



NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l

ישראל בן רחל נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

Give Hashem Time

אָדָם כִּי יִקְרִיב מִמֶּם קֶרְבָּן לַה' (ויקרא א, ב)

When a person brings from you an offering to Hashem. (Vayikra 1:2)

Some of the Torah's commandments are defined as *chukim*, meaning that we don't know the reason for them. Nevertheless, Jews fulfill these *mitzvos* with special love and affection, because they know that whatever Hashem commands has wondrous reasons and hidden levels of significance to it.

The *korbanos* stand out among these *mitzvos*. They possess tremendous *kedushah* and are on a level more exalted than all other *mitzvos*.

Although the *korbanos* are among the Torah's *chukim*, early Torah sources presented various explanations of them. The Ramban explains¹ that someone who brings an animal as an offering should think and feel that everything done to this animal is being done to himself. He is being slaughtered, his fat and blood are being offered on the *Mizbeach*. By thinking this way, his sin is atoned.

Korbanos also express love for Hashem. It may be compared to someone who gives a gift of flowers to the one he loves. It is not because his loved one needs flowers, but rather as an expression of his feelings of affection. Similarly, bringing a *korban* shows a person's desire to draw close to Hashem, to the point of virtually offering his fat and blood on the altar of love of G-d.

Our prayers are in place of *korbanos*. It is written:

וְנִשְׁלַחַם פְּרִים שְׁפִתֵינוּ:

We shall offer bulls through our lips.²

Simply speaking, this is because a *korban* expresses a person's self-nullification to Hashem to the point of pouring out his blood for the sake of Hashem. Similarly, *Tefilah* is a feeling of total self-nullification to Hashem. It is the recognition that everything in the world in general, and in my world

¹ Vayikra 1:9.

² Hoshea 14:3.

in particular, is all from Him. Everything is from Him, and He is the only One Who can give it. For this reason, a proper *Tefilah* needs to include an expression of *mesirus nefesh* and actual self-nullification to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

A person's life consists of the time that *Hashem* gave him to live in the world. Thus, the first step in successful *Tefilah* is to devote time to it. Devoting time to *Tefilah* is giving *Hashem* a piece of our life.

Sometimes we see a person come late to *shul*. Perhaps because it was hard for him to get out of bed in the morning. Or because he had something to do or talk about before *davening*. Since he came late, his whole prayer is rushed. He says the words as fast as he can and skips whatever is allowed in order to catch up so he can recite the *Amidah* together with the congregation. And after the *Amidah* he again rushes and skips so he can wind up prayers and get out the door to take care of pressing business. He feels like he doesn't have enough time in his day, and the *davening* is long, so he tries to squeeze a lot into a little space of time. This ruins all the beauty of the *Tefilah*.

To someone who isn't used to coming on time to *davening*, those ten minutes before the *Tefilah* are torture. However, it is a matter of *mesirus nefesh* in prayer. A person should firmly decide that during the time dedicated to *Tefilah*

and preparation for it, all other business is out of sight and out of mind. Even the precious moments of morning sleep, or some other matter that momentarily seems very important – it's all nothing, like it doesn't even exist. This time is sacred. It is devoted to Heaven.

This is a matter of *kevod Shamayim*, of giving respect to G-d. The simplest way there is to show respect to someone is to give him a little time. There is nothing more insulting than saying to someone, "I don't have time for you."

At the time of prayer we are talking to *Hashem*. Yet, a person sometimes feels as if he doesn't have time for this. He rushes to finish up the *davening*, he quickly utters a few words that he needs life, livelihood, health and so on and so forth, *shalom*. Then he takes off his *tefillin* and rushes off. Is that any way to behave?

Sometimes there really is time pressure. In such a case, we should come earlier. For instance, if the *minyan* is at seven AM and it goes too fast, you should come at least ten minutes beforehand. It makes a big difference to the entire *Tefilah*. Anyone who tried it knows. There is no more important business than *Tefilah*. The prayers of someone who devotes time to properly serving his Creator will be accepted like the pleasing *korbanos* offered in *Beis Hamikdash*. ●



לְעִילּוֹי נִשְׁמָת

מוֹהַ"ד מוֹשֶׁה בֶּן אֱלִיעֶזֶר הַמְּבוֹרָגָד זצ"ל

וּמוֹהַ"ד בְּרוּךְ זָאב בֶּן נִפְתָּלִי קְרָאוֹס זצ"ל

גְּדֵבַת נְבֻדָהֶם ~ עֶשְׂרֵת יָמִים בְּנִי וְהַפָּאָרַת בְּנִים אֲבוֹתָם





אָדָם כִּי יִקְרִיב מִמֶּם קָרְבָּן לַיהוָה מִן הַבְּהֵמָה מִן הַבֶּקָר וּמִן הַצֹּאן תִּקְרִיבוּ אֶת קָרְבַּנְכֶם: (א, ב)

When a person brings from you an offering to Hashem, from the cattle and from the flocks you shall bring your offering. (Vayikra 1:2)

Right In The Middle

There is a reason why *Sefer Vayikra*, which is all about *korbanos*, is the middle book of the Torah. It is written in *Shir Hashirim*:

מַעֲיוֹ עֵשֶׂת שָׁן

His innards are like a trunk of ivory.¹

Chazal explain that this is an allusion to *Sefer Vayikra*, which is in the middle of the Five Books of the *Chumash*, like the innards are in the middle of the body.²

It is written further in *Shir Hashirim*:

בְּטֶנֶךָ עֲרַמַת חֲטִיִּים

Your stomach is like a stack of wheat.³

This, too, refers to *Sefer Vayikra*. The stomach is in the middle, with the heart above and the legs below. So it is with *Sefer Vayikra*; there are two Books on either side, and it is in the middle.⁴

Vayikra is placed where it is because the *korbanos* are the heart of the Torah.

The *Rishonim* debated the meaning of *korbanos*. They are indeed a very deep subject and the reason for them is not spelled out anywhere.

Once someone came up to me to ask about this. He said, “We are modern people living in an enlightened and progressive world. What significance do sacrifices have for us?” Then he went on to ask, “The Torah speaks so much about sacrifices. It goes into all the different kinds with all their details. What is the reason for this? Why do

we take animals, slaughter them and offer them as sacrifices?”

I answered him that there are really two points that we need to talk about. The first is to explain the nature and meaning of *korbanos*, which are a very big and important part of *avodas Hashem*. The second is to explain why people don’t understand such an important and basic matter.

There is a rule of thumb that very well-known Torah matters are for everyone and accessible to everyone. Matters that are rarer, that are not right out in the front, have a deeper meaning and not everyone can comprehend them. Which category do *korbanos* fall into? We recite the order of *korbanos* every morning, and we repeat them in some form three times a day. We speak about them so much! We would thus expect *korbanos* to be for everyone and accessible to everyone. How can something so basic be so hard to understand?

In truth, *korbanos* are a profound matter, despite their ubiquity. It says in *Sefer Nefesh Hachayim*,⁵ citing the Zohar, that the spiritual effect of *korbanos* reaches the highest possible point. Out of all the *mitzvos*, the one that rectifies the highest root of all is *korbanos*. Such a sublime *deveikus* could only exist when the Jewish people lived in *Eretz Yisrael* with all the *sheleimus* they had at that time.

We can’t touch that level anymore. But *Hashem* was so kind as to give us a *Seder Tefilah* that allows us to verbally offer *korbanos*.

וְנִשְׁלְמָה פְּרִים שְׂפָתֵינוּ.

We shall offer bulls through our lips.⁶

1 *Shir Hashirim* 5:16.

2 *Shir Hashirim Rabbah* 5:14.

3 *Shir Hashirim* 7:3.

4 *Shir Hashirim Rabbah* 7:7.

5 2:9, in the addendum.

6 *Hoshea* 14:3.

This was established at *Bris Bein Habesarim*, when *Hashem* told Avraham:

קָחָה לִּי עֵגְלָה מְשֻׁלֶּשֶׁת וְעִזּוֹ מְשֻׁלֶּשֶׁת וְאַיִל
מְשֻׁלֵּשׁ וְתֹר וְגֹזֵל.

Take for Me three calves, three goats and three rams, and a turtledove and a young dove.⁷

This covenant insured that there will always be *korbanos* in some form.

Besides reciting the Torah passages of *korbanos* there is another way we can connect to them. That is by learning the tractates of *Seder Kodoshim*. The Chofetz Chaim worked hard to encourage people to study these *masechtos*.

In ancient times, people would learn the entire Torah. In the period of the *Ge'onim*, someone who knew four *sedarim* was considered a *talmid chacham*, someone who knew five was called a *Rav* and someone who knew all six was called a *Ga'on*. (The word גאון has the *gematriya* of sixty; someone who knows all the sixty tractates of *Shas* is called a *Ga'on*.⁸) But every *talmid chacham* knew four *sedarim*, which are: *Mo'ed*, *Nezikin*, *Nashim* and *Kodoshim*. These *sedarim* treat matters of practical significance. *Kodoshim*, too, is practical, because by reciting *korbanos* it is considered as if we actually offered them.⁹

Now we will talk about what it means to offer a *korban*.

The Korban Is You

As mentioned earlier, the *Rishonim* had great differences of opinions regarding the significance of *Korbanos*. The Rambam presents a novel approach in *Moreh Nevuchim*.¹⁰ The Ramban¹¹ explains *Korbanos* on the levels of *Remez* and *Sod*.

This is the Ramban's well-known explanation of *Korbanos* on the level of *Remez*:

The deeds of human beings are composed of

⁷ Bereishis 15:9.

⁸ *Shem Hagedolim*, "Ga'on."

⁹ See *Bava Metz'ia* 114b, *Rashi s.v.* בארבעה.

¹⁰ 3:46.

¹¹ *Vayikra* 1:9.

thought, speech and action. *Hashem* therefore commanded that when a person sins he should bring a *korban*, lean on it with his hands (corresponding to "action"), verbally confess his sins (corresponding to "speech") and burn in fire its innards and kidneys (which are the organs of thought and physical desire) and the legs (which correspond to a person's hands and feet, which perform his work), and cast the blood on the Altar (corresponding to the person's life blood).

This is so the person will think, as he does all this, that he sinned against G-d with his body and his soul, and it is fitting that his blood should be spilled and his body burnt – if not for the Creator's kindness, that He accepts from him a replacement. The *korban* atones, as its blood is in place of his blood, its life is in place of his life. The chief organs of the *korban* are in place of his chief organs.

And portions of its meat go to sustain the [*kohanim* who are] teachers of the Torah, so they will pray for him. And the *Tamid*, the daily offering, is brought because the public constantly has people who sin.¹²

We will explain what the Ramban meant by all this. But first there are a few points that need to be understood.

Being Human

The simplest and most basic definition of a human being is a creature that knows *Hashem* exists and is thereby connected to Him. Without this, without living in such a connection and such an awareness, we are like a walking chunk of flesh and blood. We are not essentially different from animals. This is true even if we do *tzedakah* and *chesed*, even if we support *yeshivos*, even if we busy ourselves with saving Jewish lives.

On a deeper level, lack of connection to *Hashem* does not just deprive us of our humanity. It deprives us of any true existence at all. This is because *Hashem* is the only true existence, the only true reality. To the extent that we recognize Him and connect to Him, we exist.

¹² *Ibid*.

This is a basic principle that everyone needs to know. The Rambam writes:

Until a person gains intellect and knowledge, he is considered like an animal. Human beings are different from other kinds of living creatures only because of thought. A human is a living being that possesses the power of thought. Thought means the ability to conceptualize non-physical ideas. The most distinguished of non-physical ideas is conceptualizing *Hashem's* Oneness and all the Divine matters that accompany it....

When a person pursues physical desires, and places sensory matters over that which his mind conceives, and directs his intellect to physical desires, he becomes like an animal, which thinks only of eating and drinking. Then the Divine element, which is the intellect, does not show itself in him, and he is like a simple creature swimming in a sea of היולי. "Sea of היולי" means תהו.¹³

היולי is matter without form. We have no way to understand what matter without form is, because

¹³ Introduction to Peirush Hamishnayos.

all the matter that we know has a certain form to it. If it has no form, we can't comprehend it. But in the beginning of the world's creation, matter was formless. It was היולי. Its existence had not yet actualized.

The Rambam says that a person without intellect is "swimming in a sea of היולי." Intellect enables us to think about *Hashem*, Who is not a physical object. G-d is not something that animals think about. They cannot conceptualize non-physical ideas. To the extent that we think about *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, to the extent that we know He is here, and feel His presence and absolute existence, we ourselves have a hold on existence.

The above applies to all human beings. It is not unique to Jews. A person's existence depends on his faith in the Creator. In fact, everything that *Hashem* created, everything in the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms, sings praises to *Hashem* through its essential nature, because it, too, needs to be connected to *Hashem*. Otherwise it can't exist.

So what is a Jew? A creature that has a relationship of love with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. And the most powerful expression of this relationship of love is offering *korbanos*. ●

SPECIAL TOPIC

Here's a really interesting point about the miracle of Purim. It says in the Midrash that when Haman advised Achashverosh to wipe out the Jews, the latter hesitated. He argued that kings greater than him had been punished by *Hashem* when they tried to do evil to the Jewish people. Haman answered him:

"The G-d that drowned Pharaoh in the Sea, and did for Yisrael the miracles and powerful acts that you heard about, has now grown old. He can't do anything. Nevuchadnezzar already came and destroyed His house and burned His sanctuary and

exiled Yisrael and dispersed them among the nations. Where is His strength and power? He grew old already." As it says, "They will say, '*Hashem* will not see, and the G-d of Yaakov will not understand.'"¹

Once Haman said this to them, they immediately accepted his words, and gave their agreement to annihilate the Jewish people, and they wrote the royal edicts and signed them.²

What did Haman mean when he claimed that the

¹ Tehillim 94:7.

² Esther Rabbah 7:7.

KEEPING HIS FIRE ALIVE

The Nefesh Shimshon Kollel Project



Dvar Torah by Rosh Hakollel Harav Yosef Dov Pincus shlita, as heard from his father Hagaon Harav Shimshon Dovid Pincus zt”l:

Why are we joyous specifically with the arrival of Adar? And what differentiates Purim from other holidays when Am Yisrael also experienced salvation?

It states in the Megillah, “kiymu v’kiblu.” Unlike at Matan Torah, when Am Yisrael received the Torah out of obligation, on Purim, they received the Torah again, this time – out of love.

Mordechai Hatzaddik was informed by Eliyahu Hanavi that Haman’s decree to annihilate Am Yisrael had already been signed in Heaven. Nevertheless, Hakadosh Baruch Hu rescued His

people, superseding this ostensibly irreversible decree in an outpouring of pure love. That love generated a corresponding outpouring of love on the part of Am Yisrael toward Hakadosh Baruch Hu. And how do we express that love? By loving Hashem’s Torah. When we love the Torah we love Hashem and vice versa.

Abba would say, “Taamu ure’u ki tov Hashem, Taste and see that Hashem is good.” We do the mitzvos not only because we must, but because we love them, we’re connected to them, they are our life! And that is what we strive to accomplish in our kollel, to create an environment of love for Torah, a bond to Torah, not because someone is forcing us to do so, but because we want to. And the love of Hashem and His Torah brings us the greatest simchah. There is no joy like the joy of Torah!



G-d of the Jews “got old”? There is a general principle that everything in the world has a starting point. If something doesn’t have a starting point, it means this thing has a different kind of existence. Its existence is fundamental. And since it is fundamental, it also has no end. It is something that must be there at all times.

This is actually one of the Thirteen Principles of Faith. Since *Hashem* came first, since His existence is prior to that of the world, He is also eternal. Everything depends on Him and nothing can exist without Him.

If so, what could Haman possibly have meant when he described *Hashem* as “old”? *Hashem* always existed and always will. An old person is one who is getting close to his end. How stupid and nonsensical could Haman have been? Eternal things don’t get old. He must have meant something else by the term “old.”

Young People Have A Lot Of Reasons

Haman actually presented a very clever argument. An old man has a white beard and a young man has a black beard. What do these two colors signify? Black and white are the only colors that don’t have their own individual color. Black is black because it comprises all the colors together. Let’s say a child scribbles on a piece of paper with a lot of different colored crayons. If he scribbles enough, the scribble will turn black, because it has all the colors.

White is just the opposite. It is white because it lacks any color at all. White is the original state, it is the thing in its purity, without any added color.

Now let’s apply this idea. A young man with a black beard who sits and learns might be doing it for various reasons. First of all, he wants to go to *Olam Haba*. Second, he wants to be respected. Third, he wants to become a great *rosh yeshivah*. Fourth, what will the in-laws say if he gives up learning? And fifth, he needs some income, and the *Kollel* pays a stipend. In any case, it’s not because he derives intense this-worldly pleasure from his learning...

This is what black means. It is the combination of

all the colors together. A young, black-bearded man has a whole combination of reasons why he learns Torah.

When an old man sits down to learn, he doesn’t do it for the above-mentioned reasons. He is no longer deluding himself that he will have an epic portion in the World to Come. He is not worried about what his in-laws will say because they are already in the next world. He doesn’t see himself suddenly becoming a famous *rosh yeshivah*, either. And he married off all his children long ago so he is not under so much pressure to bring in a few dollars.

Why does he learn? For one reason: because a Jew needs to learn Torah. It’s an essential part of his life. The color white is the essential thing, with no color added. An elderly Jew is in an “essential” state. That’s who he is, no more.

This is what Haman meant when he called G-d “old.” When G-d went out to battle Pharaoh and the Egyptian army at *Yam Suf*, He was young, He appeared as a warrior with black hair.³ He had a lot of plans for the future. He held high expectations for His people. He wanted to give them *Eretz Yisrael*, have them build *Beis Hamikdash* and establish an exalted and exemplary nation among whom His Presence will dwell. But now He is “old.” His plans didn’t turn out. He brought them into *Eretz Yisrael* and they just worshipped idols and did all sorts of other disappointing sins to the point that He had to destroy *Beis Hamikdash*.

An old person is one who lost his zest for life, his burning aspirations for the future. He isn’t looking to do big things and make great changes anymore. Haman argued that *Hashem* is “old.” He gave up on His plans for the Jewish people’s glorious future and will just leave things be.

Haman was clever, but he was wrong.

What was his mistake?

Hakadosh Baruch Hu’s relationship with the Jewish people is not based on plans for a great and glorious future that unfortunately didn’t work out. It is not like a young man’s dreams and aspirations.

³ See *Chagigah* 14a and *Rashi* on *Shemos* 20:2.

Hashem's relationship with us is an essential one. It is unchanging. It is always there, regardless of whether *Hashem* appears “young” or “old.” This is what the miracle of Purim revealed.

Hashem and the Jewish people have an intrinsic relationship that doesn't depend on anything in the world. It is rooted in the highest, most essential place there is, and it is not going away, ever. ●



Upside Down

Purim is “upside down,” it is **וּנְהַפּוּךְ הוּא**.¹ What does it mean to be upside down? Literally, it means to have one's feet pointing up and head pointing down. Ostensibly, this is a strange position to be in.

Or is it?

When Rivkah was riding on the camel and first saw Yitzchak, who had gone out to the “field,” she was astonished by his appearance, and leaned down from the camel.² The Midrash says that she saw him exiting *Gan Eden*³, and when people exit *Gan Eden*, it is normal for them to do so with their legs up and their head down.⁴

Rivkah saw Yitzchak “upside down,” and that is what astonished her. Yitzchak's upside-down position signified that he looked at things exactly the opposite of how most people do. The very name Yitzchak, **יצחק**, denotes laughter, because Yitzchak laughs when others don't. He sees things very differently.

What does all this have to do with Purim?

Megillah

The central point of Purim is the connection between *Hashem* and the Jewish people. But there is something big intervening between them that disturbs this connection. It is physical nature.

To illustrate the point, right in front of a person's nostrils there is a great gift: air. Without air, he can't live. If so, why isn't he all excited about the gift?

Because everyone has air, not just him. It's “natural” to have air, so it doesn't appear to be a gift special for him straight from *Hashem*.

Or let's say a person goes into the local market to pick up some milk. He sees five hundred milk containers behind the glass doors of the refrigerated section and thinks that *Hashem* brought them there for anyone who might come into the market looking for milk, and he happens to be one of them. But the truth is that *Hashem* lovingly placed a carton of milk there just for him and his family, and covered up the miracle by putting 499 other milk cartons all around it.

Purim comes to show us the truth. It turns our whole outlook on nature upside down. The Purim understanding is, “There is one milk container here that *Hashem* lovingly prepared just for me.”

This is why we read the *Megillah* on Purim. The word *Megillah*, **מְגִלָּה**, derives from the Hebrew root **גלה**, which in its *pi'el* form means “to reveal.” We could just change the vocalization of the word **מְגִלָּה** and read it **מְגִלָּה**, “reveal.”

On all the other holidays we learn what Judaism is all about, what *mitzvos* are, and we rise above physical nature. Purim is completely different. Purim teaches us what physical nature is all about. It “reveals” to us that inside physical nature is concealed a deep connection with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. It reveals to us that we have been looking at things upside down. Superficially, nature conceals *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, but the *Megillah* reveals to us what is really going on with nature: properly understood, it connects us in a powerful way with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. ●

1 *Esther* 9:1.

2 *Bereishis* 24:64.

3 See *Yalkut Shimoni, Bereishis* 109.

4 See *Midrash Tanchuma, Emor* 2.

STORIES FROM THE LIFE OF RAV SHIMSHON PINCUS ZT" L



Calling Out to Hashem

It was Purim 5761 (2001), the final Purim of his life. Having fulfilled the mitzvah of *ad d'lo yada*, Rav Shimshon had drunken his due portion of wine and was walking slightly unsteadily down the street when he encountered a member of his *kehillah*.

"*Rebbi*, give me a *berachah*!" cried out a man who begged for a blessing that would free him of a matter that troubled his soul. Rav Shimshon paused, leaned against a tree, and brought his face close to the other man's face.

The ensuing cry emerged from the depths of his *neshamah*. "Between my mouth and yours is *Hashem Yisbarach*! Why are you looking so far?"

Everyone Is Welcome

Rav Shimshon was particular never to ask anyone to leave his house, even when circumstances compelled it. In Ofakim, there was a man who lived in close proximity to the Torah community who stirred endless trouble for the *kehillah* and did everything in his power to curb its growth and make its members' lives miserable.

One Purim, while the Pincuses were enjoying a festive *seudah* together with the Deutsch family, the man boldly entered the Rav's house along with the many well-wishers and took a seat at the table as if he were a welcome guest. Others were infuriated by the man's impudence and repeatedly hinted to Rav Shimshon to order the man to leave his house at once, yet he consistently ignored them. As the minutes passed and everyone grew sufficiently inebriated, the objections dwindled and the *seudah* continued with

its customary joy and *divrei Torah*.

When Rav Shimshon was later asked why he didn't object to the presence of his unwelcome guest and how far a person must go in order to accommodate a Jew who does everything in his power to harm the Torah *kehillah*, he replied, "I learned from the Brisker Rav never to throw another Jew out of my house, even if he is the lowest of the low."

In a similar vein, during the brief period that he lived in Tifrach, Rav Shimshon hosted a weekly *leil Shabbos Chumash shiur* in his home. The *shiur* focused on the *parashah* with the Ramban's commentary, and while its weekly preparation and delivery always took away from Rav Shimshon's few hours allotted to sleep, there was one *Shabbos* that he was particularly exhausted. Despite the impossible fatigue filling every limb and muscle in his body, he swallowed his yawns and delivered the weekly *shiur* to his eager audience. The hands of the clock moved steadily ahead, and it grew later and later.

Rav Shimshon's lids felt so heavy that he could hardly keep his eyes open, but the *bachurim*, who were enjoying themselves thoroughly, seemed blissfully ignorant of their *rebbe's* exhaustion. Rav Shimshon felt awkward excusing himself, until he could continue no longer.

With a smile, he said, "It's a *Brisker chumrah* never to throw a person out of your house. You're all welcome to stay as long as you wish." With that, he bid them all "*A gut Shabbos*" and continued learning on his own until he fell asleep.

The *bachurim* got the hint and, one by one, quickly left. ●

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