

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת צו

ופשט את בגדיו ולבש בגדים אחרים והוציא את הדשן אל מחוץ למחנה אל מקום טהור
“He shall remove his garments and don other garments, and he shall remove the ash to the outside of the camp, to a pure place” (6:4)

R' Moshe Feinstein asks: What was the point of specifically depositing the ashes in a pure place if ashes cannot become tamei? He answers this teaches us an important lesson. Even a good person who is confident in his abilities to follow the path of the Torah should be careful about going to a place that has beliefs to the contrary. A person should not put himself in a situation where he will be exposed to negative influences, regardless of how strong he thinks that he will be. Even something that does not become tamei should avoid the influences of tumah. R' Feinstein writes that this is particularly applicable to those who work in kiruv. One who goes out to bring people closer to Torah must still be wary of the effect that they can have on him. He must maintain a connection to a teacher who can make sure that he is always doing what is right. Sometimes, if a person will be negatively affected by this type of activity, it may not be a good idea to be involved in it even though it is a worthy cause. A person must be very careful about the situations that he puts himself in and the influences that he exposes himself to. This is the lesson that we can learn from the placement of the ashes.

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)

In the final halacha of Hilchos Meilah, the Rambam writes that the law of korbanos is a chok, a mitzvah whose reasons we cannot comprehend. Nevertheless, we should not belittle this mitzvah just because we do not understand it. We have to value chukim as much as mitzvos that we can fathom. The Rambam proves this through the mitzvah of meilah, misusing a consecrated object. If a person makes any object sanctified to Hashem, he creates restrictions governing the use of the object and it has to be treated in a certain way. Certainly the concept of holiness and consecration which Hashem decreed and handed to us should be appreciated and valued as much as man-made sanctification. Even though we are unable to fully comprehend the idea of korbanos, we still must appreciate its importance and follow mitzvos which we do not understand.

Chazal say that one who learns about the laws of korbanos is considered to have actually sacrificed them. Since we do, in this way, have the ability to bring korbanos even today, we should appreciate them and realize that they are a way of coming closer to Hashem, whether we completely understand how they function in this manner. As we read the parshiyos of Sefer Vayikra and when we read the korbanos section of our davening every morning, we should remember that this study is the equivalent of bringing korbanos and we should be cognizant of their importance.

Another activity that is the equivalent of bringing korbanos is teshuva. The verse in Tehillim says “Zivchei Elokim Ruach Nishbara,” “The sacrifice of Hashem is a broken heart.” The Midrash tells us that when one repents properly, it is as if he went to Yerushalayim and brought a sacrifice. This is because, as the Rambam writes, the main component of the sacrifice that brought atonement was the vidui, the confession. The Yalkut Shimoni writes that one of the reasons for the destruction of the first Beis HaMikdash was because the people brought sacrifices without confessing their sins. Because they refused to admit having done wrong, they were not worthy of having the Beis HaMikdash in their midst. Therefore, even when we have no sacrifices today, we can still accomplish the goals of the sacrifices through confession and changing our ways. We say three times a day in Shemoneh Esrei, “Hachazireinu biteshuva sheleima lefanecha,” “return us in complete repentance before you.” There is always room for self-improvement and we can always grow and become better people if we take the lessons of the Korban Chatas to heart. The Torah says “This is the law of the sin-offering” to teach us that learning the laws of the chatas is the equivalent of actually sacrificing a chatas.

Kesharim Baruch College/NYU Parsha Shiur

Shiur given by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

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