

# HOW DO WE PRAY?

*by Shlomo Katz*

## Parshas Tzav

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BS"D  
Tzav  
"How Do We Pray?"  
Volume 29, No. 24  
8 Nissan 5775  
March 28, 2015

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## Yuta bat Yosef a"h

Today's Learning:

Nach: Hoshea 13-14

Mishnah: Ohalot 2:6-7

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Ketubot 54

Halachah: Mishnah Berurah 558:1-559:2

This week's parashah continues the laws of the korbanot / sacrificial offerings. R' Shimshon David Pinkus z"l (1944- 2001; rabbi of Ofakim, Israel) notes that Rishonim / early authorities offer several different explanations for the korbanot. According to Ramban z"l (1194-1270; Spain and Eretz Yisrael), one who brings a sacrifice is supposed to imagine that he is the korban, that he is sacrificing himself to Hashem. According to another opinion, Hashem allows us to offer korbanot as our way of demonstrating our love for Him, though Hashem, of course, has no need for the korbanot. By way of analogy, R' Pinkus writes, a wife doesn't have any "need" for the flowers her husband brings home. However, she recognizes that they are a token of his love, and she lovingly accepts them as such. The same is true of the korbanot we offer Hashem.

R' Pinkus continues: Our Sages teach that today, when we have no Bet Hamikdash and no sacrificial service, tefilah / prayer takes the place of the korbanot. Therefore, writes R' Pinkus, we must examine the way we pray to determine whether it is done with mesirut nefesh, i.e., with a feeling that we are willingly offering ourselves as sacrifices. We must examine, likewise, whether our prayers are given lovingly so that they may be accepted lovingly. All too regularly, observes R' Pinkus, we come to shul late. Perhaps we end up skipping or swallowing half of the prayers because we came late. Or, maybe we are among those who habitually leave shul early because we feel we have somewhere more pressing to be. Such prayers, suggests R' Pinkus, are not substitutes for what the sacrificial service was meant to be. (Tiferet Shimshon)

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"If he shall offer it as a todah / thanksgiving offering . . ." (7:12)

Our Sages say: "The todah will never cease to be brought." R' Aryeh Levin z"l (died 1969) asks: Why is this a happy tidings? The korban todah is brought, after all, by one who has been saved from danger! If the todah will never cease to be brought, that means that people will never cease to find themselves in danger!

R' Levin answers: When Pharaoh refused to release Bnei Yisrael from Egypt and instead decreed that they work harder, Moshe asked Hashem (Shmot 5:22-23), "Why have You made things worse for this nation?" Hashem answered him, "You will see!" He meant: You will see that from every tragedy comes something good; from exile and persecution comes redemption.

The Midrash says that when Yosef died, the Jews wanted to assimilate into Egypt. Hashem therefore

made the Egyptians hate the Jews, causing the Jews to reunite and to support each other. This is an example of how good -- the continued existence of the Jewish people -- came from bad, i.e., from the Egyptians' hatred.

So, too, Chazal say that the gift of Eretz Yisrael is acquired through suffering. The Torah (Devarim 8:5) tells us, however, that it is the type of "suffering" which a loving parent imposes on a child for the child's own well-being.

Thus, it is not a bad tiding that a korban todah will always be necessary. Good comes from what is seemingly bad. (Quoted in Ish Tzaddik Hayah p.303)

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"At the entrance of the Ohel Mo'ed you shall dwell day and night for a seven-day period . . ." (8:35)

R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik z"l (1903-1993) observes: It is impossible to move between the mundane and the holy instantaneously. Before Aharon and his sons were dedicated as kohanim, they had to prepare for seven days. Before the Kohen Gadol performed the Temple service on Yom Kippur, he had to prepare for seven days (as described in the mishnah, Yoma 1:1). Before the Torah was given, there were three days of preparation (Shmot 19:10-11). Mentally, a person cannot switch between the "desert" and Har Sinai"--between the street and the bet ha'knesset--in an instant.

For the same reason, halachah requires a person to arrive in shul some amount of time before davening and to linger some amount of time after davening. It is a "serious transgression" (in R' Soloveitchik's words) that people habitually remove their tefilin before or during Aleinu, except in truly pressing circumstances.

R' Soloveitchik adds: The word kedushah / holiness literally means, "set aside" or "prepared." Without preparation, there is no kedushah. If a person anticipates and looks forward to kedushah, it has a ta'am / taste. If one does not pine for kedushah, it will be tasteless. (Al Ha'tefilah p.29)

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"At the entrance of the Ohel Mo'ed you shall dwell day and night for a seven-day period, and you shall protect Hashem's charge so that you will not die; for so have I been commanded.' Aharon and his sons carried out all the matters that Hashem commanded through Moshe." (8:35-36)

R' Zalman Sorotzkin z"l (1881-1966; the "Lutzker Rav") writes, "I saw a wondrous thing in the Midrash Tanchuma." It says:

Moshe said to Aharon and his sons [regarding the seven days preceding the dedication of the Mishkan], "Observe seven days of mourning before it is relevant to you, for Hashem likewise observed seven days of mourning before He brought the flood. Where do we find that Hashem mourned? It is written (Bereishit 6:6), "Hashem reconsidered having made Man on earth, and He had heartfelt sadness"-this is mourning. At that time, Hashem observed seven days of mourning before

bringing the flood, as it is written (Bereishit 7:10), "It came to pass after the seven-day period that the waters of the Flood were upon the earth." Likewise, Aharon and his sons observed seven days of mourning; however, they did not know for what they were mourning, as it is written (Kohelet 8:5), "He who obeys the commandment will know no evil," i.e., he will not know for what pending evil he is obeying the commandment to mourn.

R' Sorotzkin comments: This is a terrifying, but important, teaching. One can never be certain whether he is at a celebration or at a place of mourning. Here you have five people--Aharon and his four sons--sitting amongst the trappings of royalty, so that at the end of the seven-day period they would receive the kehunah / priesthood for themselves and their descendants forever. Only later did they find out that, simultaneously with the seven days of celebration, they were sitting shivah for two of their number (Aharon's sons Nadav and Avihu) who died on the very day of their "coronation."

R' Sorotzkin continues: This sheds new light on the verse (Kohelet 9:12), "For man does not even know his hour." Not only does a person not know what the future holds; a person does not even know the nature of the present, whether it is "A time to weep, a time to laugh," etc. The midrash equates the mourning that Aharon and his sons Elazar and Itamar observed before their sons' / brothers' deaths to the mourning that Hashem observed before the Flood. Here, however, there was something different. In retrospect, Nadav and Avihu sat shivah for themselves! Has such a thing ever been heard of or existed? R' Sorotzkin asks.

This harsh lesson has a message for us, R' Sorotzkin writes. The Chafetz Chaim z"l told his students not to count on their heirs to save them from Gehinnom by reciting kaddish or learning mishnayot. Who knows if they will do those things and, if they do, what value they will have? Rather, we must prepare for our own posterity by studying Torah and sanctifying G-d's Name. Of course, one does not know when his end will come, so he cannot sit shivah for himself. Therefore, one should devote as much time as he can to sitting in the bet ha'midrash and engaging in other acts that will ensure his eternal life. (Oznayim La'Torah)

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Thirty Days Before Pesach . . .

Our Sages teach that the purpose of the exile in Egypt was so that we would develop emunah / faith in Hashem. One might ask, however: why did the enslavement have to be so harsh? R' Alexander Aryeh Mandelbaum shlita (Yerushalayim) offers several explanations:

(1) "Emunah," by definition, means believing in something that one cannot see. If life is going well and all signs point to the existence of a loving G-d, there is no room for emunah. Therefore, the Jewish People could attain the pinnacle of emunah only by going through the darkest of times.

(2) One of the fundamentals of our belief is that Hashem's "Yichud" (Uniqueness and Oneness) will ultimately be revealed--indeed, this is one of the reasons why Hashem created the world. R' Moshe

Chaim Luzzato z"l (Ramchal; 1707-1746) writes that Hashem's Yichud is apparent only when He reveals that He is more powerful than any other force on earth. This, in turn, requires that evil be given free rein for a time, after which Hashem will vanquish it and be revealed--exactly what happened in Egypt.

(3) The Egyptians were a very arrogant people, as demonstrated by Pharaoh's question to Moshe (Shmot 5:2): "Who is Hashem that I should listen to His voice?" Living in Egypt, Bnei Yisrael acquired this trait of arrogance, a characteristic that would have precluded their attaining the unity necessary to receive the Torah. The only solution was to subdue them to the point of hopelessness, and then to redeem them and have them submit humbly to Hashem's dominion. (Ha'lylah Ha'zeh p.52)

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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