



NEFESH SHIMSHON

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

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED TO THE HATZLACHAH AND ZECHUS OF נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה. MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

Know Why You Bring a Korban

זאת תורת החטאת. (ויקרא ו, יח)

This is the law of the sin offering. (Vayikra 6:18)

We have a lot to learn from this teaching of *Chazal* about bringing *korbanos*.

R. Shmuel bar Nachmani said in the name of R. Yonasan: What is the meaning of שְׁמֹר רַגְלֶךָ כְּאֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵךְ אֶל בֵּית הָאֱלֹקִים – “Guard your feet when you go to the House of G-d”¹? Guard yourself not to sin, and if

you sin, bring a *korban* before Me.

[The verse continues:] וְקָרוֹב לְשִׁמְעַ – “He is close to hear.” [What does this mean?] Rava said: Be close to hear and obey the words of the Sages, that if a person sins, he should bring a *korban* and do *teshuvah*.

[The verse continues:] מִתַּת הַכֶּסֶלִים – “Rather than the giving of a *korban* by

1 *Koheles* 4:17.

גליון זה מוקדש לע"ג הטוהרה של מורנו ורבנו הגאון הצדיק רבי שמשון דוד פינקוס זצוק"ל ב"ד חיים אברהם זצ"ל. האידו ברקיו תבל, בעוצם פרישותו קדושתו וחסידותו. הדריכנו באורה חיים למעלה, לדעת את ה' ולעבדו בכל ליבנו ומאודנו, באהבה בידאה ובשמחה. ורעייתו הרבנית הצדקנית מרת חיה מינדל ע"ה בת הגאון הגדול רבי מרדכי לייב מן זצוק"ל ובתם העלמה החסודה מרים ע"ה עלו בסערה השמימה יי ניסן תשס"א זכותם תגן עלינו ועל כל ישראל

the fools.” [What does this mean?] Don’t be like the fools who sin and bring a *korban* and don’t do *teshuvah*.

[The verse continues:] כִּי אֵינָם יוֹדְעִים לַעֲשׂוֹת רָע – “Because they do not know how to do evil.” [What does this mean?] If it is so, [that the fools do not know how to do evil,] then they are *tzaddikim*!

Rather it means: Don’t be like the fools who sin and bring a *korban*, and don’t know if they are bringing it for good or for evil. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* said: They can’t distinguish between good and evil, and they are bringing a *korban* before Me?!²

Let’s understand this puzzling piece of *Gemara* that describes people who sin and bring a *korban* and don’t know whether it’s for the good or for the bad. What’s there not to know? Isn’t it obvious that sin is bad, and the *korban* is to atone for it?

A person dreams about the stock market on *Shabbos* night. In the morning he wakes up, totally forgets that today is *Shabbos*, and before he even goes to *daven* he picks up the phone and orders a thousand shares of stock. *Oy vey*, he accidentally desecrated *Shabbos*! Now what?

On *Motzaei Shabbos* he looks at the screen and sees that the stock went up and he made a million dollars profit. He goes to the *Rav* and says contritely, “I accidentally desecrated *Shabbos*.” The *Rav* rules, “You must bring a well-fattened animal as a *korban*.” He goes out to buy the best bull he can find and pays top dollar for it. \$25,000 after taxes. He brings it to *Beis Hamikdash*, offers it as a *korban*, recites *vidui* and goes back home. Now he sits down to calculate his gains and losses and finds that he didn’t do bad at all. He grossed

2 *Berachos* 23a.

\$1,000,000 and his expenses were \$25,000.

This is the meaning of “they sin and bring a *korban*, and don’t know if they are bringing it for good or for evil.” In truth, the profit he made will destroy him. It is evil, it is to his detriment, because he gained the money by committing a serious sin.

Hashem sets every person’s budget. He decides how much money a person will bring in. If a person steals, he will simply choke on the money. He won’t gain from the money but will rather pay it to doctors or some other unfortunate expense. He doesn’t know if the money will help him or hurt him.

The stock investor thinks that he made a net profit, just that he needs to bring a *korban* to atone for the sin. He thus thinks that he is bringing the *korban* for the good, because he sees himself as coming out in the plus. But in truth, this “profit” cost him a *Shabbos* desecration, and that’s not good at all. It’s very bad.

There are a lot of cases like this in our lives. A person opens up his big mouth and speaks indiscriminately and thinks he is winning. But he can be sure that if this success came by way of sin, it is bad for him, and he should regret it. He should feel bad because he did something that will ultimately just hurt him.

The proper understanding is illustrated by the story of the pious man who went for a walk on his property on *Shabbos* and saw something broken and made a mental note to fix it after *Shabbos*. Later, he regretted thinking about *melachah* on *Shabbos* and decided that since he thought about this on *Shabbos*, he will never fix it.³ He didn’t want to benefit from an idea that came to him through an *aveirah*.

May *Hashem* give us the merit to always benefit only from *kosher* money that came to us the right way, without sin or misdoing. ●

3 *Shabbos* 150b.

לעילוי נשמת

מוה"ר משה בן אליעזר המבורג זצ"ל

ומוה"ר ברוך זאב בן נפתלי קראוס זצ"ל

נדבת נכדיהם ~ עטרת זקנים בני נשים והפארת בני אבותם

Keep It Burning

אֵשׁ תָּמִיד תּוֹקֵד עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לֹא תִכָּבֶה: (ויקרא ו, ו)

A fire shall burn constantly on the Altar; it shall not go out. (*Vayikra* 6:6)

Even on the journeys. (*Yerushalmi, Yoma* 4:6)

There is a *mitzvah* to keep a fire lit on the *Mizbeach* at all times, even when journeying from one encampment in the *Midbar* to another. This seemingly simple matter teaches us something wonderfully relevant to our lives today.

We all devote time and energy, on a regular basis, to Torah learning and *Tefilah* and other aspects of *avodas Hashem*. We keep it up constantly. Three *Tefilos* a day, fixed times for Torah learning, keeping all the *mitzvos* day and night.

Sometimes we need to travel. It might be somewhere far or somewhere near. What happens then? When we are away from home, the structure of our *avodas Hashem* might weaken. We might *daven* quickly, we might be less stringent about our *kashrus* practices, and our learning schedule is especially likely to suffer.

Regarding all this, the Torah says: אֵשׁ תָּמִיד תּוֹקֵד – עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לֹא תִכָּבֶה – “A fire shall burn constantly on the Altar; it shall not go out.” The word אֵשׁ, “fire,” hints to the fire and enthusiasm we have in *avodas Hashem*. It “shall burn constantly on the Altar.” We need to keep our *avodah* burning at all times. “It shall not go out,” “Even on the journeys.”

This brings us to another potential pitfall when traveling. When on the road, we are likely to see things and hear things that are detrimental to our spiritual state, things that run counter to our *kedushah* and *taharah*.

Yet, it is almost inevitable that we will encounter these things. Is there anything we can do about it?

The *Shelah Hakadosh* wrote:

I found a manuscript authored by the Divinely holy R. Moshe Cordovero in which he wrote, “We learned from a

certain elder that to get rid of an unwanted thought, one should say this verse many times: אֵשׁ תָּמִיד תּוֹקֵד עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לֹא תִכָּבֶה.”

It is clear to me that this elder was Eliyahu Hanavi, but the author did not want to reveal that fact, out of humility.

Therefore, if a thought of sin or of vain matters comes into a person’s mind, he should make sure to recite the above-mentioned verse many times. And it seems to me that he should also recite the verse סַעֲפִים שָׂנֵאתִי וְתוֹרְתֵךְ אֶהְבֵּתִי. He should say it with great enthusiasm, strong like a lion.¹

Why does it help to say אֵשׁ תָּמִיד תּוֹקֵד עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לֹא תִכָּבֶה? How does this banish negative thoughts?

The Ramban wrote in the essay “*Toras Hashem Temimah*” that the whole Torah is names of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. Every verse contains a holy Name that pertains to the subject of that verse. For instance, the passage in *Yechezkel* about the valley of dry bones that came back to life contains the Name of *Hashem* pertaining to *Techiyas Hameisim*.

The passage about the dry bones contains within it the Name of *Hashem* that causes the dead to rise from their graves, the Name that works the miracle of *Techiyas Hameisim*. The verses have the power that revives the dead. So we see that there are *pesukim* with a special *segulah* for the matter about which the verse speaks or to which it alludes. And someone who recites this *pasuk* thereby awakens the power of the holy Names contained within the *pasuk*.

¹ *Sefer Shnei Luchos Habris*.

For this reason, the verse לב טהור ברא לי אלקים has a *segulah* to purify the heart, as stated in the *Mishnah Berurah*.² And this is why the *Shelah Hakadosh* recommended reciting the verse סַעֲפִים שָׂנֵאתִי וְתוֹרַתְךָ אֶהְבֵּתִי – “I hated evil thoughts and loved Your Torah.” This verse has the power to rid a person of bad thoughts because that is what the verse talks about.

What about אֲשֶׁר תִּמְיֵד תוֹקֵד עַל הַמְזִבֵּחַ לֹא תִכְבֶּה? Why does it banish bad thoughts?

Chazal say that a burnt offering, a *korban olah*, atones for thoughts of the heart.³ And *Rabbeinu Bechaye* wrote that although it is not proper for a person to bring a lot of *korbanos*, this applies specifically to sin offerings and guilt offerings. A person should not sin and have to bring a *korban* to atone for it. But regarding *korban olah*, it was said by *David Hamelech*: אָבוֹא בֵיתְךָ בְּעוֹלוֹת – “I will come to Your House with burnt offerings.”⁴ Because this type of *korban* doesn’t atone for sinning in deed, but for sinning in thought. And it is extremely common for people to have sinful thoughts. Furthermore, since sinful thoughts come to a person more at night than at day, the Torah ordained that *korbanos* slaughtered during the day may be burnt on the *Mizbeach* all night long, so the atonement will take place at the time of the

2 98 s.v. 2.

3 *Vayikra Rabbah* 7:3.

4 *Tehillim* 66:13.

aveirah.⁵

So we see that the verse אֲשֶׁר תִּמְיֵד תוֹקֵד עַל הַמְזִבֵּחַ לֹא תִכְבֶּה speaks of keeping the fire of the burnt offerings lit at all times. This fire is what constantly cleans and removes and atones for improper thoughts. Now we can understand why reciting the *pasuk* has a *segulah* to banish such thoughts.

Getting back to the point: there is a special command to keep up the fire of the burnt offerings even when on a journey, even when travelling. This implies that besides the need to properly maintain our *avodas Hashem* even when away from home, the main danger we face at such a time is sinful thoughts. There are so many improper things we see and hear when travelling. Thus the Torah exhorts us especially to keep the fire of *kedushah*, which purifies our hearts from all evil thoughts, burning even when we are on a journey.

It is a good *eitzah* and an effective *segulah* to repeat this *pasuk* many times when one is traveling or otherwise on the road, and also to think about the meaning of the verse. As we explained, this verse tells us not to let our excitement and enthusiasm for *avodas Hashem* dwindle, but rather to keep the fire of *kedushah* burning bright and strong.

Doing this will give us *siyata d’Shamaya* to succeed in all our endeavors, as it says, ה' שָׁמֵר? צֵאתְךָ וּבּוֹאֶךָ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם. ●

5 Commentary of *Rabbeinu Bechaye* on *Vayikra* 6:2.

SPECIAL TOPIC

Shabbos Hagadol: A Time to Be Great

This *Shabbos*, which is before Pesach, is called *Shabbos Hagadol*, the “great *Shabbos*.” It is so named because of the great miracles that took place on it.

The special nature of this unique *Shabbos* is not

just that the day of *Shabbos* itself will be “great,” and that the sanctity of the time will be “great,” but that we ourselves will leave our smallness behind and become “great.”

What is the meaning of *gadol*, “great”? The trait of *gedulah* mainly denotes greatness in *chesed*, in giving. *Chazal* explain the verse of לָךְ ה' הַגְדֹּלָה as referring to *chesed*. This is the concept of עוֹלָם חֶסֶד יִבְנֶה, the world was built for *chesed*. *Hashem* created all the creatures in the world in order to bestow goodness on them, for their good and benefit and pleasure.

This concept of *Olam chesed yibaneh* not just for the world as a whole but also for individuals. True greatness, in fact the only greatness, is in doing *chesed*. *Gedolei Torah* are called *Gedolei Yisrael* because Torah learning is the greatest *chesed* there is. It brings life, blessing and an abundance of everything good to the whole world.

The same is true of this *Shabbos*, called *Shabbos Hagadol*. And it is true of these great and holy days in general. They are “great,” *gadol*, because these special times of *kedushah* bring a great flow of plenty to all the worlds and to each and every one of us. For this reason, we should all busy ourselves especially with doing *chesed* at this time of year, because greatness is in *chesed*.

This is not just a lofty concept but also a very simple and practical matter. First of all, everyone is cleaning the house for Pesach, and this entails a real lot of work. It is thus very important to put out a helping hand and assist as much as possible, over and above our bare obligations. This is the time to do extra *chesed* and offer generous help, happily and with a smile.

Along the same lines, it is an ancient Jewish *minhag* to give *Kimcha d'Pis'cha* money at this time. This is to help those who are financially strained. We all know that Pesach is a very expensive holiday to get ready for. *Matzah* and wine, meat and fish,

new clothes for the whole family. All this creates a heavy financial burden. For many people, it results in Pesach being not an uplifted time of joy, like it should be, but rather a sad time of worry and pressure. Pesach should not be that way. This a special time for us to do *tzedakah* and *chesed* by donating to *Kimcha d'Pis'cha*. This actually breathes *neshamah* and the spirit of life into these days, making them truly “great.”

And the greatest *chesed* of all is learning Torah. Most *yeshivos*, *mesivtos* and *kollelim* are not in session at this time. The world is desolate from Torah learning. The world is hungry for Torah and thirsty to hear the word of *Hashem*. This is because the soul of the world is Torah learning:

All the life and existence of all the worlds comes only through our speech and thought in Torah learning. It is certainly true that if the whole world from one side to another would be empty of Torah learning for even one moment, all the upper and lower worlds would be immediately destroyed and return to chaotic emptiness.

Similarly, the increase or decrease of their illumination is all according to how much we occupy ourselves with Torah learning.¹

Every *shiur*, every *daf Gemara*, every *devar Torah* that we learn, especially at this time of year, is a breath of life for the whole world. So let's not miss out on the special *segulah* of these days. Let us do as much *chesed* and *tzedakah* and Torah learning as possible, and we will thereby merit true greatness and blessings for the whole year. ●

¹ *Nefesh Hachayim* ch. 4.