

על דשע

**Alei Deshe - Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on
the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"א of Gur**

Coming of Age

The Shabbos before Pesach is called *Shabbos HaGadol*, the Great Shabbos. The *Tur*¹ explains that when Bnei Yisrael set aside sheep for the *Korban Pesach* in Mitzrayim, it was a great miracle that the Egyptians – who worshipped sheep – were unable to harm them. This point is highlighted by the fact that when Pharaoh earlier told Moshe (Shemos 8:21), לָכוּ זָבְחוּ לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְעֵינֵיהֶם וְלֹא יִסְקְלוּנָהּ - *Go, bring offerings to your G-d in the land [of Egypt], Moshe responded (Ibid 22) הֲוֵי נִזְבַּח אֶת תּוֹעֵבַת מִצְרַיִם לְעֵינֵיהֶם וְלֹא יִסְקְלוּנָהּ - behold, if we were to slaughter the deity of Egypt in their sight, will they not stone us?* Yet, as Bnei Yisrael tied sheep to their bedposts and prepared to slaughter them, the Egyptians could do nothing but watch in angst.

This needs explanation. Throughout this period, since the time that Moshe began speaking to Pharaoh about freeing Bnei Yisrael, many great miracles occurred. The Mishnah (Avos 5:4) states that ten miracles took place in Mitzrayim, and ten at the sea. And as Bnei Yisrael journeyed from Mitzrayim to Eretz Yisrael, they experienced a long chain of miracles. What was unique about this miracle, the Egyptians' inability to react to the *Korban Pesach*, that it warrants a special memorial?

Chazal say² that Bnei Yisrael were commanded with the mitzvos of *Korban Pesach* and *bris milah* while still in Mitzrayim, in order to bring them merit so they could be redeemed. This seems difficult to understand. Hashem promised Avraham Avinu at the *Bris Bein HaBesarim* that

he would redeem Avraham's children from the land of their servitude, so why did Bnei Yisrael need to earn special merit to be redeemed?

The answer is that although Bnei Yisrael would have been redeemed regardless, in accordance with Hashem's promise to Avraham, nonethe-

less, Hashem wanted that they should be redeemed of their own merit. This is comparable to the difference between a child who rides on his father's shoulders, and an adult – a *gadol* – who fends for himself.³ Thus, this Shabbos, when Bnei Yisrael earned merit and became fit for redemption independent of their forefathers' merit, is termed "*Shabbos HaGadol*."

A simple fulfillment of mitzvos, however, is not considered one's own *zechus*, since the fulfillment itself is done with Hashem's help. Only when one fulfills a mitzvah with especial effort and dedication is it credited to him as his own.⁴ Thus, at the time of

Yetzias Mitzrayim, when Hashem wanted Klal Yisrael to gain independent merit, He commanded them specifically with the mitzvos of *Korban Pesach* and *bris milah*, since these mitzvos would require dedication to the point of *mesirus nefesh*.

We may now understand why the miracle of *Shabbos HaGadol* deserves eternal memorialization. The *nes* occurred as a result of Bnei Yisrael's *mesirus nefesh* in fulfillment of their mitzvah – knowing full well that the Egyptians were likely to have a strong reaction. Such a miracle is worthy of commemoration.

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**To inspire us, to give us
strength from the story
of how they rose above
their nature and were
moser nefesh to fulfill
Hashem's command**

1 O.C. 430

2 Cited by Rashi, Shemos 12:6

3 See Bava Metzia 12b. See also *Imrei Emes*, Shabbos HaGadol 5670

4 See *Sfas Emes*, Mikeitz 5632 and 5635 "*Yosef mishelo nasnu lo*"; *Sfas Emes, Likutim*, letter for Rosh Chodesh Elul

לְעֵילוּי נִשְׁמַת
מִדַּת
עֲקָא עֲדָנָה
צְפוּדָה ע"ה
בֵּית מִשְׁה מְנַחֵם הַלּוּי ז"ל

On a deeper level, we commemorate it not simply to remember the great *nes* that occurred to our forefathers, but to inspire us for all time, to give us strength from the story of how they rose above their nature and were *moser nefesh* to fulfill Hashem's command.

We may now understand why these two mitzvos – *Korban Pesach* and *bris milah*, alone among the positive mitzvos – carry a punishment of *kareis* for one who neglects them. A mitzvah fulfilled with self-sacrifice is what provides the essential vitality of a Jew, so if it is neglected, he lacks life itself, resulting in *kareis*.

Humble Yet Ablaze

The *parshiyos* preceding Pesach – Vayikra and Tzav – are replete with the laws of the *korban minchah*. Parshas Vayikra discusses the five types of *menachos*: *soless*, *bikkurim*, *ma'afeh tannur*, *machavas*, and *marcheshes*. Parshas Tzav states (Vayikra 6:7), וְזֹאת תִּזְרֹת הַמִּנְחָה, - *This is the law of the minchah* and enumerates additional halachos of *menachos* which are not discussed in Parshas Vayikra. Even the *haftarah* of Shabbos HaGadol, taken from Malachi (3:4), begins on this note: וְעִרְבָה לָהּ מִנְחַת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַם - *Then the minchah of Yehudah and Yerushalayim will be pleasing to Hashem*. In fact, Sefer Malachi constantly reiterates the idea of a *minchah*. The *mefarshim* and *sefarim* tell us that the term '*minchah*' includes more than a *korban minchah*; anything that a person gives to the *Ribbono Shel Olam* can be termed a *minchah*. We must understand: what is the special significance of a *minchah*?

There is an important distinction between the way *menachos* and other *korbanos* are discussed in the Torah. When discussing other *korbanos*, the Torah uses the third person: אָדָם כִּי יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם - *When a man among you brings an offering* (1:2); וְאִם מִן הַצֹּאן וְגו' יִקְרִיבֶנּוּ - *And if one's offering is from the flock... he shall offer* (1:10); וְאִם מִן הָעוֹף עֲלֶה קָרְבָּנוּ לָהּ וְהִקְרִיב - *If one's offering to Hashem is a burnt-offering of fowl, he shall bring his offering* (1:14). In all these examples, the

5 Menachos 104b, cited by Rashi 2:1

6 The four components of an animal *korban's* *avodah* are: *shechitah*, *kabbalah* (catching the blood), *holachah* (carrying the blood), and *zerikah* (spraying the blood). A bird *korban* has the *avodah* of *melikah* (nipping its head). Although parts of a *korban* are burned on the *mizbe'ach*, this is not an intrinsic part of the *avodah*, since if it is not done, the *korban* is still valid.

We must note that although it was these two mitzvos that Bnei Yisrael fulfilled with *mesirus nefesh*, *mesirus nefesh* is not limited to mitzvos such as these. Our Rebbeim have instilled in us that *mesirus nefesh* is not a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, limited to the extreme case when a *goy* threatens a *Yid* with his life if he does not transgress one of the three cardinal sins. The essence of *mesirus nefesh* is giving up one's desires for Hashem. Opportunities for this abound throughout our lives. Whenever a *Yid* is *moser nefesh* by giving of himself to fulfill a mitzvah, he gains life energy from it. This was the lesson of the first mitzvah we were commanded with: what we sacrifice of ourselves is the only basis of our existence.

(בנאוות דשא – פרשת טהרה-שבת הגדול תשפ"ב)

Torah instructs how *one who wishes* to bring a *korban* may do so.

When it comes to *menachos*, on the other hand, the Torah uses the first person: וְכִי תִקְרַב קָרְבָּן - *When you offer a minchah that is baked in an oven* (2:4); וְאִם מִנְחָה עַל הַמַּחְבֵּת - *If your offering is a minchah on the pan* (2:5); וְאִם מִנְחַת מְרֻחֶשֶׁת קָרְבָּנָהּ וְגו' וְהִבֵּאתָ - *If your offering is a minchah in a deep pan... You shall present it* (2:7-8).

We may explain this on a simple level. Chazal⁵ explain the Torah's usage of the word נֶפֶשׁ - *a soul* exclusively regarding the *korban minchah*,

person regarding the *korban minchah* occur only with four of the five types of *menachos*. Regarding the *minchas soless*, however, the Torah speaks in the third person (2:1): וְנִפְשׁ כִּי תִקְרִיב - *When a person offers a minchah to Hashem, his offering shall be of fine flour*. Why is this?

The *avodah* of *korbanos* of animals and birds does not use fire,⁶ and neither does the *minchah* of *soless*. The four types of *menachos* where the Torah speaks in the first person all include fire in their *avodah*. The lesson is clear: Yes, the quality of humility is most precious – but only in a

Yes, the quality of humility is most precious – but only in a heart that burns with fire

saying: "Who brings a *minchah*? A poor man. Hashem says, 'I consider it as if he has offered up his soul.'" Since the Gemara (Sotah 5a) states that Hashem dwells with the downtrodden, the heartbroken poor man who brings a *minchah* is in the presence of Hashem. Thus, Hashem addresses him directly: *When you offer a minchah*.

We may suggest another approach. Notably, the above examples of the Torah using the first

heart that burns with fire. When the preparation of one's *korban* involves fire, when a *Yid's* *avodah* involves warmth and *chiyus*, it is not just a *korban* that he offers; he is himself elevated to the point where Hashem stands opposite him and addresses him in the first person: *If your offering is a minchah... You shall present it*.

(פרשת צו – שבת ערב פסח תשפ"א, ליל ש"ק)

A Depth of Gratitude

אִם עַל תּוֹדָה יִקְרִיבֵנוּ וְהִקְרִיב עַל זֶבַח הַתּוֹדָה חֲלוֹת מִצּוֹת בְּלוּלֹת בְּשֶׁמֶן וְיִקְרִי מִצּוֹת מְשֻׁחִים בְּשֶׁמֶן וְסֹלֶת מְרֻבָּקֹת חֲלוֹת בְּלוּלֹת בְּשֶׁמֶן

If he brings it as thanksgiving offering, he shall bring along with his thanksgiving offering unleavened loaves mixed with oil, unleavened wafers smeared with oil, and loaves of scalded fine flour mixed with oil (Vayikra 7:12).

Rashi explains that ten loaves each of four kinds of breads are brought with the *Korban Todah*. They are these three unleavened varieties, plus the *chametz* listed in the following pasuk.

The *mefarshim*⁷ explain why forty loaves of bread must be brought with the *Todah*. In order to ensure that all the loaves are eaten (as leaving any uneaten would transgress the prohibition of *nosar*), the Yid who experienced a miracle, who brings the *Todah*, will invite many people to partake. In this manner, the story of his miracle will be publicized.

This explains why there needs to be a large amount of bread, but why is the bread divided into forty smaller loaves, and not baked as one large loaf? We may explain that this demonstrates the proper form of *hoda'ah*, thanksgiving. It is not enough to express gratitude for one's life having been spared; one must thank Hashem for every detail of his life. When thanking Hashem, we must pay close attention to the small things and express gratitude for each one of them.

We say in *Nishmas*, על כן, איברים שפולגת בנו, ורוח ונשמה שנפחת באפנו, ולשון אשר שמת בפינו, *Therefore, the organs that You distinguished within us; the spirit and soul that You blew into our nostrils; the tongue that You placed into our mouth – indeed, they will thank and bless.* Obviously, our 'spirit and soul' should praise Hashem. Our gratitude to Hashem must be primarily inside, in our *ruach* and *neshamah*; gratitude that is exclusively an outward display has no value to Hashem. Our tongue, too, must praise Hashem, since we thank Hashem with the faculty unique to man, which is speech. But

what manner of thanks and praise do we express with 'the organs that You distinguished within us'? Does this refer to swaying while reciting *Nishmas*? Surely one who thanks Hashem while standing still shows no less appreciation than one who does so while swaying.

One who looks closely will notice that even people who experience life-saving miracles often do not perceive that every one of their senses and body parts is in fact a gift from Hashem. Yes, we declare every morning, "*Modeh ani lefanecha,*" but that may be just an expression of general thankfulness to Hashem. Do we pay attention and recognize the many facets of Hashem's kindnesses to us? At every moment we receive the great gift of life, with which Hashem grants life to every part of our bodies, each one essential in its own way. Often, it is a person who is in a weak physical state that will recognize that every part of life, every breath and every movement, is cause for thanks to Hashem. This, then, is what we mean that 'the organs that You distinguished within us' will praise Hashem – we do not take our body and all its components for granted as something that simply comes with life. For each element and detail of our bodies we give unique thanks to Hashem.

The Gemara (Bava Kamma 92b) states: What is the source for the saying that 'Wine belongs to its owner, yet thanks go to its server'? Hashem instructed Moshe to lean his hands upon Yehoshua so that Bnei Yisrael would obey him (Bamidbar 27:18-20), and the pasuk (Devarim 34:9) states, ויהושע בן נון מלא רוח חכמה כי סמך משה, *Yehoshua Bin Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, because Moshe had laid his hands upon him, so Bnei Yisrael obeyed him.* Although Yehoshua's wisdom and authority originated from Hashem, they are credited to Moshe.

There is an implicit message in this. In actuality, Hashem is both the 'Owner' and the 'Server.' He alone serves each person his bottle of wine – his life – and is constantly refilling the bottle,

giving vitality and purpose to each limb, to our ability to move, to our faculties of vision and comprehension. As much as one may express appreciation to Hashem, it will never approach the smallest minimum of the true thanks we owe Hashem.

The Gemara (Chullin 83a) states that in regard to the laws of *kodashim*, night follows day, unlike the general rule that day follows night. Rashi explains that the pasuk (7:15) says about the *Korban Todah*, בָּיּוֹם קָרְבָּנוּ יֹאכַל לֹא יֵינִחַ מִמֶּנּוּ עַד בֹּקֶר - *it must be eaten on the day of its offering; he shall not leave any of it until morning;* clearly, the 'day of its offering' extends through the night, until the following morning.

Let us try to understand this more deeply. The Gemara (Pesachim 2a) states that this world is compared to night. One may wonder about this: don't we live in a highly advanced world, with technological and scientific breakthroughs beyond what was previously imaginable? Yet, Chazal termed our world 'night'; it is a long, dark tunnel. As R. Baruch of Mezhibuzh said, this world is radiant to the one who is uplifted above it, but dark and gloomy to the one who is entrenched in it. We are entrenched in this world; we must occupy ourselves with matters of physicality. Yes, we have some light of *ruchniyus* which brightens our way; but the world is still a place of night.

But when one brings a *Korban Todah* and has a *hisorerus* of gratitude to Hashem for every detail of his life – his night follows daytime. Why? When one experiences a miracle, he is lifted above the darkness of nature, where everything seems to run in a predictable manner. Even as life moves on and his health remains in place, seemingly transporting him back to the darkness of this world, the 'daytime' of his miracle and his *hoda'ah* will continue to illuminate the 'nighttime' that follows it.

(בנאות דשא - פרשת ויקרא-שבת זכור, פורים, פרשת צו תשפ"ב)

7 See *Abarbanel*

Mizbe'ach and Animals: What's the Connection?

וְהָאֵשׁ עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ תִּוֹקֵד בּוֹ לֹא תִכָּבֶה וּבַעֲרֵה עָלֶיהָ הַכֹּהֵן עֲצִים בְּבֹקֶר בְּבֹקֶר
The fire on the Mizbe'ach shall be kept burning on it, it shall not be extinguished; and the Kohen shall kindle wood upon it every morning (Vayikra 6:5).

The Mesorah⁸ records that the word וּבַעֲרֵה appears twice in the Torah; in the above pasuk, and in Parshas Mishpatim (Shemos 22:4), וְשָׁלַח אֶת בְּעִירָה, וּבַעֲרֵה בְּשָׂדֵה אֲחֵר - he set loose his livestock and it grazed in another's field.

It is difficult to understand the connection between these two pesukim – what does a damaging ox have to do with the wood of the Mizbe'ach? In his vast erudition in the words of Chazal, Rav Chaim Kanievsky zt"l was adept at explaining such anomalies, as he often does in his sefarim, Ta'ama D'kra and L'mechaseh Atik. Rav Yonasan Eibenschutz writes⁹ that when a gadol b'Yisrael is niftar, the special qualities he possessed become free for the taking. Let us then attempt to adopt Rav Chaim's way, and explain this mesorah in two ways, based on the words of the Gemara in various places.

The Mishnah (Tamid 29a) states, כָּל הָעֲצִים כְּשֵׁרִין לְמַעֲרַכָּה חוּץ מִשָּׁל גֶפֶן, וְשֵׁל זֵית וְשֵׁל זֵית - All types of wood are fit for the Mizbe'ach's fire, except wood of grapevines and olive trees. One reason given for this in the Gemara (29b) is yishuv Eretz Yisrael. Rashi explains that if they would burn vine and olive wood on the Mizbe'ach, there would not remain any wine or oil in Eretz Yisrael, and the land would become desolate. Another Mishnah (Bava

Kamma 79b) teaches, אין מגדלין בהמה דקה בארץ ישראל - It is forbidden to raise light livestock in Eretz Yisrael. Rashi explains that this too is because of yishuv Eretz Yisrael, since the animals will graze the fields of the land, which are all assumed to be owned by Jews.

The connection between our pesukim is now clear. Although there is a mitzvah of וּבַעֲרֵה עָלֶיהָ הַכֹּהֵן עֲצִים בְּבֹקֶר בְּבֹקֶר, obligating us to provide wood for the fire of the Mizbe'ach, we must nonetheless keep in mind וּבַעֲרֵה אֲחֵר, the grazing of livestock, which is a reference to yishuv Eretz Yisrael – and not use wood of grapevines or olive trees, so as not to bring desolation to Eretz Yisrael.

Our second approach: The Gemara (Pesachim 82b-83a) states that it is permissible to burn an individual's korban that became tamei or nosar with the wood of the Mizbe'ach. It is not considered me'ilah (using kodashim for one's own needs), because since it is allowed by beis din, the Mizbe'ach's wood is consecrated on this condition.

We can now understand the connection between these two pesukim. Although וּבַעֲרֵה עָלֶיהָ הַכֹּהֵן עֲצִים בְּבֹקֶר בְּבֹקֶר - the wood is meant for the Mizbe'ach – nonetheless, וּבַעֲרֵה בְּשָׂדֵה אֲחֵר - it can sometimes be burned for another purpose, that of burning a korban that became tamei or nosar.

(צו תשפ"ב – קידושא רבא)

8 This mesorah is not cited by Ba'al HaTurim, but it appears in Sefer HaMesorah.

9 Ya'aros Devash, vol. 2 no. 7

A Shabbos Full of Life

The mefarshim and sefarim wonder why this Shabbos is referred to as Shabbos HaGadol, using lashon zachar, and not Shabbos HaGedolah, in lashon nekeivah. After all, the Torah refers to Shabbos using lashon nekeivah: וְשָׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת כִּי קֹדֶשׁ (Shemos 31:13); כִּי אֹת הוּא וּבְיַמֵּיכֶם (Ibid 14); אֹת הוּא לְעַלְמִם (Ibid 17). Although the Torah states (Shemos 20:8), זָכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת, וּבַעֲרֵה בְּשָׂדֵה אֲחֵר, in lashon zachar; the masculine word, לְקַדְּשׁוּ, actually refers to the word יוֹם, which is masculine.

Some explain the masculine form of 'Shabbos HaGadol' based on a statement of Tosafos¹⁰ that Shabbos is sometimes referred to using lashon zachar: עלת שבת בשבתו (Bamidbar 28:10); שָׁמַר שַׁבָּת מִחֻלְלוֹ (Yeshayah 56:2).¹¹ In davening, too, Shabbos is referred to with both grammatical forms; on Shabbos night we say וַיִּנּוּחוּ בַּיּוֹם, and on Shabbos morning we say וַיִּנּוּחוּ בַּיּוֹם.¹² Some commentaries cite the Ibn Ezra¹³ saying that any nonliving entity can be referred to with either lashon zachar or lashon nekeivah.

On a lighter note, although the grammar of 'Shabbos HaGadol' is justified since Shabbos is not a living being, nonetheless we must take care that our Shabbos HaGadol is far from lifeless. Every Shabbos must contain life, but we must observe Shabbos HaGadol, in particular, with chiyus and warmth in avodas Hashem, becoming uplifted on this Shabbos so that we can approach the Seder night on a higher plane.

(פרשת צו – שבת ערב פסח תשפ"א, ליל ש"ק)

10 Kesubos 4b s.v. shema

11 See Ma'amar Chametz of the Rashbatz, chapter 1; Pri Megadim, siman 430; Mishbetzos Zahav no. 1

12 These differences are based on kabbalah.

13 Cited by Tosafos Yom Tov (Nazir 2:2, Tamid 5:4); see also Tosafos HaRosh, Shevuos 5b

Published by Machon Alei Deshe of America

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