



Parshas Tzav Parshas Parah

For the week ending 20 Adar II 5757
28 & 29 March 1997

Overview

The Torah addresses Aaron and his sons to teach them additional laws that relate to their service. The ashes of the “*Korban Olah*” — the *korban* burnt on the Altar throughout the night — are to be removed from the area by the *Kohen* after he takes off his special linen clothing. The *Olah* is brought by someone who forgot to perform a positive commandment of the Torah. The *Kohen* retains the skin. The fire on the Altar must be kept constantly blazing. The “*Korban Mincha*” is a meal offering that is made from flour, oil and spices. A handful of it is burned on the Altar, and a *Kohen* eats the remainder before it becomes leaven. The Parsha describes the special *korbanos* offered by the *Kohen Gadol* each day, and by Aaron’s sons and future descendants on the day of their inauguration. The “*Chatas*,” the *korban* brought after an accidental transgression, is described, as are the laws for the slaughtering and sprinkling the blood of the “*Asham*,” the “guilt-*korban*” for certain transgressions. The details for the “*Shlamim*,” various types of peace *korbanos*, are described, including the prohibition against leaving the remains of the “*Todah*,” the thanksgiving *korban*, uneaten until the morning. All sacrifices must be burned after they may no longer be eaten. No sacrifice may be eaten if it was slaughtered with the intention of eating it too late. Once they have become *tamei* (ritually impure) *korbanos* may not be eaten, and they should be burned. One may not eat a *korban* when he is ritually impure. Blood and *Cheilev*, forbidden fats of animals, are prohibited to eat. Aaron and his sons are granted the breast and shank of every “*Korban Shlamim*.” The inauguration ceremony for Aaron, his sons, the Mishkan and all of its vessels is detailed.

Insights

UNACUSTOMED AS I AM...

“If he shall offer it for a thanksgiving offering...” (7:12)

What does the word ‘Jew’ mean?

‘Jew’ is a translation of the Hebrew ‘*Yehudi*’ which comes from the same root as the word ‘*l’hodot*.’

‘*L’hodot*’ is an interesting word. It has two meanings. It can mean ‘to give thanks,’ and it can mean ‘to admit.’

What does admitting have in common with giving thanks?

When a person says ‘thank you,’ he is, in essence, admitting. He’s admitting that he is in the debt of the other person for a kindness he has received. Unless we can admit that we have received something, we can never really say ‘thanks.’

If we are called ‘Jews,’ if that’s who we are, it must be that those two qualities, of admitting, and of giving thanks, are integral elements of the collective *persona* of the Jewish People.

When a person escapes from a life-threatening danger, the Jewish custom is to make a special meal of thanks to Hashem.

But why do we thank Hashem specifically in this way? Why don’t we give charity? Why don’t we put up a plaque?

In this week’s *Parsha* we learn of a category of offerings that were brought in the *Beis Hamikdash* called *Korban Shlamim* (Peace Offering). These were eaten partly by the *kohanim* and partly by those who brought them.

The general rule was that the offering had to be eaten entirely within 36 hours — two days and one night. However, the exception was the *Korban Todah*, the offering that was brought to thank Hashem for being delivered from grave danger. The time period for the consumption of the *Korban Todah* was a maximum of just 24 hours — one day and one night until midnight.

Why was the time period for eating the *Korban Todah* so much shorter than other *Shlamim*?

The question becomes even more pointed when you take into account the tremendous amount of food that had to be consumed with the *Todah* — 40 loaves of bread.

The answer is that when the person who brought the *Todah* saw how much food there was, he would invite his friends to a meal to celebrate and rejoice with him.

Naturally the main topic of conversation would be the great deliverance which was the cause of the meal, and the host would thus recount the miraculous circumstances of his delivery.

Specifically he would be called upon to deliver words of Torah and thanks to Hashem for his delivery.

When a person has to get up and speak in front of a crowd the usual result is that his heartbeat quickens, his palms become moist and his throat dry. He is forced to think carefully about what he is going to say and how he is going to say it.

Through this process of re-analysis, the recipient of the miracle re-examined every detail of his miraculous escape, with the result that not only would he inspire his audience with his tale, but **he himself would come to a higher realization of the good which Hashem had bestowed on him.**

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WARNING: HEART - DO NOT EXTINGUISH!

A continual fire shall be kept burning on it; it must not be extinguished.” (6:6)

The Torah prohibits extinguishing the fire of the Altar; on the contrary, the fire must be attended to and wood and kindling added as necessary, so that the flame ascends constantly.

If it is forbidden to put out even a single coal on the physical Altar (Zevachim 91), how much more is it forbidden to put out even a single burning spiritual ember on the spiritual Altar, the Jewish heart.

The yearning for holiness, the flame in the heart which aspires longingly upward, homeward, must be constantly added to; aided and strengthened through reason, wisdom and discernment, with the illumination of mitzvos and the light of the Torah.

UNDER COVER

“Command Aaron and his sons, saying ‘This is the law of the elevation-offering...’” (6:2)

Each of the organs of sense have a covering protecting them from that which is undesirable. The mouth has lips which can prevent the mouth from issuing improper speech. The ears have lobes which can be used to block the entrance of unseemly words. The eyes have lids and brows. Thus it is with all the organs of perception.

With one exception.

The mind has no protection. Thoughts have no visor. They can come and go at will. Therefore it takes an extra degree of alacrity and alertness to guard against improper thoughts.

Rashi comments on the above verse that when the Torah uses the word ‘command’ it always implies ‘alacrity.’ In the Talmud, Rabbi Shimon states that where there is a ‘chisaron kis’ the Torah mandates an extra degree of alertness.

‘Chisaron kis’ can mean literally ‘a loss of pocket’ — a monetary loss. In most offerings, the kohanim were given part of the animal to eat. However, in the Korban Olah, where the entire of offering was burned and the kohen received nothing, the kohanim needed to be commanded an extra degree of alacrity.

However, ‘chisaron kis’ can also mean ‘lacking a cover.’

The elevation-offering was brought as an atonement for improper thoughts. The mind has no barrier, no cover; and thus where there is no protection, an extra degree of alacrity and zeal is required.

Sources:

Unaccustomed As I Am... - Abarbanel; Rabbi Yitzchak Ezrachi in Mizmor Lesodah by Rabbi Daniel Travis

Warning: Heart - Do Not Extinguish! - Oros HaKodesh

Under Cover - Sichos Tzaddikim in Mayana shel Torah

Haftarah: Parshas Parah - Yechezkel 36:16-38

HEART OF STONE

“One who aspires to purify himself spiritually, is given help from above.”

The period before Rosh Chodesh Nissan is especially favorable for purification. This is one of the reasons that we read Parshas Parah at this time of the year.

But there is a more basic reason: In the time of the Beis Hamikdash, it was on the 15th of Nissan that the Korban Pesach was brought by all of the Jewish People.

Parshas Parah deals with the laws of purification that were needed to purify the Jewish People from contact with a dead body — a necessary preliminary to entering the Beis Hamikdash and bringing the Korban Pesach.

The Haftarah describes the time of Mashiach, when Hashem will “sprinkle purifying waters on the Bnei Yisrael” and remove from them all the impurities that have encrusted their souls.

“I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh instead.” (46:26)

Hashem’s mitzvos are our life blood. When we neglect them, our hearts freeze over, severed from their lifeline. We become spiritually rigid. Our hearts atrophy, coarsen and eventually become as rigid as stone.

And because we then have made ourselves a heart of stone, we don’t realize that this is why we have so little faith. How can a heart of stone have faith? We don’t realize that our complaints against the Almighty come from a rock chamber entombed in our chests.

Eventually it will be too late for a ‘bypass.’ Hashem will come and give us a heart that is soft, that cries, that wants to hear the word of Hashem and beats in time to its Maker.



INSIGHTS INTO THE ZEMIRO
SUNG AT THE SHABBOS TABLE
THROUGHOUT THE GENERATIONS.

YOM SHABBOSON - יום שבתון
“THE DAY OF REST...”

They all joined together in the Covenant
“We will do and we will hear” they said as one

**וְנָא כָל בְּרִית יָחַד
נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע אִמְרוּ כְּעֶחָד**

*u'va'u culom b'bris yachad
na'ase v'nishma, amru k'echad*

The unity of the Jewish People reached its peak when they stood at the foot of Mount Sinai. “Israel camped facing the mountain” (Shmos 19:1). Our Sages explain that they did so as “one man with one heart.” (Rashi). In response to the invitation from Hashem to accept the Torah “The entire nation declared ‘All that Hashem has spoken we shall do.’” (Shmos 19:8)

This sense of unity is expressed in their camping in perfect harmony and in their declaration in unison of being prepared to do even before hearing. This is relived by Jews every Shabbos. All week long each Jew may be involved in his own activities for earning a livelihood but on Shabbos all Jews are united in their emulation of their Creator who rested on the seventh day.

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