

THE MESSAGE OF THE LOTTERY OF THE TWO GOATS

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Acharei Mos

The Message of the Lottery of the Two Goats

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 854 - Tattoos: Totally Taboo? Good Shabbos!

A major component of the Yom Kippur Temple Service involved the ritual of the "Shnei Seirim" [two goats]. Two goats were taken and stood in front of the opening of the Tent of Meeting. Lots were drawn assigning one goat to Hashem and one goat to 'Azazel'. The former was slaughtered and offered on the Mizbayach in the Mishkan / Bais HaMikdash; the latter was pushed off a remote cliff in the dessert. This Yom Kippur requirement of choosing a Korbon by lot ('goral') is unique in the Temple ritual.

The Akeidas Yitzchak offers a beautiful insight into this concept of 'goral':

In the future, we will each be held accountable for what we do and what we do not do in this world. Different people have different spiritual traits, varying strengths and weaknesses in matters of the soul. There are students, for example, who can sit and learn for hours on end. They have the patience and the intellect and the spiritual desire to sit in a Beis Medrash [Study Hall] hour after hour after hour studying Torah. There may be other equally bright young men who just do not have the patience to sit and study for hours on end.

This tendency will impact a person's experience and level of success and accomplishment during the years he spends in Yeshiva. It will continue to impact his learning level and degree of knowledge and spirituality acquired throughout his life. We are all held accountable for our actions. The studious person - after 120 - will go to the World of Truth and get reward for all the hours and years he spent studying Torah, even though it may have come relatively easy to him. What about the person who did not have the patience to sit and learn? Will he be punished for not having accomplished something he was apparently not given the tools of patience and studiousness to accomplish?

The same question can be raised regarding other human personality traits. Some people by nature are very calm and serene. It takes a lot to get them angry. Because of their natural temperament, they never lose their temper. There are other people who are not like that. They fly off the handle. They have no patience. They have a nervous makeup and they get angry very often. Is it truly 'just' that they should be held accountable after 120 years for not being as calm and serene through all of life's stresses as their fellow man who was born with a calm personality and makeup?

The answer is that the Master of the Universe takes all of this into account. "The Rock -- perfect is His work" [Devorim 32:4]. The Justice He metes out is perfect. Everyone is given appropriate reward and punishment that factors in their particular upbringing and nature. We do not need to worry that we will be held to the same standards as the next fellow. The Almighty knows that people are different by nature and they react to things differently. The True Judge will judge with true fairness.

This is the message of the two goats and the associated drawing of lots. The word 'goral' in Hebrew means two things. It means lots but it also means fate. Yom Kippur is about Repentance and Forgiveness. The Almighty is sending us a message by the ritual of drawing lots over the goats. We must ask ourselves: Why does this goat go to Hashem and the other one go to Azazel? It is not their fault! That is the way the lot came out and that is their destiny. Hashem will take it all into account.

This does not necessarily mean that if a person has trouble learning, he is off the hook or if the person has a short temper, he has license to fly off the handle and does not need to worry about spiritual consequences. No, this is not so! But on the other hand, it is also not the case that a person is judged by a universal standard without factoring into account varying differences of personality and natural tendency. This is the message of the lottery determining that one Goat goes to G-d and the other Goat goes to Azazel.

The Message of The Deaths Of Aharon's Two Sons

The Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei haTosfos on our parsha quotes a Medrash that clearly speaks to our times. The Medrash, discussing the death of Aharon's two sons, who were consumed by fire for having offered a "foreign fire" on the Mizbayach, links this incident with a pasuk in Tehillim [78:63]: "Fire consumed His young men, and His maidens had no marriage celebration." The Medrash comments: Why were the two young sons of Aharon consumed by fire? It was because they allowed the young maidens to go unmarried. In other words, they were punished for not having gotten married themselves. Many young maidens remained single waiting for the prospect that one of these two very eligible bachelors would marry them.

Nadav and Avihu said to themselves (according to the Medrash) "Our uncle (Moshe Rabbeinu) is King, our father (Aharon) is the Kohen Gadol, our other uncle is Prince, we are Vice-Priests (Seganei

Kehunah) - which woman is good enough for us?" That is why they never got married. They thus died without children.

The Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei haTosfos uses this Medrash to explain an apparent redundancy in the pasuk: "After the death of the two sons of Aharon when they approached before Hashem and they died." [Vayikra 16:1]. The first expression "After the death" refers to their own death; the second expression "and they died" refers to the fact that they died childless and had no one to carry on their lineage."

We need to understand that we are speaking about Nadav and Avihu, who our Sages say were righteous individuals, pillars of the world. We cannot speak of their faults in the same way that we speak of the faults of other people. We do not understand who they were and we certainly cannot ascribe pettiness to them. Moreover, I am acutely aware because of the position I occupy, how difficult it is sometimes for a young man to find a suitable marriage partner. There are certainly young men who try and try and try as they might, yet they cannot readily find their destined soul-mate. This is not always because of over pickiness or pettiness. Sometimes they get turned down; whatever it is, this is sometimes the reality.

However, all that having been said, the lesson we need to learn from this Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei haTosfos is that Nadav and Avihu rejected too many girls because they thought that they were not good enough for them. Part of what is happening in our society today -- and this is a crises in our society -- is that there are so many single men and single women who are not getting married. Again, I am not making universally applicable accusations, but certainly PART of the problem is that people are looking for perfection. The girl needs to have everything. She needs to be beautiful and she needs to have money and she needs to have yichus and she must have this and must have that, the list goes on. If they do not fit all the categories on my list, she is not good enough for me (and vice versa).

The problem is that we have become such a pampered society and we can achieve perfection in so many areas of life that we think we can achieve perfection in 'shidduchim' as well. We can order a car and the car can be exactly to our liking from the exterior color to the interior color to the sound system, to all the options and bells and whistles. Forget cars -- we can go into the coffee aisle of the supermarket. It used to be that there was Folgers and Maxwell House, and that was it. Today, there are so many options of how to order a cup of coffee -- to custom design it to one's ultimate taste of perfection - that we expect to be able to custom design our future spouses as well! The problem is that people are not cars and they are not coffee. People are NOT perfect. One should not expect to achieve perfection in this area of life.

We need to stress and stress again to our single young men and women in the community that we cannot achieve perfection in a shidduch. The 'list' has to be cut down to one or two major items and that is it! If there is any lesson we can take out from the tragic death of Nadav and Avihu, this is that

lesson.

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