

# WHAT IS WISDOM?

*by Shlomo Katz*

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The Gemara (Shabbat 31a) gives each of the Six Orders of the Mishnah a nickname. It refers to the Order of Kodshim, which deals with the sacrificial service (the subject of our Parashah), as "Chochmah" / "wisdom." This, observes R' Avraham Yoffen z"l (1887-1970; rosh yeshiva of the Novardok Yeshiva in Bialystok, Poland; New York and Yerushalayim), seems to contradict another Gemara (Bava Batra 175b), which states that one who wishes to be wise should study the Order of Nezikin, which deals with torts.

He explains: If the question is how to sharpen one's mind, the answer certainly is to study Nezikin. However, we read (Iyov 28:28), "Behold, fear of the Lord is wisdom." The Gemara (Shabbat 31b) interprets this verse: "Only fear of Hashem is wisdom." From that perspective, Kodshim is the source of wisdom, for it is all about serving G-d. R' Moshe ben Nachman z"l (Ramban; 1194-1270) writes that through the sacrificial service, which atones for the Jewish People's sins, the Shechinah attaches itself to us. The word "korban," notes Ramban, is from the root that means "close."

R' Yoffen adds: Among the lessons we can learn from the sacrificial service is how a person is influenced by his location and surroundings [because a korban cannot be brought just anywhere]. Halachah states that there are ten levels of sanctity, starting with the Land of Israel and ending with the Holy of Holies. Even a prophet could only be called a "man of Elokim" when he was in certain places, but not in others, the Zohar teaches. From this, a person must learn to choose to be in places and among people who will assist him in serving Hashem, not interfere with him. (Ha'mussar

Ve'ha'da'at)

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***"Vayikra / He called to Moshe . . ." (1:1)***

Rashi z"l asks: Why is the Torah broken by hafsakot / breaks, i.e., why is it broken into subsections? He answers: To give Moshe an interval for reflection between one section and another and between one subject and another--something which is all the more necessary for an ordinary man receiving instruction from an ordinary man.

R' Menachem Mendel Taub shlita (the Kaliver Rebbe in Rishon Le'tzion, Israel) observes that in a non-leap year [like this year] Vayikra is read the week that most yeshivot begin their Pesach breaks. What purpose do these hafsakot serve? he asks. They are times to review, reflect upon, and digest what one has learned in the preceding five or six months. If Moshe needed such opportunities to reflect, surely we do. (Kol Menachem)

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***"If his offering is a shelamim / peace-offering . . ." (3:1)***

R' Yosef Bechor Shor z"l (France; 12<sup>th</sup> century) writes: The reason it is called a "shelamim" / peace-offering is that the altar gets a part, the kohanim get a part, and the owners get a part. This is the way of peace, i.e., that everyone eats "together." (Bechor Shor)

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***"I fashioned this People for Myself that it might declare My tehilah / praise." (Yeshayahu 43:21 – from today's Haftarah)***

R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (1865-1935; Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael) writes about this verse: The word "tehilah" refers to "light," as in the verse (Iyov 31:26), "If I ever saw light as yahel / it shone." To give thanks ("hoda'ah") means to recognize that one is surrounded by Hashem's goodness. In contrast, "tehilah" means recognizing that the goodness that one receives is a result of being surrounded at all times by a Divine "light." In effect, it means recognizing that every individual good that is received is due to Hashem's constant presence. That "light," Hashem's presence, writes R' Kook, is a far greater gift than the specific good that was given.

The ability to recognize this, R' Kook adds, is itself a gift from Hashem, for how else could mankind see beyond the darkness of this world and notice Hashem's light! (Olat Re'iyah I pp. 193 & 197; II p.62)

R' Moshe Bleicher shlita (Rosh Ha'yeshiva of Yeshivat Shavei Chevron) elaborates: Giving thanks ("hoda'ah") is not unique to the Jewish People; all the peoples of the world do that. However, our verse teaches, tehilah -- recognizing and declaring Hashem's constant presence and living a life that reflects that awareness -- is the unique mission for which the Jewish nation was created. (V'rav

Shlom Banayich p.14)

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## Pesach

***"Afilu kulanu chachamim . . . / Even if we all were wise, we all were understanding, we all were experienced, and we all were knowledgeable in Torah, we still would be obligated to tell about the Exodus from Egypt." (Haggadah Shel Pesach)***

R' Eran Moshe Margaliot shlita (Israel) writes, based on the writings of R' Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter z"l (1847-1905; the Gerrer Rebbe; known as the "Sefat Emet"):

Why, indeed, must a wise person who knows the story of yetziat Mitzrayim retell it year-after-year? He explains: We learn in Pirkei Avot (ch.3), "If one's yir'ah / fear of sin precedes his wisdom, his wisdom will endure." Even if one is wise, he needs yir'ah, because yir'ah is the foundation that allows a person to stand before Hashem and accept the yoke of Heaven. That, in turn, is a prerequisite for attaining true wisdom.

He continues: Through retelling the story of the Exodus on the Seder night, a person can experience a revelation of G-d, which leads, in turn, to increasing one's yir'ah and re-accepting the yoke of Heaven. This comes from the realization that Hashem did not simply free us from serving Pharaoh; He did so in order that we would serve Him.

Also, a wise person must retell the story of the Exodus until he understands that all of his wisdom is not his own accomplishment, but from Hashem. This is why we conclude the Seder with the poem, "Echad mi yodea?" / "Who knows one?" We declare: "Mi yodea" / "The fact that anyone knows anything" is the result of the abilities he has been given by the "Echad Elokeinu" / "Our One Elokim who is in the heavens and the earth." (Petach Ha'haggadah p.26)

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***"Chad gadya" / "One kid goat . . ."***

R' Yitzchak Isaac Chaver z"l (1789-1852; rabbi of Suvalk, Lithuania, and a prolific author in all areas of Torah study) explains this poem as an allusion to all of Jewish history.

**"One kid goat"** refers to the Jewish People, as is written (Yechezkel 34:17), "You are My flock." The Jewish People is called "one," as in the verse (Divrei Ha'yamim I 17:21), "Who is like Your nation, Yisrael, one nation in the land." In particular, the Jewish People, a nation that is stubborn and brazen (in Hebrew, "אז" / "az"), is likened to a goat (in Hebrew, "אז" / "aiz").

**"That father bought for two zuzim"** is an allusion to the sacrificial service, toward which every person contributed half a shekel, i.e., two zuzim, every year. The sacrificial service atones for the sins that result from our stubbornness and brazenness.

**"Then a cat came and ate the kid goat"** refers to the sale of Yosef by his brothers, after which the brothers slaughtered a kid goat.

**"Then came a dog"** refers to the exile in Egypt, which resulted from the sale of Yosef.

**"Then came a stick"** refers to Moshe's staff [which assisted in bringing about the Exodus].

**"Then came a fire"** refers to the sin of the Golden Calf, to which one can apply the verse (Iyov 31:12), "For it is a fire, it consumes until doom."

**"Then came water"** refers to Moshe's prayers, which are likened to water, as in the verse (Eichah 2:19), "Pour out your heart like water."

**"Then came an ox"** refers to the golden calves erected by King Yerovam [in the First Temple period; see Melachim I 12:28]. These new calves undid the atonement that Moshe's prayer had achieved and reawakened the "fire" of the Golden Calf.

**"Then came the shochet"** refers to the Anshei Ha'knesset Ha'gedolah / Men of the Great Assembly [at the beginning of the Second Temple period] who prayed successfully that the Yetzer Ha'ra for idolatry be "slaughtered," i.e., eradicated from the Jewish People.

**"Then came the angel of death"** refers to sin'at chinam / unjustified hatred that led to the destruction of the Second Temple and our present long exile.

**"Then came Ha'Kadosh Baruch Hu"** alludes to the eventual fulfillment of the verse (Yeshayah 11:11), "On that day, Hashem will again show His Hand to acquire the remnant of His people." At that time, [in the words of Yeshayah (25:8)], "He will eliminate death forever." Then, concludes R' Chaver, He will enlighten our eyes with a clear light - speedily in our days, Amen! (Haggadah Shel Pesach Yad Mitzrayim)