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Covenant and Conversation
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

Why Civilisations Die

In The Watchman's Rattle, subtitled Thinking Our Way Out of Extinction, Rebecca Costa delivers a fascinating account of how civilisations die. When their problems become too complex, societies reach what she calls a cognitive threshold. They simply can't chart a path from the present to the future.

The example she gives is the Mayans. For a period of three and a half thousand years, between 2,600 BCE and 900 CE, they developed an extraordinary civilisation, spreading over what is today Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Belize, with an estimated population of 15 million people.

Not only were they expert potters, weavers, architects, and farmers, they also developed an intricate cylindrical calendar system, with celestial charts to track the movements of the stars and predict weather patterns. They had their own unique form of writing as well as an advanced mathematical system. Most impressively they developed a water-supply infrastructure involving a complex network of reservoirs, canals, dams, and levees.

Then suddenly, for reasons we still don't fully understand, the entire system collapsed. Sometime between the middle of the eighth and ninth century the majority of the Mayan people simply disappeared. There have been many theories as to why it happened. It may have been a prolonged drought, overpopulation, internecine wars, a devastating epidemic, food shortages, or a combination of these and other factors. One way or another, having survived for 35 centuries, Mayan civilisation failed and became extinct.

Rebecca Costa's argument is that whatever the causes, the Mayan collapse, like the fall of the Roman Empire, and the Khmer Empire of thirteenth century Cambodia, occurred because problems became too many and complicated for the people of that time and place to solve. There was cognitive overload, and systems broke down.

It can happen to any civilisation. It may, she says, be happening to ours. The first sign of breakdown is gridlock. Instead of dealing with what everyone can see are major problems, people continue as usual and simply pass their problems on to the next generation. The second sign is a retreat into irrationality. Since people can no longer cope with the facts, they take refuge in religious consolations. The Mayans took to offering sacrifices. Archaeologists have uncovered gruesome evidence of human sacrifice on a vast scale. It seems that, unable to solve their problems rationally, the Mayans focused on placating the gods by manically making offerings to them. So apparently did the Khmer.

Which makes the case of Jews and Judaism fascinating. They faced two centuries of crisis under Roman rule between Pompey's conquest in 63 BCE and the collapse of the Bar Kochba rebellion in 135 CE. They were hopelessly factionalised. Long before the Great Rebellion against Rome and the destruction of the Second Temple, Jews were expecting some major cataclysm.

What is remarkable is that they did not focus obsessively on sacrifices, like the Mayans and the Khmer. With their Temple destroyed, they instead focused on finding substitutes for sacrifice. One was gemillat chassadim, acts of kindness. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai comforted Rabbi Joshua, who wondered how Israel would atone for its sins without sacrifices, with the words: "My son, we have another atonement as effective as this: acts of kindness, as it is written (Hosea 6:6), 'I desire kindness and not sacrifice.'" Avot deRabbi Natan 8

Another was Torah study. The Sages interpreted Malachi's words, "In every place offerings are presented to My name," (Malachi 1:11) to refer to scholars who study the laws of sacrifice (Menachot 110a). Also: "One who recites the order of sacrifices is as if he had brought them." Taanit 27b

Another was prayer. Hosea said, "Take words with you and return to the Lord . . . We will offer our lips as sacrifices of bulls" (Hos. 14:2-3), implying that words could take the place of sacrifice.

He who prays in the house of prayer is as if he brought a pure oblation. Yerushlami, Perek 5 Halachah 1

Yet another was teshuvah. The Psalm (51:19) says "the sacrifices of God are a contrite spirit." From this the Sages inferred that "if a person repents it is accounted to him as if he had gone up to Jerusalem and built the Temple and the altar and offered on it all the sacrifices ordained in the Torah" (Vayikra Rabbah 7:2).

A fifth approach was fasting. Since going without food diminished a person's fat and blood, it counted as a substitute for the fat and blood of a sacrifice (Brachot 17a).

A sixth was hospitality. "As long as the Temple stood, the altar atoned for Israel, but now a person's table atones for him" (Brachot 55a). And so on.

What is striking in hindsight is how, rather than clinging obsessively to the past, leaders like Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai thought forward to a worst-case-scenario future. The great question raised by parshat Tzav, which is all about different kinds of sacrifice, is not "Why were sacrifices commanded in the first place?" but rather, "Given how central they were to the religious life of Israel in Temple times, how did Judaism survive without them?"

The short answer is that overwhelmingly the Prophets, the Sages, and the Jewish thinkers of the Middle Ages realised that sacrifices were symbolic enactments of processes of mind, heart, and deed, that could be expressed in other ways as well. We can encounter the will of God by Torah study, engaging in the service of God by prayer, making financial sacrifice by charity, creating sacred fellowship by hospitality, and so on.

Jews did not abandon the past. We still refer constantly to the sacrifices in our prayers. But they did not cling to the past. Nor did they take

By Janet Rottenberg, Mindy & Shmuel Tolchinsky & Family, Simi & Sammy Franco & Family, and Jerry Rottenberg to commemorate the 14th Yahrzeit of Melvin Rottenberg, Menachem Mendel ben Tzvi Yehuda, z"l, beloved husband, father and grandfather on the 9th of Nissan. May his Neshama have an Aliyah from this learning

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refuge in irrationality. They thought through the future and created institutions like the synagogue, house of study, and school. These could be built anywhere, and would sustain Jewish identity even in the most adverse conditions.

That is no small achievement. The world's greatest civilisations have all, in time, become extinct while Judaism has always survived. In one sense that was surely Divine Providence. But in another it was the foresight of people like Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai who resisted cognitive breakdown, created solutions today for the problems of tomorrow, who did not seek refuge in the irrational, and who quietly built the Jewish future.

Surely there is a lesson here for the Jewish people today: Plan generations ahead. Think at least 25 years into the future. Contemplate worst-case scenarios. Ask "What we would do, if…" What saved the Jewish people was their ability, despite their deep and abiding faith, never to let go of rational thought, and despite their loyalty to the past, to keep planning for the future.

The Person in the Parsha
Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

The Practical Mystic

The world did not know that he was a mystic. He was an accomplished diplomat, who knew how to deal with people in positions of great power. Some characterized him as a shrewd, and even manipulative, manager of men. His name was Dag Hammarskjold, and he was the second Secretary-General of the United Nations.

He died in an airplane crash in September of 1961 and was posthumously awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. It was as an astute and successful politician that the world knew him.

It was only after his tragic and untimely death that his personal journal was discovered. It was subsequently published under the title Markings, and it revealed a rare depth of introspection, which some described as poetic, whereas others saw in it poignant expressions of mystical experiences.

For me, Hammarskjold was but a twentieth-century example of my own favorite type of hero, the person who combines worldly skills with a private spiritual essence. He was a man who lived in the world of action, dealing with the obstinate problems of international relations, but he drew his inspiration from sources within his innermost being.

The Jewish biblical tradition knows of quite a few heroes of this type—men who were engaged in the affairs of the world, but also in touch with the deep wellsprings of their souls. Surely, the Patriarch Abraham was one such person, and King David was clearly another.

Another twentieth-century example of an individual who could harmonize his profound inner inspiration with the demands of life as a public figure was Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the first chief Rabbi of the Land of Israel, of whom I have written frequently in this weekly column. He too was characterized by many as a mystic, and indeed his written works testify to his mystical bent. But he was engaged in public affairs in an era of history which demanded political acumen, diplomatic skill, and the courage to act upon religious and nationalistic convictions.

Rav Kook's commentary on a passage in this week's Torah portion, Parshat Tzav (Leviticus 6:1-8:36), offers a very creative analysis of the symbolism of the Temple sacrifices which illustrates the combination of inner inspiration and outer action which I find so fascinating, so rare, and so very necessary.

At the beginning of the parsha, we read of the olah offering, the olah being that sacrifice which was totally consumed by the fire upon the altar. As we read the details of this offering, we learned that its service involved three different locations, with descending sanctity:

Upon the altar, of which we read "…It is burned upon the altar all night until morning, while the fire on the altar is kept going on it." (Leviticus 6:2)

Next to the altar, of which we read "The priest… shall take up the ashes to which the fire has reduced the burnt offering on the altar, and place them beside the altar." (ibid. 6:3)

Outside the camp, of which we read "He shall then take off his vestments and put on other vestments, and carry the ashes outside the camp…" (ibid. 6:4)

We then read that "the fire on the altar shall be kept burning, not to go out" and that "every morning the priest shall feed wood to it." (ibid. 6:5)

Rav Kook sees the three different locations as metaphors for three different stages which are necessary in what he calls the prophetic life, but which we can readily apply to the life of every human leader.

The first stage is "a blaze of sacred flames inside the human soul," corresponding to the fire on the altar. This is the deep inner experience which can be superficially described as introspective insight, but which is in truth a mystical moment.

The prophet, or genuine leader, must not allow that experience to remain buried internally. He must raise it to the surface of his being and integrate these "flames" into his external character and unique personality. This integration is the second stage.

But he cannot stop there. He must now take the person whom he has become by virtue of incorporating the profound spiritual experiences into his very human self and connect to the outside world, far away from the mystical cocoon which he has heretofore enjoyed.

In this third stage, when he engages the real world with all its imperfections, he must be ready to change his vestments. He must put on not only new clothing but a new persona. In the words of the Talmud (Shabbat 114a), "The clothes worn by a servant while cooking for his master should not be used when serving his master wine".

Yet, even during this third stage of interaction with the mundane affairs of the world, the fires on the altar continue to burn. The sources of warmth, illumination, and inspiration are ever present, even if they are in some manner far removed.

And the prophet, or leader, must ever seek to renew himself, by returning each and every morning to the altar's hearth, to place new kindling wood there, and to rejuvenate his soul.

This brilliant application of the detailed laws of the Temple sacrifices to the psyche of the prophet/leader can be found in the first volume of Rav Kook's commentary on the Siddur, or daily prayer book, Olat Re'iyah. It is masterfully summarized in Rabbi Chanan Morrison's Gold from the Land of Israel.

Some readers might find it odd, and others might even find it improper, for me to be comparing the saintly Rabbi Kook to the worldly Dag Hammarskjold. But I have long followed Maimonides' advice to accept the truth from every source, and I find much spiritual truth in the words of this Swedish diplomat.

This was a man wise enough to say, "The longest journey is the journey inwards."

This was a man sufficiently spiritual to say, "God does not die on the day when we cease to believe in Him, but we die on the day when our lives cease to be illumined by the steady radiance, renewed daily, of a wonder, the source of which is beyond all reason."

This was a man who could offer us this sage advice: "In our age, the road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action."

Rav Kook, using the ritualistic terminology of the ancient Temple sacrifices to be found in this week's Torah portion, delivered a similar message, and offered us the identical sage advice: "The road to holiness passes through the world of action."

But he would add, "And back again!"

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

On All Other Nights We Eat Chametz and Matzah

The following is both a beautiful comment on Parshas Tzav and on the Hagaddah.

The first of the four Mah Nishtana questions is "…on all other nights we eat chametz or matzah, tonight only matzah". Most of us have been saying this since we were five years old. Maybe when we were five, we did not pause to notice the following very glaring inference:

The traditional way to translate "she'bechol haleilos anu ochloim chametz u'matzah" is that on all other nights we can eat either Chametz or Matzah. In truth, that is not what the questions says. Literally, the question states that every night of the year, we eat chametz and matzah. Now in fact, rarely, at any given meal, do we eat both chametz and matzah together. So, it seems that it would have been more appropriate to phrase this question differently.

In fact, it is not necessary to go very far to come up with a more apt way of expressing this "either/or" dichotomy between chametz and matzah. The fourth question states "…on all other nights we are seated bein yoshvin u'bein mesubin (whether sitting or reclining) tonight we are all reclining." If the author of the Hagaddah is smart enough to figure out how to contrast two alternative scenarios with the expression "bein yoshvin u'bein mesubin" why did he not utilize a similar formula and say "shebechol haleilos anu ochlim bein chametz u'bein matzah," which would mean "either/or"?

The Binyon Ariel was the Rav in Amsterdam. He says that the first question is indeed precisely articulated as stated that "on all other occasions we eat chametz and matzah together". How so?

The Binyon Ariel explains something unique about the Korban Todah (Thanksgiving Offering), which is in our parsha. The Korban Todah is a very unique offering. Not only do you bring an animal offering on the Mizbayach (Altar), but together with the Korban Todah, the person needs to bring "Lachmei Todah" (breads of the Thanksgiving Offering). Lachmei Todah are very peculiar because they include both leavened and unleavened loaves!

The Binyon Ariel explains that the first question in the Hagaddah (based on the Mishna in Arvei Pesachim) is referring to the fact that normally when we bring a Korban Todah, we do so with chametz and with matzah together. This question is not referring to what we eat on Seder night in our time. This question is referring to the Korban Pesach, which is very similar to a Korban Todah. Unlike the normal Korban Shlamim which may be eaten for two days and one night, the Korban Todah is only eaten for one day and the following night (i.e. – it must be consumed by the following morning). A Korban Pesach is like that as well. Furthermore, just like a Korban Todah needs to be accompanied with bread, so too a Korban Pesach needs to be accompanied by bread ("It shall be eaten upon matzaoh and marror" (Shemos 12:8).

The author of the Hagaddah is asking why on this night are we bringing this unique kind of Thanksgiving Offering that is eaten only with unleavened bread and not also with leavened bread? This is how the Binyon Ariel interprets the first question of the Mah Nishtana.

Rabbi Buchspan from Miami Florida wanted to explain the symbolism of the fact that the regular Korban Todah includes both chametz and matzah and the Korban Pesach only includes matzah.

Rabbi Buchspan quotes an interesting insight from Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch in Sefer VaYikra on the parsha of Korban Todah. Rav Hirsch writes that matzah represents nature in its crudest form, before human involvement and innovation. What is matzah? Flour and water. It does not get more basic than that. There is very little human innovation. You put the flour in the water, you bake it, v'nomar amen.

On the other hand, chametz is an example of man's manipulation of the natural elements, where human ingenuity yields a far more advanced and sophisticated product than the original ingredients. When you take flour and water and you add yeast and other ingredients, then instead of getting a thin little matzah that sometimes tastes not much better than cardboard, you get a geshmake challah that is a symbol of human involvement and the human ability to make something so much superior to a basic nature-based product.

Rabbi Buchspan writes that when the four individuals who are required to offer a Korban Todah (those who travel across a desert, those who travel across the sea, the seriously ill who are healed, and those who are freed from imprisonment – Brochos 54b) bring their Thanksgiving Offering, they acknowledge that there were two elements that saved them. Number one, the Hand of G-d saved them, with minimal if any human involvement. That is symbolized by the matzah. But whenever a person is saved in any one of these situations, there is also human involvement. When a person is sick and he needs an operation, it is not the doctor or the surgeon that heals, it is the Ribono shel Olam that heals. But on the other hand, healing requires hishtadlus (human effort). You need to find the right doctor. You need to go to the doctor. You need to make decisions regarding your care and follow the recommended medical protocol. A person's healing certainly requires personal involvement as well as that of the Almighty. We are not Christian Scientists who claim "The Almighty made me sick. He will make me well." We do great hishtadlus in seeking competent medical treatment, which is a very legitimate thing to do.

Likewise, if a person is crossing a desert or travelling on the high seas, he needs to make effort on his own to return to civilization. He cannot just rely on the Ribono shel Olam to miraculously pluck him from his dangerous situation. If a person is on a sinking ship, he needs to get into the life boat. He cannot say "If G-d wants to save me, He will save me miraculously." So the four individuals who need to offer thanks must all offer a dual acknowledgement – an acknowledgement of the Yad Hashem, symbolized by the matzah (which is lacking in human involvement) and an acknowledgement of his own successful effort to return safely home or to regain his health, symbolized by the chometz (which requires human involvement).

However, the Korban Pesach is different. This is the miracle of the Ribono shel Olam acting on His Own. "You shall not leave the door of your house until morning" (Shemos 12:22). The Angel of Death was roaming the streets of Mitzrayim. What were the Jews supposed to do? They were commanded to do nothing, to act with total passivity. Everything will be taken care of by the Ribono shel Olam. That is why the Korban Pesach—which is a form of the Korban Todah, which normally involves human participation—was brought with only matzah, symbolizing the lack of human involvement in the deliverance from Mitzrayim.

Dvar Torah: Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Here is a riddle for you: Where do we find a Gematria in which the numerical equivalent of the title of a Parsha, equals the number of verses within that portion?

The answer is that this week's portion of Tzav. Tzav, 'tzade' is 90, 'vav' is six, that adds up to 96 and that's the number of verses in the Parsha. With Tzav, what it says on the tin is what you find within it.

I find it very interesting that if you were to ask the average person, what is the one food which is more treif than any other? Everybody would say, it is 'chazir', it is pig.

But what is really interesting is that actually the Torah tells us that the pig scores one out of two, when it comes to the two requirements for animals to be kosher, because a pig does have cloven hooves.

However, it does not chew the cud. Actually, the fact that the pig scores 50%, is what makes it seem more treif than any other food.

It's the fact that outwardly it presents itself as being kosher, but internally it is treif and you can't have anything more treif than that.

In the book of Shemot we read, how the 'Aron', the Ark of the Covenant was layered with pure gold, both on the outside and on the inside, in order to teach us 'Tocho kebaro', what you see on the outside is also what it contained, in the inside.

Both outwardly in terms of our persona and when it comes to our true inward characters, we too need to be as good as gold.

So, let's never forget the message, the lesson of the title Tzav and that is in life, what you see on the tin should match what is inside it.

Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

The Paradox of the Pesach Symbols: The Jewish Dance for Eternity
Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Brander

In just a matter of days, we will all sit at the festive Seder table, in commemoration and celebration of the foundational story of our people. We will read the Haggadah, our guidebook through the evening, as we tell our story with the help of the various symbolic foods that grace the Seder table.

And yet, this year the joy of the holiday is colored with grief, sorrow and anxiety. There are so many empty chairs at so many Seders - some for reservists back on the frontlines, some for the remaining hostages, some for those who remain in hospital for their injuries or in hotels as their displacement continues, and yet more for all whose lives have been taken from us on and since Oct. 7th. The weight grew even heavier on Saturday night, as Iranian cruise missiles and drones rained down on our cities, striking fear into the hearts of Israelis across the country. This latest escalation in Iran's campaign to destroy our nation threatens our very existence and instills even greater anguish in the minds of our already overburdened children. How are we meant to focus on the festival's messages of freedom, peoplehood and redemption in the face of the overwhelmingly tragic and terrifying events of the last six months?

Perhaps the answer lies in the duality of the Seder's narrative and of its symbols themselves.

The Mishna in Masechet Pesachim (10:4) presents the framing through which we are commanded to read the Exodus narrative: Matchil bignut, umisayem bishevach, 'opening with shame and servitude, and ending with praise.' In order to fulfill the mitzva of sippur yetziat Mitzrayim, of telling the story of our release from bondage in Egypt, we must begin our retelling by recounting the servitude itself, and only then make our way towards redemption.

This framing, making space for both the servitude and the redemption, plays out in the symbolic items on the Seder table as well. The Matza we eat is presented twice in Maggid - first in the Ha Lachma Anya, seeing in the Matza the bread of affliction eaten while our ancestors were enslaved in Egypt, and then again at the closing of the Maggid section, where the Matza celebrates redemption, reminding us of the hurried departure from Egypt, which left the Jews with no time to allow their dough to rise.

The same goes for the Maror, the bitter herbs. The Mishna (Pesachim 10:5), cited in the Haggadah, attributes the Maror to the bitterness of slavery (Shemot 1:14), yet Rav Chaim ibn Attar, in his masterful commentary Or Hachayim (Shemot 12:8), sees Maror as a way to accentuate the taste of the Korban Pesach eaten with it. Even the Maror has a dual purpose, focusing on both dimensions of Pesach: the enslavement and the redemption.

So, too, for the four cups of wine. On the one hand, they are traditionally associated with the four redemptions from Egypt (Shemot 6:6-7; Yerushalmi Pesachim 10:1). On the other hand, the Shulchan Arukh (Orach Chayim 472:11) notes a preference for red wine for it recalls the blood of the Jewish children spilled by Pharaoh as he had them cast into the Nile.

Even the sweet Charoset, according to Gemara Pesachim (116a) holds within it a duality of meaning, directing our memory both to the fragrant apple orchards in which Jewish women would secretly birth their children, as well as to the thick mortar the Jewish slaves would prepare and use during their backbreaking labor.

Each one of these symbols has two layers of meaning, one of Genut/Avdut (denigration and slavery) and one of Shevach/Geula (praise and redemption). Yet unlike the telling of the story, which follows a clear chronological trajectory, the symbols on our Seder table are denied the luxury of beginning with sadness and journeying into joy. On the contrary, our Matza, Maror, wine, and Charoset are left to hold the whole story together - simultaneously the tragedy and the relief, all the pain and all the healing, all the grief and all the hope - in a single instant.

This intermixing of suffering and redemption speaks to us so clearly this year. We will celebrate our people, our State, and our bright future, without losing sight of all that remains broken, the empty chairs, the unbearable sacrifices, and the ongoing challenges facing our people. We will bring all this grief with us into Pesach this year, as we reminisce about marching out of Egypt and dream ahead to our ultimate redemption.

These feelings are not in opposition to one another, but complementary - the story of our people, throughout history and in this moment, holds within it both of these poles. We are both a redeemed people and a people in a state of challenge, with both Eliyahu the prophet and the angel of destruction simultaneously knocking on our door on Seder night. For this is the Jewish dance towards eternity.

Our challenge for this Passover is not to lose sight of either, making space for both our heartbreak and our hope, praying that it won't be long before we 'sing a new song upon our salvation, and upon the redemption of our souls.' (Haggadah)

The Days of Miluim – Seven or 100+?
Shulamit Friedler

The portion of Tzav in the book of Vayikra focuses on the Sacred Service performed in the Mishkan. In the second part of the parsha, the seven days of inauguration preceding the dedication of the Mishkan (miluim) are described, culminating in the climactic eighth day, which is elaborated on in next week's portion.

On each of the seven days of miluim, a lengthy and detailed ceremony took place, executed exclusively by Moshe. During the ceremony, Moshe bathes Aharon and his sons and dresses them in the priestly garments. He then anoints the Mishkan and the Kohanim with the anointing oil, and offers three sacrifices on each of the days: a sin offering, a burnt offering, and a consecration offering.

At the conclusion of the days of inauguration, the Mishkan becomes sanctified, and the Kohanim complete their consecration, transforming into the sacred servants of the Mishkan.

In this article, I will focus on the process by which Aharon and his sons ascend from the status of ordinary men to the rank of Kohanim serving in the sanctuary. For this purpose, a meticulous seven-day process is required, involving three components:

External appearance – Moshe bathes the Kohanim and dresses them in garments of "splendor and beauty."

Anointment and sprinkling – the Kohanim are anointed with the anointing oil, and Moshe sprinkles the blood of the sacrifices upon them.

Study – The Kohanim learn how to perform the Sacred Service of the Tabernacle while observing Moshe perform the different tasks.

All of these things take place in multiples of seven, a number symbolizing both holiness as well as wholeness in Judaism.

The rituals of the inauguration days can be analyzed through a well-known sociological prism called "Rite of Passage" (in French: Rite de Passage), a term coined by the French ethnographer Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957). The term "Rite of Passage" was created to explain the way in which a person transitions

from one social status to another in human society.

For example, when a person gets married, the transition from being single to being married is a change in status that requires preparation for the rights and obligations of a married person, both for the individual getting married as well as for the community that needs to recognize the individual's change of status.

In traditional rites of passage, there are typically three stages:
Stage 1: Separation – This stage involves detachment from the previous social status (e.g., walking towards the wedding canopy with the parents).

Stage 2: Transition – This stage involves standing on the threshold of the new status. At this point, the individual has left the old status but has not yet taken on the new one (e.g., the wedding ceremony itself).

Stage 3: Incorporation – This stage marks the final adoption and formal establishment of the new status (e.g., the newlywed couple walking together from the wedding canopy towards the community and the bridal chamber).

The ritual, with its various stages, expresses the essence of the change, prepares the involved parties for the change, and then makes it public knowledge, thus contributing to the social acceptance of the change that has taken place.

In my view, the seven days of miluim, or inauguration, can be seen as a kind of "Rite of Passage" that contributed to the acceptance of the change in the status of Aharon and his sons, transforming them from ordinary individuals in the community to the status of Kohanim serving in the sanctuary.

During the first stage of the ritual, the stage of separation, Moshe is commanded to gather all the congregation of Israel at the entrance of Ohel Mo'ed, the Tent of Meeting (Vayikra 8:3): "And assemble thou all the congregation at the door of the Tent of Meeting."

Why is it important for the congregation to be present at the consecration of the Kohanim?

One of the characteristics of a rite is its publicity. The congregation witnesses the entry of the Kohanim into the sanctuary. This publicity serves an important function: it informs the community of the change in the Kohanim's status and prepares them for it.

To complete their separation from their previous status, the Kohanim do not leave the entrance of the Tent of Meeting throughout the seven days that follow.

During these seven days of miluim, the second stage of the rite – the transition – takes place. This is an intermediate stage where the Kohanim have already left their previous daily lives behind and are in the process of "filling their hands" with the tools needed for their new role. They are in a state of learning and are anointed to become sacred servants.

On the eighth day, the day of the consecration of the sanctuary, the third and final stage of the rite takes place – incorporation, the final transition to the new status, whereby the Kohanim begin their service in the sanctuary.

And how does all of this relate to the reserve duty, the miluim, of our soldiers?

On the official website of the IDF, it is recounted that David Ben-Gurion coined the term "miluim" for reserve duty. During the first government meeting in 1948, Ben-Gurion declared the establishment of the initial miluim units – reserve forces which would be available for conscription when needed. Ben-Gurion insisted that these units be called "amal" [עמל], the Hebrew acronym for "reserve forces [עתודות מילואים]. He derived the term "miluim" from the Bible; more specifically, from the seven days of inauguration during which the Kohanim fulfilled their duties and engaged in the Sacred Service. Over time, the word "amal" was dropped from official documents, leaving only the word "miluim", which became the commonly accepted term for reserve duty in the military.

In recent months, the concept of "miluim" has become particularly prevalent in our discourse due to mass conscription under Tzav 8 emergency mobilization due to the intense war imposed upon us.

At the outset of the war, the media described the mobilization of reservists as unprecedented, exceeding 100%. Men and women who left behind their daily routines, their families, their jobs, came to stand at the forefront and defend the people of Israel.

As can be seen from our portion, in Biblical Hebrew "miluim" translates to dedication and consecration. It is also reminiscent of the Hebrew "lemale yad" ["to fill one's hand with the task"], and means just that: to assume a role, filling one's hands with tools and work. During the seven days of miluim, the Kohanim were tasked with serving in the Mishkan.

Similarly, on the seventh of October, reserve soldiers took on the responsibility of protecting the nation.

While these roles may differ in nature, they both share a commonality in their public duty and the sacrifice of personal lives for the greater good of the nation.

Transitions are complex processes that demand adaptation. Our reservists were abruptly compelled to forsake all they held dear, with little warning and no time for the customary rituals of departure or the gradual acclimatization to their new reality. This was made easier by their military background and the rigorous training they had endured in preparation for warfare.

However, in these very days, many reservists return home after enduring extended periods of conflict, uncertain when they might be called back to the front lines.

The military establishment, the community, and the family circle must therefore prepare itself for an optimal transition: a gradual progression is imperative also when bidding farewell to the status of soldier and reintegrating into civilian life, family responsibilities, or professional circles.

This transition requires the three pivotal stages noted above:

The separation stage entails the processing of shared experiences among soldiers, the unit's combat debriefing, and returning the military uniform and equipment.

During the transition phase, soldiers find themselves in a state of limbo, not fully resuming their former lives but gradually reacclimating, perhaps with a period of respite at home with family, a family hike, or an initial reintegration process into the workplace.

Only after the above phases have been implemented, should one ideally progress to the final stage – incorporation, during which time soldiers fully reintegrate into their previous civilian status as parents, employees, and community members, albeit possibly for a limited time – until they are once again called back to reserve duty.

The portion of Tzav underscores the sanctity of the Kohanim and their sacred service in the Mishkan.

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Rabbi Michael Rosensweig
Minchat Chinuch and Minchat Chavitin: The Idealistic Calling of Keter Kehunah

In Parshat Tzav, the Torah (Vayikra 6:13) intriguingly introduces and defines the minchat chavitin as the quintessential korban of Aharon and his progeny - "zeh korban Aharon u-banav" (based upon the cantillation) - before proceeding to specify the content and timing of the offering ("asher yakrivu la-Hashem be-yom himasach oto asirit ha-eifah solet minchah tamid, machzitah ba-boker u-machzitah ba-erev"). Consistent with this subtle emphasis, after establishing that this kehunah-defining minchah is completely consumed on the alter (6:15- "ve-hakohen hamashiach tachtav mibanav yaaseh otah chok olam la-Hashem kalil taktar"), the Torah (6:16) articulates the principle that all minchot kohen, like the aforementioned quintessential chavitin,

are exclusively designated to Hashem - "ve-kol minchat kohen kalil tehiyeh lo tei-achel"!

The symbolic and paradigmatic dimensions of this kohen-korban invite further scrutiny. A rigorous examination of the singular halachot and features of the minchat chavitin would certainly provide indispensable insight into the character of keter kehunah, particularly regarding the role and unique status of the kohen gadol. We will focus briefly on one particular facet. An analysis of the pesukim and rabbinic literature (Menachot 51b and Sifrei ad loc, also discussed by Rashi, Ramban and other commentaries) reveal the remarkable fact that the phrase "korban Aharon u-banav beyom himashach oto" is intentionally ambiguous in order to convey two distinct applications. The minchat chavitin that is offered in two sessions by the kohen gadol every day (and that opens Rambam's discussion of Menachot - Hilchos Maaseh Korbonot 13:1-2) is identical with the minchat chinuch brought once in a lifetime as a complete isaron upon the initiation of every kohen into the avodah.

The fact that the Torah' employed this striking device to communicate the respective independent korbanot obligations of the kohen gadol and the initiate-kohen hedyot reinforces the conclusion that the mostly identical configuration of the offerings is itself significant. While some Geonim (Behag and R. Saadia Gaon) count the two menachot separately in their enumeration of the mitzvot, and there are sources (see Sifrei ad loc and the discussion of Mishneh le-Melech, Hilchot Maaseh Hakorbanot, ch. 13) that support the conclusion that there are minute discrepancies in the ingredients or mode of preparation of these menachot, these views are exceptional.

The predominant stance of the Rishonim (Rambam, Sefer ha-Chinuch etc.) is that the minchat chavitin and minchat chinuch represent a single mitzvah, notwithstanding some differences in implementation. [Even R. Saadia renders "bayom himashach oto" also as "miyom" to integrate the two themes. Rambam (Hilchot Klei ha-Mikdash 5:16) formulates the various offerings-obligations (initiation of kehunah, initiation of kehunah gedolah, and daily kohen gadol chavitin offering) as one: "u-shelashtan ke-achat".] This despite the apparently glaring differences of stature, timing, and circumstances. The minchat chinuch is a singular event in the career and history of every kohen, one that marks a transition, his full initiation into the avodah. The daily minchat chavitin, alongside the once-yearly avodat Yom Hakippurim ("achat bashanah", as formulated twice in Achrei Mot and once in Tetzave), constitutes the obligatory avodah of the "kohen ha-gadol me-ehav", who alone has risen to the pinnacle of the keter kehunah. The protocol of offering two halves of a single korbon (see Rambam and Ra'avad - Hilchot Ma'aseh Hakorbonot 13:4) one almost at the onset and the other close to the culmination of every single day in the mikdash further underscores the theme of the kohen gadol's constancy and consistency, sharply contrasting with the single initiating minchat chinuch of the kohen hedyot.

Upon reflection, however, the implications of this parallel-opposite phenomenon are evident and profound. The two themes are, in fact, mutually enhancing. The initiation of any kohen into the avodah is predicated upon the assumption and accompanied by the aspiration that he be fully committed to the demands and to the ethos of the avodah, and by extension, to the principle of "kulo la-Hashem" that defined the first kohen and kohen gadol, the paradigm who is the focus both of the Torah's presentation of avodat Yom Hakippurim in Achrei Mot and the daily minchat chavitin, here in Tzav - Aharon ha-Kohen. [The perspective that Moshe Rabbeinu actually initiated the kehunah gedolah, a prominent view in Chazal, is fully consistent with this approach. I have explored this previously in an essay on the miluim transition.] He personally may never reach the pinnacle of "ha-kohen ha-gadol mei-ehav", but every kohen's initiation minchah links him to this all-consuming principle.

Indeed, this explains why the minchat chinuch-chavitin is the quintessential kohen-korban, and why it must be "kalil taktar", completely consumed by the mizbeach, an expression of absolute commitment and devotion. Moreover, the principle that underpins the chavitin-chinuch dictates that any minchat kohen demands "kulo la-Hashem", "vekol minchat kohen kalil tihiyeh lo teiachel." Within the parameters of his own obligations, opportunities and actual service, the initiate is to emulate the veteran and venerable kohen gadol himself in his efforts to maximize this ideal. He does not practice "u-min ha-mikdash lo yetze" and other manifestations of an exclusive spiritual focus reserved only for the kohen gadol. However, by sharing once in a lifetime at the onset of his service the korban that every day and all through the day (by means of the two half offerings) crystallizes the kohen gadol's continuous, consistent and all-consuming service, he attaches himself- substantively and symbolically - to this spiritually ambitious, seemingly unattainable theme.

At the same time, the Kohen Gadol's ethos and mission is immeasurably enriched by virtue of his daily korban chavitin's association with the initiates one-time minchat chinuch. Both the spiritual intensity of a life defined by the aspiration of "kulo kalil" and "lifnai ve-lifnim", and the daily rigor of minchat chavitin pose formidable challenges to the kohen gadol persona. He must guard against the danger of spiritual burn-out, being overwhelmed by both his efforts to reliably embody "kulo la-Hashem" and his responsibility to Klal Yisrael ("shluchei de-Rachmana u-sheluchei didei"), as well as the hazard of routinization. The overlap of his twice-daily chavitin avodah with the once-in -a-lifetime minchat chinuch ensures that his all-pervasive service and consuming commitment are always suffused with feelings of excitement, opportunity and a sense of wonder reminiscent of a fledgling kohen ha-oved, initiating his avodah career also inspired by the very persona of the kohen gadol. The kohen gadol's minchat chavitin protocol, as well as the minchat chinuch's enhancement of the kohen gadol's own mission further justifies the stature of this dual korban as the quintessential and defining "korban Aharon u-banav", as well as the precedent for all minchat kohen - "ve-kol minchat kohen kalil tiheyeh lo tei'acchel".

The kohen gadol is a model and inspiration to the kohen hedyot in much the same way that keter kehunah is an avodat Hashem model for all of Am Yisrael. Though avodat kehunah is technically restricted, it is a spiritually specialized prerogative, the motif of spiritual excellence and consuming dedication is relevant to each and every member of Klal Yisrael. [Rambam (end of Hilchos Shemitah) famously elaborates this theme regarding all of Shevet Levi.] The moniker "mamlechet kohanim ve-goy kadosh" reflects this axiomatic truth. The important integrated dialectic of the minchat chavitin-minchat chinuch is a relevant paradigm to every member of Klal Yisrael.