

The following is a speech written for a girl in a Conservative congregation upon the occasion of her Bat Mitzvah.

The book of *Vayikra*, Leviticus, in which my *Parsha* is contained, deals mostly with the various sacrifices that were brought in the Temple. Interestingly, the word sacrifice is one of the poorest translations in all of the *Torah*.

In English, the word sacrifice seems to be a form of the verb meaning, “to give up,” often associated with suffering or having to do without. In truth, the Hebrew word *Korban* means, “that which brings close.” It is a joyful term, because it signifies that we have catalysts available to help us attain our spiritual goals.

Much more than a primitive rite, the sacrifices represent the breaking down of animalistic desires into their most basic form, the component parts, and through reflection on that, being able to free ourselves from the base instincts that cause Man to sin. As the animals being offered have no say in their fate, walking without resistance in the direction they are led, so does one who approaches life without thinking, merely traveling the path of least resistance, succumb to a sorry end.

The specific *korbanot*, sacrifices, in the *Parsha* I read today have an extra significance for a Bat Mitzvah. In my *Parsha*, we read of the sacrifices offered upon the inauguration of Aaron and his sons into the Priesthood. Moshe placed the blood of the special inaugural sacrifice upon the ear, thumb, and toe of each of Aaron and his sons. What does this signify, and what does it have to do with my becoming a Bat Mitzvah?

Just as Aaron and his sons were installed as the Priests in the Temple during this ceremony, I am installed as a member of the Jewish People at this one. I am now an adult member of Israel, and have obligations to fulfill. In trying to fulfill them, I must ask myself: what is the message of Aaron's inauguration to my own?

In that ceremony, blood was placed on three body parts.

First, the ear. Aaron and his family were not expected to necessarily know everything about Jewish law. Rather, their ears were consecrated so they would understand that by listening, they could learn of the traditions and expectations of Judaism upon them.

Next comes the thumb. What sets Man apart from most of the animal kingdom is his opposable thumb. This feature allows us to perform many acts other creatures cannot. The message here is that we must utilize our gifts, talents, and skills in such a way that our actions are sanctified.

Finally, the big toe. Like the opposable thumb which makes grasping possible, the big toe gives us balance when we walk. King Solomon, in Proverbs (3:5), says: "In all your ways acknowledge Him." When we walk in the street, G-d's glory should be visible upon us, so that people who see us may say, "there goes a person who is holy and whose actions are sacred. That is someone who is a complete individual."

The Hebrew word for the inauguration is "*milu'im*," or installation, but the commentaries say that several times it is spelled, "*mi'lay'im*," meaning "which make complete." Though I am not a complete and perfected human being today, for I have my whole life ahead of me to strive for greater and loftier goals, my *Parsha* give me the tools I need to get there. By learning about my heritage, and acting in a manner consistent with a person of spirituality, I can become not only a successful Bat Mitzvah, but also a perfected human being.