

The Narrow Bridge

גשר צר מאוד

PARSHA PERSPECTIVES

Short Divrei Torah on Parshas Tzav

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רפואה שלמה פעסל בת גאלדא / לזכות חילינו

SOURCE OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

“Command Aharon and his sons, saying, ‘This is the law of the burnt-offering...’” (6:2)

Mashal: Two men, both seriously ill, occupied the same hospital room. The first man’s bed was near a window, and he took advantage of this by describing the sights he saw to the man in the other bed.

The second man enjoyed these descriptions enormously. It was the only time his world became enlivened by the activity and color of the world outside.

He was told that the window overlooked a park with a lovely lake, where ducks swam merrily, and children played nearby. Majestic trees graced the landscape, and a fine view of the city skyline could be seen in the distance. As the man by the window described all this in exquisite detail, the man on the other side of the room would close his eyes and contentedly imagine the picturesque scene.

Weeks passed in this way. Then, one day, the man by the window passed away. As soon as it seemed appropriate, the other man asked if he could be moved next to the window. His request was granted, and he excitedly looked out the window, expecting to see the scenes he had heard so much about, but had never seen for himself.

To his shock, however, he immediately saw that the window faced a blank wall! Bewildered, he asked the nurse for an explanation for his friend’s vivid descriptions.

“The man who used to be by the window?” the nurse asked. “Why, he was blind; he couldn’t even see the wall at all!”

Nimshal: Rashi explains that the word “Tzav” (command) denotes encouragement. Every Jew is responsible for his fellow Jew, which includes making him feel important, seeing to his welfare, and encouraging him to be a better person. If we make an effort to assist our brothers and sisters and ensure that they are happy, both physically and spiritually, this alone will give us encouragement in our own lives and responsibilities.

QUIET ENTHUSIASM

Rabbi Moshe Schochet

“Command Aharon and his sons, saying, ‘This is the law of the burnt-offering. It is the burnt offering that remains on the flame...’” (6:2)

If you were to look into a Sefer Torah, you would notice that the letter mem in mokdah - “on the flame,” is written smaller than the rest of the letters. What is the Torah teaching us through the use of the smaller mem?

Rav Alexander Zusha Friedman (Ma’ayana Shel Torah) quotes the Kotzker Rebbe who explains that the Torah is teaching us a very important lesson regarding how to approach life and avodas Hashem. The letter mem in mokdah - “on the flame,” is written small to convey to us that when we are on fire in our relationship with Hashem, we do not need to be flamboyant and public about it. When we are passionate and laser-focused on our learning of Torah, davening, and acts of chesed, the whole world does not need to be made aware of it. Like the letter mem, we can be enthusiastic, energetic and “on fire” in a humble and quiet manner that only Hashem can notice.

In life, we often feel the need to ensure that other people will see and know what we are doing. We desire to be recognized for our altruistic accomplishments and endeavors. The Kotzker Rebbe is teaching us that when it comes to our avodas Hashem, we are encouraged to stay out of the limelight. Our motivations should be pure and devoid of ulterior motives, not focused on achieving public accolades. Instead, we should be focused solely on doing the will of our Creator. In doing so, we will surely be recognized by the One Who really counts.

[Similarly, Reb Alexander Zusia Friedman comments: Bo, the Hebrew for “there,” may also be rendered as “within” a person or thing. Hence, this specification may be construed to mean that “the fire of the altar shall be kept burning within him”; i.e., the zeal of sacrifice is to be kept burning within the kohen (Aharon and each of his descendants) to whom the commandment was addressed.]

TESTS OF FAITH

Sefas Emes

“Command Aharon and his sons, saying, ‘This is the law of the burnt-offering...’” (6:2)

The expression “command” always implies urging one to carry out a command, meaning, the command takes effect at once and, in addition, is binding on future generations. Rabbi Shimon said: “The Torah must particularly urge the fulfillment of a command in cases involving financial loss.” (Rashi)

“The Torah must particularly urge the fulfillment of a command in cases involving financial loss.” This admonition refers especially to the Exile’s worst days, when Jews were denied almost all opportunities to earn a living and hardly had a penny. Such times constituted the most critical test of Jewish loyalty to the Torah, for the struggle for bare existence made it difficult to observe the laws of Judaism. For this reason, we must expend every effort to muster sufficient strength to pass the test.

SPIRITUAL SACRIFICE

Baal Shem Tov

“Command Aharon and his sons, saying, ‘This is the law of the burnt-offering...’” (6:2)

Our Sages state that “whoever occupies himself with the study of Olah [the laws of the burnt-offering] is considered as having offered an actual Olah.”

How can mere study equal an actual event?

When we read the words of Torah regarding the Olah with passionate feelings of love and awe of G-d, we breathe new spiritual vitality into the Torah’s words. This does not remain as mere spoken words, because in the spiritual realms, the vitality caused by our emotions produces an effect equivalent to an actual offering in the Holy Temple. In the spiritual realms, we have indeed offered an Olah.

(All the same, such an achievement does not replace a tangible offering, because a physical sacrifice introduces new spiritual vitality even to this physical world of action.)

LIGHTING UP THE NIGHT

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“...[the burnt-offering remains] on the Altar all night until morning, and the fire on the Altar should be kept lit on it.” (6:2)

The Altar fire that was kept burning throughout the night was kindled during the day.

The Altar alludes to the Jewish heart. Even when we find ourselves in situations of spiritual darkness, we must keep the Divine fire of enthusiasm for G-d, His Torah, and His commandments, always burning in our hearts. (See Ohr HaTorah, Vayikra, vol. 1, p. 13) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

PROCEED WITH CAUTION

Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

“Command Aharon and his sons, saying, ‘This is the law of the burnt-offering...’” (6:2)

Rashi points out that Aharon was “commanded” to offer the Olah and not simply “told” to offer it because he needed additional encouragement to perform this mitzvah with the same zeal and passion as he did with the other offerings. This is because by spending time offering the Olah, the Kohanim stood to lose potential earnings because they were not compensated for their sacrificial service and would therefore not be earning any income that they could have made during this time. Therefore Hashem “commanded” Aharon and his sons as a way of urging them to fulfill this mitzvah with excitement despite the financial loss they would likely incur. (The Taz points out that this was especially relevant regarding the Olah offering which only provided the Kohanim with the animal’s hides as a means of recompense, unlike other offerings where they also received the animal’s meat - which somewhat offset their financial loss.)

It is astonishing to think that Aharon would need this encouragement. Not only was the Kohen Gadol fabulously wealthy (Yoma 18a) - certainly not needing the additional money that he could have earned instead of serving in the Beis HaMikdash - but we are talking about one of the most righteous people that ever lived who surely took every opportunity to serve Hashem with fervor and joy. If so, why would Aharon need any additional incentive to perform this mitzvah with alacrity?

We see from here, writes Rav Yechezkel Levenstein, that our desire for personal gain is so strong that even Aharon - the greatest of the greats - would not have necessarily escaped from possessing a tiny degree of hesitation when accepting the task of offering the Olah. Therefore, how important is it for us, concludes Rav Yechezkel, to learn mussar so that we can be constantly aware of any weaknesses we may possess and protect ourselves accordingly?!

Rav Yisrael Salanter was someone who certainly understood this message. Once, when he was in a room where charity money was being counted, the person counting the money had to rush out for a moment and planned to leave Rav Yisrael in the room momentarily. Rav Yisrael, however, jumped up from his seat, refusing to be alone for a second with uncounted money. Hearing the story, many are surprised that the great Rav Yisrael Salanter doubted his own self-control not to steal from charity. However, just as we have stated above, without a doubt Rav Yisrael knew that he would never steal a penny. However, he was concerned that a fleeting consideration of doing something like that might briefly cross his mind, and Rav Yisrael did not even want to entertain such a thought even though he knew that it would never lead to anything. As a pillar of mussar, Rav Yisrael understood the potential danger he faced and took quick steps - literally - to avoid any unnecessary challenge.

TORAH OFFERING

Chacham Yehudah Elbaz of Morocco

“Command Aharon and his sons, saying, ‘This is the law of the burnt-offering...’” (6:2)

The midrash states that when Bnei Yisrael heard the parshah dealing with the korbanos they became very frightened. They feared the time when there would be no Beis HaMikdash. How would their sins be forgiven? Moshe reassured them, “Involve yourselves in Torah and you will not be afraid.”

Torah study atones like korbanos, as Chazal tell us that one who involves himself in Torah study does not need an Olah, Minchah, or Chatas (Menachos 110). That is what is meant by the pasuk, “This is the Torah for the Olah.” When one learns Torah, it is like he brought a Korban Olah.

HUMBLE GREATNESS

Reb Avraham Chaim of Zlotchov

“Command Aharon and his sons, saying, ‘This is the law of the burnt-offering. It is the burnt offering that remains on the flame...’” (6:2)

The words “this,” “the” and “that” are qualifications. The Hebrew term for “qualifications” is synonymous with “narrowing” or “lowering.” (Gemara)

Olah, the Hebrew for burnt-offering, carries the connotation of ascent. The higher the moral level to which one rises, the humbler one must become.

For this reason, the Torah specifies that in reciting the Shemoneh Esrei one need bow only twice, once when uttering the first berachah and again when ending with “We thank You...” A Kohen Gadol, however, had to bow after each of the berachos, and the king had to bow at the beginning and remain in a bowed position throughout the entire prayer.

The greater the person the more powerful their effort must be in their striving to remain humble before G-d.

VIGOR AND ZEAL

Reb Alexander Zusia Friedman

“Command Aharon and his sons, saying, ‘This is the law of the burnt-offering...’” (6:2)

The expression “command” denotes encouragement in reference to the present and future generations. (Rashi)

Since the commandment is binding on all future generations, its observance must be encouraged so that it shouldn't grow stale but will always be performed with zeal and vigor. Hence, we say in our prayers: “Fortunate are we and how goodly is our portion.” And we say in Shabbos Mussaf, “twice each day, with affection, we say Shema.”

Therefore, “Fortunate are we and how goodly is our portion” because even though we recite Shema twice each day, we do so each time with affection, with ever-new delight, for it never grows stale but renews itself through the ages.

According to the Sages (Kiddushin 31), “one who receives a commandment and performs it is better than one who received no commandment and performs it,” for it is more challenging to obey a commandment than to do something out of one's own free will, without having received an explicit command. Hence, the observance of a commandment must be given considerable encouragement.

SHOWING PROPER RESPECT

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

“The kohen shall dress in his linen garment and he shall wear linen pants on his skin, and he shall separate the ashes...” (6:3)

Hashem commanded that the bigdei kehunah - priestly vestments be worn when the service of terumas ha'deshen (removing the ashes from the Altar) was performed.

This mitzvah, although necessary and important, is considered a relatively low form of service, yet the kohen is commanded to fulfill this mitzvah wearing his holy and special garments. Why was it necessary for him to dress up for this mitzvah?

The Chacham, R' Yitzchak Magriso of Constantinople zt'l, explains that this teaches us an important lesson. One must always be careful of Hashem's honor when performing any service for His sake, no matter how big or small. The kohen therefore dressed in his priestly clothes as a way of showing respect for even the lowest of services.

REMEMBER THE PEOPLE

Reb Simchah Bunim of Pshischa

“The kohen shall dress in his linen garment and he shall wear linen pants on his skin, and he shall separate the ashes...” (6:3)

The Torah commanded the Kohen Gadol that when he entered the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur, he should change his clothing and remove the ashes.

He changes his clothing so that at that moment of intense holiness, when the holiest Jew on the holiest day enters the holiest place, he should not forget the basic and seemingly mundane situations, such as asking for sustenance for his people.

Therefore, he was commanded to change to weekday clothing and begin to consider the weekday necessities of his people.

NOTHING IS TOO MENIAL

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"This is the law of the burnt-offering... and [he shall] remove the ashes to the outside of the camp, to a clean place." (6:4)

An aspiring young Torah scholar came to the holy Steipler Gaon, R' Yaakov Yisrael Kanievski zt'l, with a problem. The young man felt that his particular predicament was impeding his spiritual growth and surely a man like the Steipler, who persevered in his Torah studies in the face of life-threatening problems when he was a young man back in Russia, could relate to his.

The young man had written the situation out on a piece of paper in extreme detail for the Steipler to grasp its severity.

"Every Friday," he wrote, "I come home from yeshivah, and the scene in my house leads me to despair. The table is not set, the kitchen is hardly clean, and the children are not bathed! What should I do? How can I concentrate on my studies when I have to deal with such problems?"

The Steipler looked up from the paper and peered into the face of the young man. Then he spoke in his heavy Russian-accented Yiddish.

"In Parshas Tzav, Rabbeinu Yonah asks why the Torah juxtaposes the mitzvah of the terumas ha'deshen (daily sweeping and cleaning of the ashes from the Altar), with that of the Korban Olah. The two seem to have little in common. He explains, however, that a person must realize that sometimes what is considered menial work in human eyes merits the highest accord in Hashem's eyes. The mitzvah of sweeping the Altar is prefaced with the word 'tzav' - a Divine command, for the seemingly insignificant acts that a person is compelled to do in his daily life also yield great sanctity. In the quest for spirituality, one must never demean the simple chores."

The Steipler's expression grew stern.

"Do you really want to know what to do?" he asked, and the young man nodded eagerly. Said the Steipler, "My son, grab a broom and help out!"

HOLY ASHES

Izhbitzer Rebbe

"...and [he shall] remove the ashes to the outside of the camp, to a clean place." (6:4)

Just as ashes can catch fire again, so can utter corruption, devoid of any spark of the Divine and hence "outside the camp," change for the better.

Since G-d "endeavors not to put aside an outcast," we shouldn't discard the ashes of corruption - the Jew who has left the camp and has strayed from the correct path - but put them away in a clean place. Perhaps they will return to the pure path, perhaps they will glow again.

PROPER PREPARATIONS

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"...and [he shall] remove the ashes to the outside of the camp, to a clean place." (6:4)

Removing the innermost ashes was an integral part of the daily Tabernacle ritual, whereas removing the accumulated ashes was done solely to make it possible to offer up more sacrifices. Nonetheless, both deeds had to be performed by the same kohen. This teaches us that preparing to fulfill a Divine commandment - in this case, clearing ashes in order to offer up additional sacrifices - is a bona fide part of our spiritual life, no less than fulfilling the commandment itself.

In our desire to connect to G-d through performing His commandments, we may consider fulfilling the commandments much more important than preparing for them. From G-d's perspective, however, both the commandment and its prerequisite preparation are expressions of His will. Therefore, when we are focused on G-d's will (as opposed to our own spiritual advancement), we can prepare for the commandment with the same joy and enthusiasm that we experience while performing it. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 37, pp. 5-6) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

ETERNAL FLAME

Chasam Sofer

"And the fire upon the altar shall be kept burning; it shall not go out; and the kohen shall kindle wood on it every morning; he shall lay the burnt-offering in order upon it and shall cause the peace offerings to go up in smoke on it. A permanent fire shall remain aflame on the Altar; it shall not be extinguished." (6:5-6)

In every Jew a spark of Divine fire flickers and will never be extinguished. But our leaders, kohanim, prophets and scholars must feed this little spark with fiery oratory, and stir it up anew each morning. This is true with regard to our duties toward our Maker, as symbolized by the olah (the burnt-offering that is burned up entirely and rises directly to Heaven), as well as our duties to other people, as symbolized by the shelomim (the peace-offerings).

If kohanim do this and kindle the sparks of the Divine in our hearts they may be sure that G-d's fire will burn continually upon Judaism's altar and never go out.

HEART ON FIRE

Baal Shem Tov

"A permanent fire shall remain aflame on the Altar; it shall not be extinguished." (6:6)

Our heart is the altar and no matter what we do, we should let the holy fire remain within us so that we may fan it into a flame.

TRAVELING FIRE

HaDerash VeHalyun

“A permanent fire shall remain aflame on the Altar; it shall not be extinguished.” (6:6)

It shall not go out, even when it travels (Talmud Yerushalmi, Yoma 4:6). As long as people remain at home and continue their everyday life among their relatives and friends, it isn't easy for them to stray into sin. The discipline of daily living - coupled with the ever-watchful eyes of those around them - will keep people from improper conduct.

But when people travel far from home, the situation is entirely different. They meet many strangers; there is no one in whose presence they may feel constrained to be circumspect, and many situations can arise to test them. At such times it is more likely that they will go astray.

We are therefore told by the Psalmist: “Happy is everyone who fears G-d, who walks in his ways” (Tehillim 128:1). If “his” is taken to refer not to “G-d” but to “everyone,” the meaning of the pasuk is “Happy is he who remains G-d-fearing (even) when he walks on his ways,” i.e., when one is on a journey far from home. The true test of one's fear of G-d is whether one remains steadfast in observance even when removed from one's usual environment.

This is the message the Torah and Talmud both seek to convey in the text quoted above: “A fire shall be kept burning upon the altar continually” - the fire of the love and fear of G-d must be kept burning at all times upon the altar of the human heart, and “it shall not go out, even when it travels” - that Divine spark must not be permitted to go out even when one is far from home.

KEEP THE FIRE ALIVE

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“A permanent fire shall remain aflame on the Altar; it shall not be extinguished.” (6:6)

We may sometimes feel so distant from the Torah's expectations of us or encumbered by negative spiritual baggage that it is hard for us to imagine how we could even begin to live in accordance with our ideals. In times of such pessimism, this verse empowers us to keep our Divine fire burning even when we feel unqualified or otherwise unable to enter realms of holiness.

By keeping our enthusiasm fired even in such times, the Divine flame within us will eventually burn away all impediments to joyful, holy living. As the Maggid of Mezeritch interpreted this verse, “If the [inner] fire [of the heart] is kept burning continuously, it will extinguish all negativity.” (HaYom Yom, 20-21 Adar II)

But the fire can only be effective if it is kept burning continuously; any lapse in enthusiasm is an opportunity for pessimism to creep in. An intermittent fire or the memory of recent flames is therefore not enough; we must become adept at keeping our inner fires burning no matter how our moods may vary.

KEEPING WARM

Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

“A permanent fire shall remain aflame on the Altar; it shall not be extinguished.” (6:6)

There are times when we get a wave of inspiration: whether from a moving speech, a period of personal reflection, or even a sudden realization that we could be so much greater. The first thing that we must do is to grab the moment and take a genuine step to improve ourselves with a solid and achievable resolution to change.

The Baalei Mussar use the above verse to outline the next step in ensuring that our moment of clarity does not go to waste - keep the fire burning, namely, maintain our initial determination to change.

The Chazon Ish emphasized that most people cannot sustain the burning passion that they had at the moment when they decided to improve, but there is a crucial piece of advice that he gave: never switch off.

The Chazon Ish was speaking to yeshivah students who were about to finish their studies for the summer break. He explained that while the break from such intense study was necessary, nevertheless, in order not to lose what they had achieved in the previous term, they should ensure that they maintain some serious degree of learning every day.

To exemplify his point, he explained that someone who was trying to maintain a pan of hot water on a gas fire, even if he initially heats it to a high degree, once it cools down, he will have to start again. What he should be doing, however, is, after boiling it, keep it on a low simmer - never extinguishing the flame. This way, when he wants to boil the water again, he will get there a lot quicker.

In the same way, even when our commitment to improvement falters, we must ensure never to allow our initial resolution to completely cool. Because if we keep the flame burning - however small the flame is - it will always be a lot easier and quicker to return to where we want to be when we are ready.

PRECIOUS SACRIFICES

Abarbanel

“It [the meal offering] shall not be baked with leaven; I have given it [as their portion] from My offerings by fire. It is most holy; like the sin-offering, and like the guilt-offering.” (6:10)

The meal offering is “most holy” because it is a poor person's offering and as such it is quite precious to G-d.

Similarly, the sin-offering and the guilt-offering are also “most holy,” for both are brought to demonstrate repentance, and repentant sinners, too, are dear to G-d, as it is said: “Even people of perfect righteousness cannot stand in the same place as repentant sinners.”

DAILY DEDICATIONS

Reb Alexander Zusia Friedman

"...the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a meal-offering perpetually..." (6:13)

An ordinary kohen was obliged to bring a meal-offering only on the day of his induction into Beis HaMikdash service. The Kohen Gadol, however, had to bring one each day. For with a person on a higher spiritual level, every day must represent a new beginning, a renewal of zeal for the task that must be accomplished. Thus, in the case of the Kohen Gadol, every day was a new "dedication" such as the ordinary kohen experienced only on the day of his induction into office.

SENSITIVITY TOWARDS SINNERS

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"... the sin-offering shall be slaughtered before Hashem; it is holy of holies [most holy]." (6:18)

The Gemara (Sotah 32b) writes: "Rebbe Yochanan said in the name of Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai: 'Why did Chazal institute [certain] prayers to be said silently? In order not to embarrass sinners, since the Torah itself does not differentiate between the place [where the Korban] Chatas and Olah were brought.'"

The Torah is very sensitive to the feelings of every Jew, even those who have sinned. One may not view a sinner with dishonor or ridicule. Thus, just as the Chatas and Olah offerings were brought in the same spot in the Mishkan so that the one who brought the Chatas not be singled out as a sinner, so too, certain prayers - especially the confessions of sins - are to be recited silently so as not to differentiate between sinners and the rest of the congregation.

MAINTAINING THEIR DIGNITY

Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

"This is the law of the sin-offering; in the place where the elevation-offering is slaughtered..." (6:18)

The Gemara explains that the sin-offering was to be sacrificed in the same place as the elevation-sacrifice so that the sinners would be saved from embarrassment; because anyone who witnessed his friend bringing a sin-offering would instead assume that it was an elevation-offering, which could be brought as a donation and not in relation to any sin.

Based on this practice, the Gemara (Sotah 32b) explains that Chazal dictated for us to say the Shemoneh Esrei in silence, so that someone who is confessing their sins to Hashem will not be embarrassed in front of others.

Seeking to avoid another's shame is an essential character trait and a principal aspect of the mitzvah to love one's fellow as himself (Vayikra 19:18).

The following story involving Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky shows just how far one should go in order to avoid someone else's embarrassment:

One day, a stranger to the town stopped the Rav to ask for directions how to get to his destination. The man had a terrible stutter, so Rav Chaim Ozer walked him all the way to his host's home. After the stranger was safely where he wanted to be, Rav Chaim Ozer's students asked why he had taken the man all the way considering his unusually busy schedule that day. Rav Chaim Ozer answered, "If I didn't take him there, he might have needed to ask for directions again, and because of his stutter he may have been embarrassed; to avoid this, I took him all the way myself!"

PREPARED TO RESTART

Rabbi Moshe Schochet

"And the earthenware vessel that the korban was cooked in must be broken." (6:21)

The halachah is that any leftover meat from the korban that lasts beyond one day and one night must be burned. Since there will be flavor absorbed into the walls of the earthenware vessel that will last beyond one day and one night and cannot be removed, it must be broken in lieu of burning it.

Rashi notes that this halachah does not only apply to the korban chatas but to all korbanos.

The Kli Yakar asks why the Torah specifically selects the korban chatas as the sacrifice to teach this halachah regarding all other korbanos.

The Kli Yakar explains that the Torah is using the korban chatas to teach us about how to approach situations in life in which we commit sins. Very often when we do something that isn't correct, we try to work around it, refusing to fully acknowledge that which we have done. We attempt to circumvent the issue so that we don't have to completely revamp our mindset or attitude. The Torah is teaching us that the same way we need to break an earthenware vessel that has imbibed some of the korban because there is no way to remove the prohibited taste, we too have to be willing, when acknowledging that we have committed an aveirah, to break ourselves in order to remove the blemishes of sin inside of us.

We have to be open to recognizing that when we are headed in the wrong direction, we are prepared to start from scratch. We can't just make a minor adjustment and hope that it will be enough. Sometimes, we need to have the courage to hit the reset button. The Kli Yakar explains that this is why the Torah chooses the korban chatas to teach this halachah; the Torah is highlighting this important lesson regarding how we should approach rectifying our wrongdoings. Let us live lives of emes and integrity as we yearn and strive to become the best servants of Hashem that we can be.

PAY IT FORWARD

Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

"If he shall offer the thanksgiving-offering..." (7:12)

The Torah in Parshas Tzav introduces the concept of the korban todah - the thanksgiving-offering, which one would bring to express gratitude to G-d.

The Gemara (Berachos 54b) discusses different situations when people would bring this korban, based on a chapter in Tehillim (107) which speaks of the offering of a korban todah after emerging from four types of dangerous situations: serious illness, captivity, sea travel, and desert travel. Additionally, Rabbeinu Bechayei (here in Parshas Tzav) writes that people would bring a korban todah on other joyous occasions, such as a bride and groom when they got married.

This korban was unique in that it consisted of a large amount of food that needed to be eaten within a short period of time. The meat of the animal, as well as the forty loaves of bread which accompanied it, all had to be eaten on the day the korban was brought, or that night. Nothing was allowed to be left over by the next morning (7:15).

The Netziv famously explained that this unique requirement forced the person who offered the sacrifice to conduct a large gathering, inviting others to join him in his celebration. This was the only way to ensure that all this food would be eaten by the next morning.

The idea behind this requirement is that when somebody feels genuine gratitude, he does not want to keep it inside. He wants to share the news and tell people about what he had just experienced. When somebody found himself in a perilous situation, and was saved, his feelings of gratitude should overflow, and lead him to want to talk about it with as many people as possible. The person offering a todah was therefore required to invite guests to his feast, so he could share the news of his experience and express his feelings of gratitude to a large number of people.

The work U'l'sitcha Elyon offers an additional insight into this special feature of the korban todah. After experiencing Hashem's beneficence, a person should respond by seeking to follow His example and dispense kindness to others. When G-d showers us with His blessings, we are to proceed to share those blessings with other people. Gratitude should lead to action. When we feel grateful for what Hashem has done for us, we must follow up on those feelings by looking for ways to give to the people around us, to extend kindness to people just as Hashem has extended kindness to us.

Therefore, the Torah arranged that the korban todah should be brought in a manner that necessitated a large crowd, compelling the individual offering the sacrifice to invite a large number of guests and share his food with other people. When we contemplate Hashem's kindness, and are overcome by feelings of gratitude, we should feel inspired to follow His example and give to others just as Hashem is constantly giving to us.

PRAYING WITH GRATITUDE

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"If he shall offer the thanksgiving-offering..." (7:12)

In general, the sacrifices served to disentangle us from our materiality, drawing us nearer to G-d. Prayer, which in the absence of the Temple substitutes for the sacrifices, largely serves the same purpose.

Inasmuch as the physical realm is the lowest rung of existence, we need to rise above it in order to cleave to our Divine source. In the Messianic Era, however, the physical realm will be saturated with G-dliness even more than the loftiest spiritual realms. We will therefore not need to rise above our milieu, and both sacrifices and prayers will become obsolete.

The exception will be thanksgiving sacrifices and prayers. This is because rather than the effort to reach higher consciousness, thanksgiving is the experience of that consciousness - our recognition and awe of G-d's presence in our lives. Since our Divine awareness will perpetually ascend in the Messianic Era, our joy in experiencing it will also perpetually intensify. We will therefore continue to offer sacrifices and prayers of thanksgiving.

By focusing our prayers nowadays on being thankful for feeling close to G-d, we can hasten the advent of the Messianic Redemption, when this will indeed be the sole focus of our prayers. (Torah Ohr 97a; Ohr HaTorah, Vayikra, vol. 1, p. 23)

In the Messianic era, communal sacrifices will continue to be offered up, but there will no longer be personal sacrifices. The sole exception will be the thanksgiving-offering. Similarly, we are taught that in the Messianic era, all forms of prayer will cease except for prayers of thanksgiving.

The purpose of personal sacrifices (other than the thanksgiving-offering) is to orient our animal soul toward Divinity. Once the process of atonement will have been completed - and we will no longer have the desire to sin - these types of sacrifices will become obsolete. Only the thanksgiving-offering will remain, for its function is to express our acknowledgement of our dependence upon G-d, and this will continue to be the case.

Similarly, we will no longer need to pray for our needs: we will not lack anything, illness and poverty will be matters of the past, and harmony and spiritual sensitivity will become the hallmarks of society. Prayer will consist only of giving thanks, as we continuously acknowledge G-d's benevolence and wonders.

We can hasten the Messianic era by emphasizing in our present lives what will be true in Messianic times. Thus, by placing the emphasis in our prayers on appreciating G-d's goodness, we hasten the time when this will indeed be our prayers' sole focus. (Ohr HaTorah, Nach, vol. 2, pp. 963-964) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

"If he shall offer the thanksgiving-offering..." (7:12)

In Parshas Tzav we read about the "Korban Todah" - "Thanksgiving-Offering" through which those who had experienced a personal salvation would offer their thanks to Hashem. The quality of recognizing that one received an act of kindness and saying thank you is not limited to verbal thanks; one's gratitude should change the way that he relates to that person from then onwards.

The most extraordinary example of this lesson is found in the Torah as the Jews were leaving Egypt. Rashi writes that the Jewish People left Egypt carrying weapons (Shemos 13:18); if so, asks the Chasam Sofer, why did Hashem have to perform such a great miracle by drowning the Egyptians in the sea - Hashem could have commanded them to fight the Egyptians and through a miracle ensure their victory (in the same way that we celebrate Chanukah, when we commemorate the defeat of the mighty Greek army at the hands of the weak, righteous Jews who were few in number)?

The Chasam Sofer (Haggadas HaChasam Sofer, p. 319) answers that the Jewish People were not permitted to fight Egypt directly because they had a duty of gratitude to the country which had hosted Yaakov and his family when Yosef brought them down to Egypt. The Chasam Sofer bases this principle on the Gemara's words (Bava Kama 92b): "Into the well which you drank, do not throw stones."

This incredible statement from the Chasam Sofer means that despite decades of slavery, where an entire nation was abused, tortured and forced to work to an unthinkable degree, and whose young children were systematically thrown into the Nile River, nevertheless, the Jewish People were bound to a level of gratitude for something that benefitted their grandparents and great grandparents!

From here we can see just how far our sense of gratitude should take us, towards people, and even more so, towards Hashem.

CONNECTED THROUGH GRATITUDE

Rebbe Nachman

"If he shall offer the thanksgiving-offering..." (7:12)

In the Future, all of the sacrifices will be suspended except for the thanksgiving-offering (Vayikra Rabbah 9:7). At that time, when there will be no sin, it will be necessary only to offer thanks to G-d (See Likutey Moharan II, 2:1)

Then we will draw ever closer to G-d and, as we do, our understanding of G-d's greatness will increase; thus, our thanks will increase, too.

The opposite also applies: giving thanks to G-d helps us draw close to Him. And that is something that we can do in this present world.

ELEVATING HAUGHTINESS

Reb Noson of Breslov

"Do not eat any of the fats of an ox, sheep or goat..." (7:23)

Fats represent pride and haughtiness, as in "They enclosed themselves in their fats; their mouths spoke arrogantly" (Tehillim 17:10).

Therefore, the fats must be placed upon the Altar, for all pride belongs to G-d, as in "G-d has reigned, in pride He has dressed." (ibid., 93:1)

By sacrificing the fats, one elevates blemished haughtiness to G-d. (Likutey Halakhot IV, p. 60)

RECTIFICATION AND ELEVATION

Reb Noson of Breslov

"This is the Torah of the burnt-offering, the meal-offering, the sin-offering, the guilt-offering, the inauguration-offering and the peace-offering." (7:37)

The Torah is greater than all the sacrifices. (Megillah 3b)

Each sacrifice has a unique devotion which parallels its intended rectification. The Torah is an all-inclusive rectification. Therefore, the Torah is called a bride (כלה, Kallah), for it includes (כולל, Kollel) everything, all the rectifications. (Likutey Halakhot VII, p. 180a)

The Torah is compared to fire (cf. Yirmiyahu 23:29). Just as the fire of the Altar burns the fats, so too, the Torah "burns" the materialism to which a person has attached himself.

One who wishes to repent should fast, which reduces the amount of "fats" in his body. But one who studies Torah does not need to fast, since the fire of Torah purges those materialistic desires for him. (Likutey Halakhot IV, p. 64)

The verse concludes with the peace-offering, because the goal of all the sacrifices is peace. (Likutey Halakhot II, p. 171a)

Man's primary mission is to elevate all levels of creation - mineral, vegetable and animal - to the highest level, that of the "speaker" (i.e., man himself).

One who merits the level of "speaker" can bring forth all the good found in others by judging them favorably and elaborating on that good in articulated speech.

Similarly, the sacrifices were meant to elevate creation by bringing mineral, vegetable and animal components upon the Altar to G-d.

In the absence of the Temple sacrifices today, our Sages teach: "When a person studies the laws of the sacrifices, it is as if he has offered all the sacrifices" (Menachos 110a). Thus, our speech has the power to elevate all creation to G-d. (Likutey Halakhot I, p. 2b-3a)

POWER OF SPEECH

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"This is the Torah of the burnt-offering, the meal-offering, the sin-offering, the guilt-offering, the inauguration-offering and the peace-offering." (7:37)

The Midrash here quotes the pasuk: "By the word of Hashem the Heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host" (Tehillim 33:6). The Midrash implies that this pasuk is a reference to the korbanos. In what way is our parshah regarding the korbanos connected to this pasuk in Tehillim?

R' Yehonason Eibeschutz zt'l, in Ya'aros D'vash, gives a powerful answer.

Chazal tell us that when one learns and recites the parshah of korbanos, it is as though he's actually bringing a korban. This is quite evident regarding a korban olah, since that korban was brought to atone for sinful thoughts; studying the laws of the korban olah will likewise atone for sinful thoughts. However, korban chatas, for instance, atones for actual sinful deeds. How can merely uttering words regarding this korban and how it was brought provide an atonement for a sinful deed?

To this question, the Midrash gives a clear reply: "By the word of Hashem the Heavens were made." The entire world came into being by force of the very words uttered from the mouth of Hashem, kivyachol. This teaches us an important lesson. Words of holiness can be as powerful as actual deeds! Accordingly, words do have the power to neutralize a sinful act. One must recognize the inherent power of speech, utilizing it for studying Torah and performing mitzvos.

DAY AND NIGHT

Reb Noson of Breslov

"...on the day that He commanded the Jewish people to bring their sacrifices to G-d, in the desert of Sinai." (7:38)

Most mitzvos can be performed only during the day. "Day" represents intellect, understanding and clear knowledge of what is required of a person. "Night" represents constricted knowledge and, by extension, faith.

Faith sustains us when things are difficult and we find it hard to perform the mitzvos. (Thus, Jacob established the Evening Prayer [Berachos 26b] to imbue us with hope even at the darkest times.)

Armed with faith, even the "night" can become as bright as the "day." (Likutei Halachot VIII, p. 264b)

Yom (יום, day) corresponds to the clarity of G-d's manifestation, as opposed to Erev (ערב, night), which represents Irvuv (ערבוב, confusion). The Eirev rav (ערב רב, mixed multitude) darkened and confused the Jews' vision of spirituality with imaginary ideas.

When one finds himself surrounded by darkness and confusion, he must patiently await the daylight - the light of G-d - to illuminate his situation and clear his intellect of distorted illusions. (Likutei Halachot III, p. 376)

OUR INNER KOHEN

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"Moshe said to the community, 'This procedure is what G-d commanded [me] to do.'" (8:5)

Aharon and his son were installed into the priesthood through two types of offerings: specific sacrifices that Moshe offered up on their behalf every day for a full week when the Tabernacle was first erected, and a grain-offering that every kohen was required to offer up on the first day of his service (and which the high kohen was required to offer up twice every day).

The purpose of these sacrifices was to awaken within Aharon and his sons the qualities that would enable them to act as the Jewish people's representatives before G-d, whether by securing atonement for their misdeeds or by raising them to higher levels of Divine consciousness.

Every one of us has the inner power to not only overcome spiritual darkness but to transform it into light. But this inner power is not always readily available to us, for various reasons. We must therefore seek out individuals who are steeped in the Torah and further along the path of spiritual refinement than we are, so we can benefit from their inspiration and guidance.

At the same time, we must also develop our inner "kohen," both in order to transform our own inner darkness into light, as well as to help others do the same for themselves. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 7, pp. 39, 46-47) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

GIVING MORE THAN WE HAVE

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"He poured some of the anointing oil upon Aharon's head and anointed him, to sanctify him." (8:12)

Moshe was not a kohen, yet he was able to confer the priesthood upon Aharon. Thus, Moshe was able to impart a degree of holiness to Aharon that he himself did not even possess. This was possible because Moshe was not acting on his own, but as G-d's agent.

Similarly, each one of us can help improve the lives of others, drawing them closer to holiness and enabling them to lead happier and more fulfilled lives - even if it seems to us that we do not possess that much holiness or zest for life ourselves. By involving others in the study of the Torah and the fulfillment of G-d's commandments, we are drawing them closer to G-d, the source of life and fulfillment. And when we help others, G-d is certain to help us, as well. (Hitva'aduyot 5747, vol. 3, p. 74; Torah Ohr 1b) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

SWEET SURRENDER

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“And he [Moshe] brought the sin-offering bull, and Aharon and his sons leaned their hands upon the head of the sin-offering bull.” (8:14)

The person offering up a sacrifice leans with both hands upon the animal in order to demonstrate that, through the animal, he is giving his entire being over to G-d.

It is noteworthy that this act was the first one that Aharon and his sons performed themselves during the installation ceremonies; until this point, they were passive objects of the rites that Moshe was performing. Thus, paradoxically, the first act of self-assertion was one of self-nullification.

This teaches us that by nullifying ourselves humbly before G-d, we are not turning ourselves into mindless automatons. On the contrary, surrendering to G-d’s will frees us from the bondage of living up to the dictates of materialism and keeping up with the latest fashions in all areas of physical, emotional, and intellectual life. Thus liberated, we can express our true, most individual selves, as we play our unique role in fulfilling the purpose of creation. (Hitva’aduyot 5744, vol. 2, p. 1178) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

THE SOUL’S INNATE DESIRE

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“And he [Moshe] brought the sin-offering bull...” (8:14)

The minds and hearts of the people who offered up sacrifices were spiritually elevated, even if the people themselves were not consciously aware of it. This is because our Divine soul is always aware of the true state of our relationship with G-d.

Thus, the Torah does not need to explicitly state that the physical offering must be accompanied by a spiritual, inner offering - because this is always the case, from the soul’s perspective. Instead, the Torah begins its discussion of offerings with voluntary offerings since these clearly involve the offeror’s mind and heart. This indicates that all offerings, even obligatory ones, are essentially voluntary offerings, stemming from the soul’s innate desire to come close to G-d.

The same is true of our prayers, which correspond to the daily sacrifices. Our minds and hearts are always involved in our prayers, even when we do not consciously sense this involvement. Thus, we need never feel that when our minds or hearts “wander” during our prayers that nothing was accomplished.

This awareness can inspire us firstly to cultivate the habit of praying regularly (no matter how well we succeed in concentrating), and secondly to invest more effort in involving our conscious minds and hearts when we pray. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 17, pp. 12-13) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

APPLYING OUR STUDIES

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“And he [Moshe] brought forth the ascent-ram...” (8:18)

The sages teach us that, in the absence of the holy Temple, someone who studies the laws of a given sacrifice is considered as if he had offered it up. But if the study of the laws of a sacrifice accomplishes the same thing as offering it up, why should we bother with the sacrifice itself, even when the Temple will be rebuilt?

The difference between the “virtual” sacrifice and the actual one is their effect on the world. While a sacrifice “offered up” by studying its laws elevates the person, it does not elevate the world around him. Only the physical sacrifice, which includes all aspects of creation - human (the kohen offering up the sacrifice), animal (the sacrifice itself), vegetable (the wood of the fire), and mineral (the salt added to all sacrifices) - elevates the world at large.

Thus, we should always seek a practical, tangible way to apply the spiritual inspiration or insight we garner, in order for it to affect and elevate not merely ourselves, but the entire world. (Hitva’aduyot 5742, vol. 2, pp. 1137, 1145-1146) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

SOULFUL EATING

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“He brought forth the second ram, the installation ram, and Aharon and his sons leaned their hands upon the ram’s head.” (8:22)

Of the three sacrifices offered up during the installation week as part of the installation ceremonies, only the third one - the second ram - is specifically called “the installation ram.” Rashi tells us that this is because it was only this third sacrifice that completed the process of installing the priests in their office. This is because an integral part of the priests’ role is to eat the parts of the sacrifices that they are meant to eat, and it was only regarding this third offering that Aharon and his sons were instructed to eat part of it.

At first glance, it seems puzzling that eating parts of the sacrifices should be an integral part of offering them up to G-d. After all, sacrifices are meant to draw us closer to G-d, and focusing on G-d usually involves some degree of weaning ourselves from our innate attachment to materiality.

The fact that eating is nonetheless part of the sacrificial process teaches us that eating for holy purposes is part and parcel of drawing close to G-d.

Rather than ascetically renouncing the material life, our challenge is to sanctify it, thereby transforming this physical world into G-d’s true home. (Hitva’aduyot 5730, vol. 2, pp. 428-430, 439-442) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

SACRIFICING TENDENCIES

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“Moshe took [specific parts of the slaughtered sacrifices] from the hands [of Aharon and his sons] and burned them up on the Altar.” (8:28)

The procedures for the sacrifices all allude to inner, psychological processes that we must undergo in order to draw close to G-d. (The Hebrew word for “sacrifice” [korban] means “drawing close.”)

Slaughtering the animal alludes to how we slaughter - i.e., renounce - our animalistic orientation toward life.

Sprinkling the blood on the Altar alludes to how we then re-orient our enthusiasm (signified by our warm blood) toward G-dliness.

Placing the fat of the slaughtered animal on the Altar alludes to how we re-orient our sense of delight (signified by fat, which results from indulging in eating foods that trigger feelings of delight in our brain) toward G-dliness.

Burning the animal by fire on the Altar alludes to the consumption of our animal nature by Divinity, meaning that our formerly animalistic drives become drives for goodness, as we transform the world into G-d’s home. (Reshimot 108) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

HAFTORAH

NOT AN END ONTO ITSELF

Malbim

“For I didn’t speak to your fathers, nor command them... concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices. But this is what I commanded them, saying, ‘Hear My voice, and I shall be your G-d, and you shall be My people and you shall walk in the way that I command you...’” (Yirmiyahu 7:22-23)

But didn’t G-d command us to offer sacrifices?

The pasuk should be interpreted as follows: “For I did not speak to your fathers nor commanded them concerning burnt-offerings” in the sense that they should be considered as ends in themselves. The purpose of My commandment concerning these sacrifices was that you should “hear My voice.”

You must learn to do My will, so that the sacrifice will serve primarily as a symbol of your desire to please Me by doing My will. So that “I shall be your G-d, and you shall be My People” - the sacrifice will be a sign of the covenant between Israel and G-d, showing that He accepts gifts from them like a king accepts tribute from his subjects.

“And you shall walk in the way that I command you.” The intention behind the bringing of sacrifices is to remind you to follow the path of G-d and forsake evil ways.

Hence, if you don’t do His will, if you fail to acknowledge G-d as your King and adhere to His ways, and if you regard the sacrifices not as symbols fulfilling a purpose but as ends in themselves, then you are not acting in accordance with what He has said to your ancestors.

PROPER USAGE

Vilna Gaon

“Thus says Hashem, ‘Let a wise man not glory in his wisdom, nor let the strong man glory in his strength, nor let the rich man glory in his riches. But let he who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me...’” (Yirmiyahu 9:22-23)

The wise, the powerful and the rich have no reason to glory in their wisdom, their strength and their riches.

“But let he who glories glory in this” - in one’s willingness to make use of these attributes for Heaven’s sake, “to understand and to know Me.”

If one does not make use of them to serve the Most High, these virtues are absolutely meaningless and, in fact, should be considered serious shortcomings. Only when one uses them for this purpose can wisdom, power and riches be regarded as authentic virtues.

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