

פ' צו ופסח תשפ"ג

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STATE OF ELEVATION

This (zos) is the law of the burnt offering (toras olah). (6:2)

Rashi says that this *possuk* teaches us, amongst other things, about the laws of sacrifices, which have been offered up despite a certain flaw. The *gemoro* in *Zevachim* (68b) says that if the flaw is one which arose after *shechito*, if such a sacrifice has already been placed on the *mizbeach*, it need not be removed, because the deficiency arose after the animal had already acquired a certain degree of sanctity, but if the flaw derives from a fundamental blemish, such as the fact that it was a *treifo* from the outset, such a deficiency predates the attainment of sanctity, and the animal must be removed from the *mizbeach* even if it had already been placed on it.

This *halocho* teaches us an important lesson. If someone “sanctifies” himself properly by adopting an appropriate lifestyle and educating his children in Torah and *mitzvos*, then even if he stumbles more than once, he must not lose heart, because he does not lose his basic state of elevation. However, if someone does not have the strength to completely accept on himself the yoke of Torah and *mitzvos*, his level of sanctity is flawed from the outset, and if he stumbles, his only remedy is to resolve wholeheartedly to “sanctify” himself by adopting a proper attitude and way of life.

IMMUNITY TO SOCIETY

“And the kohen shall put on his linen (bad) garment” (6:3)

The word *bad* can be read as *levad*, alone. In our times *talmidei chachomim* are the equivalent of *kohanim*, and they too must consider only what the Torah expects of them, and not be affected in any way whatsoever by the opinion of others. They must consider themselves to be answerable only to Hashem and act as if they were standing alone before Him.

“And he shall take out the ashes... outside the camp” (ibid) The *Chovos Halevovos* (6:6) says that Hashem imposed the duty of removing the ashes every day on the *kohen*, who has greater inborn sanctity, in order to induce humility in him, and remove haughtiness from his heart. Through this seemingly undignified daily act, the *kohen* internalizes the lesson that true honor is not derived from wealth, social position or even wisdom, but from being ready at any time to joyfully fulfill the will of the Creator with love.

In a similar vein, the Torah accords Moshe Rabbeinu the title of “servant of Hashem”, and not “*Hayachsán*” (a person with a distinguished lineage), “*Hagaon*” or “*Hatzaddik*”. This demonstrates that, more than anything, our ultimate goal is to fulfill the will of Hashem faithfully, and without taking into account what others think of us.

WAKING UP WITH ALACRITY

He shall arrange the burnt offering and cause the fats of the peace offerings to go up in smoke upon it (6:5)

The first *korbon* sacrificed every day was the *tomid*, which is a *korbon olo*. Only after that were the fats of the peace offerings and the other *korbonos* offered. This teaches us that one should start every day by dedicating himself entirely to Hashem like a *korbon olo*, which was consumed entirely by the *mizbeach*.

One's *avodas Hashem* starts every day by overcoming one's inclinations and waking up with alacrity. This sets the foundation for the whole day, and if one gets up in a lazy manner that is likely to have a detrimental effect on the entire day.

EVERYDAY EXCITEMENT

This is the offering of Aharon and his sons (6:13)

Every *Kohen* had to offer this *minchas chinuch* on the day of his inauguration, but the *Kohen Godol* had to offer in addition a *minchas chavitin* every day.

When a person is appointed to an important position, he initially feels great excitement and a sense of responsibility, but these feelings usually dissipate with time, as he becomes used to the new situation, and it becomes routine. The *Kohen Godol* has to bring an offering every day in order to counteract this aspect of human nature. Each day, he must consider himself as if he has just been reappointed to his position, and strengthen and dedicate himself completely to *avodas Hashem*.

Similarly, a newly married *chosson* is compared to a king, and the new couple's challenge lies in finding ways to maintain their initial excitement and mutual dedication for the duration of their marriage.

We tend to become more enthusiastic about *mitzvos* that occur at irregular intervals, such as blowing shofar or taking *arba minim*, than we do about those that occur on a daily basis, such as *tefillah*, *tzitzis* and *tefillin*. We would do well to find techniques to preserve the same level of enthusiasm that we feel when first performing these *mitzvos*.

MARRIAGES ARE SUPERNATURAL

If he is bringing it as a thanksgiving offering (7:12)

Rabbenu Bachaye (on 6:2) says that in addition to the four mandatory cases, a *korbon todo* is also offered by those who have a *simcha*, such as a *simchas choson* and *kallo*. However, as he himself notes, one only offers this *korbon* after having witnessed a miracle. What miracle is involved in marriage?

The fact is that the whole area of *zivugim* is accompanied by supernatural events. As much as people put in all their efforts into *shidduchim*, in the end, one's *zivug* may be at the other end of the world, or perhaps living next door. Each *zivug* is a supernatural occurrence, and Rabbenu Bachaye is therefore saying that one must bring a *korban todo* after experiencing a miraculous *simcha*, such as that experienced by a newly married couple.

The area of *shidduchim* is the most obvious manifestation of *hashgocho* nowadays. In fact, the Chazon Ish said that this was one of the last remaining areas in which ordinary people experience revealed and tangible Divine providence.

For example, a *shidduch* that seems perfect does not materialize, or someone with all the right qualities for marriage finds it difficult to find his or her partner, in contrast to others lacking such qualities who have a much easier time.

The Brisker Rov once noted that our human efforts that we put into finding a partner do not always seem to bear fruit, and the real *zivug* appears like a lost object at the appropriate time.

THEN AND NOW

And the flesh that touches any unclean thing shall not be eaten. (7:19)

We see from the *gemoro* in *Zevachim* (97a) that *tumah* is transmitted by mere touch, whereas the holiness of *kodshim* has to be actually absorbed before it can be conveyed.

In the days of the Baal HaTanya, rumors started spreading that someone he knew was becoming friendly with *Maskilim* and heretics, and that he wanted to attend a university. When the Baal HaTanya warned this person about the pernicious influence of wicked people, he defended himself with the argument that his connections with people had no influence on him. As proof of this, he cited the fact that he had been frequenting the company of Chassidim and of the Baal HaTanya for several years, and had not been influenced by them at all. The Baal HaTanya responded that this was hardly surprising, since in order to cleave to *kedushah* and become holy, mere contact is not enough, and one has to actually absorb *kedushah*, whereas to become *tomei*, mere contact is indeed enough. “This applies all the more so to you,” concluded the Baal HaTanya, “since instead of absorbing *kedushah*, you have satisfied yourself with superficial contact, whereas you have absorbed the *tumah* of your friends wholeheartedly!”

He added that it is very easy to lose *kedushah*. *Terumah* becomes *tomei* from a distant level of *tumah* (*shelishi b'tumah*) but *kodesh* even from a further removed level of *tumah* (*revi'i b'tumah*), because the holier something is, the more the *yetzer horo* invests its efforts to undermine the *kedushah*, and, once the *yetzer horo* has succeeded in opening the gates of *tumah*, a person is likely to become even more enmeshed in *tumah*. “You must therefore be very careful,” concluded the Baal HaTanya, “because if you go to university, you can become *tomei* very easily.”

Nowadays, exposure to *tumah* is not limited to friendships with undesirable people. If *tumah* spreads even through superficial contact with it, what are we to say of those who are in frequent or even constant contact with printed, electronic and digital media and devices purveying all the cardinal sins?

How to avoid imminent *chevlei moshiach*

ETERNAL CERTIFICATE

The Chofetz Chaim once went to see a doctor during a period of particularly cruel pogroms against the Jews in the Ukraine. Men, women and children were slaughtered mercilessly. The doctor asked the Chofetz Chaim how Hashem could permit such things to take place, and added that he was beginning to wonder whether there was a G-d at all. The Chofetz Chaim responded by telling the doctor that he had doubts about whether he was a doctor. The doctor was taken aback. "But I have this certificate on the wall attesting to my qualifications!". "Yes, said the Chofetz Chaim, but that certificate is 30 years' old, how do I know about your qualifications today?". The doctor was surprised: "I don't need to prove my skills again every day, once is enough, and anyway, everyone knows I'm a doctor". The Chofetz Chaim concluded: "You should know, it's the same with us. Before Hashem gave us the Torah, he showed us wonders and miracles in Egypt in order to convey to us that whatever trials and tribulations we will have to endure in the future, we must always remember that Hashem is in charge".

So far from abandoning the world, as claimed by the ancient idol worshippers, Hashem continues to be intimately involved in His creation with divine providence. *Yetzias mitzrayim* is Hashem's certificate for all time that He rules the world and this is the message which we are obligated to inculcate in our children generation after generation on *Pesach*. The *Or Hachayim* says that we only fulfill this obligation if our children internalize the message to such an extent that they are able communicate it to others.

It is due to the fundamental importance of this message of blind and absolute faith in Hashem that many *mitzvos*, such as *tefilin*, *tzitzis*, and *kiddush*, are performed expressly in commemoration of *yetzias mitzrayim*. However, the story of *yetzias mitzrayim* has to be particularly emphasized on *Pesach*, and then only when *matza* and *moror* are in front of us. Some Jews say that they believe in G-d, but are not willing to keep the *mitzvos*. *Pesach*, i.e. faith, is valueless unless it is completely attached to *Shevuos*, i.e. Torah and *mitzvos* through the *sefiras haomer*, which prepares us and makes us worthy of receiving the Torah. After the first day of *Pesach* we only say half *Hallel* to highlight the point that the final goal of *Shevuos* still lies ahead.

SPIRITUAL BIRTH PANGS

Rav Mordechai Pogromansky, who went through the Holocaust, said that after having endured physical *chevlei moshiach* (the birth pangs preceding *moshiach*) we must now endure spiritual birth pangs, namely tests of faith. If we just open our eyes, we can perceive Hashem in a way that no previous generation could. However, the powers of Amolek, which constitute the ultimate forces of *tumoh*, would have us believe that there is a natural explanation for everything, just like their spiritual progenitors argued that all the miracles of *yetzias mitzrayim* should be attributed to *kishuf* (sorcery). Until Amolek appeared on the scene, even idol worshippers acknowledged the existence of a Creator, but argued that He was too lofty to be involved in the affairs of men. Amolek denied the very existence of Hashem, and insisted that all phenomena were natural. The Rambam says that we are obligated to obliterate the *memory* of Amolek rather than Amolek himself. Rav Chaim

Brisker deduces from this that our obligation consists in negating any force which argues that “nature” is the only reality.

Rav Mordechai Pogromansky noted that there is no hint either in *tenach* or in *chazal* that there will come a time when non-observant and anti-religious Jews will enjoy immense power in *Eretz Yisroel* itself. He posited that *Yaakov ovinu* was told about this situation, but had it been foretold to us, it would have caused unbearable despair, and so he did not reveal this piece of information.

However, we find that Rav Moshe Kordovero, who lived almost five centuries ago, does write that in the final generation Amolek will be represented by the leaders of the Jewish nation, who will endeavor to convince us that there is no such thing as *yad Hashem*. We cannot remain indifferent to the forces of Amolek in our generation, since their influence is unfortunately immense, and affects us too. If we remain strong and fight these forces we are fulfilling the commandment to obliterate Amolek.

Hashem peers through the lattice to watch our conduct. “From where (*meayin*) shall my help come”? Only if we acknowledge that nothing (*ayin*), no person, nation or force whatsoever, can be of assistance to us, will we be worthy of divine assistance. The purpose of the *chevlei moshiach*, in which we experience suffering on an unprecedented scale even in terms of our tortured history, is to instill the message into us that only Hashem can help us.

COURAGE OF OUR CONVICTIONS

About ten years ago Rav Sternbuch visited his late brother-in-law, Rav Dovid Soloveichik, who asked Rav Sternbuch the following question. Why is it that the Labor Party with a mere four seats in the Knesset, enjoys immense political power, whereas we have six seats, and are continuously taking a beating. On the educational scene they insist on introducing the core curriculum, the *yeshivos* and *kollelim* are being subjected to close scrutiny. Licenses galore have been issued to stores to open on Shabbos in Yerushalayim. After bringing in close to a million Russians, many of whom are not Jewish, thousands of avowed Christians are currently being brought here from Ethiopia. Why are we keeping quiet in light of all this, notwithstanding our political power?

Rav Sternbuch answered that it is because we are embarrassed, and lack the quality of our hearts being “lifted up in the ways of Hashem”. We lack the realization and conviction that any victory is due to our learning and prayers. We must tell our wayward brethren unequivocally that the events transpiring before our eyes are the *yad Hashem* and not them, and that they are taking place in the merit of the holy Torah and the tens of thousands of Torah learners. We are acting as if they are indeed all-powerful, whereas in reality they are nothing. Any failures on the political level are attributed to faulty public relations, and any success on the military front to our wonderful boys. They do not realize that every bullet or missile has its address, irrespective of actions taken on our part.

The headlines in the morning paper should say “Missiles were fired, no one was injured, this is one of the wonders of Hashem, and is due to the merit of the holy Torah and the prayers of the Jewish people”. In practice, the media attribute events to happenstance or good fortune, and by our silence we implicitly accept this position. The Zohar (it appears in many *hagodos* before the *seder*) says that not only on Pesach, but any time that Hashem performs wonders and miracles for us we are obligated to relate them and talk about them. Of course, Hashem does not need this, but every time we react this way, the Zohar says that

He convenes the angels and tells them: “Listen to what My children are saying, they are attributing these events to Me, and not to anything else”.

When dozens of professors from the Jerusalem and Haifa universities sign a proclamation declaring that the Arabs are right in their demands and they should all be met, these anti-Zionist actions do not bother anybody, and they feel totally at liberty to say whatever they want. They feel all-powerful and we feel powerless, whereas the reality is the opposite. We must have the courage of our convictions, we must lift up our hearts in the ways of Hashem, and declare the truth unabashedly, that without us, without our Torah and prayers, they are nothing. If we act this way, we will be worthy of experiencing the wonders of Hashem. This is what Hashem is waiting for.

Although there is no dearth of signs of the *yad Hashem*, we are unfortunately influenced by the media. Why should we wait until *chas vesholom* any of the various terrible scenarios facing this country will transpire before acknowledging the *yad Hashem* in both national and personal events, when we can already see it clearly here and now if we only open our eyes? Moshiach will come when we reach a sufficiently high degree of *emuno*.

Rashi brings the *medrash* that out of 10 million Jews, 8 million died during the plague of darkness. By this stage we had already experienced almost all the plagues, so those Jews must surely have believed strongly in Hashem and his omnipotence. However, they did not have complete faith in *hashgocho protis* and how the *yad Hashem* is evident in all aspects of our daily lives. This should serve as an important lesson for us in the future redemption. No one can be sure what his fate will be until the actual redemption takes place.

If we acknowledge and internalize the fact that only Hashem can help, and that everything that happens is due only to divine providence, we will not have to endure all the terrible *chevlei moshiach*, but if we are influenced by Amolek and the media, we are actively destroying ourselves and the future of the nation.

UNPRECEDENTED DANGERS

In the *hagodo*, the *chochom*, unlike the *rosho*, knows that Hashem commanded us to observe the *mitzvos*, but he does not understand why we need this *leil shimurim*, why we commemorate something that happened thousands of years ago. We answer him that the *seder* night is a vehicle for instilling abundant dosages of *emuna* into our children, and also into ourselves, for the rest of the year. There has never been a period in our history where we have been in such dire need of boosting our *emuna*. The potential dangers confronting us are unprecedented, and should not even be uttered. The one thing we are lacking is *emuno* that Hashem is the only reality, and anything else possesses no power. Hashem peers through the lattice, and is longing to redeem us as soon as we yearn only for Him. “My beloved knocks: ‘open to me’”.

Amolek derives his power from any weakness in our Torah learning. If we strengthen ourselves in Torah and all the *mitzvos*, if we learn *hilchos shabbos*, we will experience miracles and wonders that will make the miracles and wonders of *yetzias mitzrayim* pale into insignificance. Chazal and the Zohar tell us that at that time Hashem will reveal to us what happened in each generation, how *moshiach* was about to come, but we lost the opportunity. Let us utilize the spiritual elevation of Pesach to increase our *emuno* so that we may experience the wonders of Hashem speedily.