

RABBI FRAND ON PARSHAS TAZRIA-METZORAH

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshios Tazria & Metzorah

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These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape# 897 – Insights Into Sefiras Ha'Omer. Good Shabbos!

THINK BIG AND PLAY TO WIN

The proscribed offerings for a woman who gives birth are a sheep within its first year as an olah-offering and a young dove or a turtledove as a sin offering. However, the Torah makes provision for a woman who cannot afford the sheep as her olah-offering and specifies that in that case two young doves or two turtledoves – one as an olah offering and one as a sin offering are acceptable. [Vayikra 12:6-8]

Rashi here comments, based on a Gemara in Zevachim 90a, that the Torah here is actually imprecise. In fact, the Halacha is that anytime a person needs to bring both a sin and an olah offering, the person brings the sin offering first, followed by the olah offering. This is a procedural rule in offering "mixed sacrifices". Rashi explains the reason for the rule in Parshas Vayikra: A sin offering offers atonement for a sin; an olah (meaning to go up) re-establishes one's relationship with the Almighty. Anytime a person has offended someone, protocol is to send in an intermediary first to

make an apology, after the apology, it is appropriate to bring in a present to restore the relationship. One starts with the appeasement, not with the present.

If anyone has had the experience of somehow doing something wrong to their wives, such that they owe them an apology, it should be obvious that proper etiquette requires something more than just sending flowers. First a husband must offer his profuse apology, atoning for his past mistake. Only then is it appropriate to give a present. Presents themselves should not be expected to work in lieu of an apology. Therefore, the "Chatas" [sin offering] always precedes the "Olah" [burnt offering].

This idea is really synopsized in Tehillim [Psalms] by the pasuk "Depart from evil and do good" [Tehillim 34:15].

Why then, the Gemara asks, does the Torah here imprecisely specify "and she shall take two turtledoves or two young doves, one for an olah-offering and one for a sin-offering"? The Talmud answers, somewhat mysteriously, "the olah offering precedes the sin-offering only in the Torah reading, not in terms of the sequence in which they are actually offered".

The obvious question is that the Torah is not written to confuse us. If they are to actually be brought in reverse order, why did the Torah write it as "one for an olah and one for a chatas"?

Rav Avrohom Gurvitz offers the following explanation: Of course, the rule of thumb is "Depart from evil and do good". We always first need to stop doing what we are doing wrong and then try to "do good". That is in the actuality of it. However, in theory a person must reach for the stars. A person must have aspirations of greatness. He must want for himself – certainly in spirituality, but even in every endeavor – the top. One who does not shoot for the top will never achieve anything. The Torah says "one for an olah and one for a chatas" because the Torah is informing us that our mindset must be that we want to achieve the greatest closeness to the Ribono shel Olam. Once we have that theory down, in practice, when we do something wrong, it is understood that we need to bring the sin offering first and then the Olah.

Rav Gurvitz supports this thought with an idea he heard from his father. The pasuk states "Moshe and Aharon were among His priests and Shmuel among those who invoke His Name..." [Tehillim 99:6]. The Talmud states that in righteousness, the prophet Samuel was on the same level as Moshe and Aharon. For this reason, the pasuk in Tehillim equates them. The Medrash states that before Shmuel was born, a Heavenly Voice (Bas Kol) proclaimed, "A child is going to be born who will be on the same level as Moshe Rabbeinu and his name is going to be Shmuel." The Medrash says that all the pregnant women at that time named their sons Shmuel when they gave birth, in the hope that perhaps their son was the baby about whom the Bas Kol spoke.

Rabbi Gurvitz's father commented to his son, "You know how a Shmuel was produced? He was produced because there was an environment in which everyone strived to have such greatness for their son that he should grow up to be like Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon!" If EVERYONE is striving to have a Shmuel haNavi, then in fact ONE Shmuel haNavi can emerge! However, if everyone has

pedestrian ambitions for their children then greatness will not emerge from anyone in that generation.

This is the same concept. We need to think big. Whether or not we will eventually achieve such greatness, we must shoot for the stars; aim for the top!

A Jew once came into the Volozhin Yeshiva and brought his young son to the Netziv. He told the great Rosh Yeshiva, "Here is my son, I want him to learn in your Yeshiva and I want you to make him into a Jew with integrity and into a Jew who sets aside fixed times for learning Torah. The Rosh Yeshiva told this Jew, "You know when your father brought you into the Yeshiva, he told me 'I want you to make him into a great man (Adam Gadol) and into one qualified to be a decider of law (Moreh Hora'ah) in Israel.' You became a Jew with integrity and one who sets aside fixed times for learning Torah because your father had aspirations that you become a Moreh Hora'ah b'Yisrael. If your aspirations are to have a son who is 'merely' a nice guy who learns Daf Yomi, you can't even be assured that that will happen."

When one's aspirations are great, he at least has a chance of producing greatness. However, when a person thinks myopically, when one thinks 'low bar,' he will not achieve even minimally.

Rabbi Gurvitz adds a beautiful thought: Why does the Torah offer this concept of "one for an Olah and one for a sin-offering" (which means 'Think Big') by a woman who seeks purification following childbirth? This is not the only place in the Torah where a person brings both a sin offering and an olah. The Torah could have informed us of this same idea in other places as well. Why here?

The answer is that when a woman gives birth, she must believe "I just gave birth to the next Gadol HaDor (great man of the generation)". If a mother thinks like that, she may indeed be able to achieve greatness for her child. If her goal is "okay, he should be a mediocre child," greatness will never come.

Rav Yakov Kamenetsky once commented on the Halacha in Shulchan Aruch that for a Jewish child whose mother is not able to nurse him, the parents should seek a Jewish wet-nurse rather than a non-Jewish wet-nurse because the non-Jewish wet-nurse eats non-kosher food. This Halacha is derived from the Medrash, which states that Moshe refused to nurse from Egyptian women (and consequently Pharaoh's daughter needed to hire his own mother to nurse him). The explanation given for Moshe's refusal to nurse from an Egyptian was "The mouth that is destined to speak with the Divine Presence of G-d should suck something which is a davar tameah?"

Rav Yakov notes the generalization made here that every Jewish child should nurse from a Jewish woman if possible, based on the precedent of Moshe Rabbeinu. When, he asks, was the last time we had a Jewish baby that spoke directly with the Divine Presence of G-d? The lesson is that when one has a child, one should at least have the hope and aspiration that this child could be a "mouth that will speak with the Shechinah." Then one can perhaps hope for greatness. With an attitude of "Eh! It's just another kid," one's child will not achieve greatness.

There was once a meeting of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah held in the house of Rav Avrohom Kamenetsky, son of Rav Yakov. All the Gedolim were gathered there. When the meeting was over, there was a question of protocol as to who should leave the room first. Rav Yakov's daughter-in-law, who was in the room, was pregnant at the time. She naturally assumed that the great Rabbis should walk out the door first. Rav Yakov insisted that his pregnant daughter-in-law should walk through the door first. Why? He said, "It is because she is pregnant and maybe she is pregnant with Moshiach!"

It is the same concept. She may have a child who possesses a mouth that will speak with the Shechinah. When a person thinks like that, maybe he can achieve greatness. That is the attitude of "one for the olah-offering and one for the sin-offering." However, if a person lives life merely departing from evil and playing "not to lose" rather than aspiring for greatness, he will not achieve anything. One has to play to win!

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