally or whether, for example, the gift is stolen goods. Not so Hashem, Who does not accept as sacrifices animals that were stolen. Indeed, Hashem

does not accept any mitzvah that is intertwined with a sin.

This is another reason why the verse points out that Nadav and Avihu brought the foreign fire "before Hashem." A human king might have accepted Nadav and Avihu's fire even though they neglected to ask Moshe's permission to sacrifice it. However, Hashem rejected their sacrifice because they did not obtain Moshe's permission. (Imrei Shefer)

*"Do not make yourselves abominable by means of any crawling thing; do not contaminate yourselves through them lest you become contaminated through them. For I am Hashem your G-d -- you are to sanctify yourselves and you shall become holy, for I am holy; and you will not contaminate yourselves through any crawling thing that creeps on the earth. For I am Hashem Who elevates you from the land of Egypt to be a G-d unto you; you shall be holy, for I am holy."
(11:43-45)*

Why are these verses so full of redundancies? Also, why, regarding this mitzvah in particular, does Hashem emphasize that He is G-d? Finally, what does the Exodus have to do with not eating insects?

R' Akiva Yosef Schlesinger z"l (Hungary and Yerushalayim; died 1922) explains: It is nearly impossible to go an entire lifetime without inadvertently ingesting insects. However, our Sages promise us (regarding the commandments in general), "If one wishes to sanctify himself, he is aided by Heaven." Therefore the Torah emphasizes: Avoid abominations! If you are as careful as possible, for example, by meticulously checking any vegetables that require examination, then G-d will help you. If you "contaminate yourselves through them," then, "you [will] become contaminated through them." But, "Sanctify yourselves and you shall become holy," the verse promises, and then, "You will not contaminate yourselves through any crawling thing that creeps on the earth" [reading the last phrase as a promise and not a command.]

How can the skeptic have confidence that G-d really will save him from this abomination? "For I am Hashem Who elevates you from the land of Egypt." Despite the promiscuity of Egyptian society, Hashem easily distinguished between the Egyptian first-born and other children. He surely can distinguish on your behalf between lettuce that has bugs and lettuce which does not. (Torat Yechiel)

Pesach

In every generation, one is obligated to regard himself as if he personally had gone out of Egypt, as it is written (Shmot 13:8), "And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, 'It is because of this that Hashem did for me when I left Egypt'." It is not only our fathers whom the Holy One redeemed [from

slavery]; we, too, He redeemed with them, as it is written (Devarim 6:23), "He took us out of there in order to bring us, to give us the Land that He swore to our forefathers." (From the Pesach Haggadah)

R' Yehuda Amichai shlita (Director of the Torah Ve'ha'aretz Institute, formerly located in Gush Katif) observes: The language of the Haggadah implies that there are two parts to the obligation discussed. The first is taught by the verse, "And you shall tell your son," while the second is found in the verse, "He took us out." But what is the difference between these two obligations?

He explains: The first part of the paragraph refers to personal redemption. I must regard myself as if I personally was a slave and I was redeemed. The second part refers to communal redemption. G-d took us, the community of Yisrael, out of Egypt in order to give us the Land that He swore to our forefathers.

Significantly, the verse connected with the first part of the obligation is the verse that the Haggadah lists as the answer to the wicked son. To him we speak of the personal aspect of the Exodus, for we cannot hope that he will ever appreciate the communal aspect of the redemption. The second verse, on the other hand, is the source of the answer given to the wise son.

R' Amichai adds: Rambam z"l appears not to agree that there is a two part obligation here, for Rambam's version of the Haggadah is different. Instead of, "In every generation, one is obligated to regard himself . . .," Rambam's text reads, "In every generation, one is obligated to show himself." According to Rambam, it would seem, the entire obligation described in this paragraph is directed outward, referring exclusively to the communal redemption. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Gush Katif p.30)

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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