

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת צו

זה קרבן אהרן ובניו אשר יקריבו לה' ביום המשח אתו עשירת האפה סלת מנחה תמיד מחציתה בבקר ומחציתה בערב

“This is the offering of Aharon and his sons, each of whom shall offer to Hashem on the day he is inaugurated: a tenth-ephah of fine flour as a continual meal-offering; half of it in the morning and half of it in the afternoon” (6:13)

The Midrash on this posuk points to the use of the word "this" in the posuk and compares it to the use of the word "this" when the Jews created the golden calf and proclaimed, "This is your god, Israel." The Midrash learns from this similarity that Hashem can lower a person to extreme depths and then raise him up higher than before. Aharon was the catalyst for the expression "this" with the golden calf, but then became the subject of the expression "this" as the Kohen Gadol. R' Nissan Alpert explains that Aharon led the people to create the golden calf, but he really intended to save the Jews from the destruction that would ensue if they had killed both Chur and himself. He had a hand in the calf but his intentions were good and so he was repaid in kind for both his mistake and for his good intent. Hashem was angry at Aharon for his role in the idol worship and punished him. But at the same time, he received a reward for the fact that he meant well. Hashem possesses full depth of judgment in a way that no mortal can and sees the full picture. Hashem punishes for bad actions but rewards the noble intentions that led to that selfsame action. Nothing goes unnoticed by Hashem. Hashem's judgment is a perfect one because nothing goes unaccounted for. Even though we go through stages in life where we do not understand why things are happening, we should remember that Hashem sees everything and whatever happens in the world is an important and necessary part of a grander plan. Hashem is watching over all of us and takes care of us, even if it does not seem like it to us in our shortsightedness.

דבר אל אהרן ואל בניו לאמר זאת תורת החטאת במקום אשר תשחט העלה תשחט החטאת לפני ה' קדש קדשים הוא

“Speak to Aharon and his sons, saying: This is the law of the sin-offering; in the place where the burnt-offering is slaughtered shall the sin-offering be slaughtered, before Hashem - it is most holy” (6:18)

The Talmud Yerushalmi asks: Why is the korban olah (burnt offering) slaughtered in the same place as the korban chatas (sin offering)? The answer is that we try to protect the identity of sinners. We do not want their wrongdoing known to the public, so we slaughter their sacrifices in a location which could also mean that they are voluntarily bringing a sacrifice. By doing this, we protect them from embarrassment. The Gemara in Sotah 32b asks why was a silent Shemone Esrei instituted. The answer given is that sinners should not be embarrassed to confess their sins during their prayer. We do not want people to be embarrassed to express themselves freely before Hashem. The Gemara continues that we see this idea expressed in the fact that the same location is assigned for the slaughtering of both the olah and chatas. The lesson from this is that the Torah is concerned for the dignity of every single person, even a person who sinned, and is intent on not allowing him to be embarrassed. Similarly, there is a mitzva to rebuke a wrongdoer but this should not be done in public. Instead, the rebuke should be delivered in private so that nobody else is aware that he has done something wrong. The posuk concludes that this idea is "kodosh kodashim," most holy. The dignity of people is very important to Hashem and it should be important to us too.

כי את חזה התנופה ואת שוק התרומה לקחתי מאת בני ישראל מזבחי שלמיהם ואתן אתם לאהרן הכהן ולבניו לחק עולם מאת בני ישראל
“For the breast of the waving and the thigh of the raising have I taken from the Children of Israel, from their peace-offering sacrifices, and I have given them to Aharon the Kohen and his sons as an eternal stipend from the Children of Israel” (7:34)

When a person brought a korban shelamim (peace offering) as an expression of his gratitude to Hashem, he was required to give the breast and the right thigh to the Kohen as a gift. What is the idea behind giving these two pieces of meat to the Kohen? R' Samson Raphael Hirsch explains that the breast is traditionally the seat of a person's thoughts and desires. Thus, by giving the breast to the Kohen, who is the personal representative of Torah among the Jewish nation, the person shows that he dedicates all his thoughts and impulses to the will of the Torah. All his happiness and all the blessings bestowed upon him by Hashem, which led him to bring this shelamim, were given to him so that he could channel them toward serving Hashem. Therefore, the one bringing the sacrifice sets aside the breast for the Kohen. The thigh is the source of physical power and represents success in the physical and material spheres of life. By giving the thigh to the Kohen, the person further commits to dedicate his material success and the accompanying power and prestige to Hashem and to serving Him through keeping His Torah.

When a Jew enjoys success, he should always recognize that Hashem is the source for his good fortune. He should seek to use the benefits of his newfound blessings to serve Hashem more than before. The person who brought a shelamim could not partake of its meat until he had symbolically committed his thoughts and his actions to serving Hashem. Today, when we no longer have korbanos, one who attains personal happiness should still thank Hashem for helping him and resolve to serve Him even better than before in all facets of his life. [MG]

Megillas Esther

Esther did not reveal her nationality or her birthplace to anyone (2:10). The Targum explains that Mordechai instructed her to do this because he drew a lesson from Vashti, who did not listen to the king and was killed for her impudence. Mordechai was concerned that if Esther would one day anger the king, he would kill her as well as all the Jewish people. This actually happened when Haman got angry at Mordechai for not bowing down to him. He immediately decided to kill all the Jews because Mordechai had insulted him. The lesson for us is that the action of any individual Jew can impact a gentile's opinion of all Klal Yisrael. If a gentile disapproves of what he sees in a single Jew, it causes a tremendous Chillul Hashem, because the gentile automatically assumes that all Jews are not good people based on this one incident. Conversely, if a gentile observes a Jew doing one good deed, it can lead to a big Kiddush Hashem, because the gentile will think highly of all Jews. Many gentiles have limited or no dealings at all with Jews and any interaction that we have with them may form their first impression. It is a big responsibility that we must be aware of at all times because we are always visible to the outside world and someone is always looking at us and trying to decide if Jews are good people or not. The actions of any one of us reflect on all of us in their eyes.

Ibn Ezra asks: Why is the name of Hashem left out of the Megillah? Since the Persian scribes wrote the Megillah in their own chronicles, Mordechai was concerned that they would substitute their own deity for Hashem's name. Another answer is that the whole message of the Purim story is that Hashem orchestrated a hidden miracle, where His presence was not clearly seen. It was all done behind the scenes. To illustrate this point, Hashem's name is not found in the Megillah. It is there for the perceptive mind to understand but it is not readily apparent. This

is one of the reasons for the custom to wear masks on Purim. Since Hashem's hid Himself and His part in the miracle was masked, we cover our faces with masks on Purim to commemorate the way in which the miracle occurred. The Midrash in Mishlei says that Purim and Megillah Esther will never become obsolete. The author of the Aruch HaShulchan explained: Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot commemorate open miracles. Purim is different because it is the only holiday that marks a hidden miracle. The importance of hidden miracles will never cease for all of time.

When Esther was living in the palace waiting to be seen by the king, Mordechai went to see how she was doing every day (2:11). The Midrash says that Hashem saw that Mordechai was concerned for the welfare of one person and rewarded him that he would be concerned for the entire people. We see at the end of the Megillah (10:3) that Mordechai became a respected leader, seek the peace of all his people. We learn from here that leadership begins with being concerned about individuals. A leader is not someone who cares for a mass of people. He cares for a number of individuals, seeing each person as a separate and unique entity with concerns and cares of his own. Only when a person shows extreme care for just one individual can he be trusted with leading a large collection of individuals because he will treat each one of them with the appropriate respect and care. Another lesson we can learn from this is that leadership is a reward, not drudge work. Mordechai merited to lead the Jewish people as a reward for his good deeds. We should view leadership positions as a privilege, not as a favor or community service. Not everyone can be a leader and those who are should appreciate the position that they are in.

Cities that had walls in the time of Yehoshua bin Nun, such as Yerushalayim, celebrate Purim on the 15th of Adar. This year, the 15th of Adar is on Shabbos. Therefore, the mitzvos of Purim are divided up among three days. They read the Megillah on Friday because it cannot be read later than the 15th and it also cannot be read on Shabbos because one may carry his Megillah in the street. They also give money to the poor on Friday because the poor people have come to associate the Megillah with extra money and expect it when they hear the Megillah. Al Hanissim is said on Shabbos, the actual day of Purim. The festive meal is eaten on Sunday and the gifts of mishloach manos are given on that day as well, as they are given for the purpose of the meal. The Talmud Yerushalmi writes that when Purim takes place on Shabbos, as in Yerushalayim this year, the festive meal is delayed until Sunday, instead of taking place on Shabbos, because the joy of Shabbos is not related to Purim. The Torah Temimah infers from this that there is a special obligation to create a joyous atmosphere on Shabbos. If not for this, there would be no confusion regarding a cause for joy on Purim. Since there is already an obligation in place to create joy on Shabbos, having the festive Purim meal would be superfluous. Therefore it is held off until Sunday. It is also not pushed back to Friday so as not to interfere with preparations for Shabbos. However, our day of Purim is Friday and so we do make the festive meal on Friday before preparing for Shabbos. Since there is a halacha not to have large meals on Friday afternoons so that one eats properly in honor of Shabbos, one should try to begin his Purim meal before midday (approximately 1:03pm on Friday).

Kesharim Baruch College/NYU Parsha Shiur
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