

## Covering oneself from sin

**Command Aharon... (Lev. 6:2).** Rashi cites the *Toras Kobanim* which explains that the expression “command” (צו) is an expression of haste, as if to encourage Aharon to hasten his fulfillment of these commandments concerning the burnt-offering now and for future generations. Rabbi Shimon adds that the Scripture adds this sort of encouragement in cases where there is חסרון כיס which means a monetary cost, literally translating to "loss of pocket/wallet". What is Rabbi Shimon adding to this discussion? Rabbi Yitzchak Palagi (in *Anach Yafeh*) cites an explanation from his broth Rabbi Avraham Palagi (in *Avraham Anochi*) to shed light on this issue. He writes that the word “pocket” (כיס) used here is a homonym that also means cover (כיס). He explains that many body parts include a special “cover” which can help protect them from sin. For example, the lips “cover” the mouth to help one avoid saying things that he should not say, the eyelids “cover” the eyes to help one avoid seeing things he should not see, and the cartilage of the ear can be used to “cover” the whole of one’s ear to help one avoid hearing things he should not hear. However, when it comes to one’s thoughts, there is no “cover” to help one avoid thinking about things which he should not think about. The burnt-offering is said to atone for a sin in thought, such that the commandments concerning the burnt-offering are considered a case where this is a “lack of cover”. Because there is no special built-in protection from sins of thought, Hashem offers special encouragement concerning the fulfillment of the burnt-offering.

Nonetheless, Rabbi Yitzchak Palagi calls this explanation into question by quoting two sources which seem to say the opposite: Firstly, the *Yalkut Shimoni* cites a Midrash that says that there are three elements of a person which can cause him to sin, but are not under his control, and there are three elements of a person which can cause him to sin, but are under his control. In the first category, the Midrash lists one’s eyes (which can cause him to see forbidden sights), his ears (which can cause him to hear forbidden things), and his nose (which can cause him to smell forbidden things)—these three body parts are beyond his control. Then the Midrash lists as under one’s control his hands (which can be used for stealing), his legs (which can bring him to places he should not go), and his mouth (which can be used for speaking slander). This Midrash implies that that one’s eyes and ears are *not* considered “covered” because the sins done through them are beyond his control. This is at odds with Rabbi Avraham Palagi’s explanation that only sins of thought do not have a “cover” while sins of the eyes, ears, and mouth do. Moreover, Rabbi Yitzchak Palagi notes that the Talmud (*Bava Basra* 164b) says that there are three sins which a person which a person is involved in daily: thoughts of sin, *iyun tefillah*, and slander. This source again implies that thoughts of sin and slander should be in the same category, even though Rabbi

Avraham Palagi differentiated between the two by saying that the latter has a “cover” and the former does not.

#### Removing the ashes

***And the Kohen should wear his size of linen, and linen pants shall he wear on his flesh. And he shall lift up the ashes that [resulted from] the fire consuming the burnt-offering on the altar, and he shall place it next to the altar (Lev. 6:3).*** Rashi (to *Zevachim* 20a) explains that every morning, the Kohen would scoop up some of the burnt coals atop the altar into a ritual pan, and then place it on the east-side of the ramp leading up to the altar (which is on the altar’s south side), and then pan and its contents would be swallowed up or absorbed in its place. This was the first rite performed in the Temple every morning. Rashi (to *Meilah* 11b and *Yoma* 20a) adds that the ashes would be swallowed up in their place in order to avoid other people deriving benefit from those ashes (which is still forbidden, even though the ritual had already been performed, as we will explain below).<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, Rashi’s grandson, Rabbenu Tam (cited in Tosafos to *Yoma* 21a and *Zevachim* 64a), disagrees with Rashi’s explanation and asserts that the ashes were not swallowed up in their place.

*Minchas Chinuch*, (Mitzvah 131) points out another disagreement between the commentators concerning the ritual removal of the ashes. Maimonides writes that this ritual is supposed to be done at the break of dawn (before sunrise) which is commensurate with the time that the roosters begin to crow in the early morning. However, the Tosafists understand that this ritual is supposed to be done while it is still night—even before the break of dawn.

#### Finishing up yesterday’s work

***And the Kohen should wear his size of linen, and linen pants shall he wear on his flesh. And he shall lift up the ashes that [resulted from] the fire consuming the burnt-offering on the altar, and he shall place it next to the altar (Lev. 6:3).*** Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains that the commandment of lifting up the ashes (*terumas hadeshen*) from the altar is supposed to be carried out before lighting the fire on the altar. This is because cleaning away the ashes serves as a means of preparing the altar at the beginning of the day for the services to be done on that day. In this way, he explains that removing the ashes is actually the last step of yesterday’s service. Rabbi Hirsch compares the services of removing the ashes to the services of burning the meal-offering by noting that both must be done by a *kosher* Kohen wearing the Kohanic garb, and in both cases, the Kohen takes a handful (of either ashes in the commandment of removing the ashes, or of flour in the case of the meal-offering) and places it elsewhere. Rabbi Hirsch uses this idea to explain the

<sup>1</sup> See *Shem mi-Shmuel* (Tzav, Shabbos HaGadol 5677).

wording of Ps. 20:4, “He [Hashem] shall remember your meal-offerings, and your burnt-offerings shall be in ashes forever” which couples the meal-offerings with the removal of the ashes ritual. Rabbi Hirsch accounts for the similarities between these two rituals by explaining that the ritual of removing the ashes serves to connect today’s worship of Hashem to yesterday’s worship, essentially expressing the idea that we do not have any new job to do today in comparison to yesterday. Rather, just as we fulfilled the commandments of the temple rituals yesterday exactly according to Hashem’s specifications, so will we do the same today. Essentially, the removal of the ashes ritual conjures the merit of all previous sacrifices ever performed and adds that to today’s merits. Interestingly, the Talmud (*Pesachim* 26a) says that while in general there is no holy item which retains its holiness once it has already been used for its intended ritual, except for the ashes used in the removal of the ashes ritual. Because those ashes serve to connect the past to the present/future, they are considered still in effect, never expiring, such that for them, before and after the fulfillment of the commandment is one and the same.

#### Thanksgiving and Weddings

***If as a thanksgiving he offers it... (Lev. 7:12).*** Rabbeinu Bechaya writes that a thanksgiving-offering is brought when a person experiences a miracle, or at any other joyous occasion, such as when a man and woman get married, that would be occasion to bring a thanksgiving-offering. This seems to be at odds with the idea derived from Psalms that only a person who was released from jail, healed from a deathly sickness, or crossed a desert or a sea should bring a thanksgiving-offering. The Gerrer Rebbe *Sfas Emes* (cited by *Likutei Yehudah* to Lev. 7:12) said in the name of Rabbi Mordechai (a *posek* in Gur) who said in the name of the *Chiddushei HaRim* that we can reconcile these two ideas since we are taught that anytime a worthy bachelor gets married, they take a soul from Gehinnom and bring it to the Garden of Eden. In this way, every wedding is essentially also a situation of somebody coming out of jail, such that a thanksgiving-offering is warranted. The *Sfas Emes* adds that this is alluded to in the Talmudic passage (*Kesubos* 17a) which says, “We move away a corpse from in front of a bride”. While at face value, this passage refers to the Halacha that a bridal procession has the right of way and takes precedence over a funeral procession, it also alludes to the fact that a bride who gets married effectuates the transportation of a dead person in Gehinnom who is now relocated to the Garden of Eden. See also the comments of Rabbi Naftali Yehuda Tzvi Berlin, also known as Netziv, in *HaEmek Davar* (to Lev. 22:29) where he proves from Amos 4 that there was also an ancient custom for Jews to bring a thanksgiving-offering on Sukkos, even if there was no specific miracle that that offering marked.

## Thanksgiving for everyone

***And the meat of the sacrifice of his thanksgiving peace-offering—on that day it is brought it shall be eaten, he shall not leave from it until the morning (Lev. 7:15).***

Rabbi Ovadia Sforno (to Lev. 7:10) explains that when one brings a thanksgiving peace-offering and also has a whole bunch of accompanying breads, then they may only be eaten within one day and one night. This short of amount of time to eat all the meat and breads is so that the person offering the thanksgiving will inevitably have to share it with others, thereby further publicizing the miracle for which he is giving thanks. On the other hand, when one brings a regular peace-offering, which does not even have an accompanying breads, then he gets more time to eat the sacrifice, he has two days and one night to eat it. Sforno notes that this difference between the two types of peace-offerings remains true even though they are both of the lenient variety of holy foodstuff. Rabbi Naftali Yehuda Tzvi Berlin, also known as Netziv, in *HaEmek Davar* (here) similarly explains that the thanksgiving peace-offering has a more limited amount of time within which one can eat, so that one is forced to eat it all in one big meal, thereby better publicizing the miracle.

We can add to this that anybody who received something “good “ is obligated to return the favor and give “good” to others. In fact, the Targum to Koheles 7:14 interprets that verse as saying that when Hashem gives “good” to you, you should give “good” to everyone else.

We find this idea expressed by the Sforno elsewhere as well. As we know from the Torah, Moshe’s name was not Mashui (משוי, literally, “he who was drawn”), but was rather Moshe (משה, literally, “he who draws”). Sforno (to Ex. 2:10) explains that that Moshe’s name means “he who draws” as opposed to “he who was drawn” because Moshe himself was only saved from the waters in order to be the savior of others. Accordingly, it seems that Hashem chose the name Moshe by which to refer to him in order to teach the lesson that because he himself was saved, he was expected to devote his life to saving others.

With this idea in mind, we can explain an otherwise difficult juxtaposition of two sentences in the *Haggadah Shel Pesach*. At the beginning of the *Maggid* section, we say, “This is the bread of affliction which our forefathers ate in the Land of Egypt” and then in the next sentence, we say: “Anyone who is hungry may come and eat”. What is the connection between the bread of affliction and inviting the hungry to feast with us? The Torah elsewhere says, “You shall love the stranger, for you were strangers in the Land of Egypt”. The fact that we were strangers in Egypt and survived obligates us to love other strangers and ensure their survival. The same is true about the bread of affliction. The fact that we suffered through the enslavement and freedom symbolized by the bread of affliction binds us to helping others in

unfortunate situations, so we mention the bread of affliction as the reason behind why we invite the less fortunate to the Passover feast with us.

Don't worry about tomorrow

***And the meat of the sacrifice of his thanksgiving peace-offering—on that day it is brought it shall be eaten, he shall not leave from it until the morning (Lev. 7:15).*** The *Sefer HaChinuch* (Mitzvah 143) explains that the Torah commands us to *burn* left-over sacrificial meats in order to teach that a person should not exert much effort in trying to make sure today that he has food for tomorrow. The same sentiment is expressed by Rabbi Moshe Isserles (*Toras HaOlah* 3:53) where he cites the Talmudic passage (*Sotah* 48b) that teaches that anybody who has food today and says, “what will we eat tomorrow?” is of “small trust” (i.e. in their devotion to God). He writes that for this reason Hashem forbid the Jews from leaving over manna from one day to the next, so that a person will not be showing that he needs to hoard food in case he has no food tomorrow. Rather, a person must put his confidence in Hashem and trust that He will provide. Similarly, the Vilna Gaon (Prov. 13) explains the passage “A righteous man eats to satisfaction, while the stomach of the wicked man is lacking” as referring to the fact that the righteous man trusts that Hashem will give him what to eat tomorrow, so today he can fill his stomach and does not need to leave over anything for tomorrow. The wicked man, on the other hand, does not put his faith in Hashem, and so when he eats today, he does not eat his fill, because he feels that if he eats too much today, then tomorrow he will not have what to it. Instead of trusting in God, he trusts in his own abilities to provide for himself.

With these ideas in mind, Rabbi Yechezkel Shraga Weinfeld relates that he saw in a Hassidic work that it says that whenever there is a sacrifice that is eaten by the one donating the offering, then he gets two days to eat it, because for a regular person, the Torah does not demand such a high level of trust in Hashem. Meaning the average person is allowed to worry about tomorrow, so we let him leave over the sacrificial meats for tomorrow so that he has a one-day backup. But when it comes to more than one extra, even the average person is expected to put his trust in Hashem and therefore he cannot hoard the sacrificial meats for two days. However, when it comes to sacrificial meats eaten by Kohanim (like that of a sin-offering), then the Kohen does not get two days to eat the meat—he must eat within one day. This is because we have higher expectations of a Kohen, so he cannot even save sacrificial meats for one extra day. He must totally rely on Hashem for tomorrow; he cannot even have one day of reserves. Why do we expect so much more from a Kohen than from the average person? Rabbi Weinfeld explains that because a Kohen received the right to eat those sacrifices from Hashem, then he is getting something directly from Hashem, and

because he gets it directly from Hashem, he is expected to have a higher level of trust in Him.

In a similar vein, I found that Rabbi Shmuel Greenfeld, known as the Maharshag writes in *Zebav Shva* (*Parshas Beshalach*) that when it comes to those eat the manna, there were again higher expectations, and every day they were obligated to get rid of their leftover food. Like the Kohanim of Rabbi Weinfeld's idea, all Jews in the desert received their sustenance directly from Above, such that they were expected to trust in Him more so than the average person. Based on this, Maharshag explains that this is the meaning of the Midrash (*Mechilta* to *Beshalach*) that says, "The Torah was only given to those eat the manna". This **does not mean** that the Torah was only given to that generation of Jews, and inapplicable to other generations. The Midrash means that since those who ate manna lived on the highest possible level of trust in Hashem, then in order for one to truly master the Torah, one must trust in God the same way that the Jews who ate the manna did—with the strongest and most devoted trust in Him.

## Tzav

### Burning Man

*And the Kohen who will offer the burnt offering of a man...*

Vayikra 7:8

The Torah almost sounds like the Kohen is offering the man, himself. In fact, the verse is actually read by some<sup>2</sup> to be talking about an actual man being offered, albeit metaphysically. We find that Yitzchak's soul actually entered the ram that was offered at the *Akeidah*, and he was slaughtered. It was really him in some spiritual way. Ramban<sup>3</sup> teaches that when a person is offering a sacrifice, he is meant to envision that he is the one who deserves to be sacrificing his life. That would seem easy enough. But what does it, in fact, mean for a man to offer himself as a sacrifice, as Yitzchak did?

And what sort of sacrifice are we talking about? Our Sages<sup>4</sup> teach us that in the heavenly Temple, the angel Michael is there and he is the Kohen who offers up the souls of the righteous. We find that when Hashem told the Jewish people about the Mishkan that they were to build, He told them,<sup>5</sup> "I will meet with them there, in the partition, and it will be holy through My honor." Rashi<sup>6</sup> explains that this, in fact, means that the Mishkan will be made holy through the deaths of the noble people Nadav and Avihu, who would die on the day that the Mishkan would be inaugurated.<sup>7</sup> We learn that it was not coincidental that Nadav and Avihu rushed into their deaths on the day of the inauguration of the Mishkan, but we learn that it was fundamental. When Hashem told the Jewish people about the Mishkan, it was to be a Mishkan that would claim the lives of Nadav and Avihu. That was absolutely basic to the Mishkan. But why?

The Mishkan was built as a place where we could offer our sacrifices to Hashem. It was a place where Hashem could dwell among us, a place where we could relate to Him. The

2 Rema Mifano, *Assarah Maamaros*, *Chikur Din* 2:8 and 4:19. See also Yalkut Reuveni to Tzav.

3 Vaykira 1:9

4 Tosafos to Menachos 110a, s.v. *umichael*, quoting a Midrash. See Bamidbar Rabbah 12:12, Chagiga 12b, and *Amudei Chaim* of R. Chaim Palagi, *Amudei Avodah* 16, p. 328 (Shuvi Nafshi ed.).

5 Shemos 29:43

6 S.v. *bichvodi*, quoting *Zvachim* 115b.

7 Vayikra 10:1

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building of the Mishkan was, in fact, an act that brought us atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf. Somehow, we are meant to understand that after we worshiped the Calf, we then needed the correction that would come about by building a Mishkan. That is one thing that atoned for the Jewish people. Aaron's punishment and what brought his atonement for his involvement in the sin of the Golden Calf was losing his children Nadav and Avihu.<sup>8</sup> In what way did this correct the sin of the Golden Calf, and what is its connection to the Mishkan?

When Yitzchak was offered up, his soul entered into the ram that was being offered, and it was as though he was offered, himself, as a sacrifice. Hashem told Avraham, “*kach na*” – please take.<sup>9</sup> Rema Mifano<sup>10</sup> teaches us that the word *na*, which means “please,” is made up of the two letters *nun* and *alef*, the *nun* hinting to Nadav and the *alef* to Avihu, for, their souls were there at the time of the *Akeidah*. What were they doing there? He tells us that, in fact, the Satan told the angel Michael that Yitzchak should die since “his children will eventually sin at the *Egel* [Golden Calf].” The Arizal<sup>11</sup> also taught us that it was the incredible accomplishment of the *Akeidah* that ingrained in the Jewish people the depth in their souls, which allowed them to survive the sin of the Golden Calf and not be wiped out. The word *svach*, which means “thicket,” used in the verse to describe where the ram was caught at the *Akeidah*,<sup>12</sup> is made up of the letters *samech*, *bes* and *chof*, which are the three letters that, respectively, precede the *ayin*, *gimmel* and *lamed* of the word *egel*, which means “calf.” It is only the merit of Avraham and Yitzchak and that little ram in the thicket that gave the Jewish people the incredible ability to not be ruined by the Golden Calf incident.

Here is why: Serving Hashem is what Torah is about. We do not create a “god” based upon what we need. The very opposite is true. We are meant to relate to Hashem, and Truth because it is true. We do not gauge our needs, and then act. Avraham could have thought about how much he needed his son, both for his own dreams and for those of his future offspring. But since we give ourselves up entirely as a sacrifice to Hashem, we do not get to choose. Paradoxically, our Sages teach us, “The only way that one can truly exist is by practically killing himself!”<sup>13</sup> You begin to exist when you stop being self-centered and let

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8 Children's deaths can only be a punishment for their fathers' sins when they, too, share that same sin, according to Sanhedrin 27b.

9 Bereishis 22:2

10 *Maamar Henefesh* 4:15

11 Quoted by Chida in his *Dvash Lifi*, *alef*, 16.

12 Bereishis 22:13

13 Tamid 32:2; see Rashi there. See also R. Chaim Palagi's *Hachaim Yoducha* to Tehillim 22, and the



yourself join the Infinite Creator. Only then is your existence real. When Yitzchak made himself into a real sacrifice, he did something that was the very opposite of the creation of the Golden Calf. The Jewish people felt lost without Moshe, and they needed someone to lead them. So they created a god for that. Other religions have created gods to fit their needs. Whenever the Jews worshiped idols, all they were really doing was creating gods who would then meet their immediate needs, says the Gemara.<sup>14</sup> The *Akeidah* was the very opposite of Golden Calf. The giving up of oneself for the Truth, is what the Jewish people had ingrained in them by Yitzchak. That lesson gave them the strength to not be ruined entirely by the Golden Calf. They followed a false system to gratify their momentary needs, but it didn't really penetrate their souls, for the *svach* came long before the *Egel*.

Nadav and Avihu did something similar. They gave themselves up so completely that they became actual human sacrifices.<sup>15</sup> This was a great act, and it is what colored the nature of the Mishkan. The Mishkan was the place where we would offer sacrifices to God. The most important thing about those sacrifices was that they be sacrifices of people. The sacrifice that is just a way to get the gods to do what you want is a hollow one, and just another Golden Calf. The truest sacrifice is when one admits to God that He is in charge, and that we, as humans, have no say in defining right and wrong. When a person looks to the Truth first, and only after that, makes his next decisions, then he has followed in the path of Yitzchak, and the path of Nadav and Avihu. The potential for their act – that act that would define the very essence of the Mishkan as a true place of worship and correct the mistake of the Golden Calf – was rooted in the true offering of a man, which was done by Yitzchak.

Only when we are prepared to completely sacrifice our own attitudes and look first to what

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Introduction to *Chelkan BiChaim*, quoting the *Olillos Efraim*.

14 Sanhedrin 63b

15 The most fascinating thing about all of this may perhaps be the fact that the act of Nadav and Avihu was an act that they were not commanded to do. That is, in fact, what was lacking in their act. It was complete self-sacrifice to Hashem, and yet, Hashem had not asked for it. That paradox is what is behind their deaths, for the Torah emphasizes that it was a “strange fire that Hashem did not ask for.” It was the kink that needed to be worked out. It was corrected, teach the kabbalistic works (see *Zohar*, vol. 3, 217a), by Pinchas, when he rushed in to kill Zimri and Cozbi, which was also something that could not be commanded, as is clear from Sanhedrin 82a. See this and more in the comments of *Ramasayim Tzofim*, vol. 2, p. 35a. See also Rema Mifano in *Maamar Hanefesh*, 4:15, where he also teaches that the word *haayil* (the ram) is made up of the same letters as “Elijah,” for Pinchas and Elijah were the same person – and that “Pinchas” (when spelled with a *yod*) shares the same *gematria* as “Yitzchak.” See also his *Chikur Din* quoted earlier, where he adds that the belt of Eliyahu (Melachim II, 1:8) was from the leather of the ram from the *Akeidah*, as taught in Pirkei Dirabbi Eliezer.

*Much of the material presented in Oneg! has been translated by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein from Rabbi Elchanan Shoff's weekly Hebrew 'Aalefcha Chochma' parsha sheet. To sign up to the Oneg! weekly email list, or to sponsor a week of Oneg! send an email to BKLashul@gmail.com*

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is right and what is wrong can we truly have the humility that we need to avoid being wiped out in this world. Only then can we bring back our Temple, and truly offer the sacrifices that matter most. But first, we must be prepared to burn our egos, and let them incinerate on the altar of the Truth.