



PARSHAS TZAV PESACH

SHALOSH SEUDOS TORAH
5772

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Strengthening Emunah on Pesach

Introduction

Our parsha begins with Hashem telling Moshe Rabbeinu to 'command' Aharon regarding the laws of the Korban (sacrifice) Olah.

Rashi quotes Rabbi Shimon who states, "The verse had to specifically urge (use the strong word of commanding) because this is a situation of חסרון כיס," figuratively understood as financial loss, but is literally translated as 'a hole in the pocket.'

The Korban Olah was entirely consumed on the altar and none of it was reserved for the Kohanim (priests) to eat. Therefore, the verse specifically urges the Kohen to fulfill this mitzvah (which he does not benefit financially from) with alacrity.

Many difficulties were raised on this Rashi and many solutions were presented to answer them. We will homiletically interpret this Rashi and the verses following it so as to deduce lessons pertaining to our generation.

Our Generation Completes the Tasks of All the Previous Generations

The anatomy of a person begins with his head and ends with the soles of his feet. Likewise, there is an anatomy of all the generations.

The great, lofty Generation of the Wilderness - the one to whom the Torah was given – corresponds to the 'head' of all the generations. The generation of King David - who composed the heartwarming, inspiring verses of Psalms, and in whose era the Bais HaMikdash, the house of prayer, was erected - corresponded to the heart of the generations. These were great and lofty generations.

In contrast, our generation corresponds to the lowliest part of man, the soles of his feet. We are a generation with minimal understanding and sensitivity for spirituality - like the soles of the feet that are very hardened and insensitive to stimulation.

However, just as the soles of the feet support the body and without them a person can't stand, so too, all the generations depend upon us. If we falter, they will not be able to stand.

It is true that our service of Hashem is in a very dismal state; however, we compensate for that by remaining strong despite the tragedies and terrifying tests we endure. We refuse to falter; we trudge forward, despite the overwhelming odds against us. Therefore, it is precisely our generation who completes the tasks of all the generations.

A mitzvah is attributed to the person who completes it. Our generation takes the credit for all the great accomplishments of the prior generations.

A verse later in this paragraph states, "וְהִקְטִיר עָלֶיהָ חֶלְבֵי הַשְּׁלָמִים", 'He shall burn upon [the altar] the fat of the Korban Shelamim. The Gemara states that this is referring to the תמיד של בין הערבים (the daily evening Korban) – the last Korban of the day – "עליה השלם כל הקרבנות כולם", '[With the תמיד של בין הערבים] you shall complete all of the Korbanos.'

This hints that the last generation completes all the previous ones. Furthermore, the "השלמים" – the generation that completes all the previous ones – is "חלבי" – the fat, i.e. the choicest, of all the generations. It is a generation especially beloved by Hashem.

The Preciousness of the Generation of Night

The first verse of the parsha discusses the Korbanos burning throughout the entire night on the altar. It was preferable that the burning of the Korbanos should take place by day; however, post facto, it was acceptable if it finished burning throughout the night.

The burning of the Korban at night was not in its most proper time; however, it was accepted in heaven. So too, the service of Hashem that Jews engage in throughout the night of exile, despite its imperfections, is precious to Hashem.

The last part of the night is the darkest; however, it was precisely then that the last remains of the previous day's Korbanos ascended. Spiritual enlightenment is most absent in the last period before the arrival of Mashiach. However, it is the era when all the accomplishments of the previous generations are being finalized.

It is imperative that our generation recognize its responsibility.

Making Ourselves Complete

Rashi comments that the וצ, command, extends to all the generations until the very last one. The verse exhorts the last generations not to have a 'חסרון כיס', literally translated as 'a hole in the pocket.'

A man came to HaRav Elchonon Wasserman with a complaint. The Gemara states that one who makes Havdalah on wine will merit sons. "I make havdalah on wine and I do not have sons." Rav Wasserman responded, "Heaven is granting you sons, but you have a hole in your pocket!"

A person can be granted heavenly bounty, but he can lose it if he 'has a hole in his pocket.' In order to contain heavenly bounty, one must be complete.

Rashi notes that the verse is talking to the last generations, who will be granted much reward for fulfilling their task despite the hardships. He quotes Rabbi Shimon who says that the verse specifically urges a person to be complete in a situation where חסרון כיס - having 'a hole in ones pocket' - can cause a lot of damage. It can, heaven forbid, cause us to lose all the blessings that are awaiting us as a reward for withstanding the difficult trials and troubles of our times.

Emunah in Difficult Times

The focus of the last generation must be to maintain faith in Hashem. The Prophet Chabakuk, spoke to the last generation. He exhorted, 'A tzaddik lives through his emunah¹;' the last generation must focus all of their energies on maintaining a pure devoted faith in Hashem.

In our generation there are extensive challenges opposing belief in a Heavenly Power; ours is, for the most part, a G-dless world.

A person should visualize himself as the man who will change the fate of the entire world. A person does not know the power of his own soul.

A simple Jew may possess a very lofty soul and have an influence on a myriad of people. If he strengthens himself in emunah in a challenging situation - when Hashem appears absent from the occurrences of his life - he may affect tens of thousands of other Jews and bring them closer to holiness.

By reconfirming his trust that everything that happens emanates from the loving-kindness of Hashem - even if events seem incomprehensibly unjust and cruel in his eyes - he may be effecting the return of scores of estranged Jews to their faith.

Every annoyance, aggravation, or heaven forbid a tragedy that a person traverses, is a test from heaven. Hashem wants to see if the difficulty will awaken faith in Hashem and if he will strengthen himself in the belief that Hashem in His goodness brought it and it was not by happenstance.

Tzaddikim have told us that if a person strengthens himself in difficult times until he truly feels that the troubles he is enduring were lovingly sent to him by Hashem for his own benefit, he will experience a sweetening of the harsh judgment he is suffering from. נגע, wound, will be transformed into ענג, pleasure; צרה, calamity, to רצה, favor.

Emunah is the Catalyst for the Redemption

Through strengthening oneself in emunah – especially in difficult times - one brings the redemption closer. This is because the Ultimate Redemption is contingent upon Jews strengthening themselves in faith; as the Midrash² states, ‘the Jewish people will be redeemed only in the merit of emunah.

עיקבתא דמשיחא, the era immediately preceding the arrival of Mashiach, is gematria (has the same numerical value as) "דרך אמונה בחרתי"³, ‘a path of emunah I have chosen’ (they both equal 946). Indeed, it is the task of the last generation to choose emunah as a lifeline.

In our generation there is an influx of returnees to Judaism. The Rambam states that before Mashiach will arrive all the Jewish people will repent, as the Prophet Yeshaya predicted, "וְבָא לְצִיּוֹן גּוֹאֵל וְלְשִׁבְי פָּשַׁע בְּיַעֲקֹב"⁴, ‘a redeemer will come to Tzion and to those who repent from sin in Yaakov.’

עיקבתא דמשיחא is also gematria "שבי פשע ביעקב". The generation preceding the coming of Mashiach will repent.

Serving Hashem with Fire

Another verse in this paragraph is – "ואש המזבח תוקד בו", ‘the fire of the altar should burn on it.’

When the Sfas Emes was a child, he was asked to translate the above verse. He said – the fire of the altar should burn ‘in him’ – in the servant of G-d.

We should fan the fire of holiness within ourselves during the entire night of exile, until the morning of redemption will dawn.

Serving Hashem According to Our Capabilities

Regarding the garment of the Kohen, the verse states, "מדו בד", ‘his shirt of linen.’ Rashi comments, "שתהא כמידתו", ‘it should be his size.’ The garment that the Kohen wears when performing his duty in the Bais HaMikdash must fit him.

The garment the verse is discussing alludes to the spiritual garment each of us designs for ourselves for the afterlife through the mitzvos we perform in our lifetime. Rashi comments: the garment should fit the individual.

The ‘Ikvis DiMeshicha Jew’ feels very dejected when he compares the quality of his service of Hashem with that of prior generations. The verse comforts him: 'מדו בד', the spiritual garment you make from your mitzvos, i.e. the quality of your service of Hashem, has to be according to your size; more is not demanded from you.

Our miniscule accomplishments are very precious to Hashem because they are the best we can offer.

'Chumros' – (Stringencies in law) and Propriety

Tzaddikim would say, "We dislike extremely stringent observance of halacha (because it causes nervousness); however, on Pesach, we do like it."

On Pesach people have various customs and stringencies which are to be kept. It is proper to refrain from eating the new foods that are being marketed and keep to the traditions of previous generations. Most of these are very difficult to certify as kosher all year; this is especially so on Pesach. Sticking to the basics is the safest alternative on Pesach, especially since Pesach is a time of curtailing one's cravings.

On the other hand, the Kamarna Rebbe said that one must ensure that adding additional stringency does not detract from the joy of Yom Tov. If incorporating chumros above and beyond what is required by halacha (law) can cause stress, anxiety or pressure, it is not the will of Hashem.

If someone 'grabs' every chumrah he hears about and causes domestic harmony to be disrupted, he destroys the vessel which contains blessing - which is peace. He has a כיס, a hole in his pocket which his blessing are being poured into.

There was a custom by some tzaddikim not to talk at all by the Seder. However, this is not practical nowadays with family members that need attention and warmth.

A father-in-law came to R' David of Skver complaining that his new son-in-law went numerous times a day to the mikvah, and this disrupted the family's routine. The Rebbe called over the young man, who defended himself saying, 'But the Rebbe himself goes to the mikvah many times a day!'

To this the Rebbe responded, "First don't do what I don't do, then you can do what I do!"

This is what the verses we are discussing continue and say, "והרים את הדשן", 'he should pick up the ashes.' The fallen, ashen souls, on the edge of the Jewish nation, you shall pick them up! Don't include stringencies that will cause the insecure and sensitive to be excluded from holiness. Draw near every downtrodden person and rely on leniencies where applicable.

The custom of Slonimer chassidim was not to eat chametz that a Jew relied on the standard 'Chometz Sale' to keep in his property on Pesach. Once, by a post-Pesach meal, the local baker donated cookies. The chassidim asked him, "Were these sold to the non-Jew among your possessions on Pesach?"

"Yes," he truthfully answered. The chassidim refrained from eating the cookies and the man felt bad. The Rebbe, grasping the situation, asked that the cookies be passed to him and ate a bit of them. Thereby, all the chassidim also ate them.

A stringency can be ignored in the face of the pain of a Jew.

Praying for Mashiach

Nissan is the center of the year. Parshas Tzav contains the verse which is the center of the Torah.

All the fifty Shabbosim of the year are contained in the Shabbos before Pesach, Shabbos HaGadol and beg Hashem to bring the Ultimate Redemption. We have to join the Shabbosim

and also pray for Mashiach. Shalosh Seudos, the highpoint of Shabbos, is a time especially auspicious to pray for the redemption.

Just as the הערבים של בין תמיד completed all of the days Korbanos, this Shabbos finalizes all the Shabbosim of the year. May we merit that this be our last Shabbos in exile.

Preparing for Pesach

The most important feature of Pesach is the strengthening of emunah. Preparing all the Pesach requirements and retelling the story of the exodus plants the basic tenets of Judaism in our hearts.

To the regular man, matzah is a large bread cracker; to the nutritionist, it is a carbohydrate; the Zohar - who saw the very essence of the matzah - declared it "מיכלא דמהימנותא", 'a food of emunah.'

The Matzos are supremely holy. They contain many great spiritual secrets. The same is true of all the spiritual goodies of the Seder Night - the four cups, the Karpas, the Afikoman, the Hagaddah, the Hallel, and the traditional poems at the end of The Seder.

May it be the will of Hashem that we be redeemed **ביד רמה**, with the strong hand of Hashem, and we accomplish the purpose of the redemption, to fulfill the Torah

וכימי צאתך מארץ מצרים אראנו נפלאות, וכמשוש חתן על כלה ישיש עליך
אלוקיך

And as in the days of the exodus from Egypt I will show wonders, and like a groom rejoices with his bride, your G-d will rejoice with you.

¹ חבקוק ב:ד

² שה"ש עה"כ תשורי מראש אמנה

³ תהלים קיט:ל

⁴ ישעיה נט:כ