

PARSHA
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THE ESSENCE OF THE SACRIFICE

Rabbi David Pinto Chlita

“Hashem called to Moshe, and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting saying: Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: When a person from among you will bring an offering to Hashem: from the animals – from the cattle and from the flocks you shall bring your offering” (Vayikra 1:1-2)

The Torah states, “אדם כי יקריב מכם – When a person from among you will bring an offering.” The Ramban explains (Vayikra 1:9) that the word קרבן (sacrifice) always denotes ((הקרבה) “self-sacrifice” or dedication. The essence of the korban is meant to train man to commit himself to Hashem, relinquishing his own will and desires for His sake. Therefore, it is customary to begin teaching children specifically the parashiot that deal with sacrificing korbanot first (Tanchuma 96:14), in order that they be trained from early childhood in the middah of absolute commitment. If we were to ask a child to arise in middle of his sleep at night to go on a thrilling trip or to receive a treat, he would happily forego his sleep in order to do so. The trait of self-sacrifice is inborn in every child, and he readily sacrifices of himself for things that appeal to him. Therefore Chazal have instructed us to harness this very trait for the service of Hashem, so that the child will be used to dedicating himself for Hashem’s sake from a very young age. This can be accomplished by teaching him the subject of korbanot, which trains one for dedication.

The younger a child is, the easier it is to train and mold his character traits. He is compared to a young seedling that can be easily bent to develop into the desired direction. However, after the trunk of the plant is fully developed and its roots are firmly entrenched in the ground, it is impossible to divert its growth to a different direction. Therefore, our Sages instruct us to take advantage of the stage when children are like a young seedling, and to teach them the parashiot of the korbanot. In this way they will acquire the trait of commitment, which is a foundation and a principle in Jewish life.

I remember when we were young children, on the days prior to the Yomim Noraim, when Selichot are said at sunrise, we would eagerly anticipate rising early in the morning to join the grown-ups in the Beit Hakeneset in their Selichot prayers. Likewise, on the eve of Hoshana Rabbah, when it is customary to remain awake the entire night, we were thrilled and felt proud to be staying up to learn Torah in the Beit Hakeneset like the older men. This illustrates how natural it is for children to happily sacrifice themselves for things that seem important and worthwhile to them, to the extent that they are willing to overcome their fatigue and hardships for this goal. Therefore, we train children through the parashiot of the korbanot that instill in them this appreciation

for the concept of dedicating themselves to Hashem.

Upon reflection, the whole concept of bringing korbanot might seem difficult to understand. The Rambam explains that when Bnei Yisrael were enslaved in Egypt, they were influenced by their masters who idolized their cattle. Despite the fact that they truly resolved to follow in Hashem’s ways and receive His Torah, they still were affected by the idolatry of the Egyptians. This is the reason that Hashem commanded Bnei Yisrael, prior to the Exodus from Egypt, to take a lamb, the idol of the Egyptians, and tie it to the foot of their bed for four days. Thereafter, they were to roast it over a fire and to eat this korban Pesach in groups. Hashem wanted Bnei Yisrael to actively destroy the lingering adulation for idolatry by slaughtering the sheep in order to entirely uproot the reverence accorded to the Egyptian gods.

Similarly, Hashem commanded His sons to sacrifice for Him korbanot of sheep and cattle in order to train them and help them internalize that the idols of the Egyptians possess no power, nor prominence; therefore they cannot support man in any way. During their sojourn in Egypt, the Jews witnessed their Egyptian masters turning towards their cattle in prayer whenever they were plagued with misfortune and suffering, trusting their animals to come to their aid. Being exposed to this behavior time and time again, made a deep impression on the Jewish slaves. For this reason Hashem instructed them to slaughter and sacrifice the gods of the Egyptians. This made it perfectly clear that the gods of Egypt are totally powerless, and only Hashem Himself is capable of providing for man and rescuing him from any danger.

Many times we meet people that on one hand declare publicly that they believe in Hashem with all their heart, but on the other hand they continue to work on Shabbat, rachmana litzlan. How is it possible to resolve the profound contradiction in their behavior? It seems to me that these people really believe in Hashem, but in addition they retain a reverence for their money as well, which sometimes overpowers their feelings of belief. Therefore, they do not have the determination to close their business on Shabbat, and they become enslaved to their money unable to cease their work even for a moment.

Since Hashem knows that it is the nature of people to believe both in Him and in other “powers,” He instructed Bnei Yisrael to sacrifice the gods of the Egyptians in order to eradicate from their hearts any reverence reserved for cattle. Even though Bnei Yisrael declared their allegiance and belief in Hashem and professed to wholeheartedly follow in His ways, nevertheless, Hashem suspected that they still harbored in the recesses of their hearts veneration for the Egyptian idols. This is what Hashem sought to uproot entirely.

The Ramban teaches (Vayikra 1:9) that if man sins

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before Hashem, fully aware that his act is forbidden, this signifies an inner corruption that must be uprooted. For example, when a person suffers from a toothache because the root of his tooth is decaying, he must extract the root in order for his pain to subside. If he were to leave the rotten root, his pain would not subside. Even if he were to feel some temporary relief, very soon after, the pain would resume in full force and his condition would deteriorate from day to day. Likewise, if a person suffers from a “rotten root” caused by the degenerate influence of his environment, first he must uproot and remove the sin entirely in order that he should not repeat it.

As an illustration of this point, if a person accustomed to viewing forbidden sights would want to overcome his weakness in this matter, he should avoid walking in places that expose him to immorality and remove from his home his television, the Internet, newspapers and magazines which are

replete with immorality. If he were to continue visiting places that expose him to immorality and continue watching programs full of depravity, how can he be saved from sin? He could not possibly guard his eyes from forbidden sights. This is what the Rambam explained, that sacrificing a korban has the ability to totally uproot the cause for the sin, which is the influence of the Egyptian idols.

While in past generations, the Yetzer Hara was for idolatry, today the Yetzer Hara is expressed by the desire for physical gratification and immorality. He attempts to lure us into sin at every opportunity. Just as Hashem instructed His sons upon the Exodus of Egypt to sacrifice before Him the Egyptian idols in order to eradicate its corrupt influence from the hearts of the Jewish people, so too, it is incumbent upon us to uproot and remove entirely the passion for immorality and self-gratification that prevails today.

Walking in Their Ways

No News Is Good News

One evening, before retiring, I had an urge to glance at a newspaper. I wanted to know what was going on in the world. At that time, the security situation in Israel was delicate. Various wars were taking place throughout the world, and the financial situation in general was at a low. I was interested in reading the latest update.

I searched for the daily newspaper all through the house, but could find it nowhere. I kept looking, but to no avail. When I saw that I would not find it, I decided to change tracks. I took a sefer kodesh instead, and headed off to sleep immersed in holy words.

Upon awakening the next morning, I noticed the newspaper right in front of my eyes! I could not figure out how I had missed it the night before.

After some thought, I came to the conclusion that Hashem wanted me to retire with sanctified thoughts. This would allow me to arise with a feeling of holiness, which would escort me throughout the day. Hashem therefore arranged things so that the newspaper would elude me, and I would be spared being involved in mundane matters.

Frequently, for weeks on end, I disconnected myself from all forms of media. I would not even see a newspaper headline during this time. When I would ask a friend what was doing, he would reply, “Baruch Hashem, all is fine.”

When we are immersed in Torah study and utilize our time for holy pursuits instead of reading newspapers and listening to the radio, we actually feel the protection of the Torah. The world is tranquil for our fellow Jews. But when we fritter away our time, preferring to be updated on the news, we ourselves are responsible for the awful things we hear about. Misfortunes come precisely because of those who waste time from Torah study.

There are those who truly wish to commiserate with their fellow Jews in their suffering and therefore read about their distress. But they end up reading nonsense and gossip, stories of dishonesty and mendacity. Additionally, the time wasted from Torah study in pursuit of the news brings Heavenly prosecution upon our people. This, in turn, causes further tragedies and instability in the world at large.

When Torah is silenced, the hands of the nations are raised against us.

Yaakov and Eisav – An Inverse Relationship

A Jew who spent his time learning Torah and doing mitzvot once approached me and asked, “Rabbi, why do I have so many physical and spiritual problems?”

“Do you often travel by plane?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“Do you study Torah on your trips?” I pressed him.

“I cannot muster the concentration necessary for that.”

“So what do you occupy yourself with during the long hours in the air?”

“I am busy thinking about ways of expanding my business and whom to use as my suppliers.”

“Very interesting,” I said, thoughtfully stroking my beard. “You have a head for thinking up all sorts of novel innovations for your business, but when it comes to Torah study, you lose all focus.”

“The Torah clearly states (Devarim 6:7), ‘You shall speak of them while you sit in your home, while you walk on the way...’ Even when we are in transit, we are adjured to be involved in Torah study. Our thoughts should be in lofty places.”

“For this reason, Eisav came to attack Yaakov specifically when Yaakov was on the way. It is difficult to concentrate on Torah study when one is traveling. But when Torah is weakened, Eisav becomes strengthened.”

“Eisav’s descendant, Amalek, also attacked our nation in transit, as the pasuk states (ibid. 25:18), ‘That he happened upon you on the way.’ When our nation was traveling in the Wilderness and their senses were somewhat dulled, they were accosted by Amalek, who attempted to cause them to sin. For this reason, we are commanded to eradicate them.”

“But when a Jew exerts himself to concentrate on Torah study even while on the road, the power of Yaakov and everything he stands for brings blessing upon the world. The Satan is debilitated and cannot do anything but stand by the side, gritting his teeth in frustration.”

“This is a tried and true method of removing problems from a person.”

Guard Your Tongue

A Great Shame for the Soul

The Zohar (Parshat Tazria) expounds on the pasuk “One who guards his mouth and tongue protects his soul from troubles”: When one’s mouth speaks evil, the words ascend to Heaven. As a result, everyone cries out: Run away from the evil words spoken by such and such. Make way for the attacking snake. Then the holy soul departs from him and cannot speak, as it says: “I made myself dumb in silence; I was silent from good.” This soul ascends in disgrace and great pain and she is not accorded a place as previously. Regarding this it says: “One who guards his mouth and tongue protects his soul from troubles.”

All children need to feel love expressed to them consistently, which can manifest itself among other ways in compliments.

Even a parent who truly loves his child and expresses his love occasionally, often finds himself asking: How much should I verbalize to my child that I love and value him. Isn't it enough to tell him once that he is loved and valued, or maybe twice or three times?

This is really a valid question. Is the memory of the child so short? If I told him so yesterday, then he already knows that I value him. He already knows that I love him. Do I need to repeat it constantly?

The answer to this fateful question is; yes. Expressions of love and appreciation from parents to children must be done in an obvious and tangible manner constantly. A parent must arrange consistent "quality time," when he graciously dedicates himself to his child giving him his undivided attention.

Why is it so important?

Because it is not sufficient for the child to hear that he is loved. He needs to be consciously aware that he is loved. The child needs to feel and sense the love. Whereas knowing that someone loves him does not require a constant reminder, feeling the powerful love depends on frequent and constant expressions of love. Therefore, even if you showered your child with love the day before, he still needs to feel your love and be embraced in your warmth and affection constantly.

These frequent expressions of love are what generate an overwhelming motivation in the child to conform to the spirit of his parents and teachers.

Every small child, like an infant, needs to be caressed and kissed by his mother. Let us stop a moment and ask: Would a mother ever ask her baby, "Sweetie! Didn't I already caress you last night? Didn't I kiss you the day before?"

Moreover, imagine a child who asks his father to hold his hand, and his father reacts by saying, "Why? The day before yesterday I already gave you my hand to hold..."

The classical example is one in married life. The question as well as the answer, clearly testify to how essential and vital it is for parents to shower love and attention upon their children. The question asked, usually in all innocence, is: I already told you yesterday that I love you and appreciate you, so why do I have to repeat it again?

It is true that you already said it yesterday, and it's possible that you will say it again tomorrow. But it will still not fulfill the needs of the child today. The emotional necessity to feel loved is something that has to be nurtured constantly in every child and teenager. It is an essential requirement, and we must always remember it.

Although this was always true, today it is even more essential, since the negative influence of the streets gets worse all the time. The days preceding Purim, and during Purim itself, as well as the period of time following, which are days of "bein hazmanim" when the schedule of the children becomes unstructured, and he does not get sufficient attention at home, he is liable, G-d forbid, to find it or search for it on the streets. The harmful results could be far-reaching, and sometimes they may be irreversible.

In light of this, every intelligent parent with foresight will wisely find ways to express his love continuously and will search for different opportunities to increase his child's affection for the home, especially during these trying times. It is also essential for the parent to supplicate Hashem in prayer to direct him how to sensibly supply his children with the necessary provisions to help them get through the adolescent period successfully.

Early in the morning, several days before Rabbi Chaim Pinto's, zt"l, passing, the family members were awakened by the sound of a loud thud. They got up quickly and found that Rabbi Chaim had collapsed on the floor. He was wrapped in tallit and tefillin and had obviously been in the midst of his Shacharit prayers.

The family rushed to his aid and lifted him onto a bed. The tzaddik called his sons and told them, "My time has come to die, and I wish to bless you."

It was an emotional scene. Rabbi Chaim blessed his sons and those who were standing at his side. When he blessed his son Refael, he cried bitterly and later explained, "I am crying about the way that he will die, since he will be taken as a sacrifice for Klal Yisrael."

Decades later, on the twelfth of Shevat, 1980 (5740), a criminal entered Rabbi Refael's house in the middle of the night and beat him cruelly to death with an iron rod while he was lying in bed, may Hashem avenge his blood.

Storming the Heavens

For three days, the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Hakatan lay in his bed in agony, until his soul departed and rose to the Heavens on the fifteenth of Cheshvan, 1938 (5698). He was seventy-three years old.

His son, the tzaddik, well-known for performing miracles, Rabbi Moshe Aharon, hurried to the funeral of his father in Casablanca. Those who traveled with him testified that the journey was miraculously shortened for him. At the end of the shivah, he returned home to Mogador, continuing his self-imposed confinement in his house.

When the dreadful news of Rabbi Chaim's passing spread throughout Casablanca, all the yeshivot and Torah institutions shut down, and all the students followed with their leaders to bestow their last honors upon the tzaddik. All the shopkeepers, Jewish as well as non-Jewish, closed their shops and joined the funeral procession, without any official order to do so, but because Rabbi Chaim was admired by everyone.

Sadness and grief were palpable in the streets of the city; everyone felt the great loss incurred by the tzaddik's passing. In every Beit Hakeneset, the gabbaim removed the parochet from the Aron Hakodesh, and the city mourned as on the day of Tishah B'Av.

A tremendous crowd followed the funeral procession of the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim from his house until the old cemetery in Casablanca, where he was laid to rest, until the coming of Mashiach, may it be speedily and in our days.

The Rain Stopped

"...When [Metushelach] died, a loud thunder was heard in the Heavens, since they were eulogizing him and tears flowed from the eyes of the animals onto the place of his passing. When they saw this, they eulogized him below..." (Yalkut Shimoni, Bereishit 247:42).

It is told that at the funeral, intense rain and lightning lit up the sky. Even the skies were shedding tears over the tzaddik's passing. Chazal say (Sanhedrin, 47a) "When rain falls on the coffin, it is a good sign for the deceased."

Nevertheless, during the eulogy delivered by Rabbi Shimon Abukasis, zt"l, bemoaning the loss of the distinguished tzaddik, who had protected the generation with his prayers and righteousness, he begged Hashem to stop the rain for an hour, so that they would be able to bring the tzaddik to his resting place with due honor.

The tzaddik's request was granted, and the rain suddenly stopped falling. Thus, the eulogies continued, delivered by the great luminaries of the generation, who cried bitterly over the great loss incurred by all of Am Yisrael.

The Importance of Speech

“And He called to Moshe” (Vayikra 1:1)

Rabbi Tanchuma began, “There is gold and many pearls, but lips of wisdom are a precious vessel” (Mishlei 20). It is the way of the world that a person who has gold and silver, precious stones and gems, and every coveted item, but lacks wisdom. If so, what use are his possessions for him?

The proverb illustrates the point: If you have wisdom then what can you lack? If you lack wisdom, what can you gain?

There is gold. Everyone brought their gold as donations to build the Mishkan. And many pearls. This refers to the Nessi'im. But lips of wisdom are a precious vessel. Moshe was sorrowful and said; everyone brought their donations for the Mishkan, but I did not bring anything!

Hashem said to him; I swear! Your speech is preferable to Me than anything else in the world. From all other people, the Voice of Hashem called to no one other than to Moshe as it says, “And He called to Moshe.”

Blessings for Success

“And he shall lay his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering” (Vayikra 1:4)

Following the words, “and he shall lay his hands” it says, “And he shall slaughter the bullock”. In the place where he lays his hands he thereafter slaughters. Immediately after laying the hands, one slaughters.

Thus stated by Rav Huna in the name of Rav; Three things should follow immediately one on the other. Tefillah should follow immediately on geula, the killing [of the sacrifice] should follow immediately on the laying on of hands. Grace should follow immediately on the washing of hands.

Abaye said: We will add another case. A blessing follows immediately on [the entertaining of] scholars, since it says, The Lord has blessed me for your sake.”

Rabbi Yossi bar Bon said: Whoever follows the slaughtering immediately after laying on of hands, his sacrifice will never be a pigul (invalid because of wrong intentions). Whoever follows the Grace immediately washing of the hands, the Satan will never prosecute on that meal. Whoever follows Tefillah immediately after geula, the Satan will not prosecute on that day. (Yalkut Shimoni)

Insight

It is a universal Jewish custom to disguise themselves on Purim with various costumes.

The reason for this custom is hinted to in the explanation of Chazal regarding the question: Where is Esther alluded to in the Torah? It says, “I will surely hide (אסתר) my face”.

Another reason is that poor people are ashamed to openly ask for charity. However, if they disguise themselves and are not recognized, they will feel more comfortable to ask for charity.

In Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer it states that Eliyahu Hanavi, z"l, disguised himself as “Charvonah” and told Achashveirosh when he became enraged at Haman, “Not only that, but there is the gallows that Haman made on which to hang Mordechai.”

Accepting the Torah with Love

The Book of Esther is referred to as a “Megillah.”

Why is it called specifically like this and not differently, for example, a story, or tale or as the Megillah refers to itself, as a letter (Esther 9:26). Why was the name Megillah chosen?

We can explain it in the following manner: Chazal say (Shabbat 88a), about kabbalat Hatorah on the Festival of Shevuot that Bnei Yisrael accepted the Torah through coercion, as it says, “It was arched over them like a cask. He said to them, if you accept the Torah; fine. If not, here will be your grave.”

We may query, why, in fact, did Hashem arch over Bnei Yisroel the mountain as a cask in order to force them to accept the Torah. After all, they already declared, “We will do and we will hear!”

Furthermore, Hashem knew that Bnei Yisrael will declare, “We will do and we will hear.” If so, why did He give them the Torah through coercion? To illustrate the question, let's take for example a person who asks his friend to give him something. And, when requesting the item, he screams at his friend to give it to him, despite the fact that his friend is calmly assuring that he will give it to him, and there is no reason to take it by force.

On Purim, Chazal tell us (Shabbat 88a), that Bnei Yisrael accepted the Torah with love and with joy, as it says: “they re-accepted it in the days of Achashverosh.” It was because on Purim Bnei Yisrael witnessed the tremendous miracle done to save them from the evil Haman.

Accordingly, Hashem was as if forced to do it this way, that Bnei Yisrael should receive the Torah on Shavuot through coercion and force, in order that afterwards on Purim they would be able to receive the Torah again through joy. If on Shavuot they would already have received the Torah with love, then on Purim there would not have been a miracle and they would not have been able to re-accept the Torah through joy. Thus, Hashem says He is, as if, liable that He coerced them, but it was necessary so that on Purim they would receive the Torah with joy.

If so, the receiving of the Torah through coercion on Shavuot was the catalyst to receive the Torah through joy on Purim. This clarifies why the scroll of Purim is called a Megillah (a revelation). Megillah (מגילה) is comprised of the words מ' גילה (40 revelation), which alludes to the Torah which was given after 40 days (Menachot 99b) and accepted by Bnei Yisrael with joy (גילה) on Purim. This was possible because on Shavuot they had received the Torah by coercion and force. However, afterward they received the Torah with joy and love, since the love of Hashem for them was revealed (נתגלה) through the miracle. Finally the reason for the coercion became apparent and they saw the ultimate goodness of Hashem.

The Haftarah

The Haftarah of the week: “And Shemuel said” (Shemuel 1:15)

This week's Haftarah is connected to the Festival of Purim which is celebrated in the coming week: On this Shabbos, which is called Shabbat Zachor, we read the haftarah that discusses the eradication of Amalek, since they waged war against Bnei Yisrael when they went out of Egypt. Haman was a descendant of Amalek, and we are reminded of the command to wipe out the memory of Amalek.