

SEEKING HIM

by Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein

*This is the Torah of the **olah**. It is the **olah** that remains on the flame on the altar, all night till morning...*

Be'er Mayim Chaim: How are we to relate to an entire seder of Mishnah that seems millennia away from us? What are we to do with Seder Kodshim? Chazal present us with a unitary approach: "The law is for the times of Moshiach. In the meantime, derosh/ expound upon them, and receive reward."²

Contrary to everyone's expectation, I don't believe that Chazal meant the reward of Torah study. There is nothing unique about the set of mitzvos that, for one reason or other, cannot be implemented. All mitzvos can be studied, and reward is certainly forthcoming to those who study mitzvos that are actually put into practice. The reward for study stands independent of the reward for the actual performance of the mitzvah. Thus, if a person finds himself incapable of observing a particular mitzvah, he should study it, and at least salvage the reward for the learning. (Studying the laws of maakeh, for example, is rewarded, even if a person does not have a house, and therefore cannot implement his learning by erecting a safety barrier around his roof. The same undoubtedly holds true for the study of kodshim, even though we lack a beis hamikdash, and cannot bring any of the offerings.)

If Chazal therefore don't mean that we should study kodshim (because study is commendable for all mitzvos, regardless of whether they can be practiced or not), then what do they mean by derosh vekabel sechar? Derosh, I believe, should be understood in the way it is used in our zemiros for Shabbos: dorshei Hashem, zera Avraham ohavov. It does not mean study or expound, but ardently and expectantly seek. When we encounter kodshim (or any other mitzvos that circumstances prevent us from performing), our hearts should long for the opportunity to fulfill His mitzvah, and bring Him nachas ruach.

This might very well be the intent of the pasuk, "Dirshu Hashem b'himatzo." Too many people not only fail to long for the opportunity to perform a mitzvah well in advance of its arrival, they greet the mitzvah with less than full enthusiasm. The pasuk therefore tells us that if we cannot bring ourselves to look ahead longingly for a seasonal mitzvah to arrive, at least we should earnestly seek the closeness to Him that the mitzvah offers b'himatzo, when it has arrived. At least then we ought to seek His presence when He is available to us through the modality of that mitzvah activity.

Chazal's recommendation, however, is that we ought not to wait. Better to feel the longing and

yearning well in advance. And even in regard to mitzvos that we are simply unable to perform, our attitude should be one of yearning for the opportunity, even when it seems remote. When we encounter references to the korbanos, our hearts should ache for want of the opportunity to implement each one of them. We ought to feel the urge to bring each of the offerings, and feel hamstrung by Hashem's insistence that it be brought only in a beis hamikdosh, and only through kohanim, rather than ourselves.

The gemara³ comments on our pasuk. "Whoever involves himself with Torah is considered as if he offered an olah." Note that Chazal do not say "whoever studies Torah," but "whoever involves himself with Torah." They don't mean simply studying the Torah. They mean psychically immersing ourselves in it, identifying with all parts of it with all our hearts so that we feel the void caused by our being in exile, and therefore unable to perform some of her dictates.

Our pasuk says all of this. "This is the Torah of the olah." At times, the Torah will substitute for the olah and minchah and shelamim. Why? Because "it is the olah that remains on the flame on the altar." The place of the olah is extremely specific. It cannot be brought any place but that one mizbeach!" If this is so, what is to become of the aspirations of all of Klal Yisrael? What will happen to the aspirations of our people "all night till morning," the entire night of the long exile, until it ends in a new bright morning?" It must be that our attachment to the Torah - our intense desire to do whatever it asks of us - substitutes for the korban.

Sources:

1. Based on Be'er Mayim Chaim, Vayikra 6:2
2. Sanhedrin 51B
3. Menachos 110A