

# THANKS FOR WHAT?

*by Shlomo Katz*

**Hamaayan / The Torah Spring**  
**Edited by Shlomo Katz**

**Tzav: Thanks for What?**

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Today's Learning:

Shevuot 7:2-3

Orach Chaim 613:4-6

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Batra 3

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Terumot 58

Chazal say: "The Korban Todah / the thanksgiving offering [discussed in this week's parashah] will never cease to be brought." Asks R' Aryeh Levin z"l (died 1969): Why is that a happy tiding? After all, the Korban Todah is brought by one who has been saved from danger. If the Korban Todah will never cease to be brought, that means that people will never cease to find themselves in danger!

He explains: When Moshe asked Hashem (Shmot 5:22-23), "Why have You made things worse for this nation?" Hashem answered: "You will see!" You will see, Hashem told him, that from every tragedy comes something good; from exile and persecution come redemption. Every episode of suffering inspires a Korban Todah, because hidden within the suffering is goodness.

The midrash says that when Yosef died, Bnei Yisrael wanted to assimilate among the Egyptians. Hashem therefore made the Egyptians hate the Jews, thus causing the Jews to reunite and to support each other. Thus good -- the continued existence of the Jewish people -- came from bad --

the Egyptians' hatred.

R' Levin adds: Chazal say that Eretz Yisrael is acquired through suffering. However, the Torah (Devarim 8:5) tells us that it is the type of "suffering" which a loving parent imposes on a child for the child's own well-being. Although we cannot fathom how good can come out of our suffering, we will one day see the hidden good and will then bring a Korban Todah. (Quoted in Ish Tzaddik Hayah p.303)

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*"If he shall offer it as a todah/thanksgiving-offering, he shall offer with the todah unleavened loaves . . . With loaves of leavened bread shall he bring his offering." (7:12-13)*

The above verses teach that a todah/thanksgiving-offering must be accompanied by loaves of both chametz and matzah. R' Don Yitzchak Abarbanel z"l (15th century) asks: Since the Korban Pesach seems to be, in essence, an offering brought in thanksgiving for the Exodus, why is it not accompanied by both chametz and matzah?

R' Avraham Shmuel Binyamin Sofer z"l (the "Ketav Sofer"; 1815- 1871) answers that the Korban Pesach is not a todah-offering. Rather, it is more like another set of sacrifices described in our parashah - the inaugural sacrifices brought at the dedication of the mishkan. Those sacrifices were accompanied by matzah, but not by chametz.

R' Sofer explains further: Chazal instructed that when we relate the story of the Exodus at the Seder, we should begin with disgrace, with the fact that our ancestors were idolators, and conclude with praise. Why? This may be understood through a parable:

When one gives a garment to a laundry in order to have a stain removed, the laundry applies soaps and chemicals which first make the garment dirtier than it was before. Of course, when the customer pays the laundry, he does not intend to pay for the labor that was expended in dirtying the garment; he intends to pay for the cleaning of the garment.

Similarly, we do not praise Hashem at the Seder for redeeming us from Egypt. Who asked Him to take us to Egypt in the first place? Rather, we praise Hashem because He cleansed the stain of idolatry from our souls. Just as the laundry cleanses the garment with vile chemicals, the process by which Hashem cleansed us was our enslavement in Egypt. It follows, then, that we do not owe Hashem a debt of gratitude for the Exodus, and the Korban Pesach is not a todah offering. Rather, the Korban Pesach is a sacrifice brought upon our inauguration into Hashem's service. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Ketav Sofer p.18a)

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*"This is the law of the olah / elevation-offering -- it is the olah on the flame . . ." (6:2)*

The word that the Torah uses for "it" spelled "hu" (which means "he") but pronounced "he" (which

means "she"). R' Chaim Yosef David Azulai z"l ("Chida"; Eretz Yisrael and Italy; 1724-1806) writes about this as follows:

Any leader, whether the leader of the generation or the head of a household, must be capable of imposing his will on his followers (or household members). This may require haughtiness. However, any such haughtiness must be an act. In his heart, a leader must feel subdued. Also, he must be sure that he is acting only for the honor of the Torah, and not for his own honor.

"This is the law of the olah / elevation offering" - i.e., this is the law for those occasions when you act in an elevated (haughty) manner. Remember: "She, the Torah, is the olah - the thing which is elevated." However, if "he," the person himself, considers himself elevated, then, says the verse: "on the flame." If one's "elevation" (haughtiness) is for his own honor, he is worthy of being consumed by fire. (Quoted in Torat Ha'Chida)

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*"This is the law of the chatat / sin-offering; in the place where the olah is slaughtered shall the chatat be slaughtered . . ." (6:18)*

*"In the place where they shall slaughter the olah they shall slaughter the asham / guilt-offering . . ." (7:2)*  
Why? R' Eliezer Zusia Portugal z"l (1897-1982; the "Skulener Rebbe") explains as follows: The first offering discussed in the book of Vayikra is the olah. Unlike the chatat and asham, which are mandatory offerings for people who have committed certain sins, the olah is a voluntary offering. As such, the olah is more beloved by G-d. Moreover, the spot in the Bet Hamikdash where the olah is slaughtered is a particularly holy place, for it "reminds" G-d of the voluntary offerings that were brought there. By slaughtering the mandatory chatat and asham at that same spot, we obtain favor from Hashem and increase the likelihood that our sacrifices will be accepted.

R' Portugal quotes R' Chanoch Henach of Alesk z"l (1800-1884), who makes a similar point regarding the place where one stands for prayer. The gemara (Berachot 6b) states: "If one has a fixed place for prayer, the G-d of Avraham will come to his aid." Says the Rebbe of Alesk: A place where one has prayed a few times attains a level of holiness. By praying there on a regular basis, one joins the holiness of the earlier prayers to the later prayers and makes the later prayers more acceptable to Hashem. (Noam Eliezer)

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From the Haftarah . . .

*"Then the minchah / meal offering of Yehudah and Yerushalayim will be pleasing to Hashem, as in days of old and in former years." (Malachi 3:4)*

R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (1865-1935; Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael) writes: Why does G-d despise human sacrifice? Animals lack intelligence, and they have no way to be

elevated to a higher purpose other than by being sacrificed to G-d. Not so humans, who have intelligence, and who can use that intelligence to elevate themselves. In particular, man can elevate himself by reflecting on the purpose for which his animal was offered to Hashem.

However, we are told of the future (Yishayah 11:9): "For the earth will be filled with knowledge of Hashem as water covers the sea." We also read (Yishayah 43:20), "The beasts of the field will honor Me . . ." If so, it will no longer be appropriate in the future to offer animal sacrifices. Accordingly, says our verse (which speaks of the End of Days), "Then the minchah / meal offering of Yehudah and Yerushalayim will be pleasing to Hashem, as [other sacrifices were] in days of old and in former years." (Quoted in Haggadah Shel Pesach Im Peirush Harav Kook)

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### **Thirty days before Pesach . . .**

In many homes, the Seder begins with the poem "Kadaish U'rechatz." Numerous commentators have found homiletical meaning in this poem, aside from its obvious purpose of reminding us how to conduct the Seder. R' Yehoshua Segal Deutsch z"l (mid-20th century rabbi of Yerushalayim's Katamon neighborhood) offers the following:

King David asks (Tehilim 24:3): "Who will climb Hashem's mountain, and who can stand in His holy place?" This poem tells us how one can stand before Hashem and not worry about falling: "Kadaish u'rechatz" / "Sanctify yourself and be confident!" ("Rechatz" in Aramaic means "be confident.")

How does one accomplish this? "Karpas yachatz" / Man's material nature (which, like karpas, comes from the earth) cannot be reined in overnight. Indeed, according to one commentator, Bnei Yisrael's defense for the sin of the Golden Calf was that Matan Torah / the giving of the Torah had been too sudden for them, and left them confused and disoriented. Rather, divide ("Yachatz") and conquer.

Another tactic is "Maggid rochtzah" / Tell others to cleanse themselves. This will inspire you to do the same.

One might ask, however, "Who am I to rebuke others?" The answer to this is "Motzi matzah" / Get rid of that humility, that view of oneself as being lowly as matzah. As important as humility is, there is no place for it when one sees others violating the Torah. But do not become arrogant or haughty. Rather, "Maror koraich" / - Wrap yourself in a cloak of authority (= "marah") which you can use when rebuking others, but can shed at other times.

In order to be an effective teacher, "Shulchan oraich" / Make sure your Torah knowledge is like a set table before you so that it will always be at your fingertips. Also, make sure that your rebuke does not become a weapon of the Heavenly prosecutor. Make sure that "Tzafun baraich" / Hidden ("Tzafun") within your heart should be blessings for your fellow Jews. You should also "Hallel" / Praise your brethren before Hashem.

If you do this, your deeds will be "Nirtzah" / Accepted by Hashem. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Kol

Yeshuah)

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