

THE KORBAN OLAH TEACHES A FUNDAMENTAL LESSON IN FUNDRAISING

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Tzav

The Korban Olah Teaches A Fundamental Lesson in Fundraising

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Weekly Portion Torah Tapes: Tape # 543, Birchash Hagomel, Airplane Travel & Other Issues. Good Shabbos!

Parshas Tzav begins with a peculiar conjugation of the word meaning "command" (tzav). Rashi notes that this particular form of the verb "tzeevah" connotes particular ziruz [urging on], both for the immediate moment and for future generations. Rashi quotes the Tanna Rabbi Shimon, who says that it is particularly necessary for the Torah to urge someone on in a situation where there is a loss of money.

The Torah is speaking of the laws of the Olah sacrifice. An Olah is an animal that is totally consumed on the altar. Even though the owner does not partake of a Korban Chatas [sin offering] either, at least the Kohanim who offer it do eat from that offering. The owner eats the lion's share of the meat of the Korban Shlamim [peace offering]. However, the entire Korban Olah is placed on the altar and it is totally burnt to ashes. Therefore, it is described as an offering "involving the loss of money." Both the owners and the Kohanim see their money and their efforts literally going up in smoke when an Olah is offered. All they get out of it, in a physical sense, is ashes. For this reason, there was a special need to charge and motivate the people to keep the laws associated with the Olah offering.

It would seem that there are many mitzvos in the Torah that involve "loss of money" (chisoron kis). Observing Pesach requires spending money, and yet we do not find the word "Tzav" written in conjunction with the observance of Pesach. Succos is not inexpensive either. Being a Jew is an expensive proposition. One has to wonder -- what do the non-Jews do with their money? They don't have Yeshiva tuition, they don't have Pesach, and they don't have Succos! No wonder the

professional sports teams are able to sell so many season tickets!

If, by definition, so many mitzvos involve "chisoron kis", why does Rashi place so much emphasis on the "chisoron kis" of the Olah sacrifice?

The answer is that there are different gradations of "chisoron kis". True, it costs a lot of money to buy Matzah and to buy Esrogim, but it is easier to accept that type of expense. He gets something for his money. He can relate to the expense he has undergone. He can sit and eat the matzah. Granted, under normal circumstances he would not pay \$15 a pound for something that sometimes tastes like cardboard. But now that the Torah gave us the mitzvah, we sit down and we eat the matzah that cost us so much money, and we enjoy it!

A good pair of Tefillin today easily costs several hundred dollars. This is a big expense. But at least I have Tefillin. I look at them. I wear them every day. I get psychological pleasure from having these expensive ritual items in my possession.

But a Korban Olah is different. A person buys a bull or a cow. This can cost hundreds of dollars. What does he do with it? He watches it being burnt. No one gets any benefit from it. The money goes up in smoke! This is "chisoron kis". That is why people have to be encouraged and be given a special charge when it comes to such a mitzvah.

It is hard to take money from people and not give them anything in return. Herein lies a fundamental lesson in fund-raising. Whenever a person wants to raise money, what does the person have to do? Build a building. Why is that necessary? So that he can approach a wealthy individual and tell him "Listen, your name will be on the side of the building." The institution is giving him something in return. Then, making a big donation will not seem like a "chisoron kis".

As long as people can see the building, or the water fountain, or the plaque -- as long as they can see "something" -- they feel that they are getting something for their donation. It is far harder to raise money just in order to improve the salaries of teachers or to be able to reduce the cost of tuition. In such fund-raising campaigns the donors do not feel the same sense of "getting something for their money." That kind of donation involves "chisoron kis". Whenever people don't see a tangible return, special urging is required -- both immediately and for future generations.

Today's Service Is The Same As Yesterday's Service

We read at the beginning of the Parsha the mitzvah known as Terumas HaDeshen: "The Kohen shall don his fitted linen Tunic, and he shall don linen Pants on his flesh, he shall raise the ashes which the fire will consume of the Olah-offering on the Altar, and place it next to the Altar." [Vayikra 1:3]

Before the Kohen would start the daily service, he would go to the place where the Olahs were burnt and scoop up a handful of ashes. He placed this handful of ashes next to the Altar. This ritual of Terumas HaDeshen [lifting the ashes] is not to be confused with another ritual - Hotza'as HaDeshen [removal of the ashes]. This other ritual is mentioned in the very next pasuk: "He shall

remove his garments and he shall wear other garments and he shall REMOVE the ashes to the outside of the camp, to a pure place." [Vayikra 1:4] Hotza'as HaDeshen is merely "clean-up". Terumas HaDeshen is part of the Avodah [Temple Service].

What is the symbolism of this Avodah? What is the symbolism of the fact that every single morning, the first thing the Kohen did was gathering the ashes from the previous day's offerings and placing them next to the altar for today's offerings?

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch says something here that is strikingly beautiful. I quote (from the English translation of Hirsch's original German commentary): "The Jewish today has to take its mission from the hand of its yesterday." This means, we have to bind today's Avodah [Divine Service] with yesterday's Avodah. This is because yesterday's Avodah and today's Avodah are the same Avodah. In Judaism, there is no such thing as "Oh that was yesterday's challenge. Today is something different."

No. Today is the same Avodah as yesterday. As Rav Hirsch explains "The very last Jewish grandchild stands there before G-d with the same mission of life that his first ancestor bore." Avraham Avinu, the first Jew has the exact same mission as the "last Jew." It hasn't changed in 4,000 years.

Each day's service must be done with a freshness and exuberance. Each day, they should be in our eyes "AS IF they were new." But, in the final analysis, it is the same thing.

Such a message has no resonance today. Politicians always speak of the "new era", the "fresh start", "new challenges", and "new approaches." The common attitude is that what worked in the past, won't work now. This is not the Jewish approach.

Of course, each generation does have its own challenges. But the basic mission and the basic message do not change. The Avodah is the same as it was yesterday. The first thing the Kohen does to start today's service is to remember that it is the same thing that he did yesterday and the same thing that he will do tomorrow.

There is a principle in the Sacrificial Service, that once a mitzvah has been completed (na'asis mitzvasa), the prohibition of meilah (trespassing sacred property), no longer applies. Despite this principle, the Terumas HaDeshen is an exception. After the ashes are lifted and placed next to the mizbayach (ostensibly completing the mitzvah), the law of meilah still applies. The explanation is: just PLACING the ashes there does not complete the mitzvah. The ashes' BEING there is the mitzvah. This fits in with the symbolism we mentioned. The ashes need to remain in that place for every one to see in order to serve the purpose of demonstrating this continuity of the Divine Service.

This write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah Portion. The halachic topics covered for the current week's portion

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Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington.

Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Yerushalayim.