Eugene Mihaly

A Study of Leviticus Rabbah, With a View Towards Adapting Selected Homilies for Sermons to a Contemporary Congregation

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DIGEST

Every week, many rabbis look through the weekly Torah portion in search of sermon topics. This procedure is generally sufficient when the weekly parasha is from Genesis, Exodus, Numbers or Deuteronomy. However, when the Torah reading is from Leviticus, the rabbi often is in need of assistance. After all, how can a book dominated by priestly regulations concerning animal sacrifice, leprosy and impure bodily discharges be expounded to today's educated and sophisticated Jewry?

The rabbis we read of in Leviticus Rabbah struggled with a similar question over a dozen centuries ago. Their solution was to spiritualize the ritual law (most of which was no longer applicable) into a moral law, which would be eternal. Rather than focusing upon the content of Leviticus, the rabbis analyzed the spiritual significance which lay behind it. As a result, they were able to create a large number of sermons which related both to the text and to the people.

Nowadays, however, Leviticus Rabbah itself is obsolete from a practical homiletics point of view. While its moral lessons remain valid, they are framed in a homiletic structure which lacks practicality in today's Jewish community. The aim of this thesis, therefore, is to bypass the homiletic framework and get right to the message. Once a Levitical verse is understood in a new light, it may be expounded in accordance with one's particular homiletic style. After all, the dilemma rabbis face with Leviticus is not "how," but rather "what to preach?" The following pages contain over two hundred suggested solutions to this question.

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DEDICATION

My mother has always told me that "the greatest gift that parents can give their children is stability." By providing their children with a solid foundation upon which to base their lives, parents can offer protection from life's difficult moments, without restricting the need of children to explore life for themselves. I have been blessed with two such parents. Their love, wisdom and faith in their children have provided Margo, Nat and me with models worthy of our love, respect and emulation. I pray that we may be guided by their example as we make our ways through life. It is only fitting that this rabbinic thesis be dedicated to my parents: Anne and Larry Pernick, who have spent their lives exemplifying the qualities to which rabbis aspire: teacher, counselor and inspiration.

Of course, parents such as these must also have role models. While both my grandfathers, Ben Zelonka ז"ל and Nat Pernick ז"ל died while I was very young, they along with my Grandma Bessie Zelonka and Grandma Jeannette Pernick have been part of this large, loving and caring family which has been such a source of strength during my development. To all of this family, I want to express my love, thanks and appreciation.

Getting through life without too many psychological scars is not easy, but the warmth and support of friends can accomplish wonders. I have been privileged to enjoy some very special friendships here in Cincinnati, in the Detroit area and in Israel. While education and employment now scatter us about, the memories and positive effects of our time together can never disappear.

At age thirteen, I wanted to quit religious school. Rabbi M. Robert Syme wanted me to become a rabbi. I have never regretted that

his plan was ultimately more successful than was mine. His teaching and encouragement throughout the years have shown me the good that a rabbi can accomplish. I hope that my rabbinate will be a source of pride to Rabbi Syme and all those who have helped me during my years at Temple Israel of Detroit.

The encouragement, feedback and enthusiasm of the members of Temple Oheb Shalom - Sandusky, Ohio have helped me to grow and improve as a rabbi. I thank these people for allowing me to be a part of their lives for three years and to witness the vigor with which Judaism can flourish in the life of a community.

Lastly, I wish to express my appreciation to my teachers here at the College-Institute. I especially want to thank Dr. Eugene Mihaly for serving as my thesis advisor and inspiring my love for the midrashic literature.

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INTRODUCTION

There are seventy faces to the Torah.[1] This would seem to be enough to furnish most rabbis with a lifetime supply of sermons. However, while Genesis, Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy contain a wealth of homiletic material, "the book of Leviticus is an embarrassment to the textual preacher. Animal sacrifice - bulls, sheep, rams and goats - the laws of the leper - eruptions, boils, scabs - where shall the preacher find his text?"[2] Whereas the Holiness Code (Leviticus 19) does contain some of the greatest moral and ethical imperatives of the Bible, "the overwhelming portion of the book has little that is inspiring or elevating for contemporary man."[3]

Rabbis can avoid the situation only for so long; sooner or later, we must expound the book of Leviticus. If, as the Midrash says, there are seventy interpretations to everything in the Torah, it is the rabbi's responsibility to uncover them. Fortunately, we need not go about this task alone.

Many centuries ago, numerous sermons on Leviticus were put together in a text known as Leviticus Rabbah (Vayikra Rabbah).[4] Scholars disagree as to when this was done. The latest date generally proposed is the middle of the seventh century, by Leopold Zunz, in Had'rashot B'Yisrael.[5] Mordecai Margulies, in his critical edition of Leviticus Rabbah, says that it was the style of the midr'shay halacha (and other legal works) for the last sages mentioned to be of the generation that committed the text to writing. For this reason, he suggests a compilation date around the beginning of the fifth century.[6] Whereas Hanokh Albeck submits that Leviticus Rabbah is a product of the late fifth or early sixth century,[7] Margulies is willing to go no later than

the middle of the fifth century.[8]

Joseph Heinemann, writing in the Encyclopedia Judaica article on Leviticus Rabbah,[9] states that the editor of Leviticus Rabbah was not necessarily the author. According to Heinemann, the editor had a large number of homilies, from the oral tradition, at his disposal and arranged them as he saw fit. He feels that this probably took place during the fifth century. As such, Leviticus Rabbah is not a reproduction of ancient sermons, but rather a mosaic containing many of their component parts.

Heinemann agrees with Margulies that Leviticus Rabbah was composed at about the same time as the P'sikta d'Rav Kahana.[10] The relationship between these two midrashim is also a point of scholarly dispute, for Leviticus Rabbah and the P'sikta d'Rav Kahana share a number of identical sections, as well as five complete sermons.[11] Margulies notes that Solomon Buber, Abraham Epstein, Julius Theodor and Meir Ish-Shalom all believe that Leviticus Rabbah copied these materials from the P'sikta.[12] Albeck disagrees, saying that the P'sikta took them from Leviticus Rabbah.[13] Margulies subscribes to a more neutral position, saying that both works came from the same school and were the work of the same hand.[14]

It is generally agreed that Leviticus Rabbah shows a great deal of Galilean influence and very little Babylonian. Albeck goes so far as to say that there is no influence from Babylonia whatsoever,[15] however Margulies points to the Babylonian origins of a few of the rabbis.[16] He feels that the text was probably written in Tiberias, along with the Jerusalem Talmud, Genesis Rabbah and the P'sikta d'Rav Kahana.[17]

There has been a great deal of confusion regarding the division of Leviticus Rabbah into thirty-seven homilies. One explanation is that the Midrash is based on the triennial (Tanhuma) cycle of Torah readings; however, this cycle only contains between 20-25 divisions. Heinemann theorizes that the cycle may not have been finalized at the time of Leviticus Rabbah's compilation.[18] He also writes that "it is clear that the editor of Leviticus Rabbah had a different tradition of seder divisions than those which are known to us."[19]

Whatever the explanation, each chapter begins with a p'tihta, the majority of which are complex p'tihtot. This means that the rabbis expound several non-Levitical verses before addressing the verse from Leviticus. Because they do not address sermonic themes relating to the book of Leviticus, many of the homilies within these complex p'tihtot are not included within this study.

Most of the homilies end in n'hemtot, words of consolation directed to the future redemption of Israel.[20] Nevertheless, few of these n'hemtot relate directly to the Levitical verse. Like so many of the p'tihtot, they expound non-Levitical verses, thereby excluding them from consideration in this analysis.

The pages of Leviticus Rabbah illustrate the rabbis' attempt to bring a book of the Torah, with little practical value, to life. The overwhelming majority of the book was obsolete in their day.[21] How much the more so is this true today. As a result, the rabbis probe the spirit and motivation which lay behind the ritual acts. In seeking to spiritualize the cult, they look beyond the "what" to the "how" and "why."

The rabbis make frequent use of analogies, parables, and other hermeneutic devices, such as kal vahomer and g'matria. These continue to be effective, homiletic techniques to this day. However, the rabbis are also wont to approach the text through the splitting of Hebrew words, plays on these words, g'zera shava and streams of connecting prooftexts. These are not viable methods for today's pulpit rabbi.

In approaching this study of Leviticus Rabbah, a number of books and articles were read to acquire technical background regarding rabbinic methods and tendencies.[22] This aspect of Leviticus Rabbah is implicit within this study; however, apart from the introduction, it is not explicit. Rather, it helps to transcend the rabbinic method and to derive modern, homiletic material from the rabbinic discussions.

After assimilating this material, the four-volume, Margulies edition of the Leviticus Rabbah text was analyzed in the search for relevant, sermonic material. Although it differs only occasionally from the Soncino translation,[23] the Margulies text is of far greater value because of its extensive footnotes. Margulies facilitates the understanding of many of the text's confusing sections through his lucid commentary, which appears at the bottom of every page. In so doing, he may clarify how the midrashic text is applicable to that of Leviticus[24] or point out sections of the homily which have no apparent connection to the text.[25] He translates the many Aramaic sections of Leviticus Rabbah into Hebrew and provides a cross reference to variants and duplications of many passages as they appear in other texts. His footnotes are invaluable for properly understanding and appreciating the rabbinic methods and messages.

The quotation of Biblical verses, utilized by the rabbis within their expositions, appears only in the introduction to each chapter of Leviticus Rabbah. Unless otherwise indicated in a footnote, the translations given are those that appear in the new Jewish Publication Society books: The Torah, The Prophets, The Book of Psalms and The Five Megilloth and Jonah. At times, these sources provide a more literal translation, within their footnotes, than that given in the text and these have also been incorporated into this study. While the translations which appear in these books are very readable, they are sometimes troublesome with regard to understanding the midrashic approach to the text. Therefore, frequent recourse has also been made to the Revised Standard Version translation which, along with other translations, is indicated within the footnotes.

In utilizing Margulies' text, each paragraph of rabbinic exegesis (or eisegesis, as the case may be) was read closely and searched for sermonic themes either explicit or implicit within the rabbinic exposition. In the same way that the rabbis of Leviticus Rabbah saw the need to adapt the Levitical text to their day, we can utilize their work as a springboard for modern homiletic material.

The goal of this study is not a scholarly analysis of the technicalities of the Leviticus Rabbah text. This has already been accomplished by many of the sources listed in the bibliography. Rather, the objective is to go beyond the text and to gather from it homiletic themes and ideas which the contemporary preacher can make use of in sermonic expositions on the book of Leviticus.

This study is not a collection of completed sermons on the book of Leviticus. Rather, it is a gleaning of many of the possibilities to be

found in Leviticus. Because there is a large degree of subjectivity in the selection and treatment of the homilies which make up Leviticus Rabbah, this work cannot claim to be anything more than an ezer. There are undoubtedly more potential themes to be expounded than those presented here. Nevertheless, it is hoped that, given a new insight into the Biblical text, the modern rabbi will find a textual basis for many new homiletic themes. In short, this study seeks to assist the rabbi in finding some of those seventy faces of the Torah which can be so difficult to locate when exploring the book of Leviticus.

The first chapter of Leviticus Rabbah examines Leviticus 1:1 ("The Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting . . . "). The rabbis discuss the Lord's call, why it is directed specifically at Moses and why it comes from inside in their examination of the importance of the tent of meeting. This chapter begins the rabbinic exposition of parashat Vayikra.

The first homily in this section opens with Psalms 103:20 ("Bless the Lord, O you His angels, you mighty ones who do His word, hearkening to the voice of His word").[26] At its conclusion, this homily utilizes the similarity between the Lord's voice and the Lord's call to link the final phrase of the Psalms verse (" . . . hearkening to the voice of His word") with the beginning of Leviticus 1:1 ("The Lord called to Moses . . . "). For this reason, the last section of homily one is able to expound Psalms 103:20 as follows:

> "HEARKENING TO THE VOICE OF HIS WORD." Rabbi Tanhum bar Hanilai said: "Normally a burden which is heavy for one is light for two, or one heavy for two is light for four; but can a burden too heavy for sixty myriads be light for one? All Israel was standing before Mount Sinai and saying: ' . . . If we hear the voice of the Lord our God anymore, we shall die' (Deuteronomy 5:22), while Moses heard the voice by himself and remained alive. You have proof that it is so, that out of all of them He called only Moses, for it is said, "The Lord called to Moses."[27]

That Moses is able to withstand hearing the voice of God, while six hundred thousand Israelites cannot, bears witness to his greatness. An effective leader must be able to bear great loads which are too heavy for others. For this reason did the Lord call Moses, the leader of Israel.

In addition to speaking to Moses from the midst of the bush and at the Sea of Reeds, God tells Moses to come up to Him at Mount Sinai and later, to enter the tent of meeting. However, on each occasion, God has to insist that Moses carry out his task. Homily five defends Moses, saying that he does not want to appear pushy. As such, he can be said to follow the teachings of Proverbs 25:7 ("For it is better to be told, 'Come up here,' than to be put lower in the presence of the prince . . . ")[28] and of Rabbi Akiva, who says in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Azzai: "Go two or three seats lower and take your seat, until they say to you, 'come up,' and do not go up lest they tell you to go down. It is better that people say to you, 'come up, come up,' and not say to you, 'go down, go down.'"[29]

Hillel reinforces this point through his interpretation of Psalms 113:5-6 (" . . . enthroned on high, seeing what is below . . . "). Reading midrashically, he understands these words to say: "He that raises himself is to be made to sit down, while he that lowers himself is to be raised so that he is seen." He does so in order to indicate that one who unduly honors himself will be brought down by others, whereas the humble person will be raised up by those around him. The individual ends up at the same seat in both examples; however, in the first case he bears a sense of shame, whereas in the second he carries a sense of pride. Referring this verse to himself, Hillel says: "My self-abasement is my exaltation; my self-exaltation is my abasement."

While the rabbis do show humility to be a commendable quality, they also stress that there comes a time for action, when the moment awaits the man. God asks Moses what he is waiting for; if he won't act, then no one else will.

Moses' call is directed specifically at him; he waits until God calls him before taking action. Should we follow Moses' example or is it preferable to act when we feel the situation warrants it? Do we intervene when we think we can be of help (even if we have not been asked) or wait until our help is requested?

This homily also raises the question of the value of false modesty: is it a virtue or a way of being untrue to ourselves? This question is especially appropriate, seeing as it springs from the example of Hillel, who is well known for saying, "If I am not for myself, then who will be for me?"[30]

The conclusion of the previous book of the Torah (Exodus) details the successful completion of the Tabernacle under Moses' leadership. As a result of handling this responsibility well, Moses is given additional privileges and responsibilities in the beginning of Leviticus, where it states, "The Lord called to Moses . . . . "

Many times leaders feel excluded from the thrill of completing a project, for they may have only directed the labor, as opposed to actually participating in it. This is the case with Moses in homily six. He comes before God and laments that he has contributed no physical labor to the Tabernacle. He says, "Everyone brought a freewill offering for the Tabernacle, except for me." However, God responds, "As you live, your speaking is dearer to me than all else."

The rationale underlying God's statement is provided by Rabbi Tanhuma, who quotes Proverbs 20:15 ("There is gold and abundance of costly stones, but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel")[31] and applies it to the Israelites at Sinai. They had all brought gold to

use in constructing the Tabernacle (Exodus 25:3) and the n'siim, the important people, brought rubies (Exodus 35:27). However, without a leader to coordinate all the labor, the parts could not have come together into a whole; the Tabernacle could not have been completed. Moses, therefore, contributes the most valuable of all the jewels which make up the Tabernacle, namely, his lips of knowledge.

Moses is rewarded for his merit by having God's call go out to him alone immediately following the building of the Tabernacle, i.e. at the beginning of Leviticus. The leader, who has a different role in the creation process than the worker, also receives a different type of reward. Moses' excellent leadership earns him the honor of being singled out by God for the call. This point is reiterated in homily seven, which shows how God is so pleased with the honor Moses has given Him through the building of the Tabernacle, that He now desires to speak privately with Moses.

In Exodus 24:1, God calls Moses and says, "Come up to the Lord, with Aaron, Nadav and Avihu, and seventy elders of Israel . . . ." If God requests to speak with all these people, how is one to know which is the most important among them? The answer is provided in homily eight by the parable of a king entering a province.

> With whom does he speak first? Is it not with the market commissioner of the province? And why? Because the latter occupies himself with the essential requirements of the province. Even so, did Moses occupy himself with the burdens of Israel, saying to them, "This animal you may eat, that animal you may not eat."[32]

Eating is a necessity of life. Moses stands out among the leaders mentioned in Exodus 24, because he alone occupies himself with this

essential requirement of the people. Therefore, if God desires to communicate with the Israelites, it is only fitting that He do so via the market commissioner, i.e. Moses. To lead a group, one must know both what it is composed of and what it needs to ensure its successful continuation. As Leviticus 11 demonstrates, Moses alone satisfies these requirements and so Moses, alone, is called by God in Leviticus 1:1.

In homily ten, Rabbi Eleazar expounds Song of Songs 3:4: ". . . 'till I brought him to my mother's house, to the chamber of 'horati.'" He amends the vocalization of the word to hora-ati in order to give it the meaning of "my teaching," as opposed to "her who conceived me." In this way, Rabbi Eleazar shows that while Israel brings the Torah into its mother's house, i.e. Sinai, she is not responsible for transgressing the Torah until later, when in "the chamber of my teaching," i.e. the tent of meeting. This is the site where God revealed His will to Israel through Moses.[33] Where and how is God's will revealed to us today? Is it more apparent to us in certain places (such as a house of worship) than in others? Is God's will clearer to some people than to others? Also, in what ways is our responsibility for observing God's teaching seen today? Are we succeeding in living up to this responsibility?

Ohel moed, the tent of meeting, is the subject of homily eleven. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi quotes Deuteronomy 5:23 ("For what mortal ever heard the voice of the living God speak out of the fire, as we did, and lived?") to show that before the establishment of the tent of meeting, the voice of God gave life to Israel while, at the same time, destroying

the immoral, heathen nations of the world. The rise of a higher, moral order signaled the decline of immoral societies and the flourishing of moral nations, such as Israel.

The establishment of a moral order is only one of the many contributions of the Jewish people to the world, yet one which is inherent in the definition of a "chosen people." This is the sort of task for which we are chosen, to serve as a light to the nations as regards ethics, values and morality. How does "good" really improve the world? How does "evil" harm the world? Also, what are some of the other great contributions of the Jewish people to the world?

In the second part of homily eleven, Rabbi Hiyya says that Moses has to enter the tent of meeting because the Divine voice is cut off by the tent and is not heard outside of it. How far does God's voice (word) travel today and what kinds of things cut it off? On a more specifically Jewish level, we might ask if the messages of Judaism are getting through to the Jewish community.

Whereas the previous homily notes that the tent of meeting cut off the Divine voice, homily twelve points out that the result of this was that prophecy ceased among the heathen nations. This caused the character of world religion to be altered significantly. Therefore, this homily might help to examine how Judaism has affected world religion and/or thought.

What distinguishes Moses from all the other great, Jewish prophets? According to homily fourteen, it is the clarity of his vision. Rabbi Judah bar Ilai says that the visions of the prophets were distorted

because they traveled through nine different lenses. Their visions were not as clear as those of Moses, who beheld the Divine realm through a single lens. The other rabbis follow the same basic theme; however, they modify it by stating that the lenses of the other prophets were blurred, whereas that of Moses was polished.

What they all agree on is that there is always something intervening between God and the other prophets. Moses, however, beholds the manifestation of God directly, without any intermediary. This homily indicates that an individual achieves more in proportion to the clarity of his vision. It is important to eliminate all obfuscation and to focus clearly on the goal. In this way, the good (represented by the Prophets) may become great (like Moses). Moses is the great figure of Biblical history because of his clear vision.

The second chapter of Leviticus Rabbah expounds Leviticus 1:2 ("Speak to the Israelite people, and say to them: when any of you presents an offering of cattle to the Lord, you shall offer your offering from the herd or from the flock") in order to examine the relationship between God and the people of Israel. Israel is portrayed as God's favorite, a people whose standing reflects on the condition of the world. Nevertheless, Israel must also strive to be an honest people, one worthy of God's special care.

Although God created all the nations of the world, only Israel accepted God's sovereignty and Torah at Sinai. The first three parts of homily four utilize parables to illustrate how Israel's acceptance of ol malhut shamayim distinguishes it from the other peoples of the world. Today's Jews, however, may view their relationship with God in a different light than did their ancestors. Do we, as Jews, continue to view ourselves as a chosen people? If so (or not), what responsibilities does this entail?

Sections two and three of the homily conclude with well-known verses describing Israel's acceptance of God's sovereignty: "The Lord will reign for ever and ever" (Exodus 15:18) and " . . . all that the Lord has spoken we will do and obey" (Exodus 24:7). How do these two Biblical proclamations reflect the modern Jewish viewpoint? The latter is particularly useful as a take-off point for a sermon on Reform Judaism. Shall we do "all that the Lord has spoken?" If not, what is our rationale? How do we feel about the traditional concept of the Torah as the literal word of God? If we cannot accept this idea in toto, how do we know what the Lord has spoken and what not? What role

can a non-Divine Torah play in our lives? Upon what will our decisions and actions be based? Exploring our beliefs concerning God "speaking" in the Torah leads us to an examination of the principle of relativity in Reform Judaism and how this philosophy differs from the more authoritarian doctrine of traditional Judaism.

The first part of homily five portrays Israel's relationship with God as that of an only child to his father. God wants to be sure that all is well with His child and, therefore, commands Moses (regarding Israel) out of parental love and concern. This parable resembles those of the previous homily in that it deals with the unique nature of God's relationship with Israel. However, whereas homily four states that all peoples are children of God, with Israel being especially beloved, homily five presents Israel as the only child of God. Again, we face the question of how we differ from other religions. Are the religions of the world all traveling different roads to the same destination or is there something unique about being Jewish?

The second part of the homily describes Israel as the precious stones and jewels in the crown of the King of kings. As more glory accrues to Israel, the crown of God becomes increasingly bright. The obverse, however, is also true: as more dishonor accrues to Israel, the crown of God becomes increasingly tarnished. This idea finds application both in terms of Jewish behavior and behavior towards Jews. It relates to Jewish behavior in that many people characterize Jews, as a whole, on the basis of those few Jews with whom they are acquainted. As a result, our actions as individuals (be they secular or religious) reflect upon our people, our religion and our God.

The connection between Israel's dishonor and God's glory is also evident in the behavior of people towards Jews. The medieval poet-philosopher Yehuda Halevi said that Israel was the heart of humanity.[34] As a result, the well-being of Israel reflects the condition of the world. Anti-semitism, therefore, is not merely an action directed against Jews, but also against God. By defaming the Jewish people, the anti-semite defames God.

Leviticus 1:2 reads, ". . . when any man (adam) of you brings an offering to the Lord . . ."[35] In this verse, the Hebrew word adam refers to "man" in the general sense. However, the word can also refer to Adam, the first man. Playing on this double meaning, homily seven says that adam as a group should try to emulate Adam the individual. Since he had everything one could want, Adam's sacrifices were not acquired by unjust means. His honesty was inevitable; there was no reason for him to be dishonest. The rabbis recognize that this is not the case with us; there are no such guarantees on our honesty in today's world. Nevertheless, they stress that our worship should also be honest in order to be worthy. The sacrifice of one's emotional self to God is more important than our good deeds, for the former inevitably leads to the latter. Sincere prayer is one of the purest forms of sacrifice.

Chapter three expounds four verses in telling us that all people are equal before God: Leviticus 1:16 ("He shall remove its crop with its feathers, and cast it into the place of the ashes, at the east side of the altar"), Leviticus 1:17 ("The priest shall tear it open by its wings, without severing it, and turn it into smoke on the altar, upon the wood that is on the fire. It is a burnt offering, an offering by fire, of pleasing odor to the Lord") and Leviticus 2:1-2 ("When a person presents an offering of meal to the Lord, his offering shall be of choice flour; he shall pour oil upon it, lay frankincense on it, and present it to Aaron's sons, the priests . . . "). Its basic message is, "do not look at the vessel, but rather, at that which is in it."[36] Wealth and power do not make a person better; it is that which is inside that determines a person's worth. Similarly, the value of what we do is determined by how and why we do it. One may say that the means justify the ends.

Homily two shows God's willingness to accept the offerings of all His people. It begins by relating Psalms 22:24 ("You who fear the Lord, praise Him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify Him! Be in dread of Him, all you offspring of Israel") to Leviticus 2:1. The former verse calls upon all those who fear the Lord to glorify Him. In the Bible, one means of doing so is the meal offering referred to in Leviticus 2:1. Rabbi Samuel ben Nahman says that the Psalms verse refers to the righteous proselytes. They, like all other Jews, have a duty to glorify God. Judaism makes no distinction between the Jew by choice and the Jew by birth, as regards responsibility and status. Therefore, the first part of this homily invites an exposition regarding Jewish attitudes

towards converts and conversion.

The final two parts of this homily utilize Psalms 22:25 ("For He did not scorn, He did not spurn the plea of the lowly; He did not hide His face from him; when he cried out to Him, He listened") to explain how the offering of a poor person is also dear to God. The midrash uses the technique of saying that whereas the way of the world is x, the Torah verse indicates the opposite. Therefore, "in common practice, when two men (one wealthy and one poor) appear before a judge, towards whom does the judge turn his face? Is it not towards the wealthy man? But here, 'He did not hide His face from him; when he cried out to Him, He listened.'" Unlike a human judge, God does not discriminate against the poor. God realizes that the poor person lacks the resources of the wealthy and, therefore, feels the effects of the sacrifice much more keenly. God understands that the poor person has done all that can reasonably be expected of him, and looks with favor upon his humble offering.

This homily shows the equality of the poor before God. What is our view of the less fortunate? Do we seek to assist or understand them, like the Divine Judge, or do we turn our faces away from them, like the human judge? The value of every human being compels us to work for the betterment of the lives of all people; we should not ignore the plight of the unfortunate. The Jewish ethos to engage in social action is implicit within this homily.

Homily four looks at Leviticus 1:16 in relation to Leviticus 2:1, based upon the hermeneutic principle of s'mukhin, which states that if two verses are near each other, they must be related. Rabbi Tanhum ben

Hanilai notes that Leviticus 1:16 ordains that the crop (a small pocket, in the throat, which collects the food) be removed from turtledoves and pigeons before they are sacrificed. The reason for this is that these birds fill their crop by means of robbery and violence. In contrast, since domestic animals do not employ unjust means to obtain their sustenance, their entire being is fit for the altar. God desires our sacrifices, but is more concerned with the methods we employ to obtain them. Similarly, while prayer is important, it must be accompanied by honesty and sincerity. What other ingredients are necessary to acceptable prayer? The questions of how, when and where a Jew should pray spring from this homily's description of what it is God does and does not desire of us.

Whereas the previous homily utilized the s'mukhin principle, there was one verse separating Leviticus 1:16 from Leviticus 2:1. That verse (Leviticus 1:17) is examined in homily five which, like the end of homily two, speaks of the value of the poor person and his sacrifice. Examining this verse, the midrash again points out the difference between the way of the world and what the Torah ordains. Rabbi Yohanan says, "A normal man who smells the odor of (burning) wings is nauseated and you (the Torah) say 'the priest shall . . . turn it into smoke on the altar.' Why is this? In order that the altar may be glorified by the sacrifice of a poor person." Such an individual lacks the resources to bring a larger sacrifice. Therefore, the bird is sacrificed, with its feathers, so that it looks larger and the poor person is not made to feel ashamed on account of his sacrifice.

The midrash also notes that the quality of the sacrifice overrides the quantity. King Agrippa's one thousand burnt offerings could not surpass the importance of two turtledoves, offered in sincerity, by a poor man. All Jews are responsible for supporting the Jewish community and its institutions. Whereas the contributions of the wealthy are important, those of the less affluent mean just as much. Whether the concern be fund raising, volunteer work or charity, people should concentrate on doing what they can and not on what someone else may be doing. When people give what they can, regardless of quantity, they help the cause and they help themselves.

The next section of homily five shows how the small sacrifice may sometimes be necessary to bring about the greater (in quantity) sacrifice.

> An ox was once being led to sacrifice, but it wouldn't move. A poor man came along with a bundle of endive in his hand. He held it out towards the ox which ate it, expelled a needle and then moved on to the sacrifice. In his dream (a message) was revealed to the owner of the ox: "the poor man's sacrifice preceded you."

This parable speaks of the importance of the common person. In all areas of society, the "little people" do have the power to move the "big guys" to action. Wealthy people and large institutions are often characterized by conservatism; they are reluctant to adopt new courses of action. However, an enthusiastic, grassroots movement has the ability to move a reluctant giant to action. Witness the Solidarity movement in Poland, the women's movement in the United States. The push for change must come from those who stand to gain from it. The well insulated are not likely to risk their security needlessly. Therefore, the common people should not despair about an undesirable situation, but

rather organize and plan a strategy for bringing about the desired change. The common people do have clout; they need only learn to use it.

In both of these parables, the wealthy characters are told that a poor man's sacrifice preceded theirs in order to teach them the lesson of humility. The wealthy are asked to give of their resources, just like the average person, and though their contribution may (and should) be larger in quantity, bigger is not synonymous with better. Each of us is expected to give what we can and large contributions are expected of the wealthy. That which goes into the giving is what matters, as opposed to how much is given. The spirit and motivation which underlie one's actions are a truer barometer of an action's worth than the action itself.

This point is also brought out in the final part of homily five, which tells of a woman who brings a handful of flour for a meal offering. Whereas the quantity of this offering is meager, the motivation behind it is great. Using the kal vahomer hermeneutic principle, the midrash tells us that if the word nefesh is applied to a non-living sacrifice, i.e. a meal offering (in Leviticus 2:1), how much the more so should the word nefesh apply when a poor person gives of her meager supply of food to God, for it is as if she is sacrificing her own life. The voluntary sacrifice of the poor is the most highly valued of all, for they can least afford to make it.

Leviticus 2:2 says that the meal offering shall be brought to Aaron's sons, the priests. Since the verse employs the plural form (b'nay Aharon), one may question the need for many priests to handle a

small meal offering. However, homily six says that many priests should participate in order that the spirit which underlies the giving may be recognized and glorified. Rabbi Hiyya implies that this is necessary so that the poor person will not be brought to shame, as is the case with the poor woman whose sacrifice is scoffed at by the priest, in the final section of the previous homily.

The priests, in effect, are instructed to make a big deal over a small sacrifice. How can we, today, make those with little, to feel as if they have much? Who are the disadvantaged of society and what are our moral responsibilities towards them? How can we make people feel good when their lives are so hard?

The second part of this homily looks at the case of a man who goes to great trouble to bring his humble meal offering and the priest who eats most of it on the spot. Through kal vahomer reasoning, the midrash notes that since the priest, who expends little effort on the sacrifice, earns the right to enjoy its benefits, how much more so will this man, who has worked so hard to bring the sacrifice, merit its benefits. In other words, the effort we put into a task determines what we derive from it. Some of us strain to do that which comes easily to others; sometimes, we will try and yet not succeed. Nonetheless, making the effort is important, for it improves us as people. An example of this is the effort to know and understand God. To succeed in doing so is impossible, and yet our religion is predicated on making the attempt. Effort often results in success; it always results in self-improvement.

Chapter four deals with sin and the soul, based on Leviticus 4:2 (" . . . when a person unwittingly incurs guilt in regard to any of the Lord's commandments about things not to be done . . . "). Various kinds of sins are described, as well as their causes and consequences. It should be noted that "sin" is a difficult word to work with today, due to its fundamentalist-preacher connotations. For purposes of homiletics, a speaker may wish to substitute other terms, such as error, mistake or missing the mark, as has the above translation of Leviticus 4:2. Nonetheless, the word "sin" is used here in keeping with its original meaning.

This chapter also exhibits the rabbinic understanding of the soul. The place of the soul is described in relation to God and the human body. The purposes and problems of the soul are shown in detail, with a view towards elevating it to the level of glory intended in its creation.

Three main points are made in the opening section of homily two. The first, made by Rabbi Samuel bar Ami, is that no matter how many good deeds we may do, they are not enough to repay God for the gift of life. We can never do enough good deeds, because we are always in debt to God. The gift of life is the greatest blessing possible, and this homily encourages an exposition on the Jewish view of the value (and perhaps even the quality) of life.

A different interpretation of Rabbi Samuel bar Ami's statement is that no matter how many good deeds one may perform, it is not sufficient to atone for the sin of slander. The scars caused by this sin remain with the slandered person, regardless of any and all actions taken to

remedy them.[37] For this reason, Leviticus 4:2 can also be understood as referring specifically to the sin of slander.

The final theme of this homily is actually brought out in the first sentence, which relates Leviticus 4:2 to Ecclesiastes 6:7 ("All of man's earning is for the sake of his mouth . . . "). In other words, everything we do is directed towards satisfying our appetite. Human beings are creatures of desire, with many different types of appetites. We don't do anything without expecting to satisfy one of these appetites, even if it be the need to receive a "thank you." Although we cannot completely control our need for gratification, we can decide which appetites to satisfy and which to ignore. Feeling good from helping other people is a good desire to satisfy, while needing people to admire us is not. The Ecclesiastes verse need not be seen in a negative light if our appetites are worthy ones.

Continuing the rabbinic treatment of sin, homily three uses Proverbs 19:2 ("It is not good for a man to be without knowledge . . . ") to distinguish between unintentional and intentional sin. The rabbis present five different examples of a person sinning. While the sinful act reflects poorly on the individual who commits it unknowingly in each case, how much the more so is this true (al ahat kama v'khama) in the case of one who sins knowingly. To the latter, the rabbis apply the second part of the Proverbs verse, " . . . and he who makes haste with his feet misses his way." Yitzhak bar Samuel bar Marta presents the case of a man who carelessly buys non-kosher meat. He says that this man is a sinner, for if he had not been in such a hurry, he would have bought kosher meat. Though done unintentionally,

the careless sin is a sin nonetheless.

The root of the word for "sin" used in Leviticus 4:2 is ht. This root often refers to missing the mark; it is frequently an unintentional sin, as opposed to an averah, which generally signifies a sin committed with full knowledge.[38] "Sin" is a word not often used by modern Jews, perhaps because of its connotation with "fire and brimstone preachers." However, we can identify readily with the idea of missing the mark. How do we view this kind of a failure? Does soft peddling it make us more likely to be guilty of deliberate sin? How can we make ourselves less likely to commit careless errors? What sins are we unknowingly guilty of today, and why is our consciousness not raised in these areas? Homily three presents itself as a basis for exposition on these and other aspects of the Jewish concept of sin.

Homily four takes Leviticus 4:2 quite literally, i.e. when a soul (nefesh) sins. It states that the other bodily organs serve only to elevate the soul. However, even though God created the soul as the most exalted of all the body's organs, it is often guilty of sin. If the soul is sinning, then the bodily organs are not operating properly. We have a responsibility to improve our physical condition so that our soul may attain its potential. This homily stresses the vital link between physical fitness and spiritual fitness.

The parable of two men, one lame and one blind, who steal some figs is related in homily five. While each individual is incapable of committing the theft on his own, the two succeed in taking the figs by working together; the lame man gets on the shoulders of the blind man

and directs him to the figs.

These two men represent the division between body and soul. In the continuation of the homily, body and soul blame each other for sins committed; however, God rebukes only the soul, for it should know better than to sin. Rabbi Hiyya illustrates this point through the parable of a priest with two wives, one the daughter of a priest and one the daughter of an Israelite. When the priest finds the t'rumah dough he had given them to be ritually impure, he chastises only the wife whose father was a priest. As with the soul, in the previous example, she is not the only one to sin; however, she is guilty of sinning knowingly, whereas the daughter of the Israelite is not. Many people are guilty of similar sins, but some should know better.

Simply knowing the difference between right and wrong is not enough; that knowledge must be acted on. We are responsible for the actions of the company we keep. If someone, therefore, sins unknowingly while in our presence, it is our responsibility to point out their mistake to them. Judaism does not judge people on their philosophy, but rather on their actions. If we do not prevent others from committing what we know to be a sin, it is as if we are guilty of the sin, for we should know better, even if they don't.

Rabbi Hiyya's parable also shows the importance of environmental factors in our learning right from wrong. How do our homes influence our children as regards morality, in general, and Judaism in particular? What do our children need that they are not learning at home? What can parents be reasonably expected to give to their children?

The lesson of communal responsibility is the focus of the first part of homily six. Israel is likened to a sheep (per Jeremiah 50:17), a small and weak animal whose entire body suffers pain when one limb is hurt. The actions of each Jew, similarly, reflect on the entire Jewish community, for all Israel is one soul.[39] The fate of each Jew is bound up in the actions of his fellow Jew. This is illustrated via the story of several men traveling in a boat. When one of them begins to bore a hole under his seat, his companions ask him what he is doing. He replies that it is not their concern, since he is only making the hole under his own seat. They, in turn, reply that his actions endanger the entire group.

So it is with the Jewish community. Numerically, we are small, and because many people have little or no contact with Jewish people, they are likely to judge Jews and Judaism by those Jewish individuals whom they do encounter. As an interpretation of Leviticus 4:2, the above parable shows that one person's sin can affect an entire people. Job 19:4 is incorrect in saying, "And even if it be true that I have erred, my error remains with myself."[40] As Jews, our responsibility extends beyond ourselves alone. We are also linked to k'lal Yisrael.

The metaphor of the people of Israel as a sheep can also apply to Leviticus 4:3 ("If it is the anointed priest who has incurred guilt, so that blame falls upon the people . . . ")[41]. This verse extends the lesson of communal responsibility one step further by emphasizing the responsibilities of leadership. The leader's behavior, like that of everyone else, reflects on the community. However, by virtue of their being in the public spotlight, leaders can more readily bring shame to their people. Therefore, leaders must be particularly conscious of the

far-reaching effects that their actions may have.

The eighth homily presents a striking analogy between the soul and God. The soul is to the body what God is to the universe. Just as the soul fills, sustains and outlasts the body, God fills, sustains and outlasts the universe. These and other comparisons indicate that God is, in essence, the soul of the universe.

King David praised God with his soul.[42] How does using the soul to experience God differ from doing so through one's rational faculties? The contrast between the possibilities of the intellectual and the emotional calls for exposition.

The pious ones of old used to wait a whole hour before praying, the better to concentrate their minds on God.[43] They recognized the importance of attaining the proper spiritual mood before praying. This homily stresses the greatness of the soul and the vital role it plays in worship. We don't pray with our mind, we pray with our soul.

Because chapter five of Leviticus Rabbah deals primarily with verses not found in Leviticus, only a few homilies contain themes which can clearly and logically be derived from the Torah text. For the most part, these continue the previous chapter's interest in the concept of sin, particularly as it relates to the sin offering of a bull found in Leviticus 4:3 ("If it is the anointed priest who has incurred guilt, so that blame falls upon the people, he shall offer for the sin of which he is guilty a bull of the herd, without blemish, as a sin offering to the Lord") and Leviticus 4:13-14 ("If it is the whole community of Israel that has erred . . . the congregation shall offer a bull of the herd as a sin offering . . . "). The appearance of the bull in both pericopes is used to compare the sins of the anointed priest with those of the community. In addition, a short exposition is given regarding the moral requirements that go along with the priesthood. The final homily, examined in this chapter, uses hermeneutic techniques to transform Leviticus 4:15's details of the sacrificial rite ("The elders of the community shall lay their hands upon the head of the bull before the Lord . . . ") into an exposition on the merit of the elders of Israel.

The end of homily three notes that Leviticus 4:3 and Leviticus 4:13-14 impose an equal penalty (a bull for a sin offering) on the sinning individual and the sinning community. Why should the required offering of one person be the same as that of an entire community? Perhaps to show that one person can influence an entire community to evil, especially if that individual is a leader of the community, as is the case in verse three. Also, as noted in homily 4:6, the actions of an individual may reflect on the entire community.

Another point of this section is that God does not play favorites. The bull must be offered regardless of who it is that sins or how many are in the sinning community. God is impressed neither by status nor numbers, only by actions. A wrong is a wrong no matter who does it. How does this concept of equality (fail to) find application in the temple, community or country today? What kinds of prejudices are we guilty of? Is true equality an impossible dream?

The beginning of homily six notes that the Torah speaks of atoning for the sin of the priest (Leviticus 4:3) before it addresses atoning for the sin of the community (Leviticus 4:13-14). The reasoning here is that one must have his own house in order before looking critically at others. To fault others for a condition which we, too, are guilty of is hypocrisy. Simply put, the rabbis say to practice what you preach.[44]

The second section of the homily laments the locality whose physician is ill, whose governor is a poor supervisor and whose defense attorney plays the part of prosecutor in capital cases. These examples spring from Leviticus 4:3's description of a religious leader who transgresses religious precepts. The message here is that public leadership positions require individuals with certain qualities. Individuals lacking these qualities will not be able to perform effectively. The generation with unqualified leaders risks a tragic fate, for those whom it depends on are undependable.

In the first section of homily seven, Rabbi Isaac looks at Leviticus 4:15 and amends the text in two ways. First, he translates וסמכו זקני העדה את ידיהם as "the elders of the community shall

support," as opposed to "the elders of the community shall lay their hands . . . ."[45] Secondly, he cuts the verse off in the middle, so that the object of "the support" is not mentioned. This allows him to substitute "the people of Israel" for "the head of the bull," as is written in verse fifteen. As a result, his reading of the verse is: "The elders of the community shall support the people of Israel . . . ."[46]

Although one might question Rabbi Isaac's hermeneutic methods, his conclusion is a valid one nonetheless. The elders of the community can, indeed, support the Jewish people. When their insight, wisdom and talent is transmitted to the younger generations, the elders support am Yisrael and keep it strong. As Jews, our past is a significant source of our strength. Those who have lived the past are the key to our hopes for the future.

The sixth chapter of Leviticus Rabbah, which concludes the rabbis' exposition of parashat Vayikra, is based on Leviticus 5:1 ("If anyone sins in that he hears a public adjuration to testify and though he is a witness, whether he has seen or come to know the matter, yet does not speak, he shall bear his iniquity").[47] The responsibility to get involved and to volunteer helpful information occupies a prominent place in this chapter. When speaking up can help people, silence is a sin with potentially powerful consequences. The rabbis also deal with the covenant between God and Israel and the responsibilities it entails.

The first section of homily one lists six Scriptural verses, whose combined effect is to show that after hearing the voice of God, Israel becomes guilty of worshipping the golden calf, of affirming what she knows to be false. Israel knows the truth, but does not proclaim it.

The parable of Reuben and Shimon,[48] in the final section of homily one, shows that two wrongs do not make a right. After agreeing to be a witness for Shimon in court, Reuben changes his mind at the last minute. On the following day, Shimon has the opportunity to present evidence in Reuben's behalf. Seeing as Reuben has not kept his promise to help him, should Shimon now aid Reuben?

The rabbis answer this question by citing Leviticus 5:1. Shimon must aid Reuben if he possesses helpful evidence. One's moral obligations must override the desire for revenge. The moral code of conduct, found in the Torah, is a far more responsible course to follow than that of our passions. This case illustrates the point that we sometimes have to do what is right, as opposed to what we feel like doing.

Although we should not be selfish with what we have, be it testimony, money or even time, we should also take care to avoid adopting a missionary mentality, wherein people feel compelled to share their "testimony" with others, whether the latter want to hear it or not. There is a difference between helping someone who seeks assistance, such as Shimon and Reuben, and forcing one's self on those who don't desire any help. Unfortunately, this simple lesson often escapes those who seek to "save" us. It is more accurate to say that we would like to be saved from them than by them. The parable of Reuben and Shimon can, therefore, serve as an introduction to an exposition on religious missionaries and those who claim to possess the "truth."

Crime is a problem in all societies. Homily two illustrates who is responsible for crime by means of a story, which tells of a governor who puts all receivers of stolen goods to death, while releasing the thieves. The end result is that, without a market for the stolen property, the motivation to steal decreases markedly.

Despite maintaining the appearance of innocence, the buyer of stolen goods is responsible for crime. This type of hidden guilt also appears in other areas of life. Whenever someone says or does something wrong and we are aware of it, but do not object, we encourage their wrongful act. By listening to ethnic jokes and slurs, or observing discrimination and not speaking out, we become responsible for the wrongdoing. Not doing anything is doing something. In cases such as this, silence must be viewed as acceptance of and complicity in the act.

The parable of the weasels shows that the actions of the thief are based on the thief's expectation of our reaction. If citizens do not

take an active part in crime prevention and, thereby, put criminals on the defensive, the citizens are guilty of nourishing the urges of the criminal.

The final section of the homily takes this point one step further. When we know of a wrong, we have the potential to correct the situation. When we fail to mention the wrong, it is as if we are guilty of bearing false witness, for both result in injustice. The rabbis link Proverbs 29:24 ("The partner of a thief hates his own life; he hears the adjuration, but discloses nothing")[49] with Leviticus 5:1 to show that while it is often possible to rationalize such silence, deep down we know that we have done wrong. Our consciences are a powerful influence upon us, if not at the time of the misdeed, then surely later on. We can ignore our consciences, but we can never silence them.

In the beginning and end of homily five, the rabbis cite various verses from Deuteronomy and Isaiah to show that Leviticus 5:1 refers to the Israelites at Mount Sinai. Although Israel has heard the voice of God, the people sin nonetheless. God has made a covenant with them and the Israelites do not keep their part of the agreement. As Jews, separated by over thirty centuries from the Biblical event, how do we relate to the covenant between God and Israel? What does God expect of us today, and what should our responsibilities be to God? What does being Jewish mean to us today?

The seventh chapter of Leviticus Rabbah begins the rabbinic exposition of parashat Tzav, focusing as it does on Leviticus 6:2 ("Command Aaron and his sons thus: this is the ritual of the burnt offering: the burnt offering itself shall remain where it is burned upon the altar all night until morning, while the fire on the altar is kept going on it"). Unfortunately, the homilies of chapter seven are very difficult to adapt to the aims of the present analysis. The first homily, in fact, appears to be the only one containing a theme applicable to modern preaching. It examines the words: "Command Aaron and his sons," noting that although Aaron's sons are mentioned in an earlier chapter of the book,[50] this is the first specific reference to Aaron in Leviticus. God is said to have been angry at Aaron for constructing the golden calf and was prepared to eliminate all references to him from the Torah, as per Exodus 32:33 (" . . . he who has sinned against Me, him only will I erase from My record"). That Aaron ultimately attains glory, rather than erasure, is due solely to Moses' intercession with God. Moses asks, "Can the well be hated while its water is beloved?" In other words, can You hold dear Aaron's sons and, at the same time, ignore where they came from? Should Aaron not benefit from the merit of his children?

God's affirmative response to this last question confirms the validity of the converse of the rabbinic concept of z'hut avot (the merit of the ancestors). It also points to the critical importance of environmental influences upon children, particularly as this relates to the role of parents. The goal of parenting should be to raise children who grow up to be well-adjusted individuals. Many poorly adjusted children have parents who do not permit them to acquire a sense of self-

worth. These parents may not be content to shep nahes from the deeds of their children. Instead, these individuals seek to live the deeds of their children in order to fulfill their own personal dreams. This type of vicarious fulfillment is a psychological threat to children. Parents who put extraordinary pressures on their children may be more interested in their own psyches than those of their children. Common examples of this phenomenon are little league parents, who often transform a kids' baseball game into a war of egos, and grade-obsessed parents who crush their child's self-confidence through the pressure they exert to live up to their expectations. Parents are supposed to guide and influence their children in a positive manner; parents should not take over the lives of their children and deprive them of the opportunity to realize their own potentials, to live their own lives.

The object of chapter eight's exposition is Leviticus 6:13 ("This is the offering that Aaron and his sons shall offer to the Lord on the occasion of his anointment: a tenth of an ephah of choice flour as a regular meal offering, half of it in the morning, and half of it in the evening"). As such, the rabbis deal with two issues: the importance of Aaron's sacrifice and the significance of the mention of choice flour as an offering. In addition, two homilies utilize the hermeneutic principle of g'zera shava in connection with the word "zeh." However, it seems impractical to use the appearance of the word "this" in different verses as the basis for a sermon in today's pulpit. For this reason, these two homilies are not examined.

The final section of homily two compares Aaron's offering in Leviticus 6:13 with the case of Samson, who finds honey in the carcass of a lion.[51] In the text of this midrash, Samson notes that just as the lion uses others for food, food has now come forth from the lion. Similarly, just as Aaron and the priests take of all the sacrifices, a sacrifice now comes forth from them.

These examples illustrate the principle that those who take must also give; it is only right that we do our part to help any endeavor from which we stand to benefit. We are not required to do all the work by ourselves, but neither are we free to abstain from it.[52] The example of this homily, therefore, may be incorporated into an exposition on parasitism or it may take the approach of stressing the importance of give and take within our relationships.

The major part of homily four looks at the detailing of "choice flour for a regular meal offering" in Leviticus 6:13. The homily states that if one is unable to bring a sacrifice from the herd, a lamb may be brought. If that is beyond one's means, a goat is permissible. If one lacks a goat for the offering, fowl may be brought and if even that is not affordable, choice flour will constitute an acceptable offering. God is flexible and does not demand more from us than we are able to give.

This homily also stresses the importance of religious ritual. The rabbis note that it is important that ritual be performed, for it results in a closer feeling between one's self and God. It is difficult to reach the goal of spiritual fulfillment unless one goes through a meaningful ritual process.

Meaningful ritual, however, is not measured in quantitative terms. From its prominence in this verse and in Malakhi 1:11 ("For from where the sun rises to where it sets, My Name is honored among the nations, and everywhere incense and a pure meal offering are offered to My Name . . . ")[53] we learn that the humblest sacrifice is of great significance, if it is offered in the proper spirit. What one does matters less than how and for what reasons it is done.

The homilies of chapter nine are based on the seventh chapter of Leviticus. The first two homilies examined herein deal with Leviticus 7:12 ("If he offers it for thanksgiving, he shall offer together with the sacrifice of thanksgiving unleavened cakes, with oil mixed in . . . "). Unlike the sin and guilt offerings, the offering of thanksgiving is eternal; it will continue to exist long after the need for sin and guilt offerings has disappeared. In addition, since it is voluntary, the thanksgiving offering is the most appreciated.

The last two homilies of chapter nine are based on Leviticus 7:37 ("This is the law of the burnt offering, the meal offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the offering of ordination, and of the peace offerings")[54] and the many forms of sacrifice it speaks of. The peace offering, the last of the six mentioned in this verse, is of special interest to the rabbis, who devote an unusually large amount of space to it.

In homily four, Rabbi Pinhas draws a parallel between three forms of sacrifice (the sin, guilt and thanksgiving offerings) and three people who do homage to a king (a land tenant, one of the king's entourage and one with no formal link to the king). The first two parts of each parallel portray actions which the doer hopes to benefit from: there is a clear motivation for the sacrifice or the homage. However, the thanksgiving offering and the third man's homage to the king are voluntary actions; there is no obligatory aspect to them.

When we, as Jews, thank and do homage to the Supreme King, we tend to do so in our houses of worship. But do we come to temple with a free-will offering or do we have a purpose in mind? Just what are we

trying to do in the temple and how well are we doing it?

One need not thank and honor God in the house of worship alone. Our relationship with God is also evidenced through our moral and ethical behavior. Is this behavior practiced for its own sake or do we fear the consequences of acting immorally? Just why should people be good?

In the parable, the king brings the third man nearer to him, for this man had no ulterior motive in honoring him. According to Rabbi Pinhas' midrashic rendering of Leviticus 7:12 (If it be for a thanksgiving, He [God] will bring him [the man] near), God is also flattered by such voluntary actions. Everyone tends to be impressed and influenced by people who say or do nice things for us when they do not have to. What are the potential dangers of flattery and how do people influence one another? Is it wrong to look a gift horse in the mouth?

When the Messianic Age comes, there will be no more sin and, consequently, the need to atone for sin through prayer and sacrifice will disappear. Nevertheless, the sacrifice and prayer of thanksgiving will remain. Although homily seven portrays the messianic future as a time of goodness and abundance, it is always important, even in the Messianic Age, to give credit where credit is due. Too often, we are guilty of taking things and people for granted. The importance of giving thanks is twofold: it rewards the giver for his gracious act and it reminds us of how much we receive from others. When we take people or things for granted, we risk losing them through our carelessness. Thanksgiving is, therefore, a necessary element in maintaining successful give and take relationships.

Homily eight looks at the number of regulations in Leviticus 7:37 and compares them to a ruler who enters a province with many prisoners. One citizen, alarmed at the number of prisoners, exclaims, "How fearful is this ruler! His neighbor tells him, if you are good, you will have nothing to fear. So it is with the Israelites: they are informed of all the sacrifices that they are responsible for and they grow worried. Moses tells them that if they occupy themselves with Torah, they will have nothing to fear." This parable intimates that the threat of harsh punishment will deter improper behavior; good people have nothing to fear from stringent laws. Which type of laws are necessary for our society today: harsh laws or more flexible laws? What are the possible consequences of either of these alternatives? Is the ultimate punishment, capital punishment, an effective deterrent to crime? An exposition on these questions springs from this homily's emphasis on strong law enforcement.

Homily nine deals at great length with the concept of peace, based upon the mention of the peace offerings at the end of Leviticus 7:37. No less than thirteen rabbis are quoted on their views of why peace is great ("gadol shalom"). The concept of peace is central to Jewish thought, and the rabbis quote verses and examples in abundance to show just how strong is the Jewish yearning for peace.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai says, "Peace is great, for all blessings are included within it," a statement which finds application on both a societal and an individual level. If peace is not present, either in ourselves or our society, we lack a vital sense of stability; we are unable to completely enjoy whatever other blessings we may possess. To

modify Leviticus Rabbah 1:6 somewhat: if you have peace, what do you lack? And if you lack peace, what do you have?[55] The significance of these types of peace and how we can bring them about become grist for the homiletic mill, based upon Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai's extollment of peace.

Hezekiah quotes sections of three Torah verses[56] to show that while we are obligated to perform a good deed if the opportunity presents itself, there is no such obligation should the opportunity not present itself. The latter is not the case with regard to the commandment to pursue peace. Psalms 34:15 reads, " . . . seek peace and pursue it,"[57] which Hezekiah interprets to mean that we must pursue peace until we find it. Whether we seek it in another locale or try and bring it about where we live, Jews have a duty to bring about peace where it does not exist. We are not permitted to sit back and observe dismal or deteriorating scenes; we are told to intervene and improve them. The Jewish stress on social action is manifested clearly in Hezekiah's call to pursue peace.

Bar Kappara reports that the Torah contains evidence of God telling a falsehood in order to maintain domestic tranquility (shalom bayit) between Abraham and Sarah. When the angels of God appear to Sarah to announce that she will give birth, she asks, " . . . am I to have enjoyment with my husband so old?"[58] However, in the next verse, God asks Abraham why Sarah laughed and said that this is impossible " . . . now that I am old."[59] God changes Sarah's words around so as to avoid creating tension between Abraham and Sarah. Shalom bayit is shown here to be of such importance that God is even willing to resort to falsehood in order to ensure it.

Judaism's emphasis on shalom bayit also appears in the example of Rabbi Meir, who tells a woman to spit in his face seven times in order to bring about peace between her and her husband. Rabbi Meir feels obligated to suffer this dishonor, saying that if it is good enough for God, it is good enough for him. His statement refers to Numbers 5:23, which contains an injunction specifying that a scroll containing the Name of God be blotted out in water in order to bring about peace between husband and wife. Rabbi Meir reaffirms the Jewish teaching that one should go to extraordinary lengths in order to bring about or maintain peace.

Rabbi Shimon ben Halafta expresses the greatness of peace through the creation narrative, saying that when it came time to create Adam, God had already created an equal number of upper and lower elements of the universe. The creation of Adam, therefore, threatened to disrupt the harmonious balance of God's creation. Consequently, God created Adam with characteristics from both the upper and lower worlds. This is seen by the references to "the dust of the earth" (a lower element) and "the breath of life" (an upper element) within Genesis 2:7 ("The Lord God formed man from the dust of the earth. He blew into his nostrils the breath of life . . . "). We are, therefore, composed of a balance between the higher and lower elements of creation. Which human qualities fit in each realm and how do they tend to either promote or obstruct peace? Which aspects of our personality must we develop and which must we ignore if we are to attain the ultimate goal of peace?

The tenth chapter of Leviticus Rabbah deals primarily with Leviticus 8:2 ("Take Aaron and his sons with him, the vestments, the anointing oil, the bull of sin offering, the two rams, and the basket of unleavened bread"). The homilies examined here seek to explain why Aaron, a man destined to be High Priest, would build the golden calf. The appearance of the verb "to take," in Leviticus 8:2, is contrasted with its usage in the building of the calf. In addition, the final homily explains how Moses could fulfill the command of Leviticus 8:3, to assemble the entire Israelite community at the door of the tent of meeting. This chapter concludes the rabbinic exposition of parashat Tzav.

The first three homilies of chapter ten form a composite petihta, which relates Psalms 45:8 ("You love righteousness and hate wickedness; rightly has God, your God, chosen to anoint you with oil of gladness, over all your peers") to Abraham, Isaiah and the subject of the anointing ceremony in Leviticus 8:2, i.e. Aaron. The third homily in this chapter reviews Aaron's building of the golden calf from different perspectives. Rabbi Berekhiah says, in the name of Rabbi Abba bar Kahana, that the Israelites first asked Miriam's son, Hur, to build the calf. When he refused, they killed him and made the same request of Aaron. Aaron's thoughts at this moment are deduced by changing the vocalization of the words וַיִּבֶן מִזְבֵּחַ לְפָנָיו [60] (he built an altar before it) to וַיִּבֶן מִזְבֵּחַ לְפָנָיו (he understood from the slaughtered one before him). With Lamentations 2:20 in mind (" . . . should priest and prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord?"),[61] Aaron realizes that the people will become susceptible to the punishment of exile if

they kill him, a priest, in addition to Hur, the slaughtered prophet who lays before him. Psalms 45:8 (above) accurately portrays Aaron, for while he understands the personal consequences of building the calf, he does so for the good of the people. Aaron risks himself to save the others. Therefore, his apparent sin is actually an act of courage and self-sacrifice, themes which now have a textual basis for exposition.

Moses puts Aaron and Hur in charge of the people during his ascent of Sinai.[62] Once Hur is killed, Aaron has little choice but to do as the people demand. He has to make the best of a bad situation, and by agreeing to make the calf, Aaron does what the people want, but in the manner that he wants. In addition to utilizing delaying tactics, Aaron proclaims the following day to be a festival to the Lord, not to the calf. Rather than speaking his mind and not achieving his goal, Aaron outwardly follows the people's wishes and minimizes the gravity of the sin by dedicating the calf to the Lord. Aaron gets involved in evil doings in order to try and change them. Is this idea, known traditionally as ירידה לשם עלייה (lowering one's self for the sake of uplifting others) a feasible one to employ today? If so, in what situations might this undercover strategy be effective? Is it more important to be ideologically pure or to accomplish one's goals?

In outwardly affirming something he did not believe and remaining loyal to God, Aaron's actions serve as a presage to the plight of the Marrano Jews during the Spanish Inquisition. These people also had to affirm that which they did not believe and remained loyal to God. Because of the integral connection between the Marranos and the Kol Nidray prayer, the presentation of Aaron in this homily is especially appropriate for an erev Yom Kippur address.

The final section of this homily closely resembles the first in that Aaron's clear aim is to keep the people blameless. A parable is presented of a king's son who wishes to kill his father. The child's tutor volunteers to do the deed for him, thus absolving the child of any guilt. The king recognizes this act of self-sacrifice on behalf of his child and rewards the teacher accordingly. This spirit of self-sacrifice is the same exhibited by Aaron, and for which he is rewarded with the priesthood in chapter eight. God says, "Take Aaron . . . ," for by absolving God's children of the guilt for the golden calf, Aaron has won the special favor of God, the Divine Father of Israel.

Homily four utilizes a g'zera shava, based on the verb "to take," to clear Aaron of any guilt for constructing the golden calf. In describing this event, Exodus 32:4 says of Aaron, "This (the gold) he took from them and cast in a mold, and made it into a molten calf . . . . " The verb "to take" also appears in Leviticus 8:2, which describes Aaron's elevation to the priesthood. Rabbi Hanan says that this usage of the verb atones for that connected with the building of the golden calf.

We have the power to use things for good or evil. The verb "to take," for example, has no inherent moral value on its own. This homily demonstrates that it becomes a source of glory or shame only by virtue of what we do with it. How we fail to make proper use of things may be incorporated into any of a number of topics, such as our treatment of the elderly, using love as a weapon and nuclear power, to name but some of the possibilities.

A sense of bewilderment characterizes homily nine. Reading Leviticus 8:3 ("And assemble the whole community at the entrance of the tent of meeting"), Rabbi Eleazar asks, how is it possible to do so, seeing as the men alone numbered 600,000?[63]

His answer is that this is one of several Biblical examples of the lesser containing the greater, of a small area containing more people than seems credible. In Biblical times, assembling 600,000 people in a small area was called the work of God. Today, it is called technology. Communications technology has revolutionized our definition of time and space, enabling hundreds of millions of people to be in any place (even the moon!) at a given time. The rapid technological progress of our society has made the miraculous routine. Expositions on technology, progress and the miraculous are logical extensions of this homily's treatment of Leviticus 8:3.

The rabbinic exposition of parashat Sh'mini begins with chapter eleven; however, few of its homilies relate directly to the Levitical text. Instead, they concentrate on expositions based upon verses from Psalms and Proverbs. The two homilies which do concern themselves with Leviticus focus upon Leviticus 9. The first notes that while both Moses and Aaron occupy the position of High Priest, Aaron's robes give credibility and power to the office. The second homily takes Leviticus 9:1 ("On the eighth day Moses called Aaron and his sons, and the elders of Israel") as its ground for reflecting upon the meaning and place of the elders within Israelite society.

During the seven days of consecration referred to in chapter eight of Leviticus, Moses performs the role of High Priest in a white robe. However, it is not until Aaron dons the special robes of the High Priest that the Shekhinah manifests itself. Homily six says that the robes give Aaron a priestly authority and power that were absent in Moses. One might refer to this as an instance of clothes making the man. Unlike Moses, Aaron truly looks the part of the High Priest in his regalia.

The High Priest's robes are only part of our people's lengthy association with wearing apparel, which dates all the way back to the fig leaf. Jews were a central part of the American clothing industry around the turn of this century. However, Jews have also been made to wear special garb in various times and places, such as the "Jude" stars so infamous of Hitler's era. In addition, Jews in different countries and of different sects have utilized distinctive attire to further their group identity, Hasidic Jews being one example. Clearly, homily six

lends itself to a review of the historically intimate relationship between Jews and their clothing.

In homily eight, Rabbi Akiva employs Leviticus 9:1's reference to the elders of Israel in saying that "Israel may be compared to a bird, for just as a bird cannot fly without wings, so Israel cannot do anything without its elders." Because the rabbis use the terms "elders" and "scholars" synonymously,[64] this exposition actually recounts the merits of Israel's scholars. However, whereas God has given honor to these people throughout the Torah, we treat them very differently today. What kind of status (and salary) do we give teachers and intellectual leaders, compared to that accorded athletes and entertainers? Is the vast discrepancy cause for concern - a statement about the world we are living in? Who are our heroes today; are they worthy of our adulation?

The Jewish people was once known as "the people of the book;" can we justifiably maintain this designation any longer? Do books remain important to us? What can they give us that we lack?

The final section of the homily presents the statement of Rabbi Abin who says, in the name of Rabbi Shimon bar Joshua, that the future will see selected scholars accorded the privilege of sitting together with God in a sort of heavenly Sanhedrin. However, to be worthy of sitting with God, the scholars in this court must also be righteous people. One who is well versed in Torah and ignorant of righteousness cannot see God, for the purpose of scholarship is to lead to righteousness.

Alcohol abuse is a subject of great prominence within chapter twelve. In criticizing excessive consumption of alcohol, the rabbis direct attention to the shame caused by heavy drinking, detailing its effect upon both the drinker and those near and dear to him. Many examples are furnished of Bibical characters whose drinking leads them to debasement. Among these are Nadav and Avihu, two of Aaron's sons, whose mysterious deaths are attributed to their entering the tent of meeting in a drunken condition. Their deaths are also viewed from a quite different perspective, one which regards them as sanctifying the Name of God. In praising Nadav and Avihu, this homily also commends Aaron for his silence upon hearing of the deaths of his sons.

The relevant Scriptural passage for the first part of this chapter is Leviticus 10:9 ("Drink no wine or other intoxicant, you or your sons with you, when you enter the tent of meeting, that you may not die — it is a law for all time throughout the ages"). The episodes of the deaths of Nadav and Avihu, as well as Aaron's subsequent silence, are found within the first three verses of Leviticus 10.

In denouncing excessive consumption of alcohol, homily one links Leviticus 10:9 with Proverbs 23:31 ("Do not look at wine when it is red"),[65] utilizing a g'zera shava based on the word "wine" (יין). The Proverbs' verse is midrashically rendered: "Do not look at wine, for one becomes red," in order to indicate that wine causes one to turn red from shame and embarrassment.

Rabbi Aha points out that the effect of the alcoholic's drinking extends beyond the drinker alone. This is illustrated through the parable of an alcoholic father, whose sons try to scare him into giving

up drinking. That they are ultimately unsuccessful only serves to show that the problems and consequences related to alcoholism have remained constant throughout the centuries. The alcoholic is willing to give up everything in order to acquire more money for booze, leaving nothing to his children and being left with nothing but a chronic addiction. The upshot of this parable is that no one can help the alcohol abuser until that individual recognizes the harmful consequences of alcoholism and wishes to be rid of the problem. It is hard to help someone who does not want to be helped.

The descendants of one of Noah's sons, Ham, are cursed to become slaves because of alcohol; Lot and his daughters enter into an incestuous union because of alcohol; King Ahashverus has his wife, Vashti, killed because of alcohol. These are among the Biblical examples presented to show the consequences of the improper use of alcohol. The final Biblical example cited by the rabbis directs us back to chapter ten of Leviticus. Utilizing a parable, the rabbis tell of a king who, finding his attendant standing in a wine store, inexplicably beheads the man. The reason for the king's action remains unclear until he tells the new attendant not to enter a wine store. The command given to the second attendant is the key to understanding the offense of the first.

Similarly, Aaron's sons die mysteriously in Leviticus 10:2; the reason for their deaths remains unclear until verse nine, wherein Aaron is commanded not to drink wine or any other intoxicants when entering the tent of meeting. Utilizing the same mode of reasoning as that presented in the parable, the rabbis conclude that Nadav and Avihu died as a result of entering the tent of meeting while under the influence of

alcohol.

Clearly, this homily is well suited to any of a variety of expositions on alcohol abuse and may serve as a springboard for a sermon on excesses; can we have too much of a good thing? On another level, God held Nadav and Avihu fully responsible for what they did while intoxicated. Should our legal system also hold people responsible for what they do while drunk? Can we avoid taking responsibility for our actions by escaping reality? This subject might be linked into the question of drunk driving, especially in light of the high rate of involvement of drunk drivers in (fatal) automobile accidents.

Homily two portrays God telling Moses that, in the future, He will sanctify the tent of meeting through the death of a great man.[66] Moses assumes that this refers to either himself or Aaron. After all, he thinks, who is dearer to God than us? When Aaron's sons are consumed by fire, Moses tells Aaron that God has chosen his sons to sanctify the tent of meeting; their deaths have been for the sanctification of God's Name. This is clarified by Leviticus 10:3, which immediately follows the deaths of Nadav and Avihu: " . . . through those that are near to Me will I be sanctified."[67]

Dying for the sanctification of God's Name has been an all too frequent part of Jewish history. The ability of Jews to believe so strongly that they would rather die than compromise the integrity of their God and their religion is inspiring and deserves to be recognized. This homily ties in well with the theme of remembering those that have died in order to give us what we have (and tend to take for granted) today. Seeing as the account of the ten martyrs is traditionally read

on Yom Kippur, this subject might be logically presented at that time.

Moses' view of past events convinces him that the tent of meeting will be sanctified through either Aaron or himself. When Aaron's two sons are selected for this role, Moses learns of the unpredictability of life. Despite Moses' close relationship with God, God sanctifies the tent of meeting through the sons of Aaron. The past can only give us an indication of what the future holds; it contains no guarantees.

Whereas the first homily states that Nadav and Avihu die because of their drunkenness, in this homily Moses glorifies them in death. His example instructs us of the importance of speaking well of the dead, of remembering their better qualities, rather than their faults. By speaking to Aaron with tact and sensitivity, Moses avoids compounding the grief of a bereaved father. Death is an element of every life; however, we are often traumatized when we encounter it. Helping people to cope with their grief is a great mitzvah; this homily shows us one way of doing so and gives a textual basis for teaching others how to do so.

In his grief, Aaron remains silent. He is subsequently rewarded for this by having God speak to him directly.[68] However, Jewish history also includes the examples of others who argue with and challenge God. Our relationship with God need not be one of passive acquiescence; we can talk back to God, although we had best know what we're talking about. Aaron's reaction of silence encourages an exposition on our reactions to God and our relationship with God.

Silence is not nothingness. Not to react, as in Aaron's case, is to react. What are the benefits and dangers of silence? How does silence differ from apathy? These questions arise from the homiletic

treatment of " . . . and Aaron was silent" in Leviticus 10:3, and may be related to a variety of social issues.

Silence once characterized the relationship of Jews to their persecutors; however, the Jewish people has undergone a major transformation in the course of this century. American and world Jewry have begun to defend themselves politically through various defense organizations such as the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith and the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council. These and other defense organizations are an integral part of the Jewish community structure, yet many Jews are unaware of both their existence and raison d'etre. This homily affords the opportunity of informing Jews of the alternatives to silence which our people have established in order to ensure justice for ourselves and for others.

Some Jews, however, have reacted in ways which other Jews consider to be improper; they have taken to defending themselves militarily. Do Jewish self-defense groups like the Jewish Defense League help or hurt the Jewish cause? What is the proper response to harassment of Jews? Should we be silent, speak out or retaliate?

Homily four begins with a play on the Aramaic word for wine. By utilizing different vocalizations for the same letters, Rabbi Tanhuma says that if one drinks a reasonable quantity of wine (חֲמַר), his face will glow and become a pleasant shade of red. However, if one drinks more than he should, he becomes like an ass (חֲמוֹר).

This homily presents a balanced picture of alcohol. Until now, the rabbis have decried the dangers of too much liquor. However, Judaism does consider wine and alcohol to be legitimate pleasures when partaken of in moderation; it is only when their usage is abused that they warrant criticism. Supporting this thought, Rabbi Yudan notes that if one treads grapes for too long, one extracts all that there is in them, leaving nothing. Similarly, the person that drinks too much ends up vomiting out everything within him, resulting in a sick and empty feeling.

Through his use of g'matria, Bar Kappara expands this argument to show that one who drinks too much cannot even keep a secret. The numerical value of the Hebrew word for wine (יין) is seventy, as is that of the word for a secret (סוד). When "seventy" (wine) enters, "seventy" (a secret) departs. The problem drinker, besides losing control of his bodily functions, loses the ability to distinguish between what should and should not be repeated in public.

The final section of homily four notes that wine is contained in goatskin vessels. Rabbi Abin says that there are two reasons for this. The first is to show that just as this skin was once filled with sinews and bones and is now completely empty, so the over-indulger of alcohol ends up forgetting with all 248 limbs of the body. In other words, every part of the body is rendered incapable of functioning as it should. This idea is based on Proverbs 31:5, which reads, "Lest they drink and forget what has been decreed (וישכח חקק) . . . ." The numerical value of the word חקק in g'matria is 248, the same as the number of limbs in the human body, according to rabbinic reckoning.

The second reason that wine is contained in a goatskin is to show that, just as the goatskin was once full and is now degraded, the one who drinks too much also ends up degraded, having lost everything at his own hands. Clearly, this homily resembles the first of chapter twelve in spelling out some of the many perils resulting from alcohol abuse.

The homilies of chapter thirteen relate the harmful consequences of anger and the benefits of discipline. The first homily demonstrates how Moses' anger interferes with his generally rational, level-headed approach to life. Focusing on Leviticus 10:16-20, the rabbis agree with Aaron that he and his sons were in no condition to eat of the sin offering following the deaths of Nadav and Avihu. In supporting Aaron's response to Moses' criticism, the rabbis quote directly from three of the five verses in the text. As such, this is a more literal application of the Torah text than is generally found within the pages of Leviticus Rabbah.

The second subject, which is addressed at great length, is best presented in homily three. Concerning itself with Leviticus 11:2 (" . . . these are the creatures that you may eat from among all the land animals"), the homily examines the rationale behind eating the meat of certain animals while avoiding that of others. The rabbis imply that there is nothing actually wrong with the prohibited animals; rather, their exclusion serves to discipline us to follow the will of God. Chapter thirteen marks the conclusion of the rabbinic exposition of parashat Sh'mini.

In Leviticus 10:16-18, Moses chastises Elazar and Itamar for not partaking of the sin offering. Perhaps because the harsh words are actually intended for him, Aaron responds in Leviticus 10:19, stating that they are not in a proper state of purity to do so because of the events of that day, i.e. the deaths of Nadav and Avihu.[69] The following verse (Leviticus 10:20) shows that Moses is pleased with Aaron's explanation.

Homily one embellishes the relatively simple plot of the Leviticus narrative. It claims that not only does Moses get angry at Aaron's remaining sons, he loses his composure and viciously slanders them. Moses' good sense is rendered ineffective by his uncontrolled fury. The rabbis point to three other instances where Moses loses his temper and forgets religious laws, as he does in this incident.[70] Their aim, however, is not to discredit Moses, but to warn of how our emotions have the power to overshadow our good judgment. They want us to be aware of the tremendous potential of our emotions, for while we may make judgments under emotional stress, our better judgment manifests itself only when we are levelheaded.

Homily three explores the question of why certain animals are permitted and others forbidden to Jews for consumption. The rabbis answer that it is solely to purify us. That there is nothing inherently evil or impure about these animals is clear, for the homily tells us that they will be permitted us in the world to come. We avoid these animals now only because of God's command to do so. The intent of this statute, therefore, is to get us to practice self restraint of our desires and to follow the way of God. If we are able to discipline ourselves to God's teaching in something so basic to life as eating, we are more likely to do so in other areas of life. Eating only certain animals is one step in God's ultimate plan to purify our lives.

Persuading Jews of the importance (or lack of same) of kashrut is not the rabbi's charge. However, we can provide Jews with information to enable them to decide for themselves. Since this homily advances one proposition for keeping kosher, it can also serve to stimulate a more

detailed presentation of the rationale for this traditional practice. Whether or not people decide to observe it is their business; making sure they know the pros and cons of the question is the rabbi's business.

This homily also makes a point of the need for discipline (rules) in our lives. As such, it leads to an examination of the tension between regulation and freedom in our lives. When and where are regulation and/or freedom needed? When and where do they do more harm than good?

The homilies of chapter fourteen spring from the text of Leviticus 12:2 (" . . . if a woman conceives and bears a male child . . . ").[71] The bringing forth of new life demonstrates God's generosity, in that we are permitted to serve as God's partners in the work of creation. The rabbis describe the intricacies and flawless organization of this creation, ascribing great praise to its Divine Creator. Other homilies respond to the description of birth, in Leviticus 12:2, from very different perspectives. One presents sexual intercourse as a pragmatic act not intended for pleasure, while another discusses the role that parents play in determining the sexual identity of their children. This chapter begins the rabbinic exposition of parashat Tazria.

Homily two glorifies God's role in the birth process, noting that for a small contribution of bodily matter, God presents us with a completed human being. Rabbi Levi compares this to loaning someone a small amount of silver and receiving a large quantity of gold in return. Living one's life with God is a good investment, because a small expenditure yields tremendous returns. In addition, this homily may cause us to reflect on the responsibilities which accrue to us as God's partners in the work of creation.

Homily three relates the splendor of the finely organized network of elements which God puts together to form a human being. Although the constituent elements of this homily display a primitive understanding of anatomy, they do recognize the body for the splendid creation it is. As a result, they serve as a foundation for discussing how we fail to appreciate the gift that God has given us; how we often debase this fine

creation of God (through substance abuse, for example), rather than seeking to preserve it. As the shrine of God, the human body deserves to be well taken care of.

By modern standards, the first half of homily five is a negative exposition on sexual relations. According to Rabbi Aha, one is not supposed to derive pleasure from sexual union, even when it takes place within marriage. He adds, however, that even the most pious of the pious are incapable of not deriving some pleasure from sexual intercourse. Rabbi Aha's strictly pragmatic approach to sex should compel us to present our congregants with a more balanced picture of Jewish attitudes towards sexuality.

The first part of homily eight approaches birth from the perspective of the parents' role in determining the gender of their child. Baby boys are said to come from the mother's seed, while baby girls are said to come from that of the father. Just as an artist generally does not paint his own portrait, but rather that of someone else, so also does the seed of one sex create the other.

While the study of genetics has invalidated this premise, it has also shown the rabbis to be correct in noting that all people possess both male and female potentialities. Whatever one's gender on the outside, that individual possesses something of the other sex within. As a result, people should not be rigidly locked into stereotypical, sexual roles. Men should be able to display emotion and women should not have to worry about being assertive. Societal pressures often prevent us from showing these other sides of our nature, but they are

there nonetheless.

Seeing that none of us are totally male or female, this homily can further understanding of the plight of homosexuals. As the proportion of femininity increases within a man, the possibility that he will exhibit homosexual tendencies also increases. The homosexual is not a monster, but a person containing different proportions of the various ingredients that go into the human recipe.

The homilies in chapter fifteen are centered around Leviticus 13:2 ("When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling, a rash, or a discoloration, and it develops into the plague of leprosy on the skin of his body, he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons, the priests").[72] Inquiring as to why a person contracts leprosy, the first two homilies blame the mother of the leper for not observing the laws relating to her impurity. Whereas most of the final homily deals with the procedural question of how to check for leprosy, the relevant section (for our purposes) is that which asks who may examine a person for leprosy. This chapter concludes the rabbinic exposition of parashat Tazria.

Homily five remarks that chapter thirteen of Leviticus, which deals with leprosy, follows a chapter relating to the uncleaness of a new mother. Utilizing the hermeneutic principle of s'mukhin, Rabbi Tanhum bar Hanilai suggests that there is a relationship between an impure mother and leprosy. Using the analogy of a pregnant donkey which carelessly burns itself and passes the mark down to its offspring, the rabbi postulates that a woman who is lax in observing the laws of purity will give birth to an impure child, i.e. a leper.

While there is no genetic validity to this claim, it is true that parents are usually responsible for the fate of their children. As the most important role models that children have, parents profoundly affect the destiny of their children. This homily addresses the subject of parenting quite directly by telling parents to constantly be aware of what they say and do, and how it may influence their child.

Homily six also utilizes the principle of s'mukhin to connect Leviticus 12:8 ("And if she cannot afford a lamb . . . ") with Leviticus 13:2. In both situations, the impure person is required to report to the priest. Rabbi Abin says, in the name of Rabbi Yohanan, that because the mother does not come to the priest in chapter twelve, her child is required to do so in chapter thirteen. However, whereas the requirement in the former case springs from a joyous event (a birth), in the latter instance it is because of a terrible disease. This homily shows that we cannot evade our responsibilities. Even if we are reluctant to do so, it is better to fulfill them and get it over with than to confront these responsibilities at a later time, under more trying circumstances.

How to check for leprosy and who may do so are the subjects of homily eight. While Leviticus 13:2 shows that the responsibility for examining the individual normally falls upon the priest, a Talmudic passage[73] is cited to demonstrate that the priest is not permitted to examine himself. Rabbi Meir adds that he may not even examine his relatives.

The priest is prohibited from passing judgment on himself or his loved ones because of the emotional involvement present in these relationships. The individual with no emotional stake in a situation is the most capable of clear vision. In a word, this homily addresses itself to the importance of objectivity.

Chapter sixteen, which begins the rabbinic exposition of parashat M'tzora, focuses primarily on Leviticus 14:2 ("This shall be the ritual for a leper at the time that he is to be cleansed . . . "). The concept of the m'tzora as a leper is non-existent in the midrashic exposition of the text. Instead, the word is said to refer to a person who is guilty of slander (tzara-at in its midrashic rendering). The rabbis describe the dangers of a loose or malicious tongue and regard its owner as having a contagious disease. After giving an account of other sins which may result from the spoken word, the rabbis note that silence is a virtue, whereas too much speech leads to sin. The rationale for using two birds in the purification ceremony of the m'tzora is examined in the final homily of this section.

Using the words of Psalms 34:13, homily two asks: "Who is the man who is eager for life?" Through the use of s'mukhin, Rabbi Yannai bases his answer on the succeeding verse, which says to "Guard your tongue from evil, your lips from deceitful speech." Rabbi Haggai points out that Solomon speaks similar words when he says, "He who keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble (מִצָּרָה)."[74] Owing to their similarity in appearance and sound, he says not to read the word מִצָּרָה (out of trouble), but rather מִצָּרַעַת (from leprosy); he who keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from leprosy. Using the same principle, he then amends the word מְצֹרָע (leper) to מוֹצִיא דִּבָּה (one who brings forth evil words), thus linking the Psalms verses with the slanderer.

While the midrashic techniques of the rabbis are somewhat complicated, their message is plain (in the words of Psalm 34:13): the

man who is eager for life, who desires years of good fortune, is better off avoiding the sin of slander. The reasons for this are clarified in the remaining homilies of this chapter.

Homily three expands on the rabbinic understanding of the m'tzora, saying that this person is no longer recognized by those who once knew him. Recognizing the danger of others repeating this individual's defamatory remarks, the rabbis consider him to have a contagious disease and state that he is to be avoided and isolated. Aside from pursuing the theme of the evils of slander, this homily comments on how people judge others through their behavior. This idea can be used to contrast the concepts of belief and action in Judaism.

People who criticize do not tend to be popular. However, their words of reproof are sometimes necessary and helpful; consider the ancient Israelite Prophets. By virtue of its repudiation of the m'tzora, this homily may contribute to a contrasting of good and bad criticism.

The second section of homily four shows that the concept of מלשין extends beyond the offenses described in the previous homilies. Rabbi Levi says that praise from the lips of the wicked is just as offensive as is slander from their lips. What is said is less important than who says it, for those who are praised by evil people are often done more harm than good. Consider political candidates who are endorsed by organizations of hatred and the candidates' lack of enthusiasm for their public support. The rabbis cite the appearance of the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 8:5 as proof that God does not desire

praise of Himself or His servants from the lips of evil people, such as Gehazi.

This homily raises the question of whether we should accept assistance, in any form, from people we know to be wicked. Do these individuals have a place within a Jewish congregation or community? The rabbis seem to answer "no!" However, if we do accept their contribution of time or money, are we capable of separating the good they do from the bad they are? Is there such a thing as tainted money?

Slander is not the only way one's words may lead to sin. Homily five details other offenses, such as failing to keep a promise as well as publicly pledging money to a cause and then failing to contribute. Rabbi Benjamin refers to the sin of pretending to be knowledgeable of Torah, which results in the pronouncement of erroneous judgments. This is a good example of the harm caused by people pretending to know what they are talking about. The words "I don't know" are often the hardest to say, but they are also among the most important.

Rabbi Benjamin's example also shows the danger of making ourselves out to be more than we actually are. Why do we try to impress people by passing off our fantasies of ourselves as reality? Where is fantasy beneficial in our lives and where is it detrimental?

The logical conclusion of this exposition on the dangers of the spoken word is found in the words of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi, who says that silence is twice as valuable as speech. His son, Shimon, supports his father's contention, saying: "All my life I grew up among the wise and I found nothing better for a person than silence." He adds that "too many words lead to sin," and his statements, plus that of his

father, give a firm foundation to an exposition on the value of silence. What role can silence play in a communications-oriented society?

Shimon's statement also refers to the importance of listening as an active process. Although it is not emphasized in our society, listening is essential to good communication. Shimon's advice to listen to those who can teach us is worth exploring further.

Homily six is further warning of the seriousness of slander. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi says that the reason that the word "torah" (in the sense of "law") is used five times in connection with slander[75] is to allude to the five books of the Torah. Therefore, one who is guilty of slander is as guilty as if he transgressed all five books of the Torah.

The first part of homily seven looks at the role of the two birds, referred to in Leviticus 14:4 ("The priest shall order two live clean birds . . . to be brought for him who is to be cleansed"), in connection with the purification ceremony of the m'tzora. Rabbi Judah bar Simon concludes that the voices of the birds atone for the voice of the one guilty of slander. The idea of the means of atonement being the same as the means of sinning is referred to throughout this study.[76]

The homilies in chapter seventeen base themselves on different sections of Leviticus 14:34 ("When you come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put a leprous disease in a house in the land of your possession"). As in the previous chapter, the rabbinic understanding of leprosy as slander is evident; however, leprosy is also described as a curse which may serve a positive function. The verse's reference to "Canaan" is said to allude to Abraham's servant, Eliezer, whereas the house afflicted with the disease is said to be the (first) Temple, in Jerusalem.

By concerning itself with the act of lying, homily two augments chapter sixteen's description of spoken sins included under the term tzara-at. The rabbis speak of the man who always lies, in order to keep from lending his possessions out. They show that once this person's lying becomes public knowledge, he becomes hated and avoided; it is as if a leprous disease descended on him.

The function of such a "disease" is to inspire people to treat their neighbors fairly; it is actually for the benefit of both the individual and the community. Punishments like this have the potential to rehabilitate. The question of where rehabilitation ends and punishment begins concerns our legal and prison systems, as well as discipline within the home and school. What is the function of punishment and how should it be applied? Should parents or teachers physically punish children? Does putting runaways in the same prison cell with rapists and murderers serve to rehabilitate? Is improper discipline more damaging than no discipline at all?

Focusing on the first part of Leviticus 14:34, homily five explores the origin of the name "Canaan." The last section of the homily states that this name actually refers to Abraham's servant, Eliezer. Although Canaan is cursed,[77] he does come to merit the title "blessed of the Lord"[78] and to have the land named after him. His curse becomes a blessing because of his service to the righteous patriarch, Abraham. Since the Israelites are preparing to enter the land of Canaan, the rabbis say that the people should be aware of how Canaan changed a curse into a blessing, so that they may do likewise with the curse of leprosy. If the threat of leprosy prompts them to accord honor to their righteous ones and to follow in their footsteps, then this curse will also have been transformed into a blessing.

We may accept the blemishes of life, or we can try to heal them. This homily exhorts us to do the latter. While the message seems ideally tailored to a pitch for social action, it may also function to expose the congregation to the world of Jewish mysticism, in general, and the notion of tikkun, in particular. This is the kabbalistic doctrine of collecting the holy sparks of creation (accomplished through meditation, study and good deeds) and thereby restoring the world to a state of completeness.

Homily seven identifies the house, alluded to in Leviticus 14:34, as the House of God, the Jerusalem Temple. The assemblage of verses which are linked together in order to support this supposition is less important than the homily's premise that it is the idolatry within the Temple which defiles and ultimately destroys it. Rabbi Berekhiah quotes Isaiah 28:20 ("For the bed is too short to stretch oneself on it")[79] to

show that while two is company, three is a crowd. Just as a bed is unable to hold a woman, her husband and her friend, so the Temple is unable to hold the Shekhinah, Israel and Israel's idols. The presence of idols causes the Shekhinah to leave the Temple, resulting in the latter's prompt destruction. Is there a leprosy which plagues our temples today? Do some of the activities of our congregations make it impossible for the Shekhinah to dwell within them?

By providing historical background on the Jerusalem Temple, this homily can also stimulate discussion on the place that the Temple has occupied in the life of the Jewish people. It is an aspect of Jewish history which, despite its centrality, many Jews are almost totally unaware of. The significance of the Temple and the reasons Reform Jews refer to their houses of worship as "temples" are subjects worthy of exposition based upon homily seven.

The two homilies presented here from chapter eighteen approach Leviticus 15:2 (" . . .when any man has a discharge issuing from his flesh, he is unclean") from very different perspectives. The first homily uses the verse to contrast the lowliness of the body's origin with the Divine origin of the soul. The second interprets the verse as relating how harm comes to us not from without, but from within.

Because they both make mention of the male seed, Leviticus 15:2 is juxtaposed with the Mishnaic statement of Akaviah ben Mahalaleel. In the beginning of homily one, he is quoted as saying, "Consider three things and you will not come into the hands of sin: know where you came from (a fetid secretion), where you are going (the dust of the worm and maggot) and before whom you are destined to give an accounting and reckoning of your life (the King of the kings of kings, the Holy One, Praised be He").[80] The questions of where we came from and where we are going are worth asking, even if we select different responses than those provided above. This homily provides a basis for a talk on Jewish genealogy. In addition, it prompts questions such as: are we leading our lives or are they leading us? Do we move so quickly that we lose sight of our destination? What are our goals and are we on the proper path for achieving them?

Although Akavia ben Mahalaleel's words illustrate the inglorious history and fate of our physical being, the destiny of our souls is said to include an appearance before God. The contrast between the ultimate fate of body and soul is striking and encourages elaboration regarding the distinction between the physical and spiritual aspects of our being.

The soul's appearance before God is one element of the traditional Jewish view of life after death. What have Jews believed regarding the concept of an afterlife and how can we relate to it today? Should Jews believe in heaven and hell?

The conclusion of the first homily contains a parable of a well-educated priest who hands an ignorant priest a loaf of t'rumah with the admonition: "I am ritually pure and my house and this loaf are also pure. If you return it to me in the same condition, then all will be well, but if not, I will throw it away in front of you." Rabbi Ishmael bar Nahman draws a parallel between the first priest and God, who says, "I am pure, My dwelling place and My ministers are pure, and the soul which I have given you is pure. If you return it to Me in the same condition, it will be well, but if not, I will destroy the soul in your presence."

This parable shows that despite our lowly, physical beginnings we are born with a pure soul; the concept of original sin has no place in Judaism. We begin life with a clean record and are told to maintain the purity of the soul while it is under our care. In describing how God lends us our souls, this homily alludes to the responsibilities of ownership. What is ours to do with as we please and what is merely loaned to us? This theme may be incorporated into expositions regarding pollution and exploitation of natural resources. We perceive our moral obligation to future generations only by bearing in mind that we possess, but do not own.

The theme of homily two derives from Habakkuk 1:7 (" . . . they make their own laws and שְׂאֵתוֹ").

reads, חֻקֹּתָיו (their rules), the rabbis read the word חֻקֹּתָיו (their destruction), thereby showing how we are often the source of our own downfall. This homily does not state, however, that we are totally or even partially responsible for every discord which enters our lives. Still, we often are (at least) partially responsible for creating these situations. We cannot ignore questioning whether or not we are our own worst enemy. This homily leads us to consider other ways in which we harm ourselves from within, such as stress and bottling up our emotions. It helps us to see that we have the power to spare ourselves at least a few headaches in life.

Chapter nineteen concerns itself with Leviticus 15:25 ("When a woman has had a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her impurity, or when she has a discharge beyond her period of impurity, she shall be unclean, as though at the time of her impurity, as long as her discharge lasts: she shall be unclean"). While the rabbis are aware that verses such as this appear to be inappropriate for reading in public, they nevertheless affirm the importance of doing so. Among other things, this verse is shown to refer to the physical discomfort which may afflict women during menstruation. The rabbis conclude their treatment of parashat M'tzora by citing the example of King Yekhoniah, who observes the regulations concerning menstruation despite trying circumstances.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yitzhak's statement, at the end of homily three, is in keeping with the tenor of this study. He says that Leviticus 15:25 is one of several verses in the Torah which concern subjects not normally discussed in polite company. Nonetheless, all of these verses are said to be pleasing and important to God. This is demonstrated by noting that the Torah does not combine its references to men and women who have discharges into one verse. The fact that the Torah deals with each sex separately is said to indicate the importance attached to this subject.

Rabbi Shimon's assertion bears examination: can something unpleasant or ugly be pleasing? We have all heard that "beauty is only skin deep," but do we suffer from seeing things on a superficial level nonetheless? Does outward appearance influence how we relate to people and objects? Do we judge a book by its cover? Could Rabbi Shimon be

telling us that these verses are pleasing to God so that we will search for the pleasant aspects of unpleasant subjects? Does every cloud, indeed, have a silver lining?

The middle of homily five is occupied with the reference to "many days" in Leviticus 15:25. Rabbi Berekhiah and Rabbi Helbo say, in the name of Rabbi Yohanan, that the words do not refer to a length of time. Rather, they serve to indicate that time seems to pass much more slowly in times of distress. This interpretation may help us to understand the plight of people suffering from pain and distress and make us more sensitive to what we can do to help them.

The sixth homily relates how Yekhoniah, son of Yehoiakim, becomes king and is imprisoned by Nebukhadnezzar. While in prison, he is permitted a visit from his wife. Although desiring to engage in sexual relations with her, he removes himself from her presence when she tells him that she has noticed the first signs of her menstrual period.

Yekhoniah feels obliged to observe the separation of husband and wife proscribed by the Torah during a woman's menstrual period. This despite what could certainly be labeled extenuating circumstances. This homily illustrates the importance of doing what one feels to be right, regardless of the degree of difficulty involved. As such, expositions on peer pressure and responsibility to one's self are natural extensions of this homily.

Chapter twenty, which begins the rabbinic exposition of parashat Aharay Mot, resembles chapter twelve in that it is centered around the deaths of Nadav and Avihu. In fact, two of the homilies found here actually expound verses from Leviticus 10, which is the text utilized by chapter twelve of Leviticus Rabbah. However, most of this chapter's homilies flow from Leviticus 16:1 ("The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they drew too close to the presence of the Lord"). Homily one is unusual in that it portrays Aaron's sons as blameless. Their deaths are said to illustrate that the fates of the righteous and the wicked are the same. A later homily takes this point one step further by stating that while the righteous suffer, the wicked prosper.

However, the other homilies find Nadav and Avihu guilty of various sins, such as arrogance and disrespect toward their teacher. Homilies eight and nine both claim that Aaron's sons are guilty of four offenses; however, the transgressions differ in each homily. The rabbis also note that the sins of the two brothers are spelled out clearly, so that there is no pretext for making additional accusations against them. Nevertheless, the rabbis spend most of this chapter speculating as to the nature of Nadav and Avihu's sin.

In reviewing Leviticus 16:1's reference to the deaths of Aaron's two sons, homily one accords Nadav and Avihu greater respect than do most of the homilies in the twelfth chapter of Leviticus Rabbah. Whereas Aaron's sons are accused of drunkenness in chapter twelve, this homily presents them as upright and peaceful. The basis for this interpretation is Rabbi Shimon bar Abaye's quotation of Ecclesiastes 9:2

("For the same fate is in store for all: for the righteous and for the wicked . . . "). The claim of this verse is verified through reference to numerous Biblical personalities, both good and evil, who suffer the same fate. The last of these mentioned are Aaron's sons. Despite entering the Tabernacle to offer a sacrifice in the proper spirit, they experience the same, fatal fate as does the company of Korah, who enters the Tabernacle in a spirit of confrontation.

This homily, which addresses one aspect of the problem of evil in the world, suggests a crucial religious question, namely: if good people suffer the same fate as the wicked (as the rabbis claim), why should we be good? Why not get as much for ourselves as we can?

Homily four differs from the above exposition in that it implies that the deaths of Nadav and Avihu are a consequence of their sin. Drawing on Leviticus 10:4 (" . . . come forward and carry your kinsmen away from the front of הַקֹּדֶשׁ . . . ") for its exposition, the rabbis alter the vocalization of the word to קָדְשׁ, thereby changing its meaning from "the sanctuary" to "the Holy One," i.e. the Holy One, Praised be He (קָדְשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא). According to this interpretation, the Leviticus verse portrays Moses ordering the removal of the dead bodies from the presence of God, so as not to compound the Divine Mourner's grief. God grieves over the deaths of Aaron's sons, for God does not desire that his people suffer death or punishment. Nevertheless, their deaths result from the principle that improper actions must be punished. Were they not, the unrestrained urge to do wrong could conceivably damage, if not destroy, our society. It is sometimes necessary to engage in unpleasant actions, for though they may appear to be distaste-

ful in the short run, they are of much benefit in the long run.

Homily five contradicts the claim of homily one that the same fate is in store for the righteous and the wicked. It presents the example of the wicked Titus, who enters the Holy of Holies with a sword drawn and cuts into the curtain which shields the ark. Whereas he enters and departs in peace, Aaron's sons, who enter with the intention of honoring God are killed. Why do the righteous suffer, while the evil prosper? If God is good and all-powerful, why is there (so much) evil in the world?

In homily six, Rabbi Eliezer suggests that Aaron's sons die because they give a legal judgment in the presence of Moses, their teacher. An example follows this assertion to illustrate that whoever gives a legal decision in the presence of his teacher incurs the penalty of death.

This punishment appears to be unnecessarily harsh; however, the rabbis were not averse to using strong language when emphasizing the importance of a law or principle.[81] In this homily, they state that we should not usurp the livelihood of the person who taught us ours. In the field of learning, book knowledge is less important than menshlikhkite. As a result, the student who wishes to take the place of his instructor has failed to learn the lesson of common decency. Are the rabbis justified in saying not to bite the hand that feeds you or should survival of the fittest be the guiding principle as regards the work force?

The first half of homily eight quotes Bar Kappara as saying, in the name of Rabbi Jeremiah ben Elazar, that Aaron's sons die because of four sins: drawing near the innermost part of the sanctuary, offering a sacrifice which is not commanded, using profane fire and not taking counsel from each other. The first two offenses can be readily deduced from the text of Leviticus 10:1 ("Now Aaron's sons, Nadav and Avihu, each took his fire pan, put fire in it and laid incense on it, and they offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them");[82] however, the third is brought out by examining the nature of the "strange fire." Bar Kappara says that Aaron's sons utilize fire from the kitchen for their offering, rather than the sanctified fire on the altar. His interpretation suggests an exposition on the distinction between the sacred and the profane.

The fourth offense of the pair is revealed by amending the vocalization of the word מַחְתָּתוֹ. In Leviticus 10:1, this word means "his fire pan;" however, Bar Kappara has learned that the word should be vocalized מֵחַטָּאתוֹ, meaning "from his own sin."[83] Because neither brother seeks advice from the other, each is responsible for his own sin. In acting on their own, rather than utilizing the concept of teamwork, the two brothers meet a tragic fate. The rabbinic interpretation of מחתתו speaks to the importance of working together.

The second half of this homily presents another teaching of Rabbi Jeremiah ben Elazar, namely: "the deaths of Aaron's sons are mentioned in four places and, in each, their offense is revealed." This is to show precisely what their guilt consists of, so that no one might accuse them of something else. The declaration of their sins, while bringing shame to Nadav and Avihu, spares their reputations the greater damage

which could be engendered by ambiguities in the text. As a result, this part of the homily addresses the value of honesty. Although it may cause some pain initially, being honest can prevent a more serious hurt later on; it is the most beneficial course in the long run.

Homily nine also lists four sins which are said to lead to the deaths of Aaron's sons. However, these four (below) differ from those presented in the previous homily. Here, their sins are said to be:

1) drinking wine
2) lacking the priestly robe when making the offering
3) entering the sanctuary without having washed their hands and feet
4) not having children

The rabbis learn that the brothers are guilty of the first three offenses because, for priests, these transgressions are punishable by death. The fourth offense is arrived at through reference to Numbers 3:4, which states that Nadav and Avihu leave no children behind when they die.

The low Jewish birth rate is a subject of concern to many Jewish leaders. We're not having enough children to replace ourselves. While a rabbi may not wish to preach on the need to have more children, the importance of children to the concept of the Jewish family can be examined.

Also appearing in this homily is the statement of Abba Hanin, who says that Nadav and Avihu die because they have no wives. He deduces this from Leviticus 16:6 which, referring to Aaron, says, " . . . and (he) shall make atonement for himself and for his house."[84] The word "house" is a common rabbinic designation for "wife."[85] Nadav and Avihu cannot make atonement for their houses (wives) because they have none.

Abba Hanin's interpretation clearly relates to the importance of being married. Why should we encourage marriage as opposed to the option of living together? What is the role of single people in today's (Jewish) society? Are they doomed to the same tragic fate as Nadav and Avihu? What role might the Temple play in the life of Jewish singles?

The conjecture regarding the sin of Nadav and Avihu continues in homily ten, wherein Rabbi Levi states that it is arrogance. Among other things, the two are presented as saying that no woman is worthy of them and wondering when Moses and Aaron will die, so that they may assume leadership of the community. By presenting it as a sin severe enough to warrant death, this homily draws attention to the dangers of arrogance.

Chapter twenty-one continues the rabbinic exposition on parashat Aharay Mot, concerning itself with various sections of Leviticus 16, the traditional Torah reading for Yom Kippur morning. While not making reference to specific verses, the first two homilies are based on either the subject matter of the text (the priestly garb) or when it is read (Yom Kippur). The last two homilies interpret specific verses as referring to the concept of זכות אבות, the merit of the ancestors, as well as the transformation undergone by the High Priest when entering the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur.

Homily four points out that the numerical value of שטן, the accusing angel, is 364. The rabbis understand this to mean that Satan has the power to level accusations against Israel on every day of the (solar) year; however, he has no right to do so on Yom Kippur. This holy day is set aside for Israel to purify itself before God. When this parasha is read on Shabbat, homily four may be utilized in comparing Jewish and Christian views regarding Satan.

The first part of homily ten asks why the High Priest officiates in eight garments.[86] (This question is probably an allusion to Leviticus 16:4 which deals with the garments of the High Priest.) The answer given is that the eight garments are an allusion to the ceremony of circumcision, which takes place on the eighth day of a baby boy's life. The merit which accrues to us from this covenantal ceremony permits us to minister unto God. But what of the non-Jew who may not be circumcised? Are the rabbis implying that he cannot minister unto God? With some prominent Christian evangelists claiming that "God does not

hear the prayers of a Jew,"[87] this homily allows us to clarify the quite different Jewish belief regarding the efficacy of non-Jewish prayer. At the same time, it encourages a sermon regarding the importance of religious tolerance.

The second section of homily ten is not based on any particular verse in Leviticus 16, but on the general subject matter, which describes the entry of Aaron, the High Priest, into the Holy of Holies. Rabbi Simon asks why Aaron is not adorned in golden garments. The answer given is that the accuser cannot act as defender. In other words, gold, which is central to Aaron's sin of putting together the golden calf, cannot serve to assist him in the process of atonement; he must use something else.

This contradicts a number of earlier homilies which articulate the importance of repenting by the same means used in sinning.[88] Nevertheless, one need not take priority over the other. Judaism encourages diversity of thought, not rigid conformity. This homily may serve as the basis for an exposition on the dangers of narrow-minded fundamentalism, which proclaims that there is only one truth, and only one way to get there.

Homily eleven relates the significance of the bull, the ram and the goats which Aaron is commanded to bring in Leviticus 16:3 and 16:5. These three types of animals are said to represent the merit of the three patriarchs, which is transmitted to future generations in the form of blessings and, on Yom Kippur, atonement. In stressing the concept of זכות אבות, the merit of the ancestors, the rabbis claim that the deeds of one generation affect the fate of those to come. This homily speaks

to the theme of the responsibilities of our generation to our descendants. What kind of world will they inherit? Will we give them blessings or burdens?

Toward the end of homily twelve, Rabbi Abbahu reads Leviticus 16:17 ("There shall be no man in the tent of meeting when he enters to make atonement in the holy place . . . ")[89] and asks, "Is the High Priest not a man?" If he enters the holy place, why does the verse say that no man shall be there? The answer comes from the statement of Rabbi Pinḥas, who says that when the Holy Spirit rests upon the High Priest, his spirit is lifted to such a level that he can be regarded as an angel. In illustrating the potential change we can experience when engaged in worship, this homily communicates the possibilities of the spirit. What role should one's spirit play in prayer? Is it of greater or lesser importance than the mind?

Leviticus 17:3-5, which serves as the basis for chapter twenty-two of Leviticus Rabbah, reads as follows:

> If any man of the house of Israel slaughters an ox or sheep or goat in the camp, or does so outside the camp, and does not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to present it as an offering to the Lord, before the Lord's Tabernacle, bloodguilt shall be imputed to that man: he has shed blood; that man shall be cut off from among his people. This is in order that the Israelites may bring the sacrifices which they have been making in the open — that they may bring them before the Lord, to the priest, at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and offer them as sacrifices of well-being to the Lord.

The first homily presented here teaches that there is a benefit to everything in creation. Taking this idea one step further, the second homily says that God may use any part of this creation in fulfilling a Divine wish and it is futile to try to interfere with God's plan. The third homily explains the above verses as God's proposed compromise between His desires and the people's needs. It examines how God bends to accommodate the Israelites' capacity to respond. The final homily notes that, although this restriction is one of many placed upon us, we have also been given many freedoms. God's Law is presented as a careful balance of the forbidden and the permitted.

At the beginning of homily one, Rabbi Judah says that everything in the world has a purpose, even seemingly trivial items like bast (a fibrous substance which comes from palm trees). Rabbi Elazar bar Avina's statement at the end of the homily implies that the purpose of learning is to teach. Therefore, the person who dies without transmitting his learning to others is guilty of the greatest of vanities.

From the needlessly-slaughtered animals of Leviticus 17:3 to the hallowed realm of Torah study, this homily comes out against waste. We live in an enormously wasteful society. Despite possessing only limited quantities of food, natural resources and time, we fail to utilize them properly. Waste is irresponsible; it leaves less for others who will need what we carelessly squander. The term also applies to those more abstract resources whose value we often fail to recognize because of our obsession with other concerns, like work or school. These could include the love of family and friends. This homily serves as a reminder to make the most out of life and its ingredients.

Homily four relates ten very unusual incidents intended to show how God may make use of anything in performing a Divine mission. What role has God designed us for and how well are we fulfilling it? These incidents also imply that (at least some) events are pre-determined. Does God actually determine our fate or is everything in our own hands? Do we have free will?

Homily five is an attempt to explain the rationale underlying God's command of Leviticus 17:3-5. The rabbis say that the Israelites are accustomed to offering sacrifices on the high places, before the construction of the Tabernacle, and continue to do so even after it is erected and these sacrifices are prohibited. God punishes them for transgressing this prohibition, which leads the nations of the world to mock the Jewish nation, which worships a God Who kills them. In Leviticus 17, God takes up a middle position, declaring that the Israelites may offer animal sacrifices, on the condition that they bring

the sacrifices to the tent of meeting.

God's initial command to Israel to amend its ways is not obeyed because the change demanded is so sudden and severe that the people are incapable of responding to it. God then tells them that they may continue their practice, as long as they bring the sacrifice to the priest. In so doing, God comes to the recognition that old habits die hard. The effort to jolt people from their accustomed ways is doomed to be an exercise in futility. The way to effect change is gradually.

From one angle, this homily encourages us to recognize compromise as a significant part of life. Seeing that Israel is not obeying the existing prohibition regarding sacrifices, God brings forth a more lenient proposal knowing that, while it is not exactly what He wants, it is better than what He currently has. Compromise is an important enough quality that even God makes use of it.

This homily may also be seen as an indictment of our daily routine becoming a rut from which escape is impossible, even when commanded by God. Are our lives characterized by so much predictability that they hold no hope of change? How can we break out of such a rut? Do we really want to?

The first part of homily ten refers to this same prohibition and states that God has given us a fine balance of things permitted and forbidden. The rabbis go on at length, pointing out how many forbidden things are permitted in a slightly different context. For example, while eating pork is prohibited, eating fish with a similar taste is allowed.

Were we to be completely restricted by prohibitions, life would be unbearable. However, if we had no restrictions, life would be anarchic and we would be unable to appreciate those freedoms which we possess. Therefore, this homily shows the need for preserving a good balance in our lives.

Chapter twenty-three concludes the rabbinic exposition of parashat Aharay Mot. Many of its themes derive from Leviticus 18:3 ("You shall not copy the practices of the land of Egypt where you dwelt, or of the land of Canaan to which I am taking you, nor shall you follow their laws"). This verse is understood to refer to the distinctive place which God expects Israel to occupy in the world. Like Rebecca, Israel is to embody the morality and righteousness so lacking in its surroundings. As a "lily among the thorns," Israel's uniqueness is pleasing to God and insures the continuation of the world.

The last three homilies examined in this chapter deal with the primary subject matter of Leviticus 18, i.e., sexual immorality. That God has and will continue to punish those who disregard these laws is made quite clear. The rabbis also teach that one may acquire guilt for transgressing these prohibitions without even engaging in physical contact. Our eyes alone are enough to implicate us in this area.

Homily one cites Rebecca as an example of a person who obeys the warning of Leviticus 18:3. Focusing on Genesis 25:20 ("Isaac was forty years old when he took to wife Rebecca, daughter of B'tuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, sister of Laban the Aramean"), Rabbi Isaac asks why the Torah seems to repeat itself unnecessarily by stating that both Rebecca's father and brother are Arameans. Because the words "Aramean" (ארמי) and "deceiver" (רמאי) are similar in sound and appearance, he answers that each man bears the appellation "Aramean" because each is a deceiver. That the righteous matriarch, Rebecca, emerges out of this environment makes her like "a lily among the thorns."[90]

Rabbi Isaac recognizes the difficulty of expressing one's individuality because of peer pressure and other environmental factors. Nevertheless, he asserts that it is possible to go against the current successfully. Simply because one's viewpoint is not shared by the majority does not make it wrong. On the contrary, it is important to stand up for what one believes in regardless of the perceived level of support.

Homily three extends the concept of individuality to Israel by portraying her as the one good apple which preserves the bunch (the world). The rabbis illustrate this idea by way of the analogy of a king who plants an orchard containing different crops. Some time later, he returns to check on it and finds it full of thorns and briars. As he is about to destroy the entire orchard, he notices a rose-colored flower whose pleasant fragrance moves him to spare the orchard. The rabbis see Israel as the flower whose fragrance (acceptance of the Torah) pacifies the Divine King and saves the world from destruction. Does the Jewish people still enjoy a special relationship with God? What is the basis of the term "chosen people" and what are its implications? Does this concept still hold meaning for us?

In homily nine, Rabbi Hiyya interprets the phrase "I am the Lord," which follows the Divine decree of Leviticus 18:3-4, to be a warning. It reminds the Israelites that, just as the Lord punished those people guilty of sexual immorality in the past, He will do so again if need be. God does not simply declare the law, He reminds Israel that He also enforces it. This homily implies that proper behavior results only from

laws which are enforced and warns us not to make laws which we are not prepared to enforce. This lessens respect for the law and may make people more likely to transgress other, more serious laws. This theme may be related to any of a variety of virtually unenforced laws, such as possession of marijuana.

Homily twelve is concerned with the person who lusts in his heart. Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish says that the term "adulterer" also applies to one who commits the crime with his eyes. In other words, thinking about the act is just as bad as doing it. This homily should be compared with M'khilta d'Rabbi Ishmael,[91] which presents a very different view regarding being culpable for our thoughts.

In homily thirteen, Rabbi Measha says that if a person accidentally looks upon a naked part of another's body, but does not continue to gaze upon it, he is worthy of welcoming the Shekhinah. The rabbis were so uncomfortable with nudity that they even prohibited looking upon a spouse's nakedness for reasons of modesty.[92] This homily, by presenting a very strict standard, calls for an updated assessment of Jewish views on sex and sexuality.

Chapters twenty-four and twenty-five of Leviticus Rabbah are based on parashat K'doshim, which differs from the other parashiot in Leviticus in that its p'shat contains many worthwhile sermon topics. Chapter twenty-four bases itself on Leviticus 19:2 (" . . . you shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy"). Two of its homilies understand the command to be קדושים in the sense of being separate or distinct. The Israelites are told that just as God is separate, so should they be separate; just as God is holy, so should they be holy. The rabbis note that the principles of the Ten Commandments are expressed in this chapter (albeit in different words than Exodus 20) and refer to the significance of such a parasha following one which treats of sexual immorality. The last homily interprets the words, "you shall be holy" as a prediction, rather than a command. It adds, however, that while Israel should seek to resemble God's holiness, she should realize that she can never equal it.

Toward its conclusion, homily two explores the meaning of holiness, explaining it in the sense of being separate. God distinguishes certain people for holy purposes, such as Aaron and David. Israel is also meant to be separate, for in following the Holiness Code of Leviticus 19, she establishes her identity as a holy people under God. Israel becomes holy by following the ways of the holy God. This idea is reiterated at the end of homily four, where God tells Moses to say to Israel: "My children, just as I am separate, so you be separate; just as I am holy, so you be holy."

The conclusions of these two homilies concern the idea of Jews being separate and distinct. All too often in Jewish history, we have

been separated by others, rather than doing so voluntarily. We have been enclosed in ghettos[93] and treated as foreigners. From our appearance to our demeanor, Jews have been considered "different." The subject matter of these homilies is well suited to an exposition on anti-semitism, and may be linked with the High Holy Day liturgy, which refers to the sin of xenophobia.[94] Have we been guilty of xenophobia or the victims of it?

In homily five, Rabbi Levi points out that Leviticus 19, the Holiness Code, contains the essence of the Ten Commandments. However, are the Ten Commandments all that we need to be holy? Do we over-emphasize them at the expense of the rest of our tradition, or is the latter embodied in them? Is observing the Ten Commandments the goal of Judaism or the way to the goal?

Homily six notes that the section on holiness follows that pertaining to sexual immorality. The rabbis employ the principle of s'mukhin to show that there is a close relationship between the two themes; removing one's self from the temptations of Leviticus 18 leads to the rewards of Leviticus 19. By keeping far from the forbidden, we may become holy.

Homily nine compares the potential of Joseph, in Pharaoh's court, with that of the Israelites hearing the words of God. Pharaoh tells Joseph that, while he will be powerful, he will not attain the power of Pharaoh. Joseph should seek to be as great as Pharaoh, in order to improve himself; however, he should bear in mind that he will never

realize this goal. In the same way, God tells Israel that, while it will be holy, it will never reach God's level of holiness. Israel should strive to be as holy as God, in order to improve itself; however, it should not delude itself into thinking that this effort will be successful. God and Pharaoh each serve as the ideal for their subjects' aspirations. They exhort Israel and Joseph, respectively, to dream the impossible dream. Is such a quixotic quest worthwhile? Should our goals be attainable or beyond our reach? In addition, how does one distinguish between a goal and a dream?

The paranoia which sometimes accompanies leadership may also be seen in this homily. Why do people work so hard to get to the top and then worry about who is behind them? Can we deal with the fact that by doing our jobs, we may unwillingly represent a threat to our bosses and leaders? In other words, can one be effective without being threatening? Should we concern ourselves with the idiosyncrasies of others or simply try to do our job as best we can? This homily deals with one aspect of the general subject of interpersonal dynamics, particularly as it applies to a work environment.

The homilies of chapter twenty-five are based on the first part of Leviticus 19:23 ("When you enter the land and plant any tree for food . . . "). The three homilies examined here understand this tree to be the Torah, stating that just as God began the world by planting, so the Israelites' initial act in the Land of Israel must be to plant seeds of Torah. Talmud Torah is a lifelong process, to be engaged in by both young and old. This chapter concludes the homiletic treatment of parashat K'doshim.

Citing Proverbs 3:18 ("It is a tree of life to those who hold it fast, and all who cling to it find happiness"),[95] homily one declares that the tree referred to is none other than the Torah. The rabbis view the Levitical verse as God's charge to the Israelites to plant the seeds of Torah in their new home.

Using this metaphor, the Jewish concept of Torah can be probed. What is the root of Torah, its trunk, branches and leaves? What does this tree need to grow stronger and flourish in its present environment? This question leads into a sermon on Jewish religious education. Again, what is its root and which leaves can fall off from time to time without any harm being done? Should these various aspects of Judaism be taught in the religious school or in the home? How important is one's family and home environment in strengthening Jewish identity? Of all the trees that may surround and shelter our homes, the tree of Torah should be given special attention.

Unapparent in these sermonic themes is the fact that the rabbinic interpretation of "tree" as Torah is made possible only by cutting Leviticus 19:23 off in the middle; the remainder of the verse reads,

" . . . you shall regard its fruit as forbidden. Three years it shall be forbidden for you, not to be eaten." Obviously, this part of the verse is not in keeping with the message the rabbis are trying to communicate.

The second half of homily three quotes Genesis 2:8 ("The Lord God planted a garden in Eden מִקֶּדֶם . . . "). Translating the word not as "in the east," but as "from the beginning," Rabbi Judah bar Simon says that since God began the creation of the world by planting, it is only fitting that the Israelites also occupy themselves with planting upon entering the Land of Israel. The Israelites' first act in their new home, therefore, is to ensure that their heritage will continue into the future through Torah study. This homily shows the importance of looking ahead. To ensure the present, we must plan for the future.

Homily five relates the story of a one-hundred year old man working his land in order to plant fig trees. Seeing the old man, the Emperor Hadrian says he would not have to plant now had he done so when he was young. The old man replies that he planted as a youth and will continue to plant into the future. Just as his ancestors provided for him, so will he provide for his descendants.

Using the rabbinic understanding of "tree" as Torah, this homily presents many lessons, such as, one is never too old to learn. There is always more to learn and when one advances in years, there is also much to teach. Our elderly are a valuable, educational resource which we fail to make proper use of. They have so much to teach us and all we need to do is ask. There need not be a generation gap, for education can serve to link the generations, and the best place for it to do so is

within the home. The teachings of bubbe and zayde to the kinder are likely to be more interesting and productive than those of a stranger teaching the children in a formal setting. In addition, the feeling of worth it supplies the elder teachers with is vital for their emotional well being. Perhaps our Jewish elderly cannot supplant the religious school system, but at the very least, they can complement it.

It is difficult to extract relevant, sermonic themes from chapter twenty-six's exposition of parashat Emor. Many of the homilies have no real connection with Leviticus 21:1 ("The Lord said to Moses: Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them, none shall defile himself for any dead person among his kin"). Only one homily provides useful, sermonic material based on this parasha; it centers on the prohibition against a kohen coming in contact with the dead. A second homily deals at great length with the sins of Saul. However, since it is based on Leviticus 20:27 ("A man or woman who has a ghost or a familiar spirit . . . ") it is more aptly placed in parashat K'doshim. Two homilies in chapter twenty six seek to explain the need for two appearances of the root אמר in Leviticus 21:1; however, these homilies lack practicality in the modern context. This chapter is the first of seven which expound parashat Emor.

Homily six states that the prohibition regarding contact with a corpse is eternal for the kohen. Even though the Temple has been destroyed, the sacrifices and the office of the High Priest abolished, the kohanim remain a group distinct from the rest of Israel, subject to a variety of regulations designed to safeguard their purity.

Reform Judaism has done away with the traditional distinctions between kohen, levi and yisrael, but the terms continue to hold meaning for many Jews. Is it proper, however, to elevate one group within the community solely on the basis of heredity? What are the implications of according status by birth, rather than deeds?

Taking this question one step further, do Jews really believe that all Jews are equal? Does our tradition regard women as the equals of

men? Do the ultra-Orthodox Jews of Mea Sh'arim feel themselves to be no better than Reform Jews? Do Reform Jews view the black-garbed Jews as brethren? How does the State of Israel relate to non-Orthodox Jews, or Jews by choice who do not undergo an Orthodox conversion ceremony? What is our reaction to discrimination against Jews by Jews? This homily lends itself to an exploration of the phenomenon of Jewish anti-semitism.

Approaching this homily from a different angle, if we can no longer consider the concept of the Priesthood to be meaningful, the prohibition of Leviticus 21:1 is a law without a purpose. What other outdated laws, programs or attitudes burden us today? How can we know what to preserve and what to relinquish from the past?

At first glance, there seems to be no connection between the last verse of parashat K'doshim (Leviticus 20:27), which speaks of one who makes contact with the spirit world, and the first verse of parashat Emor (Leviticus 21:1), which refers to the kohanim. In homily seven, however, the rabbis reason that the link between these two verses is King Saul, for in his lifetime he inquires of the spirits and orders the killing of (eighty five) kohanim. Nevertheless, this homily would be better placed in parashat K'doshim, for it focuses more on Saul's connection with the spirit world than on his killing of the kohanim. As such, it serves as the basis for a sermonic exploration into the realm of sorcery. Biblical Judaism does not deny the powers of magic; it simply feels that there is a better way to achieve the same results. This homily, for example, quotes the rabbis as saying that Saul should have consulted the Urim and Tumim instead of the spirit world.[96]

Lastly, the appearance of the ghost of Samuel plus the content of Leviticus 20:27 serve to raise the topic of Jewish views regarding life after death.

The significance of the animals in Leviticus 22:27 ("When an ox or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall stay seven days with its mother, and from the eighth day on it shall be acceptable as an offering by fire to the Lord") is the focus of the homilies which follow, from chapter twenty-seven. The offering of animals, which are incapable of taking responsibility for their actions, is said to indicate our desire to be forgiven as though we, too, were blameless. The rabbis also suggest that the verse's reference to an "ox" is actually a euphemism for the word "calf," which is not mentioned for fear of recalling the incident of the golden calf. However, a later homily contradicts this claim by using the terms "ox" and "calf" interchangeably. In fact, it states that the ox is placed first among the three animals so as to emphasize that it is free of guilt. The offering of oxen, sheep and goats is said to be pleasing to God, Who sides with the pursued. These animals are also easily secured, thus demonstrating God's desire to make our worship as easy as possible. Two homilies which are not included in this study are virtual reproductions of earlier homilies.[97]

Homily one expounds Psalms 36:7 at great length. Only when it approaches its conclusion does it relate to Leviticus 22:27. There, it says that although we are human, and commit errors knowingly, we ask God to forgive us as if we were animals, who act without knowledge and cannot be held responsible for their deeds.

However, we are not animals in the rabbis' understanding of the word. Therefore, we must ask if it is justifiable to rely on others, be they animals or other people, to make amends for our actions. This homily addresses the importance of individual responsibility.

In addition, this part of the homily seems to say that we may use animals for our own good. However, is there a point at which our use becomes abuse? For example, is hunting for sport just as legitimate as hunting for food?

Homily three says that the horns of all animals are ritually proper for blowing except that of the cow, whose exclusion is based on the Biblical sin of building the golden calf. Even the mere mention of the word "calf" is said to recall the iniquity of Israel. Therefore, the rabbis say that although the text reads "ox," it actually signifies "calf."

This homily reiterates an earlier point that the prosecutor cannot serve as defender.[98] In addition, however, it pays special attention to the stigma attached to the word "calf." An early usage of the word "stigma" was "a mark burned into the skin of a criminal or slave."[99] Why does a stigma remain such a hard mark to remove? Are we who give people these reputations to blame for refusing to forgive them their past? Do we fear the implication that if a bad person can change, so can a good person? Can our labeling of people act as a barrier to their rehabilitation?

Homily five contrasts those that pursue with those that are pursued, saying that God is on the side of the latter. After detailing many instances which support this view, the rabbis state that this is also the case with the sacrifices. God desires only those animals which do not engage in violence, such as the three referred to in Leviticus 22:27. God cannot be appeased by those committed to violence, for God

is a supporter of non-violence.

Homily six, like that which precedes it, focuses on the three animals specified for a fire offering. Rabbi Judah bar Simon points out that, rather than sending the people far away in search of animals to sacrifice, God facilitates the process by selecting animals which are easy to find. The rabbis describe how easy God makes it to fulfill our religious obligations. However, many Jews feel it is beyond their capability to be "religious." Perhaps they suffer from a misconception of what it takes to be "religious." Is the word really synonymous with "orthodox?" Just how hard is it to be "a good Jew?"

Homily three, which states that the word שור (ox) is utilized instead of עגל (calf) because of the sin of the golden calf, is contradicted by the first part of homily eight, which makes no distinction between the two terms. Furthermore, the latter homily claims that the ox is placed first in order to compensate it for the damage done to its reputation by unjustified accusations, such as those in homily three.

Homily eight raises the issue of cleansing one's image after being falsely accused. Our society has come to equate accusation with guilt, regardless of what transpires in court. This homily presents an opportunity to speak out against judging people to be guilty, until proven innocent.

However, we must also ask why this way of thinking has come to be so widespread. Is there something wrong with our legal system? Are courtrooms more concerned with technicalities than criminality? Why do

people today have so little faith in the courts that they feel the need to convict the accused in their own minds?

Chapter twenty-eight is based on the commandment of the sheaf found in Leviticus 23:10-11 (" . . . when you enter the land which I am giving to you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the first sheaf of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord for acceptance in your behalf . . . "). Throughout this chapter, the rabbis emphasize how little God asks of us, considering all that God provides us with. The whole world belongs to God, and we would be wrong not to acknowledge our debt to God. The rabbis conclude by stressing, once again, the importance of the commandment of the sheaf.

Homily two points out how much God does for us in terms of safeguarding the food cycle. Among other things, God brings wind and clouds to cool the plants and rain to nourish them. In return for all this work, God asks only one sheaf. The end of homily three furthers this point, saying that whereas God gave a sheaf to every person in the wilderness,[100] God now requires but one sheaf from the whole people. Furthermore, this sheaf need only be of barley, which is less expensive than wheat.[101]

Considering all that God does for us, He asks so little in return. While God is willing to accept these meager wages, the rabbis imply that we are not giving all that God is due. Israel, in fact, is getting a great bargain. However, people tend to take things like wind and rain for granted until they are gone. This homily relates to appreciating the wonders of creation, which we see all the time, but rarely perceive. The beautiful and the miraculous are all around us, if we but open our eyes to them.

Homily five asks how the priest waves the sheaf. Rabbi Simon says, in the name of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi, that it is waved forward and backward, upward and downward, in order to symbolize that the world, from front to back and top to bottom, belongs to God.

Judaism contains much ritual; however, we are often unaware of its meaning whether we perform it or not. This homily, by virtue of its description of an unusual-looking, religious ceremony, may serve as an impetus to an exposition on the general subject of ritual. If ritual arises as the effort of one generation to record its experiences, how can future generations relate to the ritual in the same way when they have not undergone the experience? In other words, how can we make ritual meaningful today? Whatever answer one provides should include the importance of knowing what the ritual is supposed to signify. This homily may, therefore, serve as a call to educate ourselves Jewishly. Whether or not we practice the ritual, Reform Judaism says we should know what it stands for.

At the beginning of homily six, Rabbi Yohanan says not to let the commandment of the sheaf appear trivial in your sight. The fact that he says this indicates that the people probably were, indeed, lax in their observance of this commandment. As such, the rabbi's statement is indicative of the tendency of people to act only after perceiving a problem. We don't make rules until situations arise which warrant them; we don't go to the doctor until we feel sick; we don't properly appreciate people until they are gone. We live in a crisis-oriented society. The upshot of this interpretation of homily six is that we should be more concerned with the condition of things before they go

wrong. Preventative treatment should become the rule in law, medicine and society in general. We need to learn the skill of thinking ahead.

The Biblical basis for Rosh Hashana is found in Leviticus 23:24 ("... in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe complete rest, a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts"). The homilies of chapter twenty-nine explore the significance of this day in a variety of ways. The rabbis say that since God judges and pardons Adam on this day, this is the Day of Judgement for all humanity. The shofar is explained to be an instrument common to many nations. However, by accompanying its call with prayers and repentance, Israel makes its sounding of the shofar especially pleasing to God. Playing on the root תקע, the rabbis show how the shofar calls us to improve ourselves and to become worthy of God's forgiveness. Two other homilies in this chapter utilize plays on words in delivering their messages. The name of the seventh month, Tishray, is said to indicate that this is the time in which God will dissolve our sins. That Tishray is the seventh month is reminiscent of the oath to which Abraham is faithful, even when it appears that God is not. The loyalty of Abraham is presented as just cause for God to forgive the descendants of Isaac on Rosh Hashana.

Homily one quotes Rav as saying that while Adam is created on Rosh Hashana, he also sins, is judged and forgiven on this day. God is pictured as saying that just as Adam, the first person, is judged and forgiven on the first of Tishray, so will all Adam's descendants stand in judgement and be forgiven on this day.

However, what reason is there for God to judge people if it has already been stated that everyone will be forgiven? Perhaps God wishes to inspire a sense of humility and repentance within people, by making

them aware of their deeds, without subjecting them to Divine wrath. As such, this homily suggests that mercy is more important to God than is strict justice. Many midrashim may be incorporated in applying this theme to the creation of the world, the formation of people to populate it and God's judgement of those people. One homily which takes the latter approach is homily three, which says that on Rosh Hashana God intends to judge Israel strictly according to its deeds. However, upon hearing the sound of the shofar, God is filled with compassion and mercy towards Israel.

In speaking of the sounding of the shofar, in homily four, Rabbi Josiah says that Israel is not the only nation that knows how to blow a horn. Other nations, in fact, have many more horns than does Israel. However, by surrounding its shofar calls with prayers and repentance, Israel puts the desired feeling into the sounding of the shofar and thereby elicits the lovingkindness of God. Nations with more horns can play louder than Israel, but none can play better. The volume of the call is less important than the spirit which accompanies it. Quantity is less important than quality. This homily asserts that it is not so much what one does, but how one does it.

In homily six, Rabbi Berekhiah states that the root of the word "shofar" (שפר), in the pi'el conjugation, means "to improve." Therefore, the shofar is a symbolic call to improve our deeds and ourselves. If we do so, God will resemble a shofar in judging our deeds. Just as the shofar takes in breath at one end and sends it free from the other, so God promises to take in our deeds and dismiss them.

Though we are brought up for judgement on Rosh Hashana, God will grant us freedom if we heed the call of the shofar to improve.

The end of homily eight also utilizes a play on words in making its point. Rosh Hashana begins on the first day of the month of Tishray, which is said to derive from the root תשר, meaning "dissolve." Thus, the word "Tishray" means "You will dissolve," signifying that, in this month, God will dissolve our sins by granting us atonement and forgiveness.

Homily nine plays on the words שבעי (seventh) and שבועה (oath), saying that in the seventh month, God promises Abraham that his seed will be continued through Isaac.[102] However, God then tells Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.[103] The rabbis say that Abraham does not question what he knows to be contradictory, Divine messages because of his faith in God. Abraham is portrayed as telling God to remember this act of devotion when judging the descendants of Isaac, so that they may be forgiven. This homily is another illustration of the importance of the concept of the merit of the ancestors.[104]

The subject matter of chapter thirty is the festival of Sukkot, as it is described in Leviticus 23:40 ("And you shall take on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days").[105] The homilies in this chapter base themselves either on the four species or on the verse's command to take them. With regard to the former, the lulav is described as representing God, the Jewish people and the human body. The chapter's final homily seems to question the validity of the traditional elements which make up the lulav.

Regarding the command to take, one homily says that this refers to taking the instruction of Torah, whose fruit is more precious than silver. Two other homilies explain the "how" and "why" of taking. The lulav is to be taken by legitimate means only; one obtained through robbery does not fulfill the commandment. In addition, the rabbis state that the taking is not for God's sake, but for ours. God issues commands only to reward us for observing them.

Whereas earlier homilies compare Torah to a tree, based on Proverbs 3:18 ("It is a tree of life to those who hold it fast, and all who cling to it find happiness"),[106] homily one interprets Leviticus 23:40 as telling us to take of the wisdom of Torah so that we might enjoy success and freedom. The rabbis say that Torah study costs nothing, for whatever is paid out returns to the individual. The implication here is that the more one gives to Torah study, the more one receives from it. This is illustrated by the story of Rabbi Yohanan, who rids himself of material possessions in order to acquire Torah (learning). He does

so based on the proposition that having Torah is preferable to having money. Satisfying one's spiritual needs is, in the end, more important than accumulating additional riches. The rabbis say that the sooner one realizes this, the closer one comes to achieving this goal. This homily, then, addresses the value of spiritual wealth in relation to material riches.

In homily six, Rabbi Hiyya and Rabbi Levi say that what one does is less important than how one does it. In other words, the command to take a lulav does not mean to acquire it by whatever means are necessary, such as theft. The lulav must be acquired through legitimate means, such as purchase. Transgressing one commandment in order to fulfill another only turns a mitzvah into a sin. This homily states that the ends do not justify the means.

In quoting verses which refer to each of the four species, homily nine shows how the purpose of each is to symbolize God.[107] This homily, thus, opens the door to a review of the many Names of God, which demonstrate that there are various ways of knowing the One God. Seeing as Sukkot is sometimes linked with Thanksgiving, which in turn has become an occasion for ecumenical services, this homily may be used to show that the different religions of the world are not completely distinct from one another. Rather, they are linked in that they experience different aspects of the One God.

Equating taste with learning and fragrance with good deeds, homily twelve demonstrates how the four species are representative of the

Jewish people. Like the etrog, some Jews have both taste (learning) and fragrance (good deeds) to their credit. Other Jews resemble the palm branch in that they possess taste (learning), but lack fragrance (good deeds). A third category is like the myrtle, which lacks taste (learning), but has fragrance (good deeds), while the final group has neither taste (learning) nor fragrance (good deeds), just like the willow.

The Jewish people is like the lulav in that our different elements are bound up into one. Both tend to be judged as a whole, rather than on their individual elements. As such, this homily bespeaks each Jew's responsibility to k'lal Yisrael. However, how far does this responsibility extend? Should we always present a united front on political issues, particularly those relating to Israel? Is "united we stand, divided we fall" a fair assessment of our lot? This homily affords the opportunity to expound on the tension between one's freedoms as an individual and one's responsibilities as a Jew.

Homily thirteen uses the command "to take" in Leviticus 23:40 as its basis for expounding on the significance of ritual. Alluding to other items which God commands to be taken (such as the red heifer and olive oil), this homily remarks that God needs none of these. The purpose of ritual is for our benefit, not God's. By enhancing our spiritual side, ritual can make us more worthy of God's favor. However, we should understand the significance of the ritual before we experience it. If we move to familiarize ourselves with the traditions which enriched the lives of our ancestors, we too may find them to be significant in our lives.

In homily fourteen, Rabbi Mani suggests that the lulav is the embodiment of Psalms 35:10 ("All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like You . . . "). He illustrates this point by saying that the palm branch of the lulav parallels the human spine, the myrtle resembles the eye, the willow represents the mouth and the etrog is shaped like the heart. These are the most important parts of the body and, in combining them into the lulav, we symbolically praise God with our entire being.

Homily fifteen seems to be a thinly-veiled protest against the generally accepted designations of the four species. Quoting Solomon's lack of understanding of four things in Proverbs 30:18 (" . . . four I do not understand"),[108] the anonymous author portrays Solomon as questioning the judgement that Leviticus 23:40 refers to the etrog, palm, myrtle and willow. After all, says Solomon, all trees bear goodly fruit; who is to say that the etrog is specified? The plural form of the verse indicates that at least two branches of the palm tree are to be used, yet the lulav contains only one. Boughs of thick trees may also refer to olive trees, and all trees grow in water, not only the willow! If all this is so, Solomon asks, who is responsible for telling us that the four species referred to are, in fact, these four?

Solomon's answer of "the sages" is given without much enthusiasm, citing only one brief proof text as textual support. The anonymous author seems to be questioning the decision, if not the authority of the sages. Is there a similar need to question the decisions of our leaders? How can leaders be expected to be responsive if they are sheltered from feedback? Is it, in fact, our duty to question and criticize what we feel to be wrong? What are the consequences of

leadership which feels no need to be responsive to those it leads?

These questions also present an excellent opportunity to show how many of the great figures of the Bible, such as Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Jeremiah and Job, questioned God's intentions and, in some cases, changed God's mind.[109] If God's decisions can be questioned, can the same not be said of human authority figures? Judaism is a thinking religion, which implies that we do not accept things blindly. We are both free and encouraged to question things, so that our faith may ultimately be stronger. Beliefs affirmed after questioning are much stronger than those which come without having gone through the process of doubting and questioning.

The following homilies, from chapter thirty-one, flow from Leviticus 24:2 ("Command the Israelite people to bring you clear oil of beaten olives for lighting, to maintain lights regularly"). Two homilies approach this verse in identical fashion, saying that God does not need these lights; the command is issued solely to make the people worthy of God's favor. This chapter's final homily explains the significance of the shape of the Temple windows, which derives from the unique nature of the light within the Temple.

Homilies one and eight are very similar in their expositions of Leviticus 24:2. Both recognize that, as the Giver of light, God is not issuing this command to fill a personal need. Why, then, does God command Israel to bring this oil for lights?

Both homilies state that, while not in need of these lights, God wishes to give us an additional opportunity to merit Divine favor. Playing on Leviticus 24:2's usage of the word זך (clear), the rabbis in homily eight, say that the clear, olive oil brings us the merit (זכות) to deserve God's favor. Therefore, this commandment is actually a charitable act on the part of God. It is like buying candy from the kids in one's neighborhood, even though the shelves are overflowing with candy. These two homilies demonstrate how charity is not limited to giving money. We can give of our time and emotion, doing volunteer work, being a Big Brother/Sister, foster parent, etc. Hebrew has one word for both charity and righteousness: צדקה. By engaging in charitable acts, we become more righteous people, demonstrating those qualities which prove that we are, indeed, created in the image of God.

The first section of homily seven illustrates how the windows of the Temple serve a different purpose than those of a king's palace. The latter are narrow on the outside and wide on the inside, so as to draw light into the palace. However, the Temple windows are wide on the outside and narrow on the inside, in order to send the Temple's light out to the world. The rabbis conceive of the Temple's light as being of more importance than that of the sun, and the function of the Temple service is to project that light outward.

Before the Jewish people can be "a light to the nations,"[110] we must answer two questions: what is the nature of this light today and how do we ensure that our modern temples fulfill their historic role of projecting this light? How can and will Judaism be able to improve the world? This theme may also be applied on an individual basis: how successful are we in carrying the lessons of our religion outside of the walls of our temples?

In addition, the idea of sending forth the Temple light to illuminate the world brings to mind the Reform movement's, recently-adopted outreach program. Should Reform Judaism seek to show the unchurched of society what it has to offer? This homily is relevant to this and other questions relating to the subject of conversion.

The following three homilies, taken from chapter thirty-two, focus on both Leviticus 24:10 ("There came out among the Israelites one whose mother was Israelite and whose father was Egyptian. And a fight broke out in the camp between the son of the Israelite woman and a certain Israelite") and Leviticus 24:11 ("The son of the Israelite woman pronounced the Name in blasphemy, and he was brought to Moses - now his mother's name was Sh'lomit, daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan").

In looking at this incident, the rabbis decry the use of God's holy Name in the context of a curse, and show how the blasphemer's ancestry derives from his father, rather than his mother. They also focus on the mother's sexual immorality in the context of their discourse on familial responsibility. This chapter concludes the rabbinic exposition of parashat Emor.

The implication of homily two's understanding of Leviticus 24:11 is found in Ecclesiastes 10:20 ("Even in your thought, do not curse the king . . . "). God, the Divine King, has made us to resemble the animals with respect to bodily structure, but has given thought, intelligence and speech to us alone. These set us apart from the other animals and enable us to rule over them. And yet, we use God's Name to curse, rather than to praise. In so doing, we violate the third of the Ten Commandments, which says: "You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain . . . ."[111] This homily shows us an ancient example of a problem still current in society, and urges us to show the proper respect to God by not using the Divine Name improperly.

In the ancient world, a name was more than an appellation. It represented the character of that individual. This concept also applied

to the Name of God, which was said to carry tremendous power with it. Consequently, its usage was restricted to holy purposes. To take something so holy and utilize it in a curse was seen as unforgiveable.

This homily lends itself to a variety of expositions relating to the significance of names. In addition, by raising the issue of mixing holy and profane, it encourages us to draw boundaries within the large, gray area that lies between these two extremes. How much of the modern world should enter the sanctuary and to what extent may religion influence our society? Must we choose between isolating religion in the sanctuary or facing groups which seek to introduce (their) religion into every aspect of our country's life? This homily encourages us to explore this tension between "freedom of religion" and "separation of Church and State."

The last section of homily three says that the man of Leviticus 24:10 wants to pitch his tent among the tribe of Dan, since his mother is a member of that tribe. The Danites, however, turn down his request on the basis of Numbers 2:2 ("The people of Israel shall encamp . . . with the ensigns of their fathers' houses . . . ").[112] The rabbis say that after appealing to Moses, who confirms the decision of the Danites, the man goes out and blasphemes God, as is stated in Leviticus 24:11. It is noteworthy that both Moses and the Torah agree that this man's ancestry derives from his father, not his Jewish mother. This opinion runs counter to the traditional position that the child of a Jewish mother is considered Jewish. As such, it is of great importance in supporting the Reform movement's stand that a child with one Jewish parent may be considered Jewish.

This homily also alludes to the psychological traumas which may confront children of mixed marriages, unless they are given a clear-cut, religious identity. Because these children face a greater risk of (religious) identity crises than children born of two Jewish parents, mixed couples have an obligation to discuss and agree upon the religious status of their children. The conversion of the non-Jewish spouse is an attractive option, in that it presents the child with a united family, as far as religion is concerned. However, at the very least, it is vital to agree upon the religion in which the child will be raised before the child is conceived. Parents who postpone the decision until one must be made add unnecessary pressure to both their decision and their marriage.

Letting the child choose when he is old enough is also troublesome, for a variety of reasons which may be described within a sermon. The status of children, within a mixed marriage, need not cause difficulties if prospective parents deal with it early.

The end of homily five comments on both sexual immorality and familial responsibility. In the first case, the rabbis praise the morality of the women of Israel, identifying the one exception as Sh'lomit, daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan. By engaging in an immoral act, she is said to disgrace herself, her family and the tribe. The rabbis see having a child out of wedlock as a serious sin. Does our concept of morality agree with that of the rabbis or does it tend to change with the times? What are the pros and cons of a flexible morality, as opposed to a clear-cut, moral code?

While the rabbis perceive the woman to be the sinner in this episode, it is the son who is condemned to death in the Biblical text. His name, however, is not mentioned, whereas those of his mother, grandparent and tribe are given. This may be said to demonstrate the responsibility of a family for the actions of its young.

This homily does not imply, however, that all bad kids are the products of bad families. Rather, it indicates that the family can have a tremendous influence on children. Consequently, raising children should not be left to chance or intuition. There are many books and courses designed to help couples to learn parenting skills. Not to avail one's self of their benefits is to shun responsibility for one's children. To give children the best lives possible, we must become the best possible parents.

Chapter thirty-three is very short and contains a minimum of relevant, sermonic material. The two homilies which may be useful expound Leviticus 25:14 ("When you sell property to your neighbor, or buy any from your neighbor, you shall not wrong one another."). The first homily understands the word תונו (you shall . . . wrong) in the sense of speaking damaging words to another person. As a result, the rabbis are able to show how the tongue is capable of both good and evil. The second homily presented here resorts to unwarranted hyperbole in discussing the surface meaning (p'shat) of the verse. This chapter opens the rabbinic exposition of parashat B'har.

In reading Leviticus 25:14, homily one asks what the Torah means by saying "you shall not wrong one another." The rabbis interpret this to mean speaking badly of others. They note that the tongue has the potential for both good and evil, and illustrate this point through the story of Rabban Gamliel, who sends his servant out to buy good food and then asks him to purchase bad food. The servant brings back tongue on both occasions, and when Rabban Gamliel asks for an explanation, the servant replies: "Both good and bad come from it. When it is good, there is nothing better, but when it is bad, there is nothing worse." This homily, then, is well suited to an exposition on the need to be aware of the effect our words have on others. In particular, it may be utilized to expound on the subject of slander.

In homily three, the rabbis interpret the word תונו (you shall . . . wrong) to refer to engaging in fraud. In their effort to stress the magnitude of this crime, they say that it is worse than idol

worship, incest and the shedding of blood. It is, in fact, said to be the most serious of sins.

While not seeking to minimize the offense, it does seem incredible that the rabbis are capable of hyperbolizing to such an extent. Although they may have felt the need to do so in order to make an impact on the populace, we may question whether or not this strategem is a good one. To what degree are we influenced by the exaggerated claims of advertisers and politicians? Why is the truth not enough for people in our society? Could not the rabbis have made their point about fraud without, in a sense, being guilty of the same crime?

While Leviticus 25:25 ("If your brother becomes poor, and sells part of his property, then his next of kin shall come and redeem what his brother has sold")[113] presents one means of helping the poor, the homilies of chapter thirty-four suggest a great many more. In so doing, they stress the importance of maintaining the dignity of the poor person. The rabbis condemn people who refuse the poor, saying that every little bit of charity helps both giver and receiver, provided it is given in the proper spirit. Since giving to the poor earns one merit in the eyes of God, giving to them is compared to lending unto God. Helping others, whether or not they are in need, is said to be always rewarded, whereas refusing them is similarly punished. This is the case whether one is poor in terms of wealth or Torah knowledge. Chapter thirty-four concludes the rabbinic treatment of parashat B'har.

In detailing ways of helping the poor, Yissa, at the beginning of homily one, speaks of giving them money. However, towards the end of this homily, Rabbi Jonah is shown to tell those ashamed to take charity that he is simply loaning them money, which may be repaid when they are able. By so doing, the rabbi gives charity without affecting the pride of the recipient.

In addition, this homily praises the person who helps to bury a met mitzvah, an individual with no one to take care of his burial arrangements. While this action and that of Rabbi Jonah are charitable, they are notable in that they are characterized by a concern for maintaining the dignity of the poor. To take a person's dignity away while giving him money is most uncharitable. It should also be held in mind that the recipient of one's charity may not feel "poor," and may have quite a

strong sense of personal dignity. Reference might be made to the millions of Jews who emigrated to America in the early twentieth century, whose sense of self worth helped them to work their way up in society. The importance of a person's dignity, regardless of social status, becomes sermonic material as a result of this homily, which emphasizes the proper ways of assisting the poor.

Homily two speaks of both the symbolic nature of giving to the poor, as well as its reward. Proverbs 19:17 ("He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord . . . ")[114] is quoted in order to show that one who gives help to the poor is sure to be rewarded by God.

The second part of this homily shows that every little bit of charity helps. The example is presented of a poor man who has nine p'rutot to his name when a loaf of bread costs ten. Someone comes along and gives the man one p'ruta. Though in and of itself this is a paltry sum, it is enough to enable the poor man to eat and feel refreshed. The small donation can make the difference between life and death. As long as it is given freely and to the extent possible, the giving of charity is pleasing in the sight of God. As the rabbis have stressed throughout the pages of Leviticus Rabbah, quality is of greater importance than quantity.[115]

This homily may be aimed at those people who shy away from giving because they fear that their donation will be insignificant in relation to those of the wealthy. Theirs, however, may be that one p'rutah required to feed that hungry child, plant that additional tree or buy that needed land. No amount of money is insignificant if it is given in the spirit of righteousness.

Homily four also teaches to give what one can to the poor; however, it expands on the definition of who is poor, relating the term to one who is weak in the knowledge of Torah. Therefore, the rabbis understand the text of Leviticus to refer to the obligation of teaching the less knowledgeable person, when one is asked to do so. A rich person, by this definition one who is well versed in Torah, who shuns a prospective student is to be reminded of Proverbs 22:2 ("The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all").[116] This verse shows that just as God may bless people with wisdom, God may also take it away if it is not handled properly.

The rabbis apply this same principle to the giving of charity money. Those who do so are worthy of reward, while those who refuse are to be reminded that they, too, may be poor one day and in need of the same assistance which they now refuse to give to others. These two sections teach that rather than refusing the ignorant or the poor, we should try to imagine what it is like to be in their shoes.

The requirement for everyone to give charity may be inferred from homily six. Its second section lists seven different levels of poverty, ranging from ani to makh. The purpose of all these terms is to show that no matter how financially troubled a person may be, there is always someone in greater need. For this reason, the poor are required to give charity, just like everyone else.

Homily eight uses a series of inferences from minor to major (kal vahomer) in showing the aspects of reward and punishment associated with the giving of charity. The first part of the homily refers to Abraham,

who is greatly rewarded for showing kindness to the angels, even though they actually do not need it.[117] The rabbis reason that if one is rewarded for helping those who do not need it, how much more will one be rewarded for helping those who do need it.

By the same token, the Ammonites and Moabites are said to have been punished for not showing kindness to the children of Israel.[118] Even though the Israelites were not actually in need of food and drink, it is said to be common courtesy to offer them to travelers. The rabbis say that because these peoples are punished for not giving to those who are not in need, how much the more so will people be punished for not showing kindness to those who are in need.

The rabbis are of the opinion that, by making the giver of charity eligible for earning merit in the eyes of God, the receiver of kindness (charity) does more for the giver than vice-versa. As a result, this homily says we should approach the giving of charity, and all good deeds, with a cheerful heart. Like homily two, this homily shows the importance of having the proper spirit when giving. It is important that the attitude of the giver does not affect the dignity of the receiver. Once again, while the actual act of giving is important, that which is given is less important than the way in which it is given.

The doctrine of reward and punishment, which runs throughout Leviticus 26, is the focus of chapter thirty-five of Leviticus Rabbah. These homilies expound Leviticus 26:3-4 ("If you follow My laws and faithfully observe My commandments, I will grant you rains in their season, so that the earth shall yield its produce and the trees of the field their fruit"). Emphasis is laid on being aware of the consequences of our actions ahead of time, so that we may choose the path leading to reward, rather than punishment. God's promise to grant rain leads to a glorification of those gifts which God has bestowed upon the world without any preconditions. This chapter begins the rabbinic exposition of the final parasha of the book of Leviticus: B'hukotai.

Homily one presents a number of interesting, homiletic possibilities. In its opening lines, King David is presented as saying that while he used to make plans to go to one place or another, he always ended up at the house of study. This may be said to indicate that before one embarks on the way, it is necessary to know how to get there. Similarly, one has to know what to do when contemplating an act. David's statement emphasizes the need for preparation. This general theme may appear in a variety of more specific contexts, such as the importance of kavana within the framework of a worship service.

David's words may also be interpreted as saying that in order to walk in God's ways, one must first know them. This perspective emphasizes the value of a particular type of preparation: study. As a result, this homily can be utilized to sermonize on a variety of themes relating to the importance of knowledge and education.

Basing themselves on the content of Leviticus 26 as a whole, the rabbis say that when one considers all the rewards for following God's statutes, as opposed to the many curses for disobeying them, it is clear that one should adopt the first course of action. It is also stated that the blessings for following God's statutes are so extensive as to encompass the entire alphabet, seeing as they begin (in verse three) with the letter aleph (אם בחקתי) and conclude (in verse thirteen) with the letter tav (ואנכי אתכם קוממיות). In contrast, the section containing the curses (verses 14-46) begins with the letter vav (ואתם אם לא) and ends with the letter hay (פי' אשר). Since vav and hay fall next to each other in the Hebrew alphabet, the extent of the curses is as though there were only two. Whereas the actual text announces many more curses than blessings, the rabbis' homiletic treatment of the text leaves one with the conclusion that God is much more eager to reward than to punish.

This theme of reward and punishment is also evident in homily six's approach to the text. The rabbis teach that, as in Leviticus 26, both the reward and punishment for one's actions are known ahead of time. They say that the sword and the Torah were given from heaven, wrapped together. If the people keep that which is in the Torah (a paraphrase of Leviticus 26:3), they will not suffer from the sword. However, if they do not observe God's teaching, the sword will be their ultimate fate.

This homily's basic outlook is that there is an explanation for that which happens to us. A person who suffers must have done something to deserve it. This notion of retribution undergoes its most serious challenge in seeking to understand the Holocaust. Were all those who

died deserving of such a fate? Surely not, so why did God not intervene? Must we conclude that there is no Divine input in life, that events occur because of circumstances completely divorced from the realm of the Divine? If no, what alternative explanations are available to us? If yes, what then is God's role or purpose in our lives? Seeing as this parasha is read shortly before Yom Hashoah, this homily may serve as the catalyst for dealing with these difficult questions.

Basing itself upon Leviticus 26:4, homily eight is concerned with that which God gives us. The benefits detailed between verses four and thirteen are rewards which God promises Israel if it fulfills the conditions set in verse three. These rewards, however, differ from the outright gifts which God is said to have given to the world. These include the Torah, the sun, moon and rains, peace, salvation, the Land of Israel, mercy and a way through the seas. This homily addresses itself to the different kinds of giving. What is the value of gifts? When is a gift not a gift? What are some of our most valuable gifts and do we appreciate them properly? How do these gifts compare with the kinds of gifts which we give to one another?

The two homilies examined here, from chapter thirty-six, base themselves on Leviticus 26:42 ("Then will I remember My covenant with Jacob; I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham . . . "). The chronological (and usual) order of the Patriarchs is reversed in this verse. This is understood as a means of displaying the equality of the three men, for he who is generally first is mentioned last and vice versa. The concept of זכות אבות (merit of the ancestors) is also discussed in terms of the length of time Israel can expect to enjoy the benefits of its ancestors' righteousness.

Homily one is concerned with the eternal problem of who gets top billing. This problem is first explored in seeking to answer which was created first: the heavens or the earth? Whereas שמים וארץ (heavens and earth) is the normal sequence of these words within the Bible, Genesis 2:4 reverses them. Moses is generally mentioned before Aaron; however, Exodus 6:27 speaks first of Aaron. These and several other examples are referred to, since Leviticus 26:42 reverses the usual order of the Patriarchs. The rabbis conclude that in each of these cases, the purpose of the exception to the norm is to indicate equality. Because Abraham's name is generally listed in front of those of Isaac and Jacob, he is placed last here in order to show that he is no better and no worse than the others.

The status which society has traditionally placed on being first is evidenced in the rabbis' effort to disassociate "first" from "best." Nevertheless, there have always been many advantages to being first, such as the double portion of the father's inheritance which was reserved for the firstborn son.[119] This homily sets up a sermon on the

value of being first, both as it applies to that individual and to those who come afterwards. When is being first a good idea and when is it not so?

Many earlier homilies in Leviticus Rabbah have dealt with the concept of זכות אבות (the merit of the ancestors).[120] Homily six asks how long this merit endures. A number of rabbis propose answers indicating that it has already run out. However, the answer of Rabbi Yudan bar Hanan, who quotes Rabbi Berekhiah, is the best for homiletic purposes. He says that if we are concerned that the merit of the Patriarchs and the Matriarchs may no longer be serving us well, we should go out and acquire more merit through the performance of good deeds. We cannot always view ourselves in the context of the past. Rabbi Yudan is saying that we must make our own future.

His statement is followed by that of Rabbi Aha, who says that the merit of the ancestors will last forever. Reading his comment in the light of Rabbi Yudan's yields a satisfying synthesis: what our ancestors did will always serve as an inspiration for us; however, every generation determines its own fate. The past should be remembered, but the present must be lived.

The homilies found in chapter thirty-seven are based on Leviticus 27:2-3 (" . . . when a man explicitly vows to the Lord the equivalent for a human being, the following scale shall apply . . . "). Although the rabbis stress the importance of fulfilling one's words, they discourage the making of vows because, at a later time, one may be either unwilling or unable to fulfill that vow. The Exodus account of Moses seeing the burdens of the Israelites is shown to serve as the basis for the different valuations ascribed to various categories of individuals in Leviticus 27:3-7, based upon age and gender. This chapter concludes the rabbinic exposition of parashat B'hukotai and is the final chapter in Leviticus Rabbah.

While homily one presents a variety of opinions and weak illustrations, it does make two points quite clearly: 1) do not make vows, and 2) if you make a vow, be sure to fulfill it. What are the dangers involved in making vows which inspire the rabbis' point of view? Are we bound by what we speak when in an emotional state? What can we do when, after promising to do something, we have second thoughts? This homily lends itself to a survey of the nature of vows, promises and the people who make them.

The end of homily two says that when Moses observes the burdens placed upon the children of Israel,[121] he sees women loaded down with the burdens of men, children doing the work of adults and the elderly doing that of the young. Moses is said to have corrected this situation, proportioning workloads to the people according to each's ability. Because Moses recognizes that people have differing abilities

as workers, the rabbis say that he shows himself qualified to reiterate this idea in Leviticus 27:3-7. This pericope "deals with a simple vow to contribute a sum equivalent to the valuation -- not the value! -- of a person who may be the donor, or someone else."[122] The scale of a person's worth on the labor market is the basis for these valuations described in Leviticus 27 and presented here:

Age	Gender	Valuation
1 month - 5 years	Male	5 shekels
1 month - 5 years	Female	3 shekels
5 - 20 years	Male	20 shekels
5 - 20 years	Female	10 shekels
20 - 60 years	Male	50 shekels
20 - 60 years	Female	30 shekels
60+ years	Male	15 shekels
60+ years	Female	10 shekels

It is difficult to argue with the labor value ascribed to each individual on the basis of age. However, in every age category, the worth of the male is higher than that of the female. This scale implies that, at any age, a woman cannot do the same work as a man. As such, it is a natural opening to a sermon on discrimination against women, both in general and in the work force specifically. This homily shows how far back the concept of the inequality of the sexes goes and, consequently, it may inspire a variety of modern-day rebuttals to this way of thinking.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Numbers Rabbah 13:15.

[2]Dr. Eugene Mihaly, "Our Moorings and Our Reach," address delivered at the 90th Founders' Day Service of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, March 13, 1965, p. 1.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Similar "rabbot" exist for the other books of the Torah, as well as Lamentations, Esther, Song of Songs, Ruth and Ecclesiastes. Nevertheless, there is no unified connection between them; each has a history of its own.

[5]Leopold Zunz and Hanokh Albeck, Had'rashot B'Yisrael (Jerusalem: Mosed Bialik, 1954), p. 80.

[6]Mordecai Margulies, Midrash Wayyikra Rabbah: A Critical Edition Based on Manuscripts and Genizah Fragments with Variants and Notes. 5 vols. (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture in Israel [vol. 1], Ararat Publishing Society [vol. 2] and Central Press vols.[3-5], 1953-1960), 5:xxxii.

[7]Ibid., 5:xxvii.

[8]Ibid., 5:xxxiii.

[9]Encyclopedia Judaica, s.v. "Leviticus Rabbah," by Joseph Heinemann.

[10]Margulies, Midrash Wayyikra Rabbah . . . , 5:xiii.

[11]These being sermons 20 and 27 through 30.

[12]Margulies, Midrash Wayyikra Rabbah . . . , 5:xiii.

[13]Hanokh Albeck, "Midrash Wayikra Rabbah," in Memorial Volume to L. Ginsberg (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1946), p. 18.

[14]Margulies, Midrash Wayyikra Rabbah . . . , 5:xxvii.

[15]Albeck, "Midrash Wayikra Rabbah," p. gimel.

[16]Margulies, Midrash Wayyikra Rabbah . . . , 5:xxvii.

[17]Ibid., 5:xxxii.

[18]Heinemann, "Leviticus Rabbah," p. 149.

[19]Joseph Heinemann, "Parshiot B'Vayikra Rabbah Shem'koriutan M'fukpeket," Tarbitz 37:4 (June, 1968), p. 340.

[20]Zunz and Albeck, Had'rashot B'Yisrael, p. 79.

[21]Mihaly, "Our Moorings and Our Reach," p. 1.

[22]See "Secondary Sources" in the List of Works Consulted.

[23]See "Primary Sources" in the List of Works Consulted.

[24]Margulies, Midrash Wayyikra Rabbah . . . , 1:85.

[25]Ibid., 4:800.

[26]Psalms 103:20 (RSV).

[27]The greater part of this translation is taken from Rabbi Dr. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds. Midrash Rabbah: Leviticus (London: Soncino Press, 1939), p. 3.

[28]Proverbs 25:7 (RSV).

[29]This refers to the setting of the academy, wherein there was fixed seating on the basis of knowledge.

[30]Pirkay Avot 1:14.

[31]Proverbs 20:15 (RSV).

[32]Freedman and Simon, Midrash Rabbah: Leviticus, p. 12.

[33]Dr. J. H. Hertz, The Pentateuch and Haftorahs (London: Soncino Press, 1978), p. 328.

[34]Isaac Husik, A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946), p. 164.

[35]Leviticus 1:2 (RSV).

[36]Pirkay Avot 4:27.

[37]Margulies, Midrash Wayyikra Rabbah . . . , 1:81.

[38]Encyclopedia Judaica, s.v. "Sin: Rabbinic Views," by Louis Jacobs.

[39]Margulies, Midrash Wayyikra Rabbah . . . , 1:91.

[40]Job 19:4 (RSV).

[41]Numbers 16:22 can be seen as referring to Leviticus 4:3 in that its p'shat shows one person bringing guilt upon the entire people, whereas this is not the case in Leviticus 4:2.

[42]Psalms 103:2, 103:22, 104:1 and 104:35.

[43]Mishnah B'rakhot 5:1.

[44]Although the rabbis make their point on the basis of verse order, it should be noted that the mention of the individual Israelite's sin precedes that of the priest, appearing as it does in verse two.

[45]Leviticus 4:15 (JPS).

[46]Unless the verse is interpreted so as to make the congregation the object of the elders' support, i.e., "And the elders shall support the congregation."

[47]Leviticus 5:1 (RSV).

[48]Reuben and Shimon are ficticious names used in rabbinic literature when giving legal examples.

[49]Proverbs 29:24 (RSV), with the substitution of the word "adjuration" (JPS, 1917 edition) for "curse" (RSV).

[50]Leviticus 1:5, 1:7 and 1:8.

[51]Judges 14.

[52]Pirkay Avot 2:21.

[53]This translation follows the JPS for the most part, but uses the phrase "pure meal offering" in accordance with the rabbis' interpretation of the word.

[54]This translation is a combination of JPS and RSV.

[55]The quote in Leviticus Rabbah 1:6 is "If you have knowledge, what do you lack? And if you lack knowledge, what do you have?"

[56]Exodus 23:4, 23:5 and Deuteronomy 22:6.

[57]Psalms 34:15 (RSV).

[58]Genesis 18:12.

[59]Genesis 18:13 (RSV).

[60]Exodus 32:5.

[61]Lamentations 2:20 (RSV).

[62]Exodus 24:14.

[63]Exodus 38:26 and Numbers 26:51.

[64]Freedman and Simon, Midrash Rabbah: Leviticus, p. 150.

[65]Proverbs 23:31 (RSV).

[66]Margulies, Midrash Wayyikra Rabbah . . . , 2:256

[67]This translation is based on that of the 1917 JPS translation.

[68]Leviticus 10:8.

[69]Hertz, The Pentateuch and Haftorahs, p. 447.

[70]The text of this homily notes that one is not allowed to partake of consecrated food prior to burial of his dead.

[71]Leviticus 12:2 (RSV).

[72]This translation utilizes the revised JPS text, with the exception of the phrase "the plague of leprosy," which comes from the 1917 JPS text.

[73]N'gaim 2:5.

[74]Proverbs 21:23 (RSV).

[75]Leviticus 13:59, 14:32, 14:54, 14:57 and 14:2.

[76]See "Atonement through Same Means as Sin" in the Thematic Index.

[77]Genesis 9:25.

[78]Genesis 24:31.

[79]Isaiah 28:20 (RSV).

[80]Avot 3:1.

[81]In point of fact, the right of the Sanhedrin to carry out capital punishment sentences was revoked by the Romans some forty years prior to the destruction of the Temple (see also Sanhedrin 41a).

[82]This translation is a composite of the current and 1917 JPS translations.

[83]Whereas Margulies' text actually reads אחיתתו, his commentary cites parallels which show that its meaning is אחיתתו.

[84]Leviticus 16:6 (RSV).

[85]C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, A Rabbinic Anthology (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), p. 511.

[86]Per Exodus 28:4, 28:40 and 28:42 they are as follows: breastplate, ephod, robe, checkered tunic, headdress, sash, turban and linen breeches.

[87]Rev. Bailey Smith, President of the Southern Baptist Convention was widely quoted after making this statement in Dallas during an August, 1980 evangelical meeting.

[88]See "Atonement through Same Means as Sin" in the Thematic Index.

[89]Leviticus 16:17 (RSV).

[90]Song of Songs 2:2.

[91]Masekhet D'vahodesh, Jethro, Parasha 5, Lines 15-18.

[92]Rabbi Solomon Ganzfried, Code of Jewish Law (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1961), Chapter 150, Number 5.

[93]Encyclopedia Judaica, s.v. "Ghetto" states that this term " . . . was probably first used to describe a quarter of Venice situated near a foundry (getto, or ghetto) and . . . in 1516 was enclosed by walls and gates and declared to be the only part of the city to be open to Jewish settlement."

[94]Gates of Repentance, The New Union Prayerbook for the Days of Awe (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1978), p. 270.

[95]This is the translation which appears in Gates of Prayer, The New Union Prayerbook (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1975), pp. 424, 430, 436, 441 and 447.

[96]The rabbis, however, ignore I Samuel 28:6-7 which shows that Saul consulted the spirits only after failing to receive an answer by means of dreams, Urim and prophets.

[97]This is the relationship of homily 27:9 to 21:11 and of homily 27:12 to 9:7.

[98]See "Atonement through Same Means as Sin" in the Thematic Index.

[99]The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 1973 ed., s.v. "Stigma."

[100]Exodus 16:16.

[101]II Kings 7:1.

[102]That this takes place in the seventh month is not mentioned in the Biblical text.

[103]Genesis 22:2.

[104]See "Ancestors: Merit of" in the Thematic Index.

[105]Leviticus 23:40 (RSV).

[106]See number 95, above.

[107]Although Psalms 92:13 reads "the righteous" and does not refer specifically to God, God may be considered the Ultimate Exemplar of righteousness.

[108]Proverbs 30:18 (RSV).

[109]Genesis 18:22-33, Genesis 32:25-31, Exodus 32:11, Jeremiah 12 and various places throughout the book of Job.

[110]Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6 (RSV).

[111]Exodus 20:7 (RSV).

[112]Numbers 2:2 (RSV).

[113]Leviticus 25:25 (RSV).

[114]Proverbs 19:17 (RSV).

[115]See "Quality vs. Quantity" in the Thematic Index.

[116]Proverbs 22:2 (RSV).

[117]Genesis 18:8.

[118]Deuteronomy 23:5.

[119]Deuteronomy 21:17.

[120]See "Ancestors: Merit of" in the Thematic Index.

[121]Exodus 2:11.

[122]The Torah, A Modern Commentary (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981), p. 964.

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