

הַמִּסֵּבִים
וְהַזֵּבִים
**THE PATH
TO FOLLOW**

Nº 24
TZAV
12 NISSAN 5764
APRIL.3.2004

בס"ד

Publication
HEVRAT PINTO

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Responsible of publication Hanania Soussan

HUMILITY LEADS TO GROWTH IN THE SERVICE OF G-OD

(by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto שליט"א)

It is written, "Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments and the oil of anointment, and the bull of the sin-offering, and the two rams, and the basket of matzot. Gather the entire assembly to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting." Moses did as the L-RD commanded him, and the assembly was gathered to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting" (Lev 8:2-4).

With regards to this passage, the book *Shemen Rosh* asks the following questions:

1. Concerning the expression, "Take Aaron," Rashi explains it to mean: "Take him with words and draw him" (Torah Kohanim 8:165). Now why would G-d need to tell Moses to take Aaron and draw him with words in order to convince him to serve in the Tabernacle? Is it possible to even think that Aaron would refuse such a task, a task that's more honorable than any other?

2. Why did Aaron need to come to the Tent of Meeting with a bull, two rams, and a basket of matzot? And above all, why did the Children of Israel need to see how Moses was performing everything that he had been commanded regarding Aaron, in particular how he washed and dressed him?

Let us try to explain the situation. In the beginning, G-d gave orders to Moses for Aaron and his sons concerning the burnt offering, as Rashi writes concerning the verse, "Command [tzav: צו] Aaron and his sons, saying..." (Lev 6: 2). The word *tzav* (צו) is a word that one uses to motivate the person being addressed, something that is particularly necessary in cases involving the possibility of loss (Torat Kohanim 6:1). This here represents such a case, since the burnt offering is entirely consumed for G-d. He also

encouraged him to remove the ashes from the altar, as it is written, "He shall remove the ashes which the fire has made by consuming the burnt offering on the altar" (Lev 6:3). This is so that he doesn't become proud of himself, referring to the fact that this work required that the Kohen remove his garments and put on other ones in order not to dirty the former (Yoma 23b), which in so doing spiritually elevates him.

It is precisely this danger of pride that Aaron dreaded, especially after having worn the eight splendid garments of the High Priest. Even the cleaning of the ashes with the simpler garments risked coming not from a true love of the mitzvah, and thus would be for him a type of humiliation that in reality would cover a feeling of superiority.

This is why G-d told Moses to draw Aaron with words by telling him, "This is the Torah [law] of the burnt offering," for in zealously performing these mitzvot, one draws closer to G-d. In the same way, zeal encourages one to perform mitzvot as soon as possible (Pesachim 4a), and it is in this way that one arrives at purity, holiness, taking part in the resurrection of the dead, and Ruach Hakodesh (Avodah Zarah 20b). In addition, the cleaning of the ashes, which comprises an element of debasement, brings one to humility, not to pride. In this context, there's no place to worry that you will swell with pride, for zeal brings one to self-effacement and great humility before G-d, and it's precisely in this way that one gets even closer to the Eternal and arrives at the ultimate goal.

We can now, therefore, better understand why G-d ordered that the assembly of the Children of Israel look at Aaron and his sons in their role

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as priests: It was to instruct them in humility and self-effacement. By the service of these priests, the people noticed that even after all the honors that G-d had bestowed upon Aaron, he didn't feel pride in himself, but rather in that he was playing a consecrated role and attributed all honor to G-d.

In reflecting on this, the same idea will help us to also understand other points in our Parsha. A great miracle was performed for Aaron in that he wasn't the cause of any incident, for Aaron's priestly anointing oil was to serve for all the generations. In effect, the Children of Israel were inspired by the humble and self-effacing manner of the priests, of which Aaron's holiness (which nothing tarnished), was a perfect example. This is why Moses anointed Aaron with the anointing oil, a reference to the fact that oil floats on water as well as on all other liquids (Shemot Rabba 36:1). Moreover, the anointing oil (*meshicha* - משיחה) alludes to G-d's anointed (*Mashiach* - משיח). In short, the priest's service should be performed swiftly, yet linger on (like the oil), which evokes Mashiach. Yet at the same time, Aaron brought a bull of atonement, which alludes to that fact that no one is free from sin ("For there is no man so wholly righteous on earth that he [always] does good and never sins" [Ec 7:20]), not even the priest, who is G-d's anointed one. When he sees the bull of atonement, the High Priest will not come to pride, and even if he has nothing to regret, it brings him to self-effacement and humility before G-d.

He brings, moreover, two rams and a basket of matzot. These show that, even though he is unique and there are no others like him (since only he enters into the Holy of Holies), nevertheless he needs an additional sacrifice because the evil inclination is very strong and tries to make him, the great Tzaddik, stumble. Our Sages teach us that "whoever is greater than his fellow has a greater evil inclination than him" (Sukkah 52a). It is actually possible that the two rams allude to the two Temples wherein the priests served. As well, the basket of matzot alludes to humility, for matzah is very thin and does not rise.

Therefore, it is to prevent Aaron from swelling with pride that the Torah provided this entire ritual, since a good start should assure a good continuation for all the generations to come. We see in this a great principle, namely that all depends on the start, in the same way that the body depends on the head (Sotah 48b). In the words of Rabbi Elazar Harokeach, "Fervor is never stronger than at the beginning," for when

the righteous demonstrates, at the very outset, the right path to those who listen to his instruction, there is a solid continuation in all the coming generations.

This same Torah that was given to us at Sinai continues in all the generations, for Moses was the most humble of all men (Num 12:3), and he served G-d with alacrity, to the point that he didn't even have the time to become swollen with pride. He progressed without cease, and as we know, one mitzvah brings about another mitzvah (Perkei Avoth 4:2). He finished by meriting that the Torah truly became his heritage, as attested to by the verse that states, "Remember the Torah of Moses My servant" (Mal 3:22) and also by the Mishnah: "Moses received the Torah from Sinai" (Perkei Avoth 1:1). It was our revered teacher Moses that received it, and if we observe it as he did (for he had totally immersed himself in it), it will also endure with us and carry our name. As it is written, "In *His* Torah he meditates day and night" (Ps 1:2), and it is on this point that our Sages have said that when a man plunges into it, it becomes *his* Torah (Kiddushin 32b).

We should learn from our teacher Moses to conduct ourselves humbly, which will enable us to acquire the Torah. It is written: "This is the Torah: A man who dies in his tent" (Num 19:14), and concerning this verse our Sages have said, "The words of Torah endure only with the one who kills himself for them" (Shabbat 83b). This "killing" oneself consists of humbling oneself as much as possible. And in the same way that a dead man, even if he was once a great king, no longer inspires fear (Shabbat 151b) and is left to the mercy of each and everyone, the man who studies Torah should humble himself as if he were dead. He should not respond to insult (Berachot 18a), for Torah is acquired through humility (Taanith 7a). One can add to this by saying that the man (in Num 19:14) is only called humble (literally "dead") when he is actually found in a tent, in the study of Torah. This is like Moses our teacher, who conducted himself with humility; thus the Torah carries his name. In our time, it is the conduct of the righteous that can teach us something similar to the service of the priest in the Temple: They consecrated themselves entirely to the honor of G-d, and by their prayers they brought to light the ashes (i.e., the prayers of the Children of Israel) that were found at a lower level. By their service, they, the Tzaddikim, pick up and raise these ashes (prayers) towards the heavens with zeal and humility.

IN MEMORY OF THE TZADIKIM

RABBI ELIYAHU HACOHEN OF CASABLANCA

K*andil el Bled* (“Master of the City”) was the name that the Jews of Morocco gave to Rabbi Eliyahu Hacohen. The saintly Rabbi Eliyahu was greatly venerated by Moroccan Jews. At the end of every Shabbat, the Jews of Casablanca came to his tomb to light candles and partake of the *Melava Malka* meal in honor of the Tzaddik.

Rabbi Eliyahu Hacohen was buried in the middle of town in Casablanca. One day, the Arab authorities decided to construct a highway. To carry out this project, they wanted to take the grave of the saintly Rabbi Eliyahu and move it to the new cemetery in Casablanca. The transfer of the grave of their saintly and venerated Tzaddik rattled the Jews to their foundation of their souls. But what could they do against the government’s decision?

The day arrived and the Arab workers came to transfer the grave to the new cemetery. But as soon as they began to dig around the grave, they were stuck in place, not being able to move their feet or their hands. Seized with terror, friends of the workers went to the Rabbinic Center of Casablanca and related what had just happened. As soon as they heard, the Jews began to pray, and thanks to their prayers, the Arabs who had been paralyzed were able to move their limbs.

Finally, the authorities received from the Rabbis of Casablanca the authority to transfer the grave of the saintly Rabbi Eliyahu to the new cemetery. They promised that the transfer would be done with the respect due to the Tzaddik, and that around the grave they would build a magnificent mausoleum for those who would come there to make a pilgrimage. In addition, the government decided to distribute money to the poor of the city.

This incident occurred around 1963.

To the south of Casablanca, in the village of

Ben Hamad, lies buried Rabbi Yechia Lechdar. According to tradition, Rabbi Yechia was the brother of Rabbi Eliyahu of Casablanca.

Jews would gather beside his grave for the “Mimuna” feast and Lag BaOmer. Rabbi Yechia was a Tzaddik, renown for his miracles. Many sick individuals who came to make a pilgrimage to his gravesite returned healed.

EISHET CHAYIL

YOM TOV AND CHOL HAMOED

1. Women are obligated to eat bread during the *Yom Tov* (Festival) meals.

2. A woman is obligated to recite *Birkat Hamazon*. If she forgets to say *Ya’aleh Veyavo* in the *Birkat Hamazon* on the night of Passover, and doesn’t realize this until after the fourth blessing and says *La’ad HaEl*, she must restart the *Birkat Hamazon*. But if this happens on the night of Sukkot, she does not restart the *Birkat Hamazon*.

3. For the requirements of a Festival, it is permitted to cook food on a flame lit before the eve of the Festival, or from a flame lit from another flame already existing since the eve of the Festival.

4. In our days, the obligation of honoring the Festival by eating meat and drinking wine is fixed. According to Halachah, the essential principle of this obligation applies to beef, but if for health or kashrut reasons, one cannot consume meat, one can fulfill this obligation by eating chicken. It is also proper to bring joy to women by providing them with beautiful clothes or jewelry, and to delight children by offering them candies or sweets.

5. Women are obligated to make an *Eruv Tavshilin* with bread and cooked food and to recite the blessing for the *Eruv*. If a woman doesn’t know how to make one, she can ask a neighbor (or a friend or relative) to do it for her.

6. A married woman that spends the Festivals at her parents or in-laws does not need to make the *Eruv*, since she eats at their table. She may, however, help the mistress of the house with cooking or other things.

7. On *Chol HaMoed*, it is permissible to iron, shine shoes, etc. On the other hand, it is forbidden to wash the laundry (with exception to laundry that is absolutely needed, such as children’s clothing or clothes that will be needed for *Chol HaMoed* or the Festival).

THE MORAL OF THE STORY

JOY

A teaching from the Maguid of Dubno

This is the law of the feast peace offering that one will offer to the L-RD: If he shall offer it for a thanksgiving offering ...” (Lev 7:11-12).

The verse tells us, “He who offers a thanksgiving offering honors Me” (Ps 50:23). It is not written, “He who offers Me an offering of atonement,” but rather, “a thanksgiving offering”. Why? An atonement offering comes because of sin, but this is not the case for a thanksgiving offering. And further, Rabbi Pinchas, Rabbi Levi and Rabbi Yochanan said, “In the future, all sacrifices will be abolished, but the thanksgiving offering will never be abolished, as it is written, ‘There will again be heard in this place ... the sound of joy and the sound of gladness ... the sound of people saying, “Praise the L-RD, Master of Legions ...” bringing thanksgiving offerings to the Temple of the L-RD’ [Jer 33:10-11].”

To shed some light on these texts, let us begin by explaining the following verse: “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light” (Isa 9:1).

There are two types of joys: Positive ones that bring with their appearance a new element to life, and negative ones that come as a result of having *avoided* problems. Sometimes we rejoice in having acquired things, or as a result of a birth, a marriage, or a successful business venture. Sometimes happiness comes only through the absence of ills, as for example when one survives a sickness that is considered terminal. Situations such as this are also joyous, sometimes even more than the first type, since one experienced a brush with death and yet was saved. The difference is that the first type of joy surprises no one because the reason for it is clear and visible for all to see, whereas for the second type, if one is unaware of the distress that preceded it, the expression of great joy without apparent reason seems strange.

It is under this category that the joy for Jerusalem falls. The city was once besieged by the Assyrians, and when they fell in combat, the joy of having escaped harm was great. From this comes the cry: “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light” (Isa 9:1). It was as if the prophet was saying, “I don’t fear recounting Hashem’s great kindness, for the people were suffering from the darkness, and when they were saved, they saw a great light.” Further in the same verse it is written, “Those who dwelled in the land of the shadow of death, light has shone upon *them*.” And yet in reality, “You did *not* [read לא, not לו] increase the joy” (Isa 9:2), for it was only proper for “them” (the people) to be joyous.

In a general way, when we ask our fellow to share in our joy (for example, at a wedding or the birth of a child), there is an exchange of blessings. This is not the case for one who rejoices in having been healed from a severe illness. When that person’s friends come to visit him following his illness, does he tell them, “May you have the merit of being gravely ill, being in agony, and being healed”? Obviously not. In reality, he experiences a joy that really can’t be classified as one. What the prophet promises for the future belongs to the first category of joy that we discussed: “Then the redeemed of the L-RD will return ... with eternal gladness on their heads” (Isa 35:10). This signifies a joy whose nature is such that the entire world desires and asks for it: “They will attain joy and gladness, and sadness and sighing will flee” (ibid.). It is a joy that consists of the happiness of obtaining new things and successes every day, for pain and sighing will have fled and there will be no more of these in the world.

This is also the teaching of the verse that states, “Then will they declare among the nations, ‘The L-RD has done greatly with these.’ The L-RD had done greatly with us; we were gladdened” (Ps 126:3).