

THE DUTY TO MOURN THE PASSING OF A TZADDIK

At the beginning of this week's parsha it is written, "The L-RD spoke to Moses after the death of Aaron's two sons.... 'Speak to Aaron your brother, that he shall not come at all times into the Sanctuary.... With this shall Aaron come into the Sanctuary: With a young bull for a sin-offering and a ram for a burnt-offering.... From the assembly of the Children of Israel he shall take two he-goats for a sin-offering and one ram for a burnt-offering'" (Leviticus 16:1-5).

We need to understand this passage. Why does the Torah mention the death of Aaron's sons, given that this was already explicitly detailed in Parsha Shemini? As it is stated there, "They brought before the L-RD an alien fire that He had not commanded them...and they died" (ibid. 10:1-2). It was then that the Torah should have immediately commanded, "He shall not come at all times into the Sanctuary."

In addition to the he-goat for Hashem, why did the Children of Israel need to bring another he-goat for Azazel, one meant to procure atonement for them? Would their repentance alone not have been sufficient to procure atonement for their sins? Was a second he-goat really necessary?

Even if the second he-goat is said to appease the Satan's anger and prevent the Jewish people from being accused on Yom Kippur, we know that the Satan is not allowed to accuse on this day (Zohar III: 255a). Thus again, one he-goat should have been enough. Furthermore, why did two he-goats have to be brought instead of, say, two sheep?

The death of Aaron's two sons is again mentioned here in order to demonstrate just how important the death of the tzaddikim is in the eyes in the Holy One, blessed be He. The Sages have said, "The death of a tzaddik is put on a level with the burning of the House of our G-d" (Rosh Hashanah 18b), which is why it is always recalled before the Holy One, blessed be He. This is especially true when they die as an offering and atonement for the Jewish people, for the latter must learn a lesson from them for all time. Actually, Nadav and Avihu were not trying to rebel against Hashem by bringing this alien fire, for the Torah itself states: "Your brothers, the entire

House of Israel, shall weep for the burning that the L-RD has kindled" (Leviticus 10:6). Their intentions were certainly holy, and when they brought an alien fire before Hashem, it was with the goal of sanctifying His Name.

This is why the Torah again states, "After the death of Aaron's two sons," for it teaches us that Nadav and Avihu brought an offering in order to come closer to their Father in Heaven, as well as to draw the Children of Israel closer to Him. This idea is what motivated them to present an alien fire before Hashem. This alludes to the fact that when the Children of Israel would sin before Hashem (thus preventing the Shechinah from dwelling among them), they would be redeemed by the death of the tzaddikim. Hashem would then forgive them and make the Shechinah dwell among them. This is why we also read the account of the death of Aaron's sons on Yom Kippur. It teaches us that not only is the death of the tzaddikim an atonement, but that recalling their death serves as an atonement for all the generations. In fact we cannot rely solely on repentance, for who can guarantee that our repentance is truly from the bottom of our hearts? Thus in addition to the holiness of this day, we must ensure that people hear about the death of the tzaddikim and weep for them, for in this way they will be forgiven. Whoever laments the death of the tzaddikim, the Holy One, blessed be He, proclaims: "Your iniquity has gone away and your sin shall be atoned for" (Isaiah 6:7).

According to this, we can also understand why the Children of Israel had to bring a he-goat (as opposed to another animal) for their atonement. In fact the he-goat for Hashem was meant to appease Him. It was meant for Hashem to recall the death of the tzaddikim, and thus by their merit to forgive the evildoers among the Jewish people for their sins. It was also meant for Him to forgive those who are not considered tzaddikim. In fact we know that "there is no man so wholly righteous on earth that he always does good and never sins" (Ecclesiastes 7:20). Who knows whether a person is considered to be evil in the eyes of Hashem, though he may be considered, both by himself and others, as a tzaddik?

This is due to the fact that, as the Sages tell us, "The Holy One, blessed be He, deals strictly with those who are close to Him kechut hasa'ara [like a thread of a hair]" (Yebamot 121b). Hence a sa'ir (he-goat) comes to atone for sins that are considered as such by a judgment that is kechut hasa'ara. We now understand why he-goats were needed, not sheep or other kinds of animals.

If we ask why Hashem in His wisdom agreed that the death of the tzaddikim should atone for the Children of Israel, we must say that eventually a tzaddik leaves this world at the appointed time, as it is written: "The end of man is to die" (Berachot 17a). Thus for the death of a tzaddik to not have been in vain, Divine wisdom decreed that it should atone for the Children of Israel. Now when Jews repent through love, their involuntary sins become merits. Since it is the death of the tzaddik that brings about their repentance, the tzaddik becomes connected with the merit that accrues to the Jewish people. Not only that, but merit is added to the tzaddik for all the generations. In fact each year we recall the death of the tzaddikim and the atonement it brings about, and thus their reward is doubled. Consequently, the Holy One, blessed be He, in no way diminishes their reward.

The Sages referred to this by saying, "The righteous are greater after death than in life" (Chullin 7b). This means that by their death, the tzaddikim merit the atonement of the entire Jewish people. The result is that everyone repents and their deliberate sins are turned into merits. The tzaddikim therefore have a part in this reward, and they continue to elevate themselves in the World to Come. This is the opposite of what happens with angels, which Scripture describes as "standing," as it is written: "I will grant you free access among these who stand here" (Zechariah 3:7). From this we learn that when a tzaddik leaves this world, everyone should weep for him, for the Holy One, blessed be He, considers his death as tantamount to the burning of the Temple. If we weep over the destruction of the Temple each year on Tisha B'Av, we should also weep over the death of the tzaddikim. It is only when we conduct ourselves in this way that the tzaddikim will be able to intercede for us in the world above.

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

Visiting His Temple

“He shall not come at all times into the Sanctuary, within the curtain” (Leviticus 16:2).

Rashi comments, “For I continuously appear there with My pillar of cloud, and therefore, since My Shechinah is revealed there, he must be careful not to accustom himself to enter.”

This mitzvah warns the priests against becoming accustomed to coming into the Sanctuary at any given time. This is explained by the fact that the Creator perfectly understands how His created beings function, and is fully aware of their behavior and character traits. When a person hears something unusual or witnesses a sight that stands out in terms of beauty and content, he will initially be amazed and impressed. At first he will show great interest in the matter, but over the course of time, as he sees it again and again, his passion and enthusiasm for it will lessen until he is no longer amazed. Thus a Jew who is filled with a spiritual yearning to cleave to Hashem, when he witnesses the miracles and wonders of the Temple three times a year – taking in this incredible sight as he listens to the singing of the Levites and sees all the open miracles happening around him – he will be completely filled with faith and a fear of Heaven. This will sustain him until his next visit, when he will return to worship in the Temple. Nevertheless, if such a Jew were to constantly be there, he would grow accustomed to the Temple and eventually not be impressed anymore, for at that point things will no longer seem new to him.

King David said, “One thing have I asked of the L-RD, that will I seek after: That I may dwell in the house of the L-RD all the days of my life, to behold the pleasantness of the L-RD and to visit His Temple every morning” (Psalms 27:4). This request seems to contain an inconsistency, for at first King David asks to dwell in Hashem’s house all the days of his life, meaning that he wants to live there continuously. However he then asks “to visit His Temple,” which can only mean a temporary stay. In fact King David wanted to stay in Hashem’s Temple continuously, but he was afraid that constantly being there would lead him to lose his spiritual enthusiasm, and his reverential fear of Hashem would slowly diminish. This is why he composed a special prayer, in order that a prolonged exposure to holiness would be no different than a simple visit, in which case things would always seem new in a person’s eyes.

“When the populace comes before the L-RD on the appointed days, whoever comes in by way of the north gate to prostrate himself shall go out by way of the south gate.... He shall not return by way of the gate through which he came in. Rather, he shall go out opposite it” (Ezekiel 46:9). In his commentary on Perkei Avoth 1:4, the Ya’avetz explains that a person must not see the same gate twice, lest he compare it to the entrance of his own home. This is due to the danger of habit, which dampens a person’s enthusiasm and his renewed efforts to serve Hashem.

Worshipping Molech

“Say to the Children of Israel: Any man from the Children of Israel, or from the proselyte who lives with Israel, who will give his seed to Molech shall be put to death. The people of the land shall pelt him with stones” (Leviticus 20:2).

In the next verse “For he has given from his offspring to Molech in order to defile My Sanctuary,” which Rashi interprets as “the congregation of Israel, which is sanctified to Me.” The worshippers of Molech would take their sons and give them over to priests who worshipped fire. When the idolatrous priests were presented with these children, they would light a great fire and then return them to their fathers in order to be passed through the flames. A man would thus take his son and pass him through the flames of the fire from one end to the other. A child would not be burned, however, because his father would pass him through the fire very quickly (Rambam, Hilchot Avodah Zarah 6:3).

We need to understand something. The Torah is eternal, and its instructions and teachings are valid for all people in every generation. However since the worship of Molech ended long ago and its memory has long been forgotten, what could we possibly learn from this commandment, the transgression of which is extremely serious and leads to tremendous depravity?

Our teacher the Chafetz Chaim Zatzal learned a lesson of capital importance from this commandment, one that he published in an open letter (Letters of the Chafetz Chaim, No. 44). He wrote, “I was told about a certain place, a nearby country [a reference to Soviet Russia] where a government decree forces all parents to send their children, starting from the age of six, to a state-run school. If parents fail to register their children for such schools, they may be imprisoned for a year or more, or they may be exiled to a well-known place [a Siberian labor camp]. Now these state-run schools are places where impurity is spread, and where children learn to deny Hashem and His Torah. It is a place where children learn to scorn those who fear Hashem, and where those who study Torah become unbelievers (G-d forbid). I was asked if it is permissible for parents to register their children in such schools on account of their fear of the government. I replied that even if parents do not have the power to prevent the government from taking their children away by force, and even if they have nobody to take up their grievance (since this is a state law), nevertheless to personally hand one’s children over to such a godless system of education would be a transgression of the Torah. It is a negative mitzvah that is explicitly given in the Torah: One cannot give his offspring to Molech! Rashi explains this transgression: ‘Because he gave of his offspring to Molech,’ for it is the giving of one’s children that the Torah prohibits. Now we know that there is an obligation to lose one’s entire wealth in order not to transgress a Torah prohibition (as explained in Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 656).”

The same applies to us, for atheism is just as much idolatry as worshipping Molech. The very fact that a person gives his children over to those who would make unbelievers of them (as idolatrous priests did in times past) constitutes a transgression of the Torah.

A Pearl From the Rav

In his book *Pahad David*, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita writes: The death of Aaron’s two sons was due to the fact that they brought an alien fire. Even though they did everything through lovingkindness, they were still punished by death because they approached too closely. Yet by their death they left the Jewish people with the power to atone for sin in every generation, which is why we read the account of their death on Yom Kippur. The Zohar states, “To instill devotion in the soul of every Jew.” “For on this day ichaper [he shall make atonement] for you” (Leviticus 16:30), the term ichaper being formed by the letter yud and the word kaper – atonement on the tenth (yud) day of Tishri. The word kaper also has a numerical value of 300 – twice the number of chapters (150) in the book of Psalms – to atone for the sins of the Jewish people and lead them to repentance. Justice is then transformed into mercy in order to redeem the Jewish people.

As a Mother Cares for Her Baby

“So shall he do for the Tent of Meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their impurity” (Leviticus 16:16).

The Zohar recounts that when Divine mercy is awakened and descends into this world, the Shechinah takes the form of a woman, a mother. Why does this happen? Both a father and mother love their child, and both embrace it in their arms. Nevertheless, when a baby dirties itself, the father no longer knows what to do, having lost the patience to deal with it. Thus the mother takes the baby and cares for it, cleaning and changing its diapers. Even when her baby has to be cleaned, she does not stay away, nor does she refrain from embracing it. We find a similar situation in the verse, “Which dwells with them in the midst of their impurity,” for Rashi explains this to mean: “Although they are impure, the Shechinah is among them.” Even when the Jewish people sully themselves with their sins, the Shechinah stays with them, taking on

the form of a woman, a mother, and cleansing her children of their sins and making them pure.

Who Needs to Eat?

“You shall afflict yourselves” (Leviticus 16:31).

Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heschel, the Ohev Israel of Apt, used to say: “If I had the authority, I would annul every fast because the Jewish people are weak. However I would keep the fast of Tisha B’Av, when nobody has the heart to eat, and the fast of Yom Kippur, when nobody needs to eat!”

– Drawn from Ma’ayanot HaNetzach

I Am the L-RD

“You shall observe My decrees and My laws, which a man shall carry out and by which he shall live – I am the L-RD” (Leviticus 18:5).

Rashi comments, “I am the L-RD’ – faithful to pay a reward.”

A famous question asks: Why does the Torah only describe our reward in this world for performing mitzvot, while our reward in the World to Come is nowhere mentioned?

“To what can this be compared?” asks the author of Ma’alot HaTorah. “It is like a king who commands one of his subjects to undertake a certain task, and then he adds: ‘Be careful to do what I ask, for I am the king.’ These words already hint to the fact that if he carries out the king’s command, he will be well-rewarded, as is fitting for a king to do. Similarly, since the Torah often mentions the performance of mitzvot, the expression ‘I am the L-RD’ means: I am Hashem, Who will faithfully reward you. Even our eternal reward in the World to Come is included in this expression, for the Holy One, blessed be He, is eternal.”

– Drawn from Shulchan Gavoha

Conquering His Nature

“Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: I am the L-RD your G-d” (Leviticus 18:2).

The Ohr HaChaim explains that the statement, “I am the L-RD your G-d” serves as a preamble to the passage on forbidden relations. It is written as if to say: With the exception of the Children of Israel, it is true that human beings have reason to believe that they cannot control their sexual desires. However this is not the case for the Jewish people, since “I am the L-RD your G-d.” In other words, the physical desires of nature can be overcome by the power of the Divine, for the spiritual can overcome the physical. When a Jew decides in his heart to cleave to the L-RD his G-d, he can indeed conquer his nature!

GUARD YOUR TONGUE

The Difficulty and Reward of Remaining Silent

When someone finds himself among people who are gossiping about others and slandering them, he is forbidden to participate in their conversation and speak Lashon Harah. This applies even if he cannot leave their presence, and even if he feels extremely uncomfortable to be the only person not speaking. True, this is not an easy thing to do, for nobody wants to seem foolish or boring in the presence of others. However we must remember what one of our Sages said, namely that it is better to be considered a fool for your entire life by man, than to be considered wicked for even a single instant by G-d (Eduyot 5:6). Nevertheless we may be comforted by the thought of our reward, for as the Sages have said: “Commensurate with the effort is the reward” (Perkei Avoth 5:21). Insofar as situations that require silence are concerned, it is also said that for every second a person remains silent, he will merit a hidden light that no angel or created being can comprehend.

REASONS FOR THE MTZVOT

Only to Prevent Him From Feeling Lonely

It is written, “He shall send it away by the hand of an appointed man into the desert” (Leviticus 16:21).

In this week’s parsha we read that the High Priest must perform the highest religious service on Yom Kippur. This service is described by the words, “Fortunate is the eye that saw all of this. Indeed, to hear about it makes our souls grieve” (Avodah, Musaf Prayer of Yom Kippur). May the Holy One, blessed be He, quickly show us the rebuilt Temple and sacred service. Here at the highest point in the service, the High Priest sent the he-goat away to Azazel by means of a man who had been designated for this task on the day before. The Mishnah teaches: “Some of the nobility of Jerusalem used to go with him up to the first booth.... They went with him from booth to booth, except the last one, for he [the last person accompanying him] would not go with him up to the peak” (Yoma 66b-67a). We need to understand that Yom Kippur is a day of fasting, prayer, and repentance, a day when people had the opportunity to gaze upon the Divine service occurring in the Temple. People saw the great and holy house where the Shechinah dwelled, and they could witness the actions of the High Priest, who was like an angel. They could gaze upon the miracles that were occurring all around them, and they could see a crimson thread turning white. Although the people stood in the azarah (courtyard), they did not grow tired from being on their feet for so long. In fact they could not feel the crowds and the press of the people around them. A miracle occurred when the people prostrated themselves, for there was suddenly a distance of two yards surrounding each one. This space separated each person from the next so that no one could hear another individual’s confessions in prayer. The High Priest could also be seen leaving the Holy of Holies in peace. Nevertheless, certain individuals would forgo this great spiritual wealth in order to accompany the man designated to bring the he-goat to Azazel, making the journey easier for him so that he would not feel lonely. It was not without reason that these individuals are described as “the nobility of Jerusalem,” for great and cherished are those who are prepared to sacrifice their own spiritual elevation for an act of kindness, accompanying a sole individual in order to comfort him and ease his feelings. Commenting on the verse, “Asser te’asser [You will surely tithe] all the produce of your field” (Deuteronomy 14: 22), our Sages in the Gemara said: “Asser k’day she’titasher [Tithe that you may become rich]” (Taanith 9a). Rabbi Shimon Shkop, the author of Shaarei Yosher, said that this principle not only applies to financial wealth, but to intellectual wealth as well. Anyone who has been given special intellectual abilities, enabling him to acquire a deep and thorough understanding of Torah, is but a custodian of such abilities. He must therefore use them for the good of the community. Hence if he devotes his time to helping others in Torah study and by giving them advice, he will be able to elevate himself in Torah even more. For example, supposing that this person needs a great deal of time to prepare a comprehensive Torah lecture or clearly present a sugia. As a reward for having devoted his time to the community, he will find that discovering new Torah insights will be easier for him, and his lectures will soon shine.

EISHET CHAYIL

By Her Merit

The family of the Chazon Ish's wife consisted of simple folk, people who did not understand his way of life. In fact they held a grudge against him, for they could not understand why a young woman such as his wife should forgo all the pleasures of life and devote herself exclusively to earning a living for her "lazy" husband, a man who spent all his time in the Beit Midrash. Simply put, they failed to appreciate the rightful value of their wonderful son-in-law. The Chazon Ish's wife paid little attention to what they said, and she continued to watch over her husband as the apple of her eye. In fact she considered the task of enabling him to study in peace as being her life's goal. A great Sage of Israel once said, "Hillel the elder divided the money he earned. He gave half of it to the custodian of the Beit Midrash to let him study there, and the other half he gave to his wife for their home expenses. Although this was extraordinary on Hillel's part, today we might still be able to find a man who does the same. However where can we find a Rebbetzin today like Hillel's wife?"

Rebbetzin Batya, the wife of the Chazon Ish's youth, did wonders from the day they were married, even forsaking the half that Hillel's wife was given. Indeed, Rebbetzin Batya was the one who provided her husband with food and everything else he needed while they lived in the Diaspora.

– Pe'er HaDor

THE DEEDS OF THE GREATS

The Gaon Was Right

A local governor said to Rabbi Jonathan Eibeshutz, "You Jews surprise me, for you adhere to laws that are completely illogical, devoid of all sense. As your Sages have said, when a fruit becomes infested with a worm after it falls from a tree, it becomes forbidden to eat if the worm has emerged from the fruit, but permitted to eat if the worm is still inside. What difference does it make if the worm has emerged from it or not? What's the logic behind this, since in any case it's still a worm?"

(Note: This ruling appears in Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 84:4. However if a fruit has become infested with a worm while still on a tree, it is forbidden even if the worm has not left the fruit. If there exists a doubt as to when the fruit became infested with a worm, it is forbidden, as explained in paragraph 7.)

The gaon took a clean spoon from the table and said to the governor, "If you would, please spit into the spoon." When he did, the gaon said, "Now please put the saliva back into your mouth." The governor refused, saying that he found it disgusting to swallow. The gaon replied: "Why is it disgusting? One moment the saliva was in your mouth, and the next it was in a clean spoon. How does that change things?" The governor replied, "Even if the saliva was in my mouth, once it left it became disgusting to swallow." The gaon therefore said, "The same thing applies to a fruit. As long as a worm is inside the fruit itself, having not emerged from it, it is considered as part of the fruit itself. Hence it is not disgusting. However once it has emerged from the fruit, even for an instant, it becomes disgusting. This is the reason why it is forbidden." The governor then admitted that the gaon was right.

A TRUE STORY

Your Mitzvah is Exceedingly Broad

It is written, "He shall confess over it all the iniquities of the Children of Israel" (Leviticus 16:21).

During the time of the Rambam, there was a leading figure who did not recite the confessions on Yom Kippur, a practice that had always been the norm among the Jewish people. When this man was asked about it, he replied: "I know that I haven't committed all the sins listed in the Yom Kippur confessions, so how can I lie by telling Hashem otherwise, for His seal is truth?" When the Rambam heard this, he summoned the man and said to him: "King David stated, 'To every purpose have I seen an end, but Your mitzvah is exceedingly broad' [Psalms 119:96]. From here we learn that every mitzvah has its main components, roots, branches, and sub-branches that can be studied until the end of time. For example, the prohibition against theft includes, besides theft per se, stealing from a person just to cause him pain, even if one's intention is to return the stolen object. It also includes stealing from a thief, not to mention stealing a person's 'mind' [making him believe something that is not true, but without actually lying]. The prohibition against theft includes other things as well, and the same applies to every mitzvah."

The Rambam concluded by saying, "Now if you evaluate each mitzvah in this way, you will realize that there is no sin that, in all its aspects, you have not committed. You should also realize that the greatest sin of all is to think that you have, in fact, not sinned!"

– Talalei Orot (citing the Chida)

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbi Ephraim Navon – The Author of Machaneh Ephraim

The gaon Rabbi Ephraim Navon Zatzal was born in the city of Constantinople, where he and his friend of the same age, the gaon Yaakov Sasson, studied Torah with their teacher Rabbi Alfandri Zatzal. Rabbi Ephraim continuously elevated himself in the rungs of Torah and the fear of Heaven, studying with extraordinary diligence and perceptiveness. When he reached the age of marriage, he married the daughter of the gaon Rabbi Yehudah Irgaz Zatzal, at which time he and his father-in-law left for Eretz Israel and settled in Jerusalem. Rabbi Ephraim remained isolated for 10 years, studying the entire Talmud with tremendous concentration and in great depth. During that time he also studied the works of the Rambam and the Beit Yosef. Thus Rabbi Ephraim's name became famous in the Jewish world.

Sent by Rav Roshehien, Rabbi Ephraim left Israel and returned to Constantinople, where he became the Rav of the city. At the same time, he wrote his famous book Machaneh Ephraim on various Halachot, a book that the Chida described as being incredibly insightful and valuable. In fact his book was acknowledged by the entire Torah world, and even today both Machaneh Ephraim and its commentaries are studied in yeshivot throughout the world.

In reading Machaneh Ephraim, one can clearly see the author's extensive scholarship and wisdom. It is even said that Rabbi Ephraim could perform wonders, knowing the sacred Names of Hashem and being able to use Kabbalah to save Jews from their hardships and illnesses. Rabbi Ephraim Navon passed away on Nissan 26, 5491, as his soul ascended to the celestial academy. May the memory of the tzaddik be blessed.