

# REMEMBERING THE AVODAH, PART 2

*by Rabbi Pinchas Winston*

## FRIDAY NIGHT:

*G-d spoke to Moshe, saying, "Command Aharon and his sons, saying: This the law of the Burnt-Offering . . ." (Vayikra 6:1)*

The Torah continues to teach about the avodah, and so do we, continuing on from last week's parshah.

It would not be appropriate to speak about "Adam Kadmon" or "Akudim" here, or what it means that the pre-creation Sefiros went out through its eyes. True, it does represent the basis of all that has gone wrong in creation, according to the will of the Creator, but it is far appropriate and sufficient to discuss the eyes of a different Adam, the one with whom we are most familiar: Adam HaRishon, the First Man.

As the Torah tells us, the essence of the first mistake of the First Man was his eating from the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil while still in the Garden of Eden. However, as Kabbalah explains, it could only have been the result of something else far more fundamental, since Adam at that stage lacked any desire or pride to sin against the will of G-d. On the level on which he was created, and then later after he ascended to entering the Garden of Eden, it was impossible for him to have eaten from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

But eat he did, as we are well aware, and we are still paying for it until Moshiach comes. Therefore, there is a piece from this puzzle that is missing, and as you can guess, it has to do with Adam's eyes. Since that time, it has also been an extremely profound lesson for life.

It says:

[The third aspect of the eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil has to do with] the mind and knowledge, which are included in the term "eating," as we see in Yechezkel (3:1), Yeshayahu (55:1). We also see this from the words of the rabbis in Shir HaShirim Rabbah, Chapter 1, where they compare words of Torah to water, wine, oil, and honey. Thus, we see that the mind and knowledge is included in the concept of eating, and therefore, He also warned him [when G-d commanded Adam not to eat from the fruit] that he should not contemplate and look at anything to which evil is attached. This was in order that he should not come to look at the ability of the evil forces, to investigate and understand the extent of their strengths, lest he be drawn down after them. For, it is

the nature of man to adhere to that which he contemplates, because the mind, the one trying to understand, and the object of understanding become one. Therefore, there is a great danger in looking at and contemplating to that which evil is attached . . . This was the main aspect of the sin of the Tree of Knowledge that G-d warned Adam HaRishon about, and which he transgressed and stumbled in. Thus, though his original sin was accidental, in the end he sinned purposely. (Sha'arei Leshem, page 341)

In this short paragraph, one of the most important fundamentals about life emerges, and that is the relationship between the eyes and the mind. In fact, so fundamental is the relationship that, even though Chava ate from the Tree first before she gave to Adam to eat, Adam is faulted for the sin. For, as the Leshem explains in great detail, it was Adam HaRishon's looking at the Tree first, that caused him and the world to quickly descend from their exceptionally high spiritual level, and make the simple mistake of eating.

As the Talmud says:

The yetzer hara only has power over someone regarding that which he has seen. (Sotah 8a)

Indeed, the Zohar (35b) teaches that, until Adam looked at the Tree, the snake was not even allowed into the Garden, let alone to be able to approach Chava to convince her to eat. Thus, it was Adam's looking at the Tree that began the slippery slide from G-d-given greatness to the depths of sin.

In fact, it was only after SEEING Eretz Yisroel that the spies made the tragic mistake of rejecting her. Their sin, too, was a function of the eyes:

Why does the letter ayin come before the letter peh [in the Aleph-Bais]? Because of the spies, who spoke about that which they did not see. (Sanhedrin 104b)

In other words, until they had seen the Land, everything was possible. However, after they had spied the Land, then they noticed what they did NOT see, and sinned as a result. As Rashi taught:

The heart and the eyes are the spies of the body; that is, they lead a person to transgress: the eyes see, the heart covets, and the body transgresses. (Rashi, Bamidbar 15:39)

## **SHABBOS DAY:**

*This is the law of the Meal-Offering . . .* (Vayikra 6:7)

Thus, Koheles taught:

The wise man's eyes are in his head, and the fool walks in darkness. (Koheles 2:14)

Hence, it is the eyes - the ayin - that establish a person's outlook in life, which determines the type of life he will live. The rabbis, to make this point simple and clear, used the words "nega" (nun-gimmel-AYIN), which means "plague," and "oneg" (AYIN-nun-gimmel), which means "pleasure," as a kind of

pneumonic. Both words possess the same letters and are identical except for the placement of the ayin (Zohar; Sefer Yetzirah; see also the Chasam Sofer, Toras Moshe, Parashas Bechukosai). When a person's "ayin" is in the right place, that is, in his head - another way of saying that he sees logically and truthfully - then life is a pleasure. Otherwise it is a plague.

You could say that it is Amalek's life ambition to transform "oneg" into "nega." As his name implies, he's after that "ayin," to cut it off and move it to the back of the word, just as it appears in the word "nega." Then, a person is vulnerable to dissatisfaction in life, and open to rebellion against G-d.

Thus, it is no coincidence that the word "vayikra," with which we began this discussion last week, is also the root of the word, "likro," which means to "read." And, "yireh," which means fear, and which is used to refer to the important spiritual quality of fear of G-d, is from the word "lirot," which means "to see," because fearing G-d is a function of "seeing" Him, that is, His Providence. And THAT has been greatly affected ever since we ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the allusion to Amalek's descendant - Haman - according to the Talmud, as we discussed last week.

Thus, the battle against Amalek is a battle for the ayin, the symbol of the way we look at reality, and particularly, HIS Reality. This is why Haman rose and fell in 70 days, the gematria of ayin, and why the Megillah spends exactly 70 verses telling us that part of the story. This is why wine and Sod - the clearest the ayin can see is through the "spectacles" of Kabbalah - are so intricately connected to each other.

And, if all of this represents the essence of "Tikun Olam" - World Rectification - and so do the sacrifices about which this sefer is about, then, they are related to each other. Somehow, the process of sacrificing to G-d is tantamount to rectifying the ayin and doing away with Amalek, which is where we began last week.

This fascinating insight provides another important piece of the puzzle:

With respect to the three senses, hearing, smelling, and speaking, each literally has open holes and hollow areas. However, with respect to seeing, there is no actual hole or hollow, which is as they say, that the light of seeing itself from the brain does not leave [the eye] at all, other than just a small amount. Rather, it emanates from the brain until the edge of the eyes, but the main part remains within. This is the light of Chochmah itself, which is a soul-like seeing, which has no bodily vessel. Through it, all the prophets saw . . . (Sha'arei Leshem, page 444)

This needs a little explaining. Actually, it needs A LOT of explaining, but we're only going to do a little of it here.

As we have said many times before, it is a given that the human body is a replica of the spiritual world of the Sefiros, which govern creation. We have been built the way we are built because that is the way creation, on the spiritual level, was constructed. For every limb and bodily function we have - to the last and most minute detail - there is a corresponding spiritual reality in the Sefiros.

On the human body, the eyes represent a function more than they do a level, though they are physically higher on the body than any other of the senses. However, in the Sefiros, where everything has remained on the level of the spiritual, the "eyes" always represent a level of light, spiritual light, that is.

Nevertheless, there is a corresponding spiritual reality even within the human being, who is also only a function of spiritual light that, somehow and quite miraculously, was able to "physicalize" and become what it is now. Indeed, most of that metamorphosis occurred as a result of Adam's sin, not in advance of it:

Thus, [Adam] stumbled twice, first by looking at the tree, and then by eating from it. As a result, the worlds became more physical, including Adam and Chava. They changed from "clothing of LIGHT" (Kesones Ohr, spelled: ALEPH-vav-raish) to "clothing of SKIN" (Kesones Ohr, spelled: AYIN-vav-raish), which is the "skin of the snake." (Sha'arei Leshem, page 345)

Amazingly, the transformation of Adam and Chava, and all of creation for that matter, from a high spiritual reality to a far more physical and materialistic reality, is defined in terms of the transformation from the level of "Aleph" to the level of "Ayin." These are two letters with which we are now quite familiar: the Aleph from "vayikra" and the Ayin from "Amalek."

And, it makes PERFECT sense as well, as we will now discuss. For, even though we don't associate Amalek with materialism, as we shall SEE, they are completely related.

### **SEUDOS SHILSHIS:**

*This is the teaching of the Guilt-Offering; it is most holy.* (Vayikra 7:1)

Physicality is always a barrier to spirituality, though a certain amount of it is avoidable if we are going to be able to exist and live like human beings, as opposed to angels. The trick has always been to minimize it, to the happy medium where it facilitates closeness to G-d and does not interfere with it.

To increase physicality beyond that which is necessary for the service of G-d, and it can depend upon the individual's needs, is for all intents and purposes, the basis of all sin. As the Ramban points out at the beginning of Parashas Kedoshim, even indulging in too much of that which is permissible to the Jew, is also considered counter-productive to holiness.

This is why the Torah warned the Jews entering Eretz Yisroel to be careful regarding their commercial success, that it not act as a way to come to doubt the Presence of G-d:

Take care in case you forget G-d . . . lest you eat and be satisfied, and you build good houses and settle, and your cattle and sheep and goats increase, and you increase silver and gold for yourselves, and everything you have will increase - and your heart will become haughty and you will forget G-d, your G-d, Who took you out of the land of Egypt from the house of slavery. (Devarim 8:11-14)

And, if "Amalek" can affect us here, in Eretz Yisroel where kedushah is intrinsic to the land itself, HOW MUCH MORE SO DOES IT AFFECT US IN AMERICA, ENGLAND, CANADA, SOUTH AFRICA, and anywhere else in the world Jews reside where holiness is NOT intrinsic to the environment. After all, Haman came on the tail end of the Jewish refusal to heed Ezra's request to return to Eretz Yisroel from the Diaspora.

(The Leshem explains that, because Chava was not guilty of looking at the tree as Adam was, Jewish women did not sin with the golden calf - "eigel" in Hebrew, and spelled: AYIN-gimmel-lamed - or SEE things as the spies did, and this merited them to enter Eretz Yisroel 39 years later, unlike the men of their generation.)

Nothing clouds the mind of a Jew more than materialism; nothing stunts Torah growth - represented by the Aleph of "Vayikra" - more than physicality, represented by the "Ayin" of Amalek, the 70 years of exile, the 70 days of Haman's rise and fall, and the 70 verses of the Megillah used to tell that part of the story.

The gematria of "Amalek" is "suffek," which means "doubt." The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was also called, in the words of the Zohar, the "Tree of Doubt," which is why it is the source of Haman, as the Talmud revealed. (In fact, when the word "Amalek" was searched for in the Torah, not in a posuk, but in encoded form, surprisingly it showed up with a skip of 12,111 letters, a very high skip for such a common Torah term - which, amazingly, is PRECISELY the amount of letters in Megillas Esther!)

However, obviously the Ayin of Amalek is only one of its two facets. Ayin also represents redemption, and more importantly, Sod. On this level, the Ayin is not spiritually low, but rather, an extremely HIGH level, the level that represents the prophecy the Jewish People once enjoyed, and will, b'ezras Hashem Yisborach, again enjoy in Yemos HaMoshiach.

The question is, how does one turn it around, so that it becomes like the Aleph, to which it is phonetically identical? That is where the sacrifices come in.

### **MELAVE MALKAH:**

*The Kohen shall cause them to go up in smoke on the Altar, a fire-offering to G-d. (Vayikra 7:5)*

Humans like barbecues; G-d does not. Well, at least He certainly doesn't desire them as we do. At least for those whom eating meat is not a problem, the smell and taste of barbecued meat is quite an enjoyable experience. For G-d, there is nothing to be physically gained by the burning of sacrifices on the Altar.

So why command it then? The Leshem explains:

Regarding this period of time (i.e., Techiyas HaMeisim), it says that sacrifices, other than the Todah (Thanksgiving-Offering), will be annulled. This is because the sod of Karbonos, in general, is to effect

three things. First of all, there are sacrifices that come to atone for a sin, which is the result of the animal soul within man. There are parts from the Inanimate-Mineral World and the Vegetation World as well, all of which are incorporated in the body of man. For, man is a small world unto himself that includes all aspects of creation, especially when he partakes of the world through eating. His baseness and zuhama are the result of the evil that became intermingled in all aspects of creation [when Adam sinned], and are the cause of his sins, which also blemish his own soul. Thus, when he causes blemish, it is to all the sections . . . that are within him. This is why, to atone for his soul, he must bring a sacrifice and perform viduy (confession). The latter atones for the part of his soul called "Medabehr," his actual soul, while the sacrifice atones for the rest of the portions. Thus, an Animal-Sacrifice involves salt, which is from the Mineral World, wood for the altar from the Vegetation World; the Animal-Nefesh itself is atoned for through the animal [being sacrificed] . . . In other words, in the beginning [these less spiritual elements of man] caused the sin, and they went from being only a potential [as of man] to actuality. Through the sin [these physical elements] became revealed and increased [in man's make-up]. Now, [as a result of the sacrifice and its various parts] they have become consumed and destroyed by the fire of the altar. (Sha'arei Leshem, page 493)

Thus, explains the Leshem, the avodah (and we'll talk later about how this is true even with respect to the prayer service that is in place of the sacrifices), is one of the most fundamental processes for reversing the effect of Adam's sin, to return back to the state of "Kesones Ohr" with the "Aleph," and not the "Ayin." Thus, the Leshem continues:

There is an additional matter. Anything a person purchases has a relevance to his soul, and can cause sin. Therefore, when a person sacrifices his property on the altar and the fire burns it up, his soul is purified as well. This is what is said [in the Talmud]: "for you" excludes stolen property, which is not his - even if the owners eventually relinquish their ownership, as it says, "his sacrifice," and not one that is stolen (Succah 30a). This is also like what is said elsewhere: It is impossible to purify a soul until the zuhama is burned up and destroyed (Bava Kamma 66b). This is usually regarding sacrifices that are brought because of a sin, in truth however, it applies to all sacrifices, whether obligatory or voluntary; this makes it more in line with the will of G-d. For, all sins are the result of [the impurities of the lower levels of man's physical being]. Therefore, when one sacrifices before G-d, the fire burns and destroys these, weakening the zuhama and its spiritual impurity. Evil is weakened and the land is purified, preventing people from coming to sin. (Ibid.)

So, there you have it, the answer to last week's question regarding last week's parshah, its connection to Amalek, and Purim. The avodah comes to reverse the effect of Adam's sin - physicalization - which is what gave rise to Amalek and company, including Haman himself, in the first place. Is it a coincidence then that "avodah" is spelled: AYIN-bais-vav-dalet, or that its gematria is one more than "hateva," which means "nature," or "Elokim," which refers to G-d's HIDDEN hand in creation?

No, it is not. And, b'ezras Hashem, Part 3 will make it more clear why it is not. And, by the way, did we

mention how the Parah Adumah, the special Maftir for this Shabbos, which, as Rashi explains, comes as the antidote for the golden calf, and is therefore the antithesis of Amalek as well? At this point, you can probably figure it out for yourself . . .

Have a great Shabbos and a freilechen Purim,  
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