

MARCH 26, 2006

Parashat Tzav – Shabbat HaGadol

Working together

Kol zachar bakohanim yochlenu “*All the males among the kohanim may eat*” (Leviticus 7:6)

The Torah states that a disfigured priest cannot serve in the *Beit Hamikdash*. The Sefer Ha'Chinuch explains that this prohibition ensures that the beauty and grandeur of the Temple is kept up to the highest of standards. A disfigured priest, we're taught, would not allow the Temple's grandeur to shine. Even though some priests cannot serve in the Temple, the Talmud (BT Zevachim 99a) explains that when the Torah states that all *kohanim* may eat of the sin offering, it includes deformed *kohanim*. Even a priest who might, otherwise, seem unworthy still has the rights conferred on him by his lineage.

Some of our brothers and sisters in the American Jewish community are unsure about becoming politically active. They wonder whether Jews should actively engage in the political process. Before talking to our Representative or Senators for the first time – before taking the first step to strengthen the U.S.-Israel relationship – many of us question who we are to take action. Why should a Member of Congress listen to me? Can I really do anything to stop Iran? What can I really do to ensure Israel's and America's safety? *Mi ani?*

Like some among the *kohanim*, we might not be up to every task. But by the rights and obligations we have as Americans, we are all entitled to make our voices heard to our representatives in Washington. ■

Seize the Day

B'yom korbano yei'acheil “*It shall be eaten on the day that it is offered*” (Leviticus 7:15)

In his commentary on this verse, Rabbi Menachem Recanati offers one explanation for why certain *korbanot* may only be eaten on the day that they are sacrificed. He explains that each day has its own intrinsic power and purpose. As such the *korban todah* which has been offered is meant for that day only, and if one waits to eat it, the meat becomes *pigul* – spoiled – and is forbidden.

R. Recanati's lesson is an important one: some tasks are so crucial that they must be done immediately.

After long delays, Iran's race to develop nuclear weapons is finally facing serious opposition. After limited sanctions were passed last year by the United Nations Security Council, many in Iran and the world community have begun to oppose Ahmadinejad's nuclear program. In local Iranian elections, Ahmadinejad's party fared more poorly than expected. Students have protested against him in the streets, protests which seem to be in response to the economic difficulties that the U.N. sanctions have caused. Last Shabbat, the Security Council unanimously passed a new, tougher sanctions bill aimed at forcing Iran to stop enriching uranium. Despite these successes, Iran is moving to

bring large numbers of centrifuges on line – a crucial step in developing the highly enriched nuclear fuel needed to build atomic weapons. Iran’s reaction to the new sanctions has been continued belligerence. In an interview with a French television channel, Ahmadinejad warned that nations "seeking to impose sanctions against Iran will suffer a greater damage themselves, “

While we should be grateful that the United States has been a strong leader on this issue, we cannot rest on our laurels. The passage of this latest U.N. resolution is an excellent step in the right direction, but it has not yet solved the problem. For today, the U.N. has taken action. In order to stop Ahmadinejad from his dream of gaining nuclear weapons, threatening Israel and the West, we must continue to hold Tehran’s feet to the fire. For years, the world allowed Iran’s delaying tactics to work. No further delay can be tolerated. The new sanctions must be put into place immediately. ■

Double Jeopardy

V’achol lo tochluhu “But you must not eat it” (Leviticus 7:24)

Our *parashah* contains the prohibition against eating *chelev*, the forbidden fats of an animal. However, it does not simply forbid the fat of kosher animals - even the fat of those animals which have not been properly *shechted*. Rashi here notes that normally such a prohibition would not be enacted because of the halachic concept of *ein issur chal al issur*. Why, then, would this prohibition apply to non-kosher meat? According to Rashi, this case is an exception because of the absolute nature of the prohibition against eating *chelev*.

Some things are too important to assume we “got it” the first time. They warrant repeating.

Following the Mecca agreement between Hamas and Fatah last month, the Palestinian Authority has established a “unity government.” This government was clearly formed under the pressure of a Western blockade on aid to Hamas. However, as we examine the statements of the new government – still under the control of Hamas’ Ismail Haniyeh – we clearly see that the leopard has not changed his spots. Not one of the three simple demands of the Quartet – the recognition of Israel, the renunciation of violence, and the agreement to abide by previous accords – has been affirmed by this new government.

Despite this obvious failure to meet international demands, some European countries have already started renewing relations with the Palestinians. Last week, 246 U.S. Representatives, led by Rep. Robert Wexler (D-FL), Rep. Elton Gallegly (R-CA), Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-NY), and Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN), sent a letter to European Union Foreign Minister Javier Solana urging the E.U. to stand firm.

In our *parashah* we see that certain prohibitions are so strong, that they must be repeated, even when we might assume that they are already understood. By now, one might assume that our European friends understand the threat posed by Hamas to the peace process – but we don’t have the luxury of such assumptions. One might also assume that our Members of Congress know we are grateful for their support – but our calls and letters of thanks are, nonetheless, necessary. Some things are too important to assume. ■