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A video thumbnail showing Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, an older man with a white beard and glasses, wearing a dark suit and tie. He is speaking in a room with a painting on the wall behind him.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Tzav



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Parshas Tzav

Children Guaranteeing the Destiny of the Father

Torah: The *Kohanim* have a *mitzvah* to put wood on the Altar. As it states, “They brought, the sons of Aaron the *Kohen*, fire on the Altar and arranged the wood.”

Midrash: “Every species of wood qualifies to be kindled upon the Altar except for the wood of the grape vine and the wood of an olive tree. Why is this so? It is because the fruits they produce are special. From this, we learn that in the merit of the children the fathers are honored.” Special honor is accorded to the parents because of the exceptional offspring.

Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: “The son brings merit to a father, but a father does not bring merit to the son.” The *Gemara* tells us that *Chizkiyahu* the king of Judah was devoutly righteous and was qualified to be *Moshiach*. Although his father *Achaz* was evil, he was a beneficiary of his son’s great spiritual accomplishments. This was

because *Chizkiyahu* was only in a context to choose to be devoutly righteous because his father brought him into existence. Therefore, all of his deeds accrue to his father. On the other hand, the accomplishments of the father do not bring merit to the son because the son does not contribute to the father’s good deeds.

Midrash: *Avraham*, our Patriarch was thrown into the fiery kiln of *Kasdim* and miraculously immersed. The *Midrash* cites a verse, “*Yaakov* redeemed *Avraham*.” Since *Yaakov* was destined to father the twelve tribes of Israel, he thus needed to come into existence in order to establish the Jewish people. Therefore, *Avraham* was saved from the fiery kiln by G-d. If the miracle of the kiln would not have occurred, there would not have been a Jewish people.

“In the merit of the children the parents are glorified.” *Avraham* coming out of the fiery kiln was a greater sanctification of G-d’s Name than if he had perished in the fire. This is because it demonstrated to the world

that due to the fact that he was willing to give his life for the Omnipotent G-d, he was saved.

Rabbeinu Bachya: King Solomon in Proverbs communicates spiritual concepts through physical allegory in order for one appreciate the spiritual realm although it is not tangible and obvious. Similarly, the *Torah* does not validate the wood of the grape vine or olive tree to communicate that because of the quality of the fruit, the wood is not burned even for the sake of a *mitzvah*. These trees assume a special value not to be burned so that they can continue to produce the most exceptional fruits, which are grapes and olive- as *Avraham* was spared from the fire to be able be the forefather of *Yaakov*. This is an example of, "In the merit of the children the parents are glorified."

If a parent invests in his child's Jewish upbringing and education, he not only is providing an opportunity for the child to develop into a *Torah* observant Jew, he is also setting in motion generations that will follow the spiritual path. Thus, their merit will accrue to him. The parent will receive merit from his child and all his descendants until the end of time because of his initial contribution. Thus, a parent can perpetuate the value of his initiative beyond his own existence.

Chofetz Chaim: If one provides what is needed to give a child a proper Jewish education, although it is not his child, and that child develops to be a *Torah* observant Jew who establishes a family, the one who initially contributed to his education will receive the merit of all the generations who will descend from the one who he had assisted until the end of time. Had it not been for the original initiative, what followed would not have come about. One does not necessarily need to be the biological parent in order to be the beneficiary of the merit that is generated from his input.

Torah: "These are the offspring of *Aaron* and *Moshe* on the day *Hashem* spoke to *Moshe* at Sinai: These are the names of the sons of *Aaron*..." Although the verse begins by saying "These are the offspring of *Aaron* and *Moshe*" it only enumerates and identifies the offspring of *Aaron*.

Rashi citing the *Gemara* in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: Because *Moshe* had taught *Torah* to the sons of *Aaron* they are considered as his children. As it is stated in the *Gemara*, "If a person teaches *Torah* to his fellow's child, it is as if he fathered him."

Humility Being Reflected Through the Burnt Offering

Torah regarding the burnt offering: "...Command *Aaron* and his sons saying: This is the law of the burnt offering..."

Torah regarding other offerings: "Speak to the children of Israel saying..."

Midrash: "Why does the burnt offering identify with *Aaron*? G-d says, 'Whoever elevates himself (arrogant) deserves to be consumed by fire.'"

Eitz Yosef (commentary on the *Midrash*): "Since one is obligated to conduct himself as G-d's servant, the service is not complete until he accepts every aspect of servitude. What are they? Submission, lowliness, one should not conduct himself in the context of mastership because it disgraces the honor of the master. This the reason the *Torah* chose to command *Aaron*, who was the most special *Kohen*. He was to lower himself and submit to G-d by removing the ash from the Altar that remains after the offering is consumed by fire. It is the most simple and least honorable of the services before G-d."

Aaron was most qualified to be the officiant of G-d because he submitted to His Will and was negated to his Master. If one is haughty (elevated), he will be consumed by fire. Consumption by fire destroys the identity of the one who is arrogant and reduces him to ash. The *Midrash* provides several examples of those who were haughty and were thus consumed by fire. The generation of the great flood were consumed by the fiery hot water. The evil community of *Sodom* was destroyed through fire (fire and brimstone). The plague of hail was a combination of fire and ice that rained down upon the Egyptians people.

Ramban: When one sins inadvertently is able to bring a sin offering to atone for his spiritual failing. It is only because of the Attribute of Mercy that the sacrifice is brought instead of the sinner. Based on the Attribute of Justice, the individual who sins inadvertently deserves to be put to death. Thus, when one brings a sin offering he must humble himself before G-d and recognize that in actuality, he is the one that deserves to be slaughtered and burnt. It is in conjunction with repentance that the sacrifice atones for the individual. If one sins inadvertently, why should he be put to death?

It is only because of one's sense of self that he does not take sufficient precautions against sin. It is his preoccupation with self that causes him to transgress against G-d. Thus, every inadvertent sin has a degree of arrogance associated with it. It is therefore through the burnt offering that the arrogance can be destroyed and the individual humbled before G-d.

Gemara: Hillel the elder was one of the most humble people. He was the Prince of Israel. Whenever he would consecrate an offering for the Temple he would consecrate it at the entrance of the Sanctuary. Why would he do so? It was so that he would not put himself in a situation where due to his delay of bringing it in its proper time he would violate the negative commandment of "do not delay your obligation (for three festivals)" regarding the bringing of an offering. It was because of *Hillel's* exceptional humility that was the basis for his devout piety that he took every precaution not to allow himself to even inadvertently violate the word of G-d. In contrast, one who does not have that degree of humility will not be sensitive to this degree because he has a right to choose to bring his offering at a later date.

The Jew's Relevance to Sacrifices

Torah: The burnt offering is completely consumed by fire and no one can partake of its flesh. The hide of the sacrifice is given to the *Kohanim*. However, the flesh of the peace offering is eaten by the one who brings it and others who he chooses to invite. The forearm and the breast are given to the *Kohen* and the innards are sacrificed on the Altar.

Torah: Although a non-Jew may bring a sacrifice in the Temple, he can only bring a burnt offering. A sacrifice of which one partakes, only has relevance to a Jew. Why is this so?

Midrash citing a verse from Psalms: "King David writes, 'I will hear G-d, He speaks peace to His people and to His devoutly righteous...' The nations of the world came to *Bilaam* their prophet and asked, 'Why did G-d ask the Jewish people to bring sacrifices and He did not ask us to do the same?' *Bilaam* responded, 'The value of the sacrifices is only peace. The one who accepted the *Torah*, which has written in it the obligation of bringing sacrifices, can do so. However, you who rejected the *Torah*, do you expect to bring sacrifices? Only the one who accepted the *Torah* is obligated as it states,

'G-d gave His strength (the *Torah*) to His people. G-d blessed His people with peace.' Thus, the *Torah* states that the Jew can bring the peace offering and not the non-Jew.'"

Maharal of Prague based on the *Gemara*: G-d had initially offered the *Torah* to the nations of the world, but they rejected it each for of their own reason. G-d offered the *Torah* to the nations of the world, although they had no relevance to its sanctity and its dimension of spirituality. Had G-d not offered it to them, they would have had a claim that He did not offer His *Torah* to them, as He had done to the Jewish people.

The non-Jew, because of his limited dimension of innate spirituality, cannot meet the objective of Creation through the observance of the *Torah*. Only the Jew who has a unique innate spiritual make up can bring about what is intended to perfect the world through the observance of the *Torah* and thus merit a special relationship with G-d. With this we can understand why the nations were not given the peace offering.

The word "offering (*Korban*)" is derived from the Hebrew word "to bring close (*I'Kareiv*)." It is through the offering that the Jew is able to come close to G-d and cleave to Him. *Ramban* explains that through the offering the Jew is able to activate and coalesce the various forces and influences that allow the world to exist and advance.

Torah: "Bereishis bara Elokim- In the beginning G-d created ..."

Chazal: The opening words of the *Torah* allude that for the sake of *Torah*, which is "*reishis* (first/choicest)" G-d created heaven and earth. All existence only came into being for the specific purpose for the fulfillment of *Torah*. In addition, G-d created the world for the sake of the Jewish people who are also referred to as "*reishis* (chosen). The world was created only for the fulfillment of the *Torah* that can be achieved only by the Jewish people who are qualified to do so.

Sacrifices have relevance to every aspect of existence because they affect the world by activating various forces and influences. Since the Jewish people accepted the *Torah*, they are the only one's who have relevance to address the objective of existence. They were commanded to bring sacrifices because only they have the ability to bring about the result of a sacrifice.

Gemara: The one who is commanded and fulfills his obligation has a greater level of accomplishment than the one who performs a *mitzvah* but is not commanded. Since the nations of the world rejected the *Torah*, to which they had no relevance, even if they were to bring sacrifices the effect would be limited. They are thus only able to bring the burnt offering, which is fully consumed on the Altar.

Gemara: “The *Kohanim* eat (the sacrificial meat) and the one who brought the offering is atoned.” It is only the sacrifice of the Jew that is able to bring about atonement as well as other advanced levels of spiritual influences, which have no relevance to the non-Jew. *Bilaam* explained to the nations of the world that since the Jewish people were the one’s who accepted the *Torah*, they thus have the capacity to affect existence and themselves through the sacrifices.

However, the nations who rejected the *Torah* have no relevance to sacrifices. By accepting the *Torah* at Sinai the Jewish people demonstrated their innate spiritual value. They are the only people who have relevance to spirituality and thus address the objective of Creation through their expression of spirituality, which is *Torah* and *mitzvos*. The Jew, having the ability to activate spiritual influences that affect existence should reveal to him that he as an unlimited potential. Hopefully with this understanding, it will encourage the Jew to actualize his potential.

The Unique Aspect of the Thanks Offering

Midrash: Regarding the thanks offering (*korban toda*), “All of the offerings that were brought were for the purpose to tone for sin. The guilt offering was brought to atone for sin. The sin offering was brought to atone for inadvertent transgression. The burnt offering was brought to atone for improper thoughts. However, the thanks offering was brought to express one’s gratitude to G-d for performing a miracle on his behalf. G-d says, ‘Of all the offerings that were brought the most beloved to Me is the thanks offering because it is not for the sake of sin but rather to demonstrate one’s gratitude to Me.’”

King David writes in Psalms that when he would gaze at the sky, “The heavens sing Your glory...” We say every day in the *Modim* prayer, “We gratefully thank You, for it is You Who are *Hashem*... For Your miracles that are with us every day.” Although we utter words of thanks

it is rare that one actually feels a sense of gratitude for the unlimited miracles that G-d performs on our behalf. If one does not perceive the miracle, although it may be taking place, he will not feel gratitude. It is only when one recognizes a miracle for what it is will he be thankful.

The objective of existence is for man to recognize G-d and Glorify Him. If one is able to appreciate and internalize that G-d performs miracles on his behalf every moment, he would be fulfilling the purpose of Creation. If one wished to demonstrate his gratitude to G-d for being healthy, he could bring a thanks offering, which is not obligatory.

Gemara: If one returns safely after traversing a desert or from traveling the high seas, or is released from prison, or recovers from a serious illness, one must bring a thanks offering. One must recognize that one’s safety and survival is not attributed to happenstance but rather G-d Wills it to be so. When the individual acknowledges G-d in this manner, the thanks offering is the most beloved to Him. The thanks offering is a meal offering that is comprised of forty loaves of bread, ten of them being leavened. In addition, an animal is brought as a sacrifice.

All other personal meal offerings in order to be valid needed to be unleavened. *Sforno* explains that the basis for this meal offering to contain a leavened element within it is to indicate that although the person is not spiritually perfect because he has impurity due to sin; nevertheless, G-d’s Mercy allowed him to survive. Something of a leavened nature represents the evil inclination. A leavened product is tastier, which connotes lust and desire. During the processing leavening the dough expands and rises, which is analogous to arrogance and haughtiness.

Therefore, under normal circumstances the leavened produced is rejected as a meal offering. If this is so, why must the thanks offering contain ten loaves of bread that are leavened? *Sforno* explains that the leavened loaves in the thanks offering that although one contains sin, G-d nevertheless performed a miracle on his behalf.

Torah: “The one who brings the thanks offering is honoring Me...” The verse expresses the word “honor” with a degree of emphasis to indicate that there is a double honor.

Chazal: This alludes not only to this world but also the world to come. When one experiences a miracle he could interpret his survival as being fate. He is thus a statistic. Or he could believe that he survived only because G-d Wanted him to be alive. If one believes that he is alive only due to G-d's Kindness then he is indebted to Him. However, if one believes that his being saved is due to fate, then he feels beholden to no one. Therefore, the one who acknowledges that G-d is the reason for his survival is the one who suppressed his inclination to recognize that it was G-d and not fate.

The majority of the loaves of the thanks offering (30 loaves) are unleavened which represents the positive characteristics of man which is humility and subservience to G-d. The ten leavened loaves represent the evil inclination that was suppressed and negated by the thirty loaves comprised of unleavened bread. Meaning, despite the individual's evil inclination that rejects the fact that he is indebted to G-d, his humility overwhelms and negates his inclination to allow him to give thanks to his true Benefactor, G-d.

Evoking Praise as a Result of sensing One's Own Unworthiness

Midrash: "Understand to what degree G-d is willing to forgive the sins of the Jewish people! One who has an ox, he should bring it as a sacrifice. One who has a ram, he should bring it as a sacrifice. One who has a sheep, he should bring it as a sacrifice. One who has a dove, he should bring it as a sacrifice. One who does not have any of these should bring flour as a meal offering (*minchas aanie* 'meal offering of the poor'). One who does not have any flour, he should bring his words. As it states, 'G-d is willing to accept words alone (as a sacrifice)...' Can one's verbal expression be considered in the place of a sacrifice? G-d says 'Yes.'" It states in Prophets, 'We shall pay oxen with our lips...'

Gemara in Tractate *Menachos*: The verse means that when one recites the portion of the sin offering it is considered as if he had brought the sin offering. The same is true regarding every offering, which one would bring if the Temple had stood.

Midrash: "Why does G-d accept words alone as a sacrifice if one is not able to bring the required species? There is no greater repentance before G-d than the giving of thanks. As it states, 'You should bring the thanks offering...'" What relevance does thanks have

to repentance? Evidently, there is a linkage between thanks and repentance.

Rabbeinu Yonah in his commentary in Tractate *Berachos*: If a person had eaten fat that eaten one of two pieces of fat and was uncertain if the fat that he ate was forbidden fat (*cheilev*) or kosher fat. One must bring a questionable guilt offering until it can be determined. If it is ultimately determined that he had eaten the non-kosher fat (*cheilev*), then he must bring a guilt offering. On a *Torah* level, there is no minimum requirement of how much must be expended for the purpose of the questionable guilt offering. However, the Rabbis did establish a minimum cost.

Rabbeinu Yonah: The reason for this rabbinic requirement is that if one is not certain if he had been in violation, the tendency of a person is to rationalize that he probably is not. Consequently, by not feeling the gravity of the question, he would not repent sufficiently. Therefore, the *Rabbis* legislated a minimum requirement for the cost of the offering to give one an understanding of the seriousness of his predicament. Since one needs to make a significant financial outlay it will give him the understanding of the seriousness of his predicament

It is only when one introspects properly and realizes that he had failed, that he will be able to have remorse. However, if one does not see himself sufficiently culpable his remorse will not be internalized properly. The more one perceives himself in a positive light, one's degree of regret assumes a more superficial standing. This is when one focuses on his accomplishments and not his failures. When one understands that he had sinned and brings an ox or any other species as the offering for his atonement, because there is a financial cost to bring about atonement, this detracts from the depth and quality of his repentance. It is because he feels he had made a significant financial outlay to bring the sacrifice. This is not to say that the individual did not repent, which he must do before the sacrifice is accepted.

Gemara in Tractate *Zevachim*: If one brings an offering without confession, his offering is considered as an "abomination" as the verse states "The offering of the evil is an abomination (*zevach reshaaim toaivah*)."

The financial outlay is also part of the atonement. When one is not even able to bring the least costly sacrifice such as the meal offering, he will realize that he has

nothing to give. The individual will understand that he is a beneficiary of G-d's Kindness and not a benefactor. This sense of reality is humbling. With this mindset, one is able to truly thankful for every aspect of his existence. G-d says that He values most the expression of thanks because it is only when one achieves this mindset is he able to have true remorse for the wrong that he had done. Although he is not a contributor, G-d still rains upon him kindness and blessing.

It is ruled in the Code of Laws (*Shulchan Aruch*) that one must mourn the destruction of the Temple every day. We must internalize that we no longer have the Temple because we are unworthy to have it

rebuild until we make the proper corrections through repentance. Only then can we bring the appropriate sacrifices to G-d and perform a proper service to Him. Consequently, we can only recite the portions of the *Torah* that pertain to the sacrifices in order to achieve some degree of atonement.

When one does so, he must feel that despite his unworthiness and lack of contribution, G-d is willing to accept our verbal expression to bring about the necessary atonement. We must also feel thankful as beneficiaries of His Kindness. This will allow us to give thanks and praise to him, not as a perfunctory act but from the depth of our heart.



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