

# EXCHANGE SACRIFICES FOR TORAH LEARNING

*by Shlomo Katz*

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Today's Learning:

Pe'ah 4:2-3

Orach Chaim 55:15-17

Daf Yomi: Yoma 47

Yerushalmi Rosh Hashanah 40

Beginning with this week's parashah, most of the remainder of Sefer Shmot is devoted to the construction of the mishkan/Tabernacle (the precursor to the Bet Hamikdash). Following this, in Sefer Vayikra, we read of the korbanot/sacrifices which were to be brought in the mishkan.

R' Moshe Isserles z"l ("Rema"; 1525-1572) authored a lengthy work containing philosophical and ethical lessons that are derived from the structure of the Bet Hamikdash and the laws of the korbanot. In the introduction to that work, he wrote (in part) as follows:

The Midrash Tanchuma states: "The Torah is greater than all of the sacrifices, as it is written (Vayikra 7:37), 'This is the Torah of the olah/burnt offering, the minchah/the meal offering, the chatat/guilt offering etc.' One who studies the Torah, i.e., the laws, of the olah is deemed to have brought an olah;

one who studies the Torah of the minchah is deemed to have brought a minchah; and so on." Similarly, Rema writes, the early commentaries state that if one studies the structure of the mishkan and its utensils, he fulfills a great mitzvah. How much more so is this true if we merit to understand the inner meaning of even one of the things to which the mishkan or its utensils alludes!

In reality, there are two benefits from studying the inner meaning of the mishkan, the Bet Hamikdash, the utensils and the sacrifices, Rema writes. One is that this study will cause us to mourn for the Temple, for we will understand what we are missing. The second benefit is that we will be able to "bring sacrifices" in our minds when we sin; this is relevant to us all, as it is written (Kohelet 7:20), "There is no man in the world who is a tzaddik who does only good and does not sin." (Torat Olah)

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*"Let them take 'li' /for Me a portion . . ." (25:2)*

Rashi writes: "'For Me' - for My Name" [i.e., with pure intentions].

R' Shmuel of Kaminka z"l (18th century; a disciple of the Ba'al Shem Tov) commented regarding Rashi's explanation:

Chazal teach that a person is permitted to give tzedakah with a selfish motivation since the benefit to the recipient is the same regardless of the giver's intentions. Thus, had the pasuk said, "Let them give," the word "li" /"for Me" could not have meant "for My Name."

What then does our pasuk mean? R' Shmuel explains: One who takes charity must do so with pure intentions. Specifically, charity should be taken only for necessities, not for luxuries. (Mishnat Chassidim p. 428)

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*"This is the portion that you shall take from them: gold . . ." (25:3)*

The midrash on this parashah states that there are a number of things which Hashem created which are, in essence, too good for man. Hashem "considered" hiding them, but "decided" not to. One of these things, the midrash states, was gold.

R' Yechezkel Levenstein z"l (1885-1974; mashgiach of the Mir and Ponovezh yeshivot) taught: Of course, gold has both good and evil uses, but the essence of gold is very good. In truth, we fail to appreciate the special nature of most of the lower forms of existence, be they inanimate, plant or animal. However, King David wrote (Tehilim 8:7), "You give him dominion over Your handiwork, You placed everything under his feet." It would make no sense for the psalmist to praise Hashem in this way unless all of those creations over which Hashem has given man dominion and which Hashem has placed under man's control are pretty significant. (Mi'mizrach Ha'shemesh)

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*"You shall place in the aron/ark the luchot that I shall give you." (25:16)*

*"You shall place the kaporet/cover on the aron from above, and in the aron you shall place the luchot which I shall give you." (25:21)*

Why is the instruction to place the luchot in the aron repeated? R' Moshe Chafetz z"l (Italy; 18th century) explains as follows, in light of the Sages' teaching that the gold of the kaporet atoned for the sin of the golden calf.

Moshe broke the luchot when he saw Bnei Yisrael dancing around the golden calf. It could be argued, then, that the Jews were not worthy of having the luchot. However, said Hashem, after the gold of the kaporet has atoned for the sin of the golden calf, then "in the aron you shall place the luchot which I shall give you." [The first verse, in contrast, simply explains the purpose of the aron. Alternatively, writing these words twice is the Torah's ways of telling us to look for a deeper message in the verse.] (Melech Machshevet)

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*"You shall make a menorah of pure gold, hammered out shall the menorah be made, its base and its shaft, its cups, its knobs, and its blossoms shall be hammered from it." (25:31)*

R' Eliezer Papo z"l (1785-1828; Bosnian rabbi; author of Pele Yoetz) writes that this verse alludes to the manner in which one should give charity. This may be seen as follows:

"Menorat"/"a menorah of" - The letters of this word can spell "matan" (leaving over the letter "reish"). "Matan" means "giving" and "rash" means pauper.

"Of pure gold" - Charity should be given from gold which is pure, and not from wealth which is ill-gotten.

"Mikshah"/"hammered out" - This word shares the same root as "kashah"/"difficult." No matter how difficult one's own circumstances, he still should give charity.

"Yereichah"/"its base" also means "its thigh." Just as a person's thigh is meant to be hidden, so one's charity should be given discretely.

"Kahah"/"its shaft" shares a root with the word which means "to acquire." When one gives charity, he actually acquires wealth for himself, for Hashem will repay him.

"Ve'kanah, gevi'ehah"/"its shaft, its cups" - The letters of these words can be reordered to spell "kenei be'yeg'ah"/"acquire through toil." This alludes to the fact that the highest form of charity is to give the poor person a job or to establish him in business so that he can earn a living through the toil of his hands.

"Kafto'rehah"/"its knobs" alludes to "kaparah"/"atonement," which is what a person achieves through

performing acts of charity.

"Its blossoms" - One who gives charity will blossom in This World and in the World-to-Come. (Elef Ha'magen)

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*"You shall make the planks of the mishkan/Tabernacle of acacia wood, standing erect." (26:15)*

The midrash comments: "From those acacia trees which were already standing for this purpose. Avraham had planted these trees in Be'er Sheva. When Yaakov went to Egypt, he transplanted these trees there. Then, before he died, he told his sons that Hashem would one day command that they build a mishkan, and they should use these trees."

Surely there were suitable trees in Egypt! Why did the Patriarchs go to all this trouble? R' Yaakov Kaminetsky z"l (died 1986) explains that the Patriarchs acted thus in order to raise the spirits of their descendants who would be enslaved in Egypt. It was not enough to promise the Jews that they would be redeemed; the groves of acacia trees that Yaakov planted in Egypt were a tangible reminder to the enslaved Jews that their eventual salvation was a reality.

Similarly, R' Kamenetsky writes, this is one reason that the authors of the siddur included the order of the korbanot/sacrifices in the daily prayers. The more we are familiar with what took place in the Bet Hamikdash, the more real that the eventual rebuilding of the Bet Hamikdash will seem to us. (Emet Le'Yaakov)

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### **Letters from Our Sages**

How can a person become a diligent student of Torah if he has only limited time to devote to Torah study? R' Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz (the "Chazon Ish"; died 1953) answers that question in the following letter which is printed in Igrot Chazon Ish, Vol. III, No. 10.

"I would like to fulfill your request to help you strengthen your Torah study, or, more correctly, your shekidah/diligence. The concept of diligence is not related to the amount of time that one devotes to studying. Rather, it has to do with handing over one's person, and giving one's heart as a gift, to delving into Torah. One hour of diligence and of yearning is more valuable than two hours of casual study. . .

"The main thing is to acquire the traits by which Torah is acquired [see Avot ch. 6]. The lifeblood of all of these traits is to structure one's thoughts around the verity that everything that befalls a person is commanded by the Power which surrounds all creations - inanimate, vegetable, and living - and all of the wonders of nature, which were created by one Power Who causes them to exist and gives them life.

"Pay attention to the fact that every mortal who was created works vigorously no matter what befalls him in order to better his situation and bring success to himself. A person is given the understanding to work things out for the best, [and these abilities can be applied] to rising to intellectual heights, to appreciating the delicateness of the enlightened soul, and to experiencing pleasure which words cannot describe.

"But, I have gone deeper with my words than I should have, and I now return to the point. There are several weeks left until Pesach [when the semester ends in most yeshivot], and it is essential to take hold of oneself and to be filled with a new spirit dedicated to diligence. A resolution is in any case more effective when it is for a limited time. It also is necessary to pray that one not encounter stumbling blocks, for a resolution which is not pure of improper motives may be a trick of the yetzer hara. Be strong - the stumbling blocks are only in the beginning, as with any test man faces."

*Sponsored by the Katz family on the yahrzeits of Avraham Abba ben Avigdor Moshe Hakohen Katz a"h and Etia (Etush) bat Avigdor Moshe Hakohen Landau a"h*

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