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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

The Food of Faith

“It shall not be baked leavened...” (6:10)

The Torah says: *“You shall guard the matzot, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt.”* (Shemot 12:17).

The connection is not immediately clear: Why is the command to ‘guard the matzah’ linked specifically to the Exodus from Egypt?

Another question:

The Zohar* teaches that matzah is called *“michla di’m’heimnusa”* — the *food of faith*. Where is this idea of *faith* hinted to within the matzah itself?

Consider ordinary bread. When a person prepares dough, he mixes flour and water, kneads it and sets it aside; his active involvement ends at that point. Yet the dough does not remain static. The dough “takes over”; through fermentation, it begins to change on its own.

The natural yeasts begin to act. Gases form within cause it to expand. The dough rises, swelling in all directions. Its texture becomes softer and more elastic. Air pockets develop. The surface begins to subtly stretch and lighten in color.

This all happens *after* the maker has removed his hand from the dough. The dough seems to be “doing something by itself.”

Matzah is the exact opposite.

From the moment the dough is mixed, it is handled continuously and baked quickly. There is no stage where it is left to arise, to “develop” on its own.

Bread, *Chametz*, represents a world where nature appears to operate by itself—where processes continue on their own, without direct involvement of the craftsman.

Matzah represents a world where nothing happens independently of the Master Craftsman.

Emunah, faith, is the recognition that there is no true autonomy in existence. Nothing unfolds by itself. Everything is continuously guided by the will of Hashem. A person does not add or detract from what has been decreed—except in one domain alone: his choice to follow Torah and mitzvot.

The *mazalot*—the constellations and the signs of the Zodiac—have no independent power. Though they appear to influence nature, they are merely tools. Hashem directs them completely, at every moment, without interruption. They have no autonomy whatsoever.

This was the fundamental error of the Egyptians, who attributed power to the stars.

Egypt was associated with the constellation of the lamb - Aries (*taleh*). Because Aries is the first of the constellations, it is regarded as the king of the zodiac signs (as the Zohar explains in Chelek III). To demonstrate that even this “King” constellation has no independent force, Hashem commanded the Jewish people to take ‘Aries’ —the god of Egypt—and slaughter it as a *korban*.

And this was done specifically in the month of Nissan—when Aries’ influence is strongest, and on the 15th of the month, when the moon is full and the power of the month is at its zenith.

At that very moment of supposed maximum strength of the Lamb, of Aries, Hashem showed it had no strength at all without Him.

The constellations, the Zodiac, do nothing by themselves. Nature does nothing by itself. Everything is entirely directed by Hashem.

Matza testifies that nothing in this world does anything by itself, and that at every moment the Divine Craftsman is acting alone; because Matzah undergoes no change once it leaves the hands of its maker, and thus it is “the food of faith”.

Source: Bnei Yissaschar

*Zohar Chelek II, 183b (אבל ע"ש) as cited by *Sod Hachasmal Chelek I HaLachma Anya*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Torah addresses Aharon and his sons to teach them additional laws relating to their service. The ashes of the *korban olah* — the offering burned on the Altar throughout the night — are to be removed from the area by the *kohen* after he changes 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 ablaze. The *korban mincha* is a meal-offering of flour, oil and spices. A handful is burned on the Altar and a *kohen* eats the remainder before it becomes leaven. The Torah portion describes the special *korbanot* to be offered by the *Kohen Gadol* each day and by Aharon's sons and future descendants on the day of their inauguration. The *chatat*, the *korban* brought after certain accidental transgressions, is described, as are the laws of slaughtering and sprinkling the blood of the *asham* guilt-*korban*. The details of *shelamim*, various peace *korbanot*, are described, including the prohibition against leaving uneaten until morning the remains of the *todah*, the thanksgiving-*korban*. 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 ritually impure, *korbanot* may not be eaten and should be burned. One may not eat a *korban* when he is ritually impure. Blood and *chelev* (certain animal fats) are prohibited to be eaten. Aharon and his sons are granted the breast and shank of every *korban shelamim*. The inauguration ceremony for Aharon, his sons, the Mishkan and all of its vessels is detailed.

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Q & A

Questions

1. What separated the *kohen's* skin from the priestly garments?
2. How often were the ashes removed from upon the *mizbe'ach*? How often were they removed from next to the *mizbe'ach*?
3. If someone extinguishes the fire on the *mizbe'ach*, how many Torah violations has he transgressed?
4. The portion of a flour-offering offered on the *mizbe'ach* may not be *chametz*. But is the *kohen's* portion allowed to be *chametz*?
5. When a *kohen* is inaugurated, what offering must he bring?
6. What three baking processes were used to prepare the *korban* of Aharon and his sons?
7. What is the difference between a *minchat kohen* and a *minchat Yisrael*?
8. When is a *kohen* disqualified from eating from a *chatat*?
9. What is the difference between a copper and an earthenware vessel regarding removing absorbed tastes?
10. Can an animal dedicated as an *asham* be replaced with another animal?
11. How does an *asham* differ from all other *korbanot*?
12. Unlike all other *korbanot*, what part of the ram or sheep may be placed on the *mizbe'ach*?
13. What three types of *kohanim* may not eat from the *asham*?
14. In which four instances is a *korban todah* brought?
15. Until when may a *todah* be eaten according to the Torah? Until when according to Rabbinic decree?
16. How does a *korban* become *pigul*?
17. Who may eat from a *shelamim*?
18. What miracle happened at the entrance of the *Ohel Moed*?
19. Other than *Yom Kippur*, what other service requires that the *kohen* separate from his family?
20. What are the 5 categories of *korbanot* listed in this *Parsha*?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

Answers

1. 6:3 - Nothing.
2. 6:4 -
 - A) Every day.
 - B) Whenever there was a lot.
3. 6:6 - Two.
4. 6:10 - No.
5. 6:13 - A *korban mincha* -- A tenth part of an *ephah* of flour.
6. 6:14 - Boiling, baking in an oven, and frying in a pan.
7. 6:15 - The *minchat kohen* is burnt completely. Only a handful of the *minchat Yisrael* is burnt, and the remainder is eaten by the *kohanim*.
8. 6:19 - If he is *tamei* (spiritually impure) at the time of the sprinkling of the blood.
9. 6:21 - One can remove an absorbed taste from a copper vessel by scouring and rinsing, whereas such a taste can not be removed from an earthenware vessel.
- 10.7:1 - No.
- 11.7:3 - It can only be brought from a ram or sheep.
- 12.7:3 - The tail (the “*aliya*”).
- 13.7:7 - A *t'vul yom* (someone *kohen* who immersed in a *mikveh* yet awaits sunset to become *tahor*); a *mechusar kipurim* (someone *tamei* who has gone to the *mikveh* but has yet to bring his required offering); an *onan* (an *avel* - mourner - prior to the burial of his deceased relative).
- 14.7:12 - Upon safe arrival from an ocean voyage; upon safe arrival from a desert journey; upon being freed from prison; upon recovering from illness.
- 15.7:15 – a) Until morning b) Until midnight
- 16.7:18 - The person slaughters the animal with the intention that it be eaten after the prescribed time.
- 17.7:19 - Any uncontaminated person (not only the owner).
- 18.8:3 - The entire nation was able to fit in this very small area.
- 19.8:34 - The burning of the *parah adumah* (red heifer).
20. *Olah* (6:2); *mincha* (6:7); *chatat* (6:18); *asham* (7:1); *shelamim* (7:11).

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

Sheva Brachot (Part 6)

A husband and wife are one soul, separated only through their descent to this world. When they are married, they are reunited again.

Zohar HaKadosh

The fourth of the *Sheva Brachot* is: **Blessed are You, Hashem our God, King of the universe, Who fashioned the man in His image, in the image of his form, and prepared for him, from himself, a building for eternity. Blessed are You, Lord, Who fashioned the Man.**

What does “**his** form” mean in the text of our blessing? Avudraham explains that it refers not to Hashem’s form - “**His** form”- but to the human body. We thank Hashem in this blessing for giving us a physical body as a home for our soul which - being entirely spiritual - could not exist in this physical world without its physical shell.

There is something extremely poignant and moving about our blessing. The idea of a couple building a home together for the rest of their lives is not necessarily a natural one. In the animal world, we see no real concept of ‘marital’ fidelity. And, yet, the aspiration of each *Chattan* and *Kallah* is that they will live in harmony together throughout their time here in this physical world.

Why are human beings different from the animals? The Torah (*Bereshit* 2:18-25) describes how Adam, on seeing that all the animals had been created in pairs, felt a tremendous sense of loneliness. So much so that Hashem created Chavah to be his pair. Our Sages teach (*Ketubot* 8a) that before Chavah became an independent being, Adam and Chavah were actually one entity. In order for them to build their lives together, Hashem physically separated them. And the same is true with each couple that marry and establish a Jewish home.

The above explains why both our blessing and the preceding one end with the same words: “*Yotzer Ha’Adam* – Who fashioned the man.” The Rabbis explain that there were two moments in the creation of mankind: The previous blessing refers to the creation of Adam, while our blessing refers to the creation of Chavah; and the phrase “a building for eternity” refers to Adam and Chavah bringing human life into the world (Rashi, *ibid.*).

As the Zohar HaKadosh so beautifully teaches: a husband and wife are one soul, separated through their descent to this world, reunited through marriage. What an astonishing concept! The Zohar HaKadosh teaches us that when a couple marry they are not creating something new; rather, they are returning to their spiritual essence, because - before they were brought down into the physical realms - they were one.

How else could two such disparate beings unite together and live in harmony as husband and wife? It is because they are returning to their original state. The moment a couple marries is the moment the two souls return to their true spiritual essence and become one.

The fusing of two souls in this world is no simple thing! It requires *Chattan* and *Kallah* both to recognize that they belong to each other; and then they need to work continuously at reconstituting their original “oneness”.

But how can a brand new couple, at the very beginning of their journey, be sure that they are truly destined for one another?

The *Ba'alei HaMussar* teach that for some couples the rejoining of their souls might be an almost innate occurrence, whereas for others it might require intensive work. But, regardless of the level of difficulty, the moment the groom places the wedding ring on the finger of his bride, they are declaring to all that she is his soulmate, and he hers.

I once read an indispensable insight into married life: Just as it is essential to find the “right one”, so it is essential to *be* the “right one”!

How does one become the “right one”? Rabbi Ben Tzion Abba Shaul (1924-1998), Rosh Yeshivah of the renowned *Porat Yosef* and one of the most influential spiritual leaders of his generation, would often offer a piece of advice to his married *talmidim* when they came to him to discuss marital issues. He would tell them: “Stop focusing on what is not good in your marriage and start focusing on what is good. And then you will see how good married life really is!”

To be continued...

TAAMEI HAMITZVOS – Reasons behind the Mitzvos

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

Recounting the Exodus

“And you shall tell your son on that day...” - *Shemot 13:8*

Mitzvah 21

Much of our relationship with Hashem is rooted in what we saw and experienced at the time of the Exodus. By recounting the Exodus to our children, we continue our tradition from generation to generation (see *Ramban* and *Abarbanel*). According to this, the main benefit of this Mitzvah is for one’s children and for the continuity of the nation as a whole.

But there are other reasons and deeper layers of meaning as well:.

We will focus on the verse, “You shall tell your son on that day, saying: ‘Hashem acted on my behalf when I left Egypt for the sake of **this**’” (*Shemos 13:8*). What is ‘this’? *Rashi* interprets ‘this’ to mean that Hashem redeemed us so that we would perform the Mitzvos, including “this”: *pesach*, *matzah*, and *maror*. In other words, recounting the Exodus leads to the conclusion that we should therefore serve Hashem.

The connection between Hashem redeeming us and our requirement to perform His Mitzvos is manifold: (a) The miracles of the Exodus demonstrate the existence of a Creator Who manipulates every element of His world according to His singular will (*Rabbeinu Menachem HaBavli* and others). Recounting these miracles brings this truth to heart and obligates us to serve our Creator. (b) By redeeming us from slavery, Hashem assumed mastery over us. (c) The overwhelming kindnesses that Hashem lavished upon us throughout the Exodus place upon us an obligation of gratitude that we repay by serving Him. (d) These kindnesses instill within us boundless love for our Benefactor and a great desire to serve Him. (e) At the time of the Exodus, Hashem descended from the highest heavens to come to the aid of mortals, exacted justice upon our tormentors, and fulfilled His promise to our Patriarchs despite our own unworthiness. All this showed a glimpse of His justness, compassion, kindness, humility, magnificence, and awesome power. Through the Ten Plagues, which affected every element of nature, we came to the realization that Hashem controls the entire world. It is natural to want to serve such a deity. This desire became absolute at the Revelation at Sinai, where we saw the Divine Presence with our own eyes and perceived that there is none other than Hashem.

Accordingly, recounting the Exodus serves the purpose of reminding ourselves and informing our children of our exalted obligation to serve Hashem. *Sefer HaChinuch* explains that even a person who is all alone needs to relate the story of the Exodus aloud, to awaken his feelings.

Another facet of this Mitzvah is that speaking of Hashem's kindnesses is a way of thanking Him. The core section of the Haggadah is the passage recited when bringing Bikkurim -- a passage thanking Hashem for the Land that He granted us -- because telling the story of the Exodus is actually an expression of thanks.

Telling the story of the Exodus is also a praise of Hashem like none other: On an esoteric level, the words "For the sake of *zeh* (this) did Hashem act on my behalf when I left Egypt" may be interpreted to mean "For the sake of Hashem" (as it states "*Zeh Keli... This is my G-d and I will glorify Him*"); that is, for the sake of His glory (*Rabbeinu Bachya*). When Moshe took the Jewish people out of Egypt, he told them: "Hashem is redeeming you so that you will relate His glory among the nations (*Midrash Tehillim* Ch. 44). The *Zohar* (*Bo* 40b) states that when we recount the Exodus at the Pesach Seder, Hashem gathers the angels and tells them, "Come and listen to My children praising Me and rejoicing in My salvation." When the angels hear the Jewish people joyously relating how Hashem saved them, they rise to praise Hashem as well.

We say in the Haggadah, "The more one recounts the Exodus, the more praiseworthy it is." This is true for all the above reasons: every additional word strengthens the tradition, enhances our belief in Hashem, heightens our sense of duty to serve Him, expresses greater thanks, and brings forth new praise of Hashem's Name both in Heaven and on earth.