

בעזהשׁי״ת

Parshah Insights

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Insights on the Parshah

פרשת שמיני - פרה

Translated from the outstanding Lev Shomaya Parsha series that contain highlights of the lectures and deroshos given by:

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פרשת שמיני - פרשת פרה

The Sefer of the Avodah

Parshas Shemini is the third Parshah in Sefer Vayikra, in which the Torah instructs us regarding the avodah of the korbonos and all other aspects of the avodah in the Beis Hamikdash. Most of the mitzvos that are mentioned in Sefer Vayikra are connected in some way to the avodah of the korbonos (see Ramban in his preface to Sefer Vayikra). Therefore, at this juncture, it is important to study these mitzvos in depth. Various Seforim Hakodoshim explain what the reason and the purpose of the holy Avodah of the korbonos was. Some of the explanations are easier for us to understand, and some expound upon lofty ideas that are harder for us to grasp. According to all the meforshim, however, the underlying sole purpose for the entire avodah in the Beis Hamikdash, was to bring us closer to אבינו שבשמים.

The Poor Man's Korban

Because קירבת אלקים is our constant goal regardless of the fact that we no longer have a Beis Hamikdash, therefore it is worthwhile to delve into this fundamental concept, and learn from the Avodah in the Beis Hamikdash, how we too can achieve ever-stronger closeness to our Father.

The Possuk in Parshas Vayikra (א יז) discusses how one should sacrifice an עולת העוף a bird offering. One who could not afford to sacrifice livestock, would bring a bird as a korban instead. The Torah tells us that the wings and feathers of a תור or of בני יונה should be sacrificed together on the mizbeach. Rashi quotes a Midrash, that says that when the wings and feathers were sacrificed, it gave off an unpleasant stench, that נפשו קצה עליו was difficult for a person to

withstand. The Midrash asks why then the Torah commanded that the bird be sacrificed in this way which had unpleasant results? And it offers a fascinating answer; כדי שיהא המזבח שבע ומהודר בקרבנו של עני, so that the Mizbeach should be satisfied and beautified through the poor man's korban.

A Sacrifice of the Heart

At first glance, the answer of the Midrash is actually extremely perplexing. How exactly does a korban that creates an unpleasant odor, beautify and satisfy the mizbeach?

With this statement the Midrash actually sheds a whole new light on the purpose of the avodah. The Torah commanded the measly wings and feathers of a simple bird to be sacrificed in order to demonstrate that the entire purpose of the avodah is to bring one closer to Hashem. Therefore, it is completely irrelevant what exactly was being sacrificed. The large and beautiful oxen were not more meaningful to Hashem than the simple bird. Rather it is the heart of the person that Hashem desires. It may just be the simple offering of the poor man, sacrificed out of love for Hashem, and with the correct intentions and machshovos, that ultimately beautifies the mizbeach in the most ideal way. The 'foul smell' of the wings and feathers is sweetened and elevated by the desire and love of the man who offers them. Thus, the smell becomes completely irrelevant, and the korban brings a tremendous nachas ruach to Hashem Yisborach. Therefore, the heartfelt korban of the עני should be sacrificed in its entirety, including the wings and feathers; no part should be left behind.

This clarifies a fundamental concept of the Avodah in the Beis Hamikdash, and our Avodah in general. Hashem does not only desire "large offerings" and those that require a significant financial or physical outlay. It is the intent and yearning to do ratzon Hashem that elevates every mitzvah and makes it beautiful in Hashem's eyes. Regardless of how "grandiose" or conversely, how "simple" the

mitzvah may seem, it is the kavonos and machsovos of the one who performs it, that determines how valued the mitzvah is.

More Beloved Than a Thousand Korbonos

The Midrash relates an episode that highlights this concept. Agrippas Hamelech wanted to perform a truly meaningful act that would have a great impact. He decided to sacrifice one thousand korbonos in one day! He instructed the Kohen Gadol not to accept any other korbonos on that day, so that all the Beis Hamikdash's resources could be channeled towards sacrificing the one thousand עולות that he would offer in a show of great love for Hashem.

That night, after all the korbonos had already been sacrificed, he had a dream in which he saw that the "simple" korban of two birds that a poor man had sacrificed was more beloved on High than his one thousand expensive korbonos.

Perplexed, he approached the kohen and asked if they had been makriv any other korbonos on that day, contrary to his original request. The Kohen Gadol answered in the affirmative. He explained that there was a poor man who would go out into the forest every day to capture four birds. He would bring two of these birds as a korban in the Beis Hamikdash and the other two were used to feed his family. That day, just like every other day he brought his korban of two birds to the Beis Hamikdash. The Kohanim told him that it would not be possible to be makriv his korban on that day. The poor man pleaded and beseeched, claiming that his entire sustenance was dependent on the sacrificing of this korban. Perhaps he believed that he only merited to capture four birds every morning, two of which were used to feed his family, in the zechus of his intention to sacrifice the other two. Or maybe he would not permit himself and his family to eat the other two birds that day, if he had not first sacrificed two as a korban. Ultimately the kohanim could not refuse his request, and they allowed him to be makriv the two birds.

The Kohen Gadol then asked Agrippas whether he believes that he should have refused the poor man's heartfelt desire to be makriv the birds, and Agrippas agreed that indeed they had to accept this individual's korban. And, according to what Agrippas saw in his dream, it was this korban that had a greater impact than the thousand korbonos that Agrippas had brought!

This clearly demonstrates how the heartfelt offering of a poor man, one who refused to acquiesce and refrain from sacrificing his korban as per the king's request, can have a seemingly disproportionate impact on High. His sincere and profound understanding that his entire sustenance was only due to the sacrifices he offered, was very beloved by Hashem, and was more meaningful than the king's thousand korbonos.

It is important not to underestimate the great Kiddush Hashem that the korbonos of Agrippas Hamelech generated. The Mishnah in יומא (פ"ב משנה ה-ו) tells us that each day dozens of kohanim were involved in the avodah of every single korban that was sacrificed. On that day in which Agrippas brought so many korbonos, many more kohanim had to be recruited in order to accomplish this great feat. This definitely generated a significant Kiddush Hashem, which was a great zechus. However according to Agrippas' dream, the small but sincere offering of the poor man had an **even greater** impact!

Sacrificing One's Soul

In the next possuk in Parshas Vayikra, the Torah instructs us regarding the מנחה קרבן. The possuk says נפש כי תקריב קרבן מנחה לה' (ויקרא ב א) and when a soul will offer a Korban Minchah to Hashem. Rashi says that the Torah does not generally use the word נפש, a soul, in relation to a korban נדבה a non-obligatory sacrifice. Why then is it used in this instance? He explains that the Korban Minchah was sacrificed by one who was even more indigent, and could not even sacrifice a bird. When a desperately poor man scrapes together his meager sustenance, and offers the little bit that he has, אמר הקב"ה מעלה

Hashem Yisborach says that He regards it as though the person has literally sacrificed his own soul. Thus, the term נפש is used in this case. For the deep-seated desire of the desperately poor man to sacrifice a korban, despite his poverty, is regarded in the highest sense.

The Midrash relates a story regarding a woman who brought a Minchah of a קומץ, which is the smallest type of Minchah offering. The Kohen who received it was מזולזל in it, he disgraced it by saying "what are they sacrificing, what is there in it to eat, and how much exactly is there to be sacrificed". He then saw in his dream that it had been improper of him to disgrace this korban, for it was as though she had been makriv her nefesh. It is irrelevant if there is something to eat or to sacrifice, it is indeed the heart and soul invested in the mitzvah that counts.

A Basket Woven with Love

By the mitzvah of Bikkurim the Mishnah says that the Yidden would bring their first grown fruits with much fanfare, and present them in the most exquisite way possible (ביכורים ג ח). The rich man would put his many fruits into a vessel plated with silver or gold. The Mishnah expounds upon how this mitzvah was celebrated joyously from beginning to end. The poor man, who often only had one tree, and thus only one first-grown fruit to offer, would sometimes not even have a basket in which to present his fruit. He would fashion a טנא, a basket made out of simple twigs, and bring his bikkurim to the Beis Hamikdash in this fashion.

The mishnah says that the Kohen took the poor man's bikkurim, including his טנא and did not return it to him. Conversely after the rich man presented his bikkurim, his silver- or gold-plated basket was returned to him.

One may wonder why the kohen kept the crude basket brought by the pauper, but returned the exquisite vessel offered by the rich man.

Rabbi Dovid of Tolna says that the meager basket of the pauper was so precious to Hashem, therefore the Kohen did not return it, and accepted it as an offering alongside his Bikkurim. The poor man's Bikkurim did not provide him with the satisfaction that the rich man felt when he presented his exquisite fruits to the Kohen. His inability to give a significant offering resulted in a mitzvah done only for the sake of Hashem, rather than self-glorification or satisfaction. This pure Mitzvah was so beloved by Hashem, that the kohen kept the basket as a long-lasting memento which served to eternalize this mitzvah. Again, it is apparent that the עבודה שבלב the machshavos and kavonos with which a mitzvah is performed, is the most important component of the mitzvah.

The Father of Greatness

Rabbi Chaim Vital was the chief disciple of the holy Arizal, and he was the vehicle through which the Torah of the Ari Hakodosh was disseminated and passed on to all future generations. His father was an ehrilche Yid called R' Yosef, who worked as a Sofer. In which merit did he have a son who was such a קדוש ועליון, an elevated holy individual? Furthermore, the Beis Yosef, R' Yosef Karo, also revealed that half the word was גיזון בזכותו, sustained in the merit of the father of R' Chaim Vital. This was revealed to him by his Maggid. It is known that throughout the generations there were some exceedingly holy individuals to whom deep and elevated סודות, sacred secrets, were revealed. They learned Torah and the secrets of the elevated sphere's, from a malach that was known as a Maggid. The Maggid of the Beis Yosef revealed to him that R' Yosef, the father of R' Chaim Vital, was the merit in which half the world received their sustenance. What were his great zechusim that resulted in such amazing blessings?

The Maggid revealed that it was because he put such a great avodah into writing tefillin that he was considered supremely righteous. He infused every single word that he wrote with elevated kavonos and Yiras Shamayim. Perhaps it was apparent that he was an

ehrliche Yid, but there were definitely many righteous Talmidei Chachomim in his generation, that must have seemed to be holier than him. It appeared as though he was just fulfilling his job as a sofer, by writing tefillin for young bochorim, and others who needed it.

Here again, it becomes apparent that it is not only the substantive actions one does that is important, rather is the intent and thoughts involved that matter. R' Yosef rose to unbelievable spiritual heights by living his life only for the sake of Hashem, and focusing on Ratzon Hashem at every moment of his day. His entire essence was that of an Eved Hashem, therefore his סופרות, his writing of tefillin, was an act of supreme holiness infused with the highest levels of kedusha. Perhaps it is also in this merit that he had a son like R' Chaim Vital (partially brought down in the ספר החזיונות, by R' Chaim Vital).

Each Person according to his Ability

Though we have expounded upon the concept that Hashem desires one's heart, regardless of the physical manifestation of the mitzvah, it is important not to err by thinking that it is therefore acceptable or even preferable to perform mitzvos in a simple way. The Chofetz Chaim points out that in the Beis Hamikdash every person would bring sacrifices according to his means and ability. By many obligatory korbonos, either one brought to atone for a sin, or in other situations where one would be required to bring a korban, the Torah obligates each person according to his means. If a person was financially blessed, then he had to bring a livestock korban, if he could not afford to, then he could bring two birds, if even this was beyond his means, then he could bring a מנחה קרבן, an offering of a small amount of flour. However, if a man of means would bring a meagre offering it was considered a חולין לעזרה an unsacred offering which was a disgrace onto the holiness of the Beis Hamikdash. Such a korban was possul, unacceptable and considered a Torah transgression. Hence the means of the person actually defined what korban was a kosher korban for him individually. (חפץ חיים עה"ת פרשת ויקרא)

This is also true in regard to other mitzvos, such as tzedakah and chessed. If one gives far below his means, his 'offering' is shameful. Clearly one must try to perform every mitzvah in the most ideal way, and attempt to achieve הידור מצוה, according to the Torah. A person must attempt to glorify each mitzvah according to his ability. He must give as much Tzedakah as his financial situation allows for, and he must learn and do chessed according to the amount of kochos and abilities Hashem has granted him.

However, he should always keep in mind, that it is neither the number of hours he has dedicated for a mitzvah, nor the resources that he has invested, that are the defining factor on how precious his avodah is. Rather it is his focus on doing Ratzon Hashem, and being a faithful Eved Hashem that is the most important. The Korban of an עני that is infused with אהבת ה' beautified the מזבח in the most elevated way. It may have been lacking in physical beauty and the smell may even have been highly unpleasant, but if the man was offering his heart to his Father, with an overriding desire to come close to Him, then the תמימים קרבן was exceedingly perfect!

The Best of every Breed

The Rambam says that by every korban a person was obligated to bring the best of that type. For example, if he had to bring a sheep, he should search for the fattest and most beautiful sheep that he could find. If he were to bring a bird, then it should be the nicest bird he can acquire. The Rambam continues to explain that this concept applies to every mitzvah. If a person builds a shul, then he should ensure that it is nicer than his own home. If he gives a pauper to eat, he should offer the best and sweetest food on his table. If he clothes a poor man, he should provide him with the nicest clothes he can offer. He quotes the possuk (ויקרא ג טז) כל חלב לה' the 'fattest' of every breed should be for Hashem, as a proof of the need to always seek to perform a mitzvah in the most ideal way possible. This again indicates that though the korban of the poor-man is supremely beloved, as the

intention is of primary importance, still each person should seek to do every mitzvah in the most ideal way possible for him. (רמב"ם סוף הלכות איסורי המזבח)

Indeed, when the above-mentioned possuk talks about an עולת העוף it concludes that this offering is (ויקרא א ט) 'אשה ריח ניחוח לה' a sacrifice that brings a nachas ruach to Hashem. Rashi points out that this expression is used both in relation to the korban of a bird and that of livestock. He explains that אחד המרבה ואחד הממעיט both one who brings more, and one who brings less creates a nachas ruach for Hashem ליבו לשמים the most important factor is if he directs his heart to Hashem. The impact of the korban is entirely dependent on the desire of the one who sacrifices it.

May we merit to perform every Mitzvah with a pure desire to do Ratzon Hashem, and in that zechus we should finally be able to sacrifice korbonos again, in the Beis Hamikdash Hashlishi! בקרוב אמן!



פרשת פרה

Parshas Parah First

This week we read the additional parshah of פרה. This is the third of the four parshios which are read in addition to the weekly Torah reading at this time of the year. In Parshas Parah we are given the mitzvah of פרה אדומה, which was used to purify a person from טומאת מת. Chazal say that we should read this parshah the week before Parshas Hachodesh is read. In Parshas Hachodesh the mitzvos of Rosh Chodesh and Korban Pesach were given to Klal Yisroel.

Rashi says (מגילה כט.) that we read the parshah of 'taharah', so that we should be reminded to prepare and purify ourselves in order to be able to bring the Korban Pesach בטהרה. This reminder was crucial, as a person who was tomei could not bring the Korban Pesach. The Mishnah Berurah (ס' תרפה סק"א) says that we still read the parshah of Parah, even though we may unfortunately not bring the Korban Pesach, so that it should awaken us to daven that we should indeed merit that Hashem should soon throw upon us מים טהורים. We plead that we should already greet Moshiach, after which we will all be cleansed of the accumulated impurities of years of golus.

Many Seforim say that we also read the Parshah of Parah to awaken ourselves to cleanse our hearts through teshuvah. Teshuvah restores our purity and brings us to a state of טהרה, as Rebbe Akiva said (יומא פה:) מה מקוה מטהר את הטמאים אף הקב"ה מטהר את ישראל just like a mikvah purifies the impure, so too Hashem purifies those that turn to Him with teshuvah. On many occasions we daven זרוק עלינו throw upon us cleansing waters, and cleanse us, which refers to Yisroel being cleansed of its sins. This is based on the words of Yechezkel Hanivi (which we read in the haftorah this week) Hashem says, (לו כה) וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתי אתכם upon you purifying waters and I will cleanse you. Meforshim say that this is a reference to Hashem cleansing those who do teshuvah. Like the Parah Adumah could purify the impurity brought about through contact with a meis, teshuvah also purifies our hearts and souls.

Purifying Ourselves Before Pesach

Many base this concept of cleansing our souls through teshuvah at this time of the year, on the Gemara in Yerushalmi (מגילה פ"ג ה"ה). The Gemara says that in the midbar the mishkan was first erected באחד בניסן, on the first day of Nissan, and on the second day of Nissan, the Parah Adumah's ashes were prepared. This was because the process of preparing the Parah Adumah to be burned had to be performed facing the entrance of the mishkan, and later the

Beis Hamikdash. Therefore, it could only be done once the mishkan was already erected. According to this, the Parshah of Parah should be read during Chodesh Nissan, only after Parshas Hachodesh. The Gemara says that we read it earlier though, because it refers to טהרתן של ישראל the purifying of Yisrael.

Rabbi Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin asks why, now that we unfortunately no longer have a korban pesach, do we not reverse the order of Parshas Parah and Parshas Hachodesh, to the way in which it originally occurred. As the Gemara says, the Parah Adumah was actually only be prepared in Chodesh Nisan. However, during the times of the Beis Hamikdash, we read Parshas Parah earlier because we had to ensure that every yid would be pure in order to be able to sacrifice the korban pesach. Unfortunately, that is no longer necessary. In golus we can neither purify ourselves using the ashes of the Parah Adumah, nor can we sacrifice the Korban Pesach. Why then do we still read Parshas Parah before Chodesh Nissan? R' Tzadok Hakohen answers that the fact that we still read Parshas Parah before Chodesh Nissan indicates that בזמן הזה, we too need to purify our hearts in preparation for korban Pesach. The Kriah of this parsha has the ability to cleanse us of the yetzer hara. Therefore, it precedes Parshas Hachodesh. (פרי צדיק פרשת פרה)

Making Ourselves into a Worthy Vessel

The Sfas Emes (פרשת פרה תרמא) expounds on why we read פרשת פרה before פרשת החודש. He explains why this is a particularly opportune time to cleanse ourselves.

Parshas Hachodesh is read in advance of the first month of the new year according to how the Torah counts the months. With the commencement of a new year, we are given a koach of התחדשות, renewal. We are granted an extra ability to recreate ourselves. We therefore need to cleanse ourselves first, in order to be able to utilize this gift properly. Through reading Parshas Parah, and working on cleansing ourselves, we become worthy vessels for the blessing of

renewal which comes with the arrival of the new year. The importance of first cleansing oneself in order to merit the gift of renewal from Hashem is evidenced in the verse in Tehillim in which Dovid Hamelech davens (תהלים נא יב) **לב טהור** ברא לי אלקים, ורוח נכון **חדש** (בקרבי). First he says, create for me a pure heart, and then he continues by asking Hashem to renew within him a correct spirit. In order to merit a renewal of spirit, we must first cleanse our hearts to create a vessel that can hold blessings.

The Sfas Emes says, that like we do teshuvah in Elul, before the beginning of a new year, so too the time before the beginning of the year, according to the way in which the Torah counts the months, is an opportune time for teshuvah. We must be **מטהר** our hearts, and only then can we be deserving of the **התחדשות** that a new year brings.

The Yismach Yisroel also explains the Gemara in Yerushalmi which tells us that the reason why we read Parshas Parah before Hachodesh is to purify Yisroel. He says that this indicates that this is indeed the correct time to purify our souls. He also quotes the verse Tehillim **לב טהור** which references the concept of first actively purifying ourselves, before being granted the gift of renewal with the coming of a new year.

Humbling Oneself Leads to a Pure Heart

The Yismach Yisroel then continues by instructing us on how to be **מטהר** our hearts. He says that one must humble oneself, and break his spirit, and in this way, he will truly purify his heart. He quotes the Zohar (רעיא מהימנא פ' פנחס רכד:) that explains the verse in Tehillim **לב טהור** (רעיא מהימנא פ' פנחס רכד:) that explains the verse in Tehillim **לב טהור** a broken and downtrodden heart is not scorned by Hashem. This broken, humble heart is pure and therefore beloved. The Mishnah in (פ"ב מ"א) discusses how various vessels are purified. It tells us that **כלי חרס** earthenware vessels **זו היא** שבירתן זו היא שבירתן breaking them apart is the only way to purify them. He says this indicates that through breaking one's heart and humbling oneself one achieves purity.

He then further instructs us on how we can achieve a humble spirit which will lead to purification. The Yismach Yisroel says that if one is haughty because he thinks he is very gifted and accomplished, he must simply compare that which he has achieved, with that which is still left to achieve. This vast gap will humble him and make him understand that he has nothing with which to pride himself. He quotes the Rabbi R' Michel of Zlotchov who referenced the possuk (ויקרא א ו) and you should strip the skin of the sacrifice and cut it into pieces. How does one strip himself of the view that he is elevated? By נתח אתה לנתחיה, by 'taking apart his accomplishments into little pieces'. By truly reflecting on how puny they are. In that manner he will see that that which he achieved is only a fraction of what he still needs to accomplish. Thus, he will achieve true humbleness, which will lead to a pure heart.

The Yismach Yisroel also says that the connection between becoming humble as a prerequisite to being cleansed, is seen from a Gemara in (פח:). חולין. The Gemara says that Avraham Avinu was rewarded for saying אנכי עפר ואפר I am but earth and dust. His reward was that זכו בניו לשתי מצוות, אפר פרה ועפר סוטה his children merited two mitzvos; the ash of the Parah and the earth that was added to the water given to a Sotah. He says that the reference here to אפר פרה as a reward for saying אנכי עפר ואפר clearly indicated that that the way to purify oneself as the ashes of the Parah Adumah did, is by humbling one's heart.

Torah and Avodah lead to ענווה

The משמואל (פרשת כי תשא תרע"א) שם also quotes this Gemara as an indication that אפר פרה is a reference for humbleness. He further brings a reference from the way in which the מי חטאת was prepared. He says that מים חיים is a reference for the Torah and השגה אלקית achieving a tiny bit of understanding of the holiness of Hashem. He says that when preparing the מי חטאת, the purifying waters of the Parah Adumah, the water was first added to the vessel and only then

were the ashes of the parah adumah added to it. The water, which is a reference for Torah and השגה אלקית had to be there before the אפר פרה, which is a reference for humbleness. Because the more Torah one possesses, and the more he delves into the greatness of the מלך מלכי המלכים, the more humbleness he will achieve! Thus, one has to learn Torah, and study the greatness of Hashem; in that manner he will achieve true humbleness, which will then lead to a pure heart which can be a vessel for renewed hashpaos including the ability to sacrifice the Korban Pesach which could only be done in a purified state!

May we be zoche to very soon have the purifying waters of the מי חטאת thrown upon us, and then in that state of complete purity may we be makriv the Korban Pesach as well as all the other korbonos which are discussed in Sefer Vakiykra!

אמן כן יהיה רצון

גוט שבת

