

THE QUALIFYING FACTOR

by Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

1. The Qualifying Factor

The Torah states, "It was on the eighth day, Moshe summoned Aaron and his sons..." It was on the eighth day that Aaron and his sons began to officiate in the Mishkan. The Midrash states, "During the seven day period that Moshe was at the burning bush G'd had said to him, 'I want you to go (to Egypt) and fulfill My agency (to redeem My children).' Moshe responded, 'You should send the one who is qualified. You should send Aaron my brother who is more qualified than I am.' This dialogue repeated itself on the first day, the second day, etc. G'd said to Moshe, 'Every day I tell you to go and every day you answer Me that I should send your brother, who is more qualified. I swear on your life that tomorrow you will be repaid for your obstinacy. When the Mishkan will be completed, initially you will believe that you will be the High Priest. However, on the eighth day I will surprise you by informing you that Aaron is the one who will officiate as the High Priest. You will then summon Aaron and his sons.' Thus, the verse states, '...Moshe summoned Aaron and his sons...'"

The Midrash continues, "There is a calling for greatness. Moshe said to Aaron, 'G'd said to me that I should install you as the High Priest.' Aaron responded, 'You have toiled for the building of the Mishkan, and I should be made the High Priest?'" If Moshe had told Aaron in the Name of G'd that he was chosen to be the High Priest, how could Aaron question the appointment? Aaron understood that Moshe had toiled and sacrificed for the building of the Mishkan. Moshe had inculcated into the Mishkan everything that was needed to give it the capacity to accommodate all the spiritual needs of the Jewish people. Chazal refer to the Mishkan as "the Mishkan of Moshe" because of his degree of involvement and sacrifice for its sake. Certainly, Aaron was not questioning Moshe's word as being the word of G'd regarding his appointment as High Priest, but rather, he needed to clarify for himself why did G'd choose him to be the qualified High Priest and not Moshe, who had given the Mishkan its spiritual potential and function.

The Midrash continues, "Moshe said to Aaron, 'I swear by your life! That although you have been appointed to be the High Priest I regard it as if it were me. Just as you rejoiced when I was chosen to be the Redeemer (despite the fact that Moshe was the younger brother), so too do I rejoice in your advancement. As the Torah states, 'G'd said to Moshe, "When Aaron will be informed of your elevation, he will come out to greet you in the desert and he will see you and have joy in his heart.'"

Although Aaron was a prophet and G'd's agent to communicate His Will to the Jewish people in Egypt, when Moshe was chosen to be the Redeemer, Aaron did not feel slighted to any degree. To

the contrary, he felt joy in his heart that Moshe, his younger brother was chosen. It was only because Aaron's heart was pure that he had the ability to rejoice. He understood and internalized to the core of his being that whatever G'd chooses to do is absolute in its essence and there is no other consideration. If He chose Moshe to be the redeemer it was certain to Aaron that the redemption could only come about through Moshe's leadership. Aaron was only able to internalize the communication of Moshe being the Redeemer because of his exceptional level of humility. Therefore, when Moshe was informed that Aaron will be the High Priest and not himself, Moshe rejoiced in a similar manner. The purity of Aaron his brother was confirmed through his own rejoicing. Moshe therefore felt that Aaron's position as High Priest was no less than he himself being the officiant. One cannot have had a more qualified agent than Aaron, his brother. The humility and purity of Aaron was also demonstrated through the mitzvah of the lighting of the Menorah.

When Aaron was told by G'd that the lighting of the Menorah was unique to him, the Torah tells us "Aaron did as he was told." Rashi cites the Midrash that explains that Aaron did exactly as he was told without any change. Despite the fact that Aaron's participation in the lighting of the Menorah established him as unique and special, he was not affected to any degree because of his level of humility. It was because he fully appreciated his responsibility to G'd to actualize his potential as High Priest.

The Torah tells us that after Yehoshua Bin Nun was chosen to be Moshe's successor as leader of the Jewish people, they both addressed the people as joint leaders. Within this context of leadership, the Torah refers to Yehoshua as Hoshea, which was his original name prior to the incident of the spies. Rashi in his commentary cites Sifri which states, "Although he (Yehoshua) was given a position of esteem and greatness he humbled himself to the point of his original unknown status when he was referred to as 'Hoshea.'"

2. Atonement, Transcending the Animal

The Torah tells us that after Aaron was installed as the High Priest, he needed to bring a calf as a sin offering to atone for his participation in the Golden Calf. Aaron in addition, brought a goat as a sin offering on behalf of the Jewish people to atone for their participation in idolatry. The Torah states, "Aaron came near to the Altar, and slaughtered the sin offering..." Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh writes, "The Jerusalem Talmud states that they had consulted with Prophecy (Nevuah), 'What should be the fate of the sinner? Prophecy responded, 'The life of the sinner should be taken.' However the Torah tells us, 'If one were to sin, He should repent and bring a sacrifice to be atoned.' This is based on the Attribute of Mercy. The process of atonement of the sacrifice is based upon the mindset of the one who brings the sacrifice.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh continues, "In truth, the individual who sins deserves to be slaughtered and burned upon the Altar as the animal. When one understands and appreciates the severity of transgression and that the only reason he is spared is due to the Mercy of G'd, then the sacrifice can

atone on his behalf. When the Torah states, 'Aaron came near to the Altar...' it means that he fully internalized that he had relevance to the Altar within the context of himself deserving to be slaughtered and sacrificed. However, he slaughtered the calf in his place because of the Mercy of G'd.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh continues, "The Midrash states, 'G'd had taken an oath that the world should function within the context of Justice.'" The Gemara in Tractate Bava Kama tells us that if one were to say that G'd overlooks and does not evaluate and judge every aspect of one's behavior, he deserves that his life should be compromised. If this is so, then how is the bringing of a sacrifice in stead of the sinner in conformance with this principle?" Based on the Attribute of Justice, the individual who had sinned should be put to death.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains, "In fact, if one's life were to be taken after he had repented, it would be considered a miscarriage of justice. When one sins, it is not within the context of rational behavior for a Jew. The sinner assumes the persona of an (intellectual) animal. As the Zohar states, 'A person does not sin unless he is overtaken by a spirit of irrationality (ruach shtus).' Therefore, when one sins, he is not sinning as a person whose classified as a human being (Adam) but rather as an animal who is not endowed with discretion. After one introspects and appreciates the wrong that he had done, and begins the process of repentance, he regains the status of a human being (Adam). Therefore, it would be unconscionable to take the life of a human being for an act that was perpetrated by an animal. Therefore, justice dictates that the animal must be sacrificed in the stead of the sinner in conjunction with the sinner recognizing the wrong that he had done. This is the understanding of the verse in Psalms, 'Man together with the animal, G'd will assist...' Meaning, if one employs his intellect to repent and appreciates the degree of travesty that in fact he deserves to be slaughtered and sacrificed together with the offering, he will achieve full atonement."

The Gemara in Tractate Zevachim tells us that a sacrifice that is brought for atonement must be predicated by repentance. As it states, "The sacrifice of the evil is an abomination (to G'd)." The reason for this is that if the person does not repent prior to bringing the sacrifice, the transition from animal to rational being has not yet taken place. Therefore, the animal is not qualified to atone.

According to Jewish Law, the animal that qualifies for a sin offering is the animal that is consecrated for that specific purpose. If the animal should give birth after it was consecrated to a calf, the offspring does not qualify to be brought as a sin offering although its status is a derivative of the initial consecration. Why should the offspring not be qualified for the offering if in fact it has the sanctity of a sin offering? The power of speech emanates from the spirit that is contained within the human being (Ruach). The power of speech quantifies the human being as being above the classification of animal. It is only when that characteristic is employed for the sake of consecration, can the animal be the equivalent of the sin offering to be slaughtered and sacrificed. Adam, the first human being was classified as the human species when he was endowed with the power of speech

that emanated from his spirit "Ruach." Similarly, Rambam explains in the Laws of Repentance, "For one to be atoned one must verbalize his confession." Only through the articulation of the sin does one assume the classification of "Adam" which transcends the animal and thus can be atoned.

3. Sensing the Pain of the Torah Sage

The Torah states after Nadav and Avihu, the sons of Aaron were struck down by G'd, "Moshe said to Aaron...your brethren the entire House of Israel shall bewail the conflagration that Hashem ignited." Rashi cites Chazal, "From here we learn that the pain of the Torah Sage is incumbent upon all to experience." Sifsei Chochomim explains Rashi to mean that it is not that everyone must mourn the loss of the one who passed away, but rather, one must feel the pain of the Torah Sage who is grieving. Why is this something that the Torah demands?

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos tells us that when Moshe was told that G'd had decreed that the Jewish people should be destroyed because of the sin of the Golden Calf, He supplicated G'd to annul the decree to the point that he became ill from the intensity of his prayer. This is alluded to in the verse, "Moshe pleaded (vayichal) before Hashem...." The word "vayichal" alludes to the fact that Moshe became "choleh (ill)." The Gemara tells us that if a Torah Sage is ill one has the obligation to pray for his recovery. Just as Moshe prayed to G'd for the annulment of the decree to the point of becoming ill, so too must one pray for the recovery of the Torah Sage. One is obligated to internalize the tragic state of the Torah Sage who is not well.

It is only in the merit of the Torah Sages that the Jewish people continue to exist. Jeremiah the Prophet states, "If not for My Covenant being in affect day and night, the extent of heaven and earth would not exist." This is referring to the continuous obligation of Torah study. If Torah were not to be studied, even for a moment, existence would cease to be. When the Torah Sage is compromised with an illness, his recovery is crucial to existence because the world stands in his merit. Therefore, one must internalize the pain and grief of the Torah Sage as his own to understand and appreciate the gravity of the moment. The Jewish people needed to grieve with Aaron and his sons to feel their pain in order to appreciate their value as it pertains to existence.

Chofetz Chaim explains the infinite value of Torah Scholars with an allegory. There was a king who had a steamboat built for himself that was the equivalent of a palace. He prided himself in the beauty and elegance of the steamboat that moved so easily over the water. One day the king asked the captain if he could show him how it was powered. The captain brought the king to the lower part of the boat where he saw how coal was being shoveled into the furnaces that caused the steam that powered the turbines. The walls of the lower deck were completely covered in the black soot of the coal and the men who worked to fuel the furnaces were similarly encrusted in grime. When the king saw the degree of filth that was in his palace, he became outraged. How could he allow such squalor to exist within his palace? He thus ordered the captain to break down the walls of the engine room to remove the filth from the walls. Although the captain understood that by doing so the ship

would sink, he had no choice but to follow the command of his master. The ship immediately sunk because the king did not understand the value of that aspect and function of the ship. Similarly, if one walks into a study hall or synagogue and notices people engaged in Torah study who may appear to be undernourished or impoverished and are not attractive physical beings because of their needy state, one should not look upon them in a condescending manner. It is these people who are the most vital to existence because their Torah study maintains existence. One must appreciate their true value and look beyond superficial appearances.

If the Torah Sage is pained or is in need, one must sense that pain to either alleviate or to indicate that this individual is of great value and importance.

4. Dietary Laws, a Confirmation of the Eternity of the Jewish People

The Torah states, "Hashem spoke to Moshe and Aaron, saying to them: Speak to the Children of Israel saying: These are the creatures that you may eat from among the animals that are upon the earth." The Midrash cites a verse from Chavakuk, " 'G'd had stood and measured/evaluated the Earth. He saw and released the nations.' What is the meaning of 'G'd measured the Earth?' When G'd wanted to give the Torah to the Jewish people, He evaluated the Earth (existence) and decided to give it in the desert in a public setting. Initially, when the nations of the world rejected the Torah, G'd was going to cause the world to revert back to a state of water (pre-existence). However, when the Jewish people accepted the Torah unequivocally with their declaration of 'Naaseh V'nishma - we will do and we will listen' existence continued. It was only when the Jewish people accepted the Torah that the world became tranquil.

As it states in Psalms, 'The Earth was fearful and tranquil.' When the Jewish people accepted the Torah, the nations of the world received their release. They were permitted to eat the forbidden contaminated species such as rodents. To what is this analogous? To a doctor who evaluated two patients. One was deathly ill with no chance of recovery. The doctor told his relatives that he should not be denied anything that he wants to eat. Afterwards, the doctor evaluated the second patient and believed that he would recover. He then instructed the family that he was only permitted to eat certain foods; however, other foods must be withheld from him so that he should be able to recover.

After hearing the doctor's prescription to each of the patients, the doctor was asked, 'Why do you differentiate between the two patients regarding what they are permitted to eat?' The doctor responded, 'Regarding the patient who is deathly ill, since he will die in any case, there is no reason to deny him anything that he desires. However, the patient, who has relevance to life, must adhere to a strict dietary regiment if he is to live.' Similarly, G'd permitted to the nations of the world to eat anything that they desired. However, since the Jewish people have relevance to eternity, they need to maintain their spiritual purity and sanctity. Therefore, G'd forbade them from eating the species that would contaminate them. As it states, 'You who cling to Hashem, your G'd, you are all alive today.'

Initially G'd had offered the Torah to the nations of the world. Each nation rejected it for their own reason. However, when the Jewish people chose to accept the Torah they did so unequivocally with their declaration of "Naaseh V'nishma." Had the Jewish people not done so, the world would have reverted back to a state of pre-existence. Because of their acceptance of the Torah, the world assumed a state of permanency. G'd chose to give the Torah to the Jewish people in a public setting which was Mt. Sinai. Why did G'd choose to give the Torah in the desert, which is a location that is the ultimate setting of desolation?

The Gemara in Tractate Nedarim explains that the reason G'd chose to give the Torah to the Jewish people in the desert was because it is a location that is ownerless and barren. Just as the desert has no innate value, so too must the one who wants to acquire Torah render himself ownerless like the desert (humble). It is only through one's self-negation does one become a proper receptacle for the processing and retention of Torah. It seems from the Midrash that G'd chose to give the Torah in the desert because He wanted to give It in a public setting that had no distractions. Because if there were any distractions at the moment of the giving of the Torah, one would not be able to appreciate the profundity of the event.

G'd wanted the Torah to be given in the most public setting because He wanted the nations of the world to understand that the world only exists in the merit of the Jewish people. It was only because the Jewish people embraced the Torah, unequivocally, that existence has any value. The nations of the world needed to appreciate and understand that they owe their very existence to the Jewish people, who dedicated themselves to G'd.

Chazal tell us that there was a negative aspect to receiving the Torah in a public setting. The Midrash tells us that the reason the Jewish people were vulnerable to the Sin of the Golden Calf was because the nations of the world had given them an "evil eye," which was rooted in envy. Had they received the Torah in a more private setting, they would not have been minimized by the envy of the nations. Although the Jewish people were put in a compromised position, as a result of the public setting, G'd chose to give the Torah before the eyes of the world, so that they could understand that their existence is only due to the Jewish people receiving the Torah at Sinai.

5. The Invaluable Gift of Mitzvos

The Torah states, "...These are the creatures that you may eat from among the animals that are upon the earth." The Midrash cites a verse in Psalms, " 'To fulfill Your Will My G'd I do desire and Your Torah is in my innards...' What is the meaning of this? The Torah permeates every aspect of our existence. How fortunate are the Jewish people because each one of their limbs has relevance to a mitzvah. There are 248 limbs in the human body and G'd has given the Jewish people 248 Positive Commandments (to correspond to them). And therefore we say every day (asher yatzar) 'Blessed are You, Hashem, our G'd King of the Universe, Who fashioned man with wisdom and created within him many openings and cavities (chalulim chalulim) ...' The numerical equivalent of 'chalulim chalulim' is

248, which corresponds to the number of limbs in the human body. This is the meaning of the words of King David in Psalms, 'Your Torah is in my innards...'"

Reb Chaim Vital explains that just as the human body is comprised of 248 limbs, the Jewish soul is comprised of 248 parts. There is a correlation between the soul and the body. When one fulfills any of the 248 Positive Commandments it perfects the corresponding aspect of the soul. In addition, the physical limb that corresponds to that mitzvah is also spiritualized and elevated. Just as the mitzvos nurture the soul, so too is the body spiritualized. As the Gemara in Tractate Berachos states, "Just as G'd permeates all existence, so too does the soul permeate every aspect of the body." The soul was created to give life and meaning to every aspect of the human being.

Chazal tell us that contained within the three paragraphs of the Shema, which is the acceptance of the yoke of heaven/dominion of G'd, are 245 words. If one prays within the context of a quorum, the one leading the service concludes the Shema with three words which complete the number 248 (Hashem Elokechem Emes). If one prays privately, one introduces the Shema with three words (Kail Melech Neeman) in order to bring the number of words in the Shema to 248. When one declares his belief in G'd, he is accepting the yoke of heaven upon every aspect of his physical being.

The human being, regarding his make up and inclination, is the equivalent of an animal, apart from his intellect. All of Man's tendencies and drives are rooted within the animal. Man was endowed with intellect in order for him to take control of his physicality and spiritualize it through the performance of the mitzvos. It is only through the study of Torah and performance of mitzvos that man can subordinate his physical inclinations and invest them in spiritual endeavors. The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos states, "If the earlier ones are classified as angels, then we can be classified as human beings. However, if the earlier ones are classified as 'human beings' then our classification will be donkeys - and not even the equivalent of the donkey of Reb Pinchas Ben Yair." The Gemara tells us that the donkey of Reb Pinchas had been stolen and the thieves who had stolen it had attempted to feed it untithed grain. The donkey refused to eat it because it was a forbidden entity. Although the donkey is an unintelligible creature, because it was the possession of Reb Pinchas Ben Yair, who was a uniquely devout and holy person, the donkey assumed a spiritualized state. Thus, instinctively it would not partake of anything that was contrary to the Torah.

Man, in terms of his physical make up, is no different from the donkey. Maharal explains that the Hebrew word "chamor - donkey" is derived from the word "chomer - material." Just as the essence of the donkey is material, and thus epitomizes the animal, man in his physical make up is no different. The only way one can dominate and dictate the physical is to assume a spiritual persona. In order to facilitate this, G'd endowed the Jewish people with Torah and mitzvos that correspond to every aspect of their physicality to bring about this spiritual metamorphosis. When one transgresses with a certain part of his body, it becomes compromised. Conversely, when one performs a mitzvah with that part of the body, it becomes spiritualized and thus elevated. Therefore, if one were to steal with his hand, besides the need to correct the sin that had been perpetrated, one should perform

acts of kindness in order to spiritualize the limb that had been diminished. If one were to gaze upon something that is inappropriate, he should gaze upon the words of the Torah in order to spiritualize his eyes. This concept is mentioned in *The Gates of Repentance*, authored by Rebbeinu Yonah.

The Gemara in Tractate Sukkah states, "I (G'd) created the evil inclination. I created Torah as its antidote." When one engages in Torah study and actualizes it through the performance of mitzvos, one incapacitates and subordinates the evil inclination and brings about a spiritualization of himself.

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