**S.A.L.T. – PARASHAT TETZAVEH**

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Motzaei Shabbat

The latter part of Parashat Tetzaveh describes the procedure that was to be followed for the formal consecration of Aharon and his sons as *kohanim*. This procedure, which was repeated for seven days, included the offering of a series of sacrifices, the final of which was the *eil ha-miluim* – a ram brought by Aharon and his sons. God commanded Moshe that after slaughtering this ram, before sprinkling some of its blood on the altar as was done for normal sacrifices, he was to place some of the blood on the *kohanim*’s earlobes, and on their right thumbs and right big toes (29:20). Then, after sprinkling the blood on the altar, Moshe was to take some of the blood from the altar, together with the *shemen ha-mischa* (anointing oil), and sprinkle the mixture on the *kohanim* and on their priestly garments (29:21). Thereafter, Moshe was to offer the ram’s fats, along with some of the bread that accompanied this special offering, on the altar (29:22-25). The rest of the meat was then eaten by Aharon and his sons, with one portion given to Moshe to eat.

Chizkuni comments that this marks the only instance of sacrificial blood being used for a ritual after it was sprinkled on the altar. When it comes to all other sacrifices, the obligations vis-à-vis the sacrificial blood are considered complete once the blood is sprinkled on the altar, and the blood is not then used for any other purpose. The *eil ha-miluim* sacrifice was unique in that some blood was taken from the altar after it was sprinkled, in order to consecrate Aharon and his sons. The reason, Chizkuni explains, is because this process was intended to “bind” the *kohanim* to the altar. By taking some blood from the altar and sprinkling it on the *kohanim*, the *kohanim* became linked to the altar. Chizkuni adds that this was necessary to signify that only Aharon and his sons – and their descendants – were chosen as God’s exclusive attendants, and nobody else was granted this privilege.

Additionally, however, this symbolic “binding” of the *kohanim* to the altar might also assume halakhic significance, establishing that the *kohanim* now became, in a sense, an extension of the altar.

This notion can be seen in an answer given to the question raised by the *Sha’agat Aryeh* (96) as to why *kohanim*, when partaking of sacrificial meat, were not permitted to eat the *gid ha-nasheh* – the sciatic nerve. Although the consumption of the *gid ha-nasheh* is forbidden for all Jews, an exception should seemingly be made in the case of *kohanim* eating the meat of sacrifices, which fulfills a *mitzva* (“*ve-akhlu otam asher kupar bahem*” – 29:33; see Rambam, *Sefer Ha-mitzvot*, *asei* 89). In light of the principle of “*asei docheh lo ta’aseh*” – the fulfillment of an affirmative command supersedes a conflicting prohibition – it would seem that the *mitzva* of eating the meat of a sacrifice would override the *gid ha-nasheh* prohibition, such that *kohanim* should be allowed to eat this part of a sacrifice. However, the *Sha’agat Aryeh* shows from the Gemara that this is not the case. The *Chazon Ish* (Y.D. 214) suggested answering that just as food which is forbidden for consumption may not be offered on the altar, such food may likewise not be eaten by the *kohanim* as part of their consumption of sacrifices. The rules governing the *kohanim*’s consumption of sacrifices must follow the rules governing the altar’s consumption of sacrifices, and thus the *kohanim* may not eat any food forbidden to be placed on the altar, even if we could, technically, apply the rule of “*asei docheh lo ta’aseh*.”

The concept underlying this explanation, as noted and discussed by Rav Shlomo Fisher in *Beit Yishai – Derashot* (p. 381), is that the *kohanim* are considered just like the altar with respect to sacrifices. They consume the sacrifices not as regular human beings, but rather as an extension, so-to-speak, of the altar. Quite possibly, Rav Fisher suggests, the source for this concept is Chizkuni’s observation regarding the blood of the *eil ha-miluim* sacrifice. The placement of this blood bound the *kohanim* to the altar in the sense that they were now considered extensions of the altar, such that their consumption of sacrifices is akin to the altar’s consumption of sacrifices.

Interestingly enough, the Ralbag explained this verse much differently, claiming that in truth, no blood of the *eil ha-miluim* was taken after it was sprinkled on the altar. When the Torah requires taking “from the blood that is on the altar,” this refers – according to the Ralbag – to the blood which remained in the container after some blood was sprinkled on the altar. The Ralbag found it inconceivable that blood would be taken and sprinkled after it had been sprinkled on the altar, to the extent that he offered a strained reading of the verse to avoid such a conclusion.

Sunday

Yesterday, we noted the procedure which God commanded Moshe to follow when offering the *eil ha-miluim* – the special sacrifice brought by Aharon and his sons as part of their consecration as *kohanim*. As we read in Parashat Tetzaveh (29:20-25), Moshe was to slaughter the ram and then place some of its blood on several parts of the *kohanim*’s body. He was then to sprinkle its blood on the altar, and afterward take blood from the altar, mix it with the *shemen ha-mishcha* (anointing oil), and sprinkle the mixture on the *kohanim* and on their garments. Moshe was then to complete the sacrifice by placing the animal’s fats on the altar.

The Ramban, commenting to Sefer Vayikra (8:30), notes a discrepancy between God’s commands to Moshe here in Parashat Tetzaveh, and Moshe’s fulfillment of these commands, as described by the Torah in Sefer Vayikra. The Torah there tells that Moshe first offered the sacrificial fats on the altar before taking some of the blood from the altar and sprinkling it with the oil on the *kohanim*. This is in contrast to the series of commands which appear here in Parashat Teztaveh, which require Moshe to first sprinkle the blood on the *kohanim* and only then place the fats on the altar. The Ramban suggests that Moshe understood from God’s commands that the fats were to be offered before the sprinkling, because God made it clear that the sprinkling marked the moment when Aharon and his sons officially became *kohanim*: “You shall sprinkle [the blood and oil] on Aharon and on his garments, and on his sons and on their garments, **whereupon he and his garments will be sacred, and his sons and his sons’ garments**…” (29:21). As this act conferred the status of priesthood upon Aharon and his sons, the Ramban writes, it was clear to Moshe that this should be the very last stage of the consecration process. He therefore first completed the offering of the sacrifice before sprinkling the blood on the *kohanim*, which was to be the final stage.

The Ramban does not explain, however, why God first mentioned the sprinkling before the offering of the fats. If the intention was that the sprinkling should be done last, then, seemingly, this stage should have been mentioned last, and not before the offering of the fats on the altar.

Netziv, in his *Ha’ameik Davar* (Shemot 29:21), advances a different theory. In principle, he writes, the blood should have been sprinkled on the *kohanim* immediately after its sprinkling on the altar, for a simple, practical reason: the blood would slowly but steadily drip down the side of the altar, and so unless it was taken quickly, it would not be available for sprinkling. In issuing His commands, then, God indicated that the blood should be taken from the altar and sprinkled on the *kohanim* immediately, without delay. However, when Moshe performed this ceremony, a miracle occurred, and the blood stood in place after it was sprinkled on the altar, without trickling down. Moshe therefore understood that he was to first perform the standard procedure of sacrificial offering, by placing the fats on the altar, before performing the unusual ritual of taking blood from the altar and sprinkling it on the *kohanim*. Netziv explains that the command was formulated in the manner that would be followed if the *kohanim* were not worthy of this miracle, but ultimately, they were worthy, and so Moshe followed a different sequence, first offering the fats on the altar and then sprinkling the blood on the *kohanim.*

Monday

The final of the sacrifices offered on each of the seven days of the *kohanim*’s consecration was the “*eil ha-miliuim*” – a special ram sacrifice which was eaten by both Moshe and the *kohanim*. Essentially, this sacrifice was handled as a *shelamim* offering – a sacrifice whose fats are placed on the altar, while the meat is shared by the *kohanim* and the individual who brought the offering. Specifically, the *chazeh* (chest) and *shok* (right thigh) are given to the *kohanim*, and the rest of the meat is partaken by the one who brought the sacrifice (and anyone with whom he wishes to share it). During the seven days of the *miluim*, Moshe tended to the sacrifices as the *kohen*, and the sacrifices were offered by Aharon and his sons. And thus the “*eil ha-miluim*,” which was modeled after the *shelamim*, was divided between Aharon and his sons – who in this instance were the owners of the sacrifice – and Moshe, who served as the officiating *kohen*. Thus, the majority of the meat was given to Aharon and his sons, and the *chazeh* and *shok* – in principle – were assigned as Moshe’s share, though as an extraordinary measure, the *shok* in this instance was placed on the altar together with the fats (29:22). God instructed that the *chazeh* should be given to Moshe as his “*mana*” – “portion” (29:26).

Rav Meir Simcha Ha-kohen of Dvinsk, in his *Meshekh Chokhma*, comments that the meaning of the word “*mana*” in this verse may have implications for the obligation of “*mishloach* ***manot***” – sending gifts of food to one’s fellow on Purim (Ester 9:22). The *chazeh* of this sacrifice, *Meshekh Chokhma* notes, is described as Moshe’s “*mana*” only once the sacrificial blood had been sprinkled and the fats were offered on the altar, at which point Moshe earned the privilege of partaking of this portion of meat. A “*mana*,” *Meshekh Chokhma* writes, is something which is already suitable for consumption, and thus God told Moshe that he would be receiving the *chazeh* as his “*mana*” only after the sacrificial rituals were completed, whereupon Moshe the meat was allowed to be eaten.

Accordingly, *Meshekh Chokhma* establishes, when the *Megilla* commands us to give “*manot*” to another person on Purim, it requires us to send food that is ready for consumption. As implied by the verse here in Parashat Tetzaveh, a “*mana*” is food fit for consumption, and thus giving raw food which still requires preparation does not fulfill the *mitzva* of *mishloach manot*.

Interestingly, others reach the precise opposite conclusion from the very same verse. Rav Yair Bachrach, in his *Mekor Chayim* notes to the *Shulchan Arukh* (O.C. 695), as well as Netziv, in his *Ha’ameik She’eila* (67:9), assert that to the contrary, the use of the word “*mana*” in this verse proves that it refers even to unprepared food. Moshe’s portion of the sacrifice was called a “*mana*” once it became permissible for consumption, but the meat was still raw at that point; it had not been cooked. *Meshekh Chokhma*’s inference from this verse thus seems difficult, as it appears to prove the precise opposite, since Moshe’s portion of the meat was still raw when it was called a “*mana*.”

Some have noted that this issue might hinge on a debate among the *Rishonim* in interpreting the Mishna in Masekhet Beitza (14b) which discusses the permissibility of sending gifts on Yom Tov. Although generally it is forbidden to give gifts on Yom Tov, Beit Hillel ruled that one may send a kosher animal to one’s fellow on Yom Tov, as the animal may be slaughtered and its meat prepared for consumption on Yom Tov. Since the gift is something which could be used as part of the Yom Tov celebration, it may be given on Yom Tov. Beit Shammai, however, disagreed, and allowed giving only “*manot*.” Rashi explains that Beit Shammai permitted giving only readymade food, which is prepared for immediate consumption. Meiri, by contrast, writes that Beit Shammai allowed giving even raw meat, and disagreed with Beit Hillel only with respect to live animals, which still require slaughtering. These *Rishonim* thus seem to debate the question of whether the word “*manot*” refers specifically to readymade food, or even to food that still needs to be cooked and made fit for consumption.

The *Mishna Berura* (695:20) brings both opinions among the *poskim* as to whether one fulfills the *mishlo’ach manot* obligation by giving raw food, implying that this issue has not been definitively resolved one way or the other.

Tuesday

Parashat Tetzaveh begins with the command to kindle the *menorah* in the *Mishkan*.  God instructs Moshe that the candles should be lit “in the Tent of Meeting, outside the curtain which is over the [Ark of the Testimony]” (27:21).

*Keli Yakar* raises the question of why God emphasizes here that the *menorah* is situated “*mi-chutz la-parokhet*” – beyond the curtain that separated between the two chambers of the *Mishkan*. Already earlier (26:33-35), the Torah specified the arrangement of the *Mishkan*, instructing that the curtain would partition between the *kodesh ha-kodashim* – where the ark was situated – and the *kodesh*, which contained the *menorah* and the *shulchan* (table). Why, then, is special emphasis made here on the fact the candles were lit “outside the curtain”?

*Keli Yakar* suggests that these verses at the beginning of Parashat Tetzaveh, which speak of the kindling of a *ner tamid* (“eternal lamp” – 27:20), refer specifically to the *ner ma’aravi* – the “western lamo.”  As the Ramban cites from the *Sifrei* and *Torat Kohanim*, *Chazal* understood that one of the lamps of the *menorah*, called the “western lamp,” miraculously burned at all times, without being extinguished, demonstrating the *Shekhina*’s presence among the nation.  Therefore, *Keli Yakar* explains, God here emphasizes that the candles are to be lit outside the *parokhet*, beyond the inner sanctum of the *Mishkan*, underscoring the fact that a miraculous phenomenon would occur even there.  The presence of the *Shekhina* would be manifest not only in the *kodesh ha-kodashim*, which housed the heavenly stone tablets, but even outside the *kodesh ha-kodashim*, by way of the miracle of the *ner tamid*.

*Keli Yakar* then offers a second explanation, suggesting that this point is emphasized to draw attention to the fact that the *menorah*’s light did not illuminate the *kodesh ha-kodashim*.  To dispel the heretical misconception that God requires light, the Torah here stresses that a thick curtain separated the *kodesh ha-kodashim* – which represented God’s “private chamber” – and thee area of the *Mishkan* where the *menorah* stood, such that the light of the *menorah* did not penetrate the inner chamber.  This proves that the candles were not lit for the sake of providing God with illumination.

The *menorah* is often seen as a symbol of our ability to “illuminate” our surroundings, to influence and inspire.  The light of the *menorah*, produced from the purest olive oil, is commonly associated with the light of Torah and spirituality which we are to “shine” as brightly as we can, adding as much “light” to the world as possible.  *Keli Yakar*’s insight into the significance of the *parokhet* in this context perhaps reminds us to recognize the limits of our capacity to “illuminate,” that there are certain “barriers” beyond which we should not aspire to “shine.”  As important as it is to “illuminate” as much as we can, we must also know where our “illumination” will never be felt, that there are certain areas where we cannot exert influence.  We are all blessed with “light,” with skills and talents, which enable us to “shine” and positively impact upon the world, but each person’s capacity to “illuminate” is limited.  We must recognize the “*parokhet*,” the limits on our potential sphere and influence, and focus our attention on shining as brightly as we can within that sphere, rather than trying to wield influence beyond the “*parokhet*,” in places where our light is unable to shine.

Wednesday

One of the *bigdei kehuna* (priestly garments) described in Parashat Tetzaveh is the *me’il*, or robe, worn by the *kohen gadol*. Among the unique features of the *me’il* is the series of bells that were affixed to its bottom hem, together with a series of decorative pomegranates made from flax. The Torah describes the arrangement of the bells and pomegranates with the command, “A golden bell and a pomegranate; a golden bell and a pomegranate; all around the bottom hem of the robe” (28:34). In concluding its discussion of the *me’il*, the Torah says that the *kohen gadol*’s “sound would be heard” as he entered the *Mishkan*. Ibn Ezra (*Peirush Ha-katzar*) cites those who explained this to mean that Aharon’s prayers would be answered if he entered the *Mishkan* with all the required garments, but the more straightforward interpretation is that the bells on the bottom of the *me’il* rang as he walked.

The commentators disagree in explaining how exactly the bells and pomegranates were arranged. Rashi, Rav Saadia Gaon, the Rashbam and others explain that the bells and pomegranates were arranged in alternating fashion. According to this interpretation, when the Torah commands arranging bells “*be-tokham*” – “in the midst” of the pomegranates (28:33), it means that a bell was positioned in between every two pomegranates. This is also the view taken by the Rambam, in *Hilkhot Kelei Ha-mikdash* (9:4).

The Ramban, however, disagrees, explaining that the bells were actually situated inside the pomegranates. The pomegranates, the Ramban explains, were hollow, and contained the bells inside. And thus when the Torah speaks of the bells being “*be-tokham*,” it means, literally, that the bells were inside the pomegranates.

This is also the position taken by Rav Yitzchak Arama, in his *Akeidat Yitzchak*, who observes that since the bells were inside the pomegranates, they did not produce a loud sound. After all, the pomegranates were made from flax, not from metal, and thus the clanking of the bell against the pomegranates could not have been very loud at all. The *Akeidat Yitzchak* suggests that this was intentional, in order to convey the lesson that one should not make a lot of “noise,” seeking recognition and notoriety. The *kohen gadol*, who was to serve as a model of spiritual greatness, produced a faint sound as he walked about in the *Beit Ha-mikdash* in order to teach us that we should not be looking to draw attention to ourselves, to impress, to be heard or seen. The “sounds” we produce should be quiet and humble, the result of our sincere, wholehearted commitment to live in the service of God.

*Chazal* (Arakhin 16a) teach that the *me’il* provided atonement for the sin of *lashon ha-ra* – gossip and negative speech about other people. The *Akeidat Yitzchak*’s insight teaches us that the opposite of *lashon ha-ra* is humble reticence, living without trying to promote oneself and without trying to impress. If we focus too much on our reputation, on how people perceive us, then we are prone to look down upon and speak negatively about other people in the process. In our quest to bolster our own standing, we will, almost inevitably, put other people down. The antidote to *lashon ha-ra*, then, is the faint sound of the *me’il*, which represents the value of humility and of focusing on doing the right thing rather than on making ourselves heard.

Thursday

One of the *bigdei kehuna* (priestly garments) described in Parashat Tetzaveh is the *choshen* – the breastplate worn by the *kohen gadol*, within which were embedded twelve special stones, which bore the inscriptions of the names of the twelve tribes (28:21).

The Torah refers to the breastplate with the term “*choshen mishpat*” (literally, “the breastplate of judgment” – 28:15), which has been explained by the commentators in several different ways. Rav Saadia Gaon interprets “*mishpat*” in this verse to mean simply “specifications,” emphasizing that the breastplate must be made precisely according to the guidelines presented by the Torah. This is similar to God’s command to Moshe earlier (26:30) to assemble the *Mishkan* “*ke-mishpato*” – according to the stated requirements. There, too, Rav Saadia Gaon explains the term “*ke-mishpato*” to mean “according to its specifications.”

The Rashbam, following the second interpretation given by his grandfather, Rashi, explains that the word “*mishpat*” here refers to the *choshen*’s function as an oracle. The breastplate contained the *Urim Ve-tumim*, a device which was used when questions of national import arose, as the *kohen gadol* would pose the question and the letters of the *Urim Ve-tumim* would illuminate to spell out God’s response. This process is referred to as “*mishpat*,” in the sense that the *choshen* resolved difficult questions much as a court decides cases that are brought before it for adjudication.

Netziv, in *Ha’ameik Davar*, creatively suggests that the term “*choshen mishpat*” indicates that the *choshen*’s function was to petition God to assist *Benei Yisrael* in battle against their enemies. Citing a verse from Sefer Melakhim I (8:49), Netziv contends that the word “*mishpat*” is used in reference to avenging honor, and thus the *choshen* worn by the *kohen gadol* was intended to appeal to God to defend His nation against those who threatened them.

The Gemara (Arakhin 16a, Zevachim 88b), however, as Rashi cites, associates the *choshen* with actual “*mishpat*” – judgment. According to the Gemara, the *kohen gadol*’sbreastplate served to atone for sins of the judiciary.

To explain the connection between the *choshen* and judicial corruption, Rav Yitzchak Arama notes in his *Akeidat Yitzchak* that the *choshen* contained the names of all twelve tribes, representing the equal stature and importance of all members of the nation. By carrying the names of all the tribes, each of which was engraved on a different stone, the *kohen gadol* conveyed the message that all members of *Am Yisrael* are precious and cherished by the Almighty. Most sins of judgment, the *Akeidat Yitzchak* writes, are the result of favoritism, of viewing some segments of the population, or some individuals, as worthier or more important than others. The *choshen* atoned for this form of wrongdoing by emphasizing the need to respect the rights and the dignity of all members of the nation, without ever placing the need and interests of one group over those of another.

Friday

Towards the end of Parashat Tetzaveh, we read of God’s command to offer a daily sacrifice each morning and afternoon (the “*tamid*” offering). God emphasizes in His command that this sacrifice is to be offered in the courtyard outside the *Mishkan*, where He would speak to Moshe (“*asher iva’eid lakhem shama* ***le-daber eilekha sham***” – 29:42).

Rashi cites two different interpretations from *Chazal* in explaining this phrase. One view understood that indeed, after the *Mishkan*’s construction, God spoke to Moshe in the courtyard outside the *Mishkan*, as the simple reading of this verse seems to suggest. Others, however, explained the verse to mean that God spoke to Moshe from inside the *Mishkan*. In this verse, God intends to refer to the area outside the *Mishkan* – the building in which God would speak to Moshe. This second view is supported by a verse earlier, in Parashat Teruma (25:22), which states that God spoke to Moshe from above the *aron* inside the *Mishkan*.

Rav Meir Simcha Ha-kohen of Dvinsk, in his *Meshekh Chokhma*, suggests viewing this debate off the backdrop of a halakhic debate in the Gemara (Megilla 26b-27a) regarding the comparative levels of sanctity of synagogues and houses of study. The practical question under debate there in the Gemara is whether a synagogue may be turned into a *beit midrash* (house of study), or vice versa. One view regards houses of prayer as more sacred than houses of study, such that it would be permissible to transform a *beit midrash* into a synagogue, thereby elevating its level of sanctity, but not to turn a synagogue into a *beit midrash*, as this lowers its sanctity. (The accepted view is that it is permissible to turn a synagogue into a *beit midrash*, but not to turn a *beit midrash* into a synagogue – *Shulchan Arukh*, O.C. 153:1.) The *Meshekh Chokhma* suggests that the inner chamber of the *Mishkan*, where the ark – which contained the tablets – stood, symbolizes the *beit midrash*, the place where Torah is studied and preserved. The outdoor courtyard in front of the *Mishkan*, where the altar stood, is similar to a synagogue – the site of serving God. And thus the question of whether God convened with Moshe at the site of the *aron* or at the site of the altar is, essentially, the same question as to whether a *beit midrash* is more sacred than a synagogue, or vice-versa. If we view a *beit midrash* as more sacred, then the more suitable location for God’s communion with Moshe was the site of the ark, whereas if a synagogue is more sacred, then it stands to reason that God communicated with Moshe at the site of the altar, in the courtyard of the *Mishkan*.

More broadly, perhaps, this debate perhaps touches upon the fundamental question of where we encounter the Almighty – in the pristine, sacred domain of the *kodesh ha-kodashim* (the inner chamber of the *Mishkan*), or in the more complex setting of the courtyard. The *kodesh ha-kodashim* was concealed by a curtain, nobody was ever permitted to walk inside and no rituals were performed there (except by the *kohen gadol* on Yom Kippur). It thus represents the highest, strictest standards of purity and sanctity, complete withdrawal from all worldly activity, and exclusive focus upon, and engagement in, spirituality. The courtyard outside the *Mishkan*, however, is where the *kohanim* performed their service and partook of sacrificial food. It represents the realm of human activity, the ideal of conducting our ordinary human affairs in an elevated, sacred manner. Whereas the *kodesh ha-kodashim* represents withdrawal from mundane activity, the courtyard represents the refinement and elevation of mundane activity.

Accordingly, the two views cited by Rashi perhaps reflect the tension between these two conflicting ideals – the ideal of the *aron*, and the ideal of the courtyard. The pristine experience of the *kodesh ha-kodashim* offers the advantage of the absence of distraction and temptation, the ability to focus exclusively and single-mindedly on the sanctity of the Torah without the unholy pressures and lures of the outside world. The experience in the courtyard, however, while exposing one to the risk of distraction and lures, offers the opportunity to extend the sanctity of the *Mishkan* outward, to apply the message of *kedusha* to all areas of human life, and to bring it to those outside the Sanctuary. This experience is one of struggle and complexity, and poses risks, but it offers opportunities that are denied in the secluded, pristine domain of the *kodesh ha-kodashim*.

The two opinions cited by Rashi thus teach that we encounter God through a delicate balance of both experiences – through the intense spiritual experience of the *kodesh ha-kodashim*, and through the complex experience of the courtyard outside. We are to set aside time for the “*kodesh ha-kodashim*,” for exclusive, single-minded focus on Torah and spirituality, but also strive to serve God in the “courtyard,” by elevating our mundane affairs and worldly engagement, rather than seeking to withdraw from them.

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