

מתוקים מדבש



Dei'ah, Binah and Haskel on the weekly parashah

RABBI MICHA BERGER

Bemachashavah Techilah

“If he shall offer it as a *todah*, a thanksgiving offering...” (Vayikra 7:1).

The gemara reads, “Rabbi Yehudah said that Rav said: There are four who have to thank [Hashem] – those who go down to sea, those who traverse the desert, one who was sick and was cured, and one who was trapped in jail and was freed.”¹ Rav’s source is a chapter of Tehillim that praises Hashem for taking us out of Egypt.

The Maharsha² explains that these four things are actually examples representing categories of distractions that prevent man from accomplishing his goal in life. First, that the person has no income, and is too busy plying a trade – going down to sea – to pursue a higher goal. The second is being plagued by enemies, so he is forced to flee, as if to a desert, rather than choosing a place where he could succeeding and force him to invest his time and effort defending what he has rather than progressing. The third is having one’s energy and productivity sapped by disease. The fourth thing that prevents spiritual growth is being imprisoned by wealth and the drive to work for financial success, which can distract a person from Torah.

The *todah* is not just thanking Hashem from saving us from a

physical close call, but is appropriate because after losing the proper physical groundwork, one’s spiritual life also decays. “*Im ein kemach ein Torah* – without flour, there is no Torah”.³

When the wine steward tells Yosef his dream, Yosef gives it a positive interpretation. Not only is this the steward’s personal redemption from imprisonment, it also is the first step toward Yosef assuming the post of second to the king, and therefore lays the groundwork for the Exodus. In describing the dream, the Torah uses the word “*kos*” (cup) four times. According to Bereishis Rabba, this is the reason why we have four cups of wine at the seder. The better-known reason is the four terms of redemption in the Torah: “*vehotzeisi... ve-hitzalti... vega’alti... velakachti...*” (I will take you out from under Egypt’s oppression, I will save you from their servitude, I will redeem you, I will take you as My nation.)⁴

The Maharal explains that both are the expression of freedom from these four basic kinds of distractions. In his view, the four cups of the *seder* are an expression of the thanks of the *korban todah*. It is therefore relevant to compare and contrast the *korban pesach* with the *Todah*.

“If he offers it as a *todah*, he shall offer with the *todah* unleavened

loaves... With loaves of leavened bread he shall bring his *korban*.” The *todah* was offered alongside both *matzah* and 10 loaves of leavened bread. Obviously the *pesach* is accompanied by *matzah* alone. Why?

Both the *pesach* and the *todah* are bounded by strict time constraints.⁵ The usual *shelamim* can be eaten the day after it was brought. These two *korbanos* can only be eaten through the first night.⁶ This forces the person to share the *korban* with others; a person cannot eat an entire lamb in one night. Particularly if you consider that *achilah gasah*, gorging oneself, is not considered eating nor a fulfillment of the mitzvah. A *todah* can be served to any Jewish passerby. A *korban pesach* can only be eaten by people who joined the offering in advance. Again why?

People relate to mitzvos in two basic ways: There is the expression of what one is feeling, and there is the performance of an act to learn how one ought to feel. The joy of the farmer bringing in his crops could be expressed through his taking the four species on *sukkos*. However, even if one does not feel that joy and gratitude to Hashem one still is obligated to take them, so as to learn this attitude. In the ideal, both are true – action sparks emotion and atti-

¹ Berachos 54b

² Ad loc

³ Avos 3:21

⁴ Shemos 6:6-8

⁵ Beitzah 19b

⁶ Which rabbinically is then limited to before midnight. See Michnah Berachos 1:1.

tude, which then express themselves in further action. "One mitzvah leads to another."

The *todah* is primarily an expression of one's natural thankfulness. As the Maharsha describes it, it is the reaction of someone who has just experienced his own minor exodus from being constrained (*Mitzrayim*) to *mishkan*-like observance. Reality brought him to a measure of the attitude, and now he wishes to express it. The *pesach*, however, is based around the full, but historical, event. In fact, it was commanded before the actual departure from Egypt; it is very much a commanded action designed to create a particular reaction within the performer.

Leavened bread is appropriate for a *todah* celebration. 10 loaves, to share the wealth he feels with others. This is not someone who needs to learn that what he received is a gift rather than the product of "*kochi ve'otzem yadi*", his own might. The *pesach*, the lesson in gratitude, must take a step back and carry with it the reminder that one should be humble. It is therefore eaten only with *lechem oni*, poor man's bread, *lechem she'onim alav devarim harbei*, the bread upon which we learn many things, matzah.

While both *korbanos* are shared, the reasons for the sharing are very different. The motivation for sharing the *todah* is the natural desire to share one's joy with others. The *pesach* is a historical joy, the joy that one could only feel if one were connected to our

people and its history. As a lesson in connecting to the Jewish people, the joining together to eat the *korban* is a necessary precondition to the joy, not something that follows from it.⁷

⁷ This same dichotomy between expressing a reaction vs. learning the appropriate reaction underlies the concepts of a previous article as well. In Sefasai Tiftach for Va'eirah <<http://www.aishdas.org/mesukim/5764/vaeira.pdf>> we explored the expressive *tachanunim*, in contrast to the fixed prayers of *tefillah* that must be performed whether in the mood of not. And note that there too, *tefillah*, such as Shemoneh Esrei is written in the plural, reflecting the person within his role in the Jewish people as a whole.

RABBI GIL STUDENT

Bakeish Shalom

Parashas *Tzav* continues the commandments regarding the sacrifices and begins with the following: "G-d spoke to Moshe saying, 'Command (*tzav*) Aharon and his sons, saying: This is the law of the burnt-offering (*olah*)...' (Vayikra 6:2-1). Not only is Moshe told what to say to Aharon, he is further told to command Aharon and his sons on this matter. This unusual¹ formulation is noted by the Sifra and is explained, as quoted by Rashi,² "The term *tzav* denotes only 'encouragement' in reference to the present and for future generations. Rabbi Shimon said: The verse must especially encourage where there is a loss of money." Since this verse

commands about the *olah* sacrifice, which is entirely burnt and from which the *kohanim* therefore do not receive any financial benefit, the Torah must emphasize the need to be zealous in performance of these commandments.

It is quite odd, though, that the Torah suspects Aharon and his sons of being less than zealous when they have no financial stake in the matter. We are not speaking here of the average businessman who is constantly concerned with profit margins and deal closings. These are righteous people whose lives are dedicated to serving G-d and fulfilling His commandments. Is the Torah really suspicious of them?

The answer, R' Elyah Lopian suggests,³ is yes. Not only do great people face the same challenges as the average, the obstacles they must

overcome are larger. As the famous Gemara in Sukkah (52a) says, when the day of judgment comes, the *yetzer hara* will appear to a righteous person as a mountain and to a wicked person as a strand of hair. The commentators explain that, because the greater a person is the greater is his *yetzer hara*, the righteous see this large mountain against which they struggled and which they overcame. The wicked, though, did not have as large a *yetzer hara* and, despite that, were still unable to defeat it. Aharon, too, had a *yetzer hara* and needed to struggle against it.⁴ Perhaps not even very deep down, Aharon and his sons had an urge to treat more casually the sacrifices that did not benefit them and, for that reason,

¹ Although not unique. The various midrashim that discuss this issue, as brought in the commentaries to the Sifra, deal with other instances of this formulation, as does the Malbim at length.

² Vayikra 6:2

³ *Lev Eliyahu*, ad loc.

⁴ This assumes that even a totally righteous person like Aharon had a *yetzer hara*. I hope to address dispute on this topic in a future column.

had to struggle not to do so. This commandment was encouragement and a reminder of the need to do so. Even moreso, it is a reminder to all of us that no matter how great we may someday become we can never “trust in ourselves until our day of death.”⁵

R' Avraham Shmuel Binyamin Sofer, the famous Kesav Sofer, quotes a midrash that says that the *olah* sacrifice is only brought by those who are haughty.⁶ This arrogance is what brings people to sin and requires them to bring the *olah* sacrifice. If so, suggests the Kesav Sofer, we can understand the connection between the specific encouragement of Aharon and this particular commandment. R' Bachya Ibn Pakuda writes in *Chovos HaLevavos*⁷ that there are two types of haughtiness: for physical matters and for spiritual matters. Someone can be arrogant about his beauty and great riches, but can also be

⁵ Avos 2:5

⁶ Kesav Sofer Al HaTorah, beginning of Tzav

⁷ Sha'ar HaKeni'ah

haughty about his wisdom and his lofty accomplishments. While Moshe was tall, independently wealthy, extremely strong (all of which we know from the requirements of a prophet), wise and the greatest of all prophets, he was still the most modest of men. He was able to achieve modesty in both areas.

A person who contemplates his true existence will realize that he has no reason for being haughty over his physical acquisitions. His wealth can disappear overnight, as has been seen many times in history. His physical health can deteriorate in ways beyond his control. His good looks, his tall height, everything physical about him can leave without notice. Not only did he not necessarily gain them through his own effort, he can lose them without any ability to stop that from happening. It would seem that a person has more reason to be haughty over his spiritual accomplishments. The wisdom he has acquired, the Torah he has mastered, the proper personality traits in

which he has trained himself are all much more stable acquisitions. However, in reality, they, too, can leave him quickly. People forget, lose their track, accidentally sin and end up on the wrong path very easily. It has happened before and can certainly happen again. In truth, there is no reason for anyone to be overly proud of their accomplishments because these acquisitions can quickly be lost.

However, the rights of a kohen to the animals of sacrifices means that this guaranteed sustenance cannot be lost. As long as there are sacrifices offered, the *kohanim* will have a source of income. Therefore, perhaps regarding *korbanos*, where there is no possibility of *kohanim* losing their wealth, the Torah has to specifically charge them with zealotry. They must work to avoid haughtiness because, unlike other people, they have a guaranteed income and, absent the great tragedy of the cessation of the regular sacrificial service, can never lose their physical acquisitions.

REB JONATHAN BAKER

Sefasai Tiftach

Let us look at the berachos themselves. When we say *asher kid'shanu*, G-d sanctifies the body of Israel. That is, mitzvos are physical acts. Torah study demands speech, not just thought, as we say in Shma, *ledabeir bam*. The story of Beruriah and the “foolish Galilean” in Eiruvin 53b reinforces this – he did not recite his learning aloud, so she kicked him and corrected him.

What is the mitzva in the brocho? *La'asok bedivrei Torah*: *la'asok* from *esek*, waking up and turning one's will towards an act, making the potential in the act into

Next up, the Torah blessings. For now, we will concentrate on the berachos. Suffice it to say that while the traditional requirement of daily Torah study requires a tripartite division into Scripture (Mikra), Law (Mishnah) and Methodology (Gemara), the lifetime goal remains to establish Torah so that it “drips from one's lips.”¹

These are the first communal berachos that are really attached to

the mitzvah act – we learn a little Torah right after saying them.

We say three berachos. The first is phrased as *asher kid'shanu bemitzvosav vetzivanu*, a real mitzvah beracha. The second supplicates and the third thanks G-d for giving us the Torah. In a way, they fulfill the minimum daily requirement of prayer: praise, request and thanksgiving. A minimal sampling of Torah learning follows, fulfilling two mitzvot with one stone. Chasidic and Kabbalistic literature (*Nefesh HaChayim*, *Tzavaas HaRivash*, etc.) inextricably link prayer and Torah study.

¹ Ran, Nedarim

reality.² *Esek* is properly spelled with a “*sin*” but the Talmud (and our prayerbooks) disambiguated the pronunciation, changing the “*sin*” to a “*samech*”.

The second beracha begins ambiguously. What is *ha'arev*? Do we ask G-d to sweeten the words of Torah, so we gain pleasure from study, or will G-d pledge to partner with Israel in Torah study? Both work well. We seek these words of Torah *befinu*, echoing the Ran's advice that Torah should be *sh'guros befinu*, secure in our mouths.

We ask this for us and our descendants. This echoes G-d's guarantee (reinforcing the second definition of *ha'arev* mentioned above) quoted in Bava Metzia 85 that we and our descendants will all have Torah.³

We should all know Thy name, recognize Thy greatness, as in Ps. 9:11, “all who know Thy name are confident in You”. Another meaning echoes the Kabbalistic idea that all of the Torah is names of G-d – we should learn all we can about the attributes of G-d, so best to know Him. How? Through learning His names, the Torah.

Why? To learn *lishmah* – the ideal way to learn Torah, even if in early stages one learns “to gain a reward”. As Antigonus Ish Socho says, we must learn to serve G-d without thought of reward.

² See Bereishis 26:20 – the well was called *Esek*, because the shepherds of Yitzchak and the shepherds of Gerar turned their will against each other over it

³ אמר ר' פרנך אמר ר' יוחנן כל שהא תלמיד חכם ובנו תלמיד חכם ובנו תלמיד חכם ובנו תלמיד חכם שוב אין תורה פוסקת מזרעו לעולם שנאמר (ישעיהו נט) ואני זאת בריתי וגו' לא ימוש מפני זרע ומפי זרע זרעך אמר ה' מעתה ועד עולם מאי אמר ה' אמר הקב"ה אני ערב לך

The third beracha thanks G-d for singling us out as the *am segulah*, the *am hatorah*. Note the conclusion: *nosein haTorah*. The giving of Torah continues today, through lower forms of *ruach hakodesh*. As R' Aryeh Kaplan says⁴:

The gift of divine guidance is granted to those who teach Torah publicly, bringing the people closer to G-d. It is thus written, "This book of the Torah shall not depart from you ... and you shall observe everything written in it, for then you shall ... have good success" (Yehoshua 1:8). Therefore, any Torah leader whose works have been accepted by all Israel is assumed to have been divinely guided.

Women, too, say these berachos. Perhaps they need not learn *lishmah*, but they do learn the laws of Jewish home and business life, theology and critical thinking.

Where do these show up in the Seder? In *Baruch HaMakom*. R' Yitzchak Mirsky (*Hagadah Hedyonei Halacha*) notes that this paragraph is a precis of the third Torah beracha, preceded with a call/response (*baruch HaMakom/baruch Hu*) analogous to Barchu. This seems to bless the special kiyum of Talmud Torah that is the Maggid portion of the seder. Just as we say the Torah beracha over the special kiyum of learning from a scroll even without a minyan⁵, we say this here over *Maggid*. I would speculate that this also works for women and children who might not necessarily have said Torah berachos in the morning – they get the mitzva with the beracha, in fullness.

⁴ Handbook of Jewish Thought 6:19.

⁵ Maseches Sofrim 13:8

Another note, following up on the recent *Vayosha* discussion, via R' Shlomo Aviner's haggadah. We discussed the first half of the verse, “the people feared G-d”. What does the second half, “and believed in G-d and His servant Moshe” mean? It suggests (ch”v) two powers: G-d and Moshe. Rather, as the Gra comments on “not via an agent”, Moshe was not a separate agent he was a pure *keli*, an instrument of G-d's will. Thus belief in G-d and in Moshe were the same thing.

On an ethical note, R' Avraham Yitzchak Kook comments on *even ma'asu habanim* in two ways with one lesson. The builders are *talmidei chachamim*, as we say “not *banayich*, but *bonayich*”, who rejected the *chalutzim*, the builders with stone, not realizing that the *chalutzim* make their Torah in the land of Israel possible. Or, the builders are *chalutzim*, who reject the Torah, not realizing that it creates the Jewish character of lands, state and people. Both are necessary, and both must acknowledge the good done by the other – without physical needs, there is no Torah; without Torah, physical deeds are pointless.

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