**S.A.L.T. – PARASHAT PINCHAS**

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Motzaei Shabbat

The final section of Parashat Pinchas deals with the mandatory public sacrifices that were required on various occasions – beginning with the daily *tamid* sacrifice, and then proceeding to the additional “*musaf*” sacrifices offered on Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh, and festivals. This section is preceded by the story of Moshe’s plea to God before his passing that He appoint a successor, and God’s instruction to formally appoint Yehoshua to that role.

Rashi (28:2), citing the *Sifrei*, famously explains the reason why these two sections appear in juxtaposition to one another: “The Almighty said to him [Moshe]: Before you command Me about My children, command My children about Me…” In other words, after Moshe demanded that God care for *Benei Yisrael* by appointing an effective leader, God responded that he must also command *Benei Yisrael* to “care” for Him, so-to-speak, in the sense of fulfilling their collective sacrificial duties in the *Beit Ha-mikdash*.

The question arises, according to the *Sifrei*, as the precise significance of the public sacrifices in this regard. Why was specifically this *mitzva* given to remind Moshe that *Benei Yisrael* must “care” for God just as we ask Him to “care” for us?

Rav Shmuel Borenstein of Sochatchov, in *Sheim Mi-Shmuel*, suggests an explanation by noting one particular aspect of Moshe’s request that God appoint a leader. In presenting this request, God referred to God as “*Elokei ha-ruchot le-khol basar*” (literally, “the God of spirits for every being of flesh” – 27:16). Rashi, citing the *Midrash Tanchuma*, explains this reference as indicating to God the kind of leader that Moshe wanted for the people: “Master of the world! Each person’s character is revealed and known to You, and they are not like one another. Appoint for them a leader who can handle each and every person according to his character.” Moshe requested a leader who like God Himself, recognized that all people think and act differently, and who would thus be capable of relating to different types of people, who would not try to impose a narrow, single approach upon all members of the nation, but would rather and appreciate, accept and embrace the uniqueness of each individual.

On this basis, the *Sheim Mi-Shmuel* suggests, we can perhaps understand God’s response. The *korbenot tzibur* – the sacrifices offered collectively by all *Am Yisrael* – represent the commonality of purpose shared by the entire nation, our joining together to serve God as a single, undivided entity. The *Sheim Mi-Shmuel* notes in particular the daily *tamid* sacrifice, which consisted of two sheep, regarding which the Midrash comments, “Just as sheep have only a single voice, so does Israel have only one heart [directed] toward their Father in heaven.” The collective sacrifices signify our shared desire to serve the Almighty, that while we have many differences, we speak the same “voice” in the sense that we all seek to faithfully serve God. Accordingly, the *Sheim Mi-Shmuel* explains, the *Sifrei* saw the institution of *korbenot tzibur* as reflecting the other side of the coin expressed by Moshe. While it is certainly imperative for a leader to have the ability to “handle each and every person according to his character,” this is only within the limits of our shared “voice” – the voice of sincere religious devotion. The *Sifrei* here seeks to clarify that the quality noted by Moshe as vital for effective leadership has limits. A leader must acknowledge and accept a range of different viewpoints and styles – but provided that these viewpoints and styles do not veer from the single “voice” of humble and unwavering commitment to God’s laws.

Sunday

The Torah in Parashat Pinchas tells of Moshe’s request that God appoint a successor who would lead *Benei Yisrael* after his passing, to which God responded by commanding him to formally appoint Yehoshua as his successor. In presenting his request, Moshe asked God to appoint over the nation somebody “who would go out before them and who would come before them; and who would bring them out and bring them in” (27:17).

Seforno explains the two halves of this verse as referring to two different responsibilities of national leadership. When Moshe spoke of a leader “who would go out before them and who would come before them,” he referred to military leadership, leading the army to war and leading them home in triumphant celebration. The second phrase – “and who would bring them out and bring them in” – speaks of managing internal affairs within the country. It is unclear, though, according to Seforno, how the terms “bring out” and “bring in” can be explained to mean running the country.

Ibn Ezra writes, “who would go out before them – in war; and who would bring them out – with somebody else.” It appears that Ibn Ezra explained both segments of the verse as referring to the leader’s wartime role, with the first clause speaking of the leader personally leading the army out to the war, and the second, of the leader finding the qualified generals to bring the army to battle. Ibn Ezra does not explain his intent, but it seems that he understood that a leader is not always able to personally bring his army to the battlefield, and sometimes needs to delegate this responsibility – such as if he is not physically fit for battle, or he has other responsibilities to which to attend. It is likely that Ibn Ezra here responds to Rashi’s comments to this verse, based on the *Sifrei*, explaining that Moshe asked for a leader who would not, like kings of other nations, remain comfortably at home while his soldiers wage battle, and would instead lead his soldiers in the front lines. Ibn Ezra seemingly disagreed, and understood that Moshe speaks of a leader who marches with his troops to battle when this is possible and appropriate, but who delegates this responsibility to others when necessary.

Rashi cites from the *Sifrei* a Midrashic reading of the second clause of this verse, explaining “who would bring them out and bring them in” as referring to leading by way of one’s merit. In other words, according to this reading, Moshe asked for a figure who led not only in the direct, pragmatic sense, but also through the merits he accrued through his good deeds.

Rav Moshe Greenwald of Chust, in his *Arguat Ha-bosem*, understands the *Sifrei*’s comments to mean that the leadership figure must inspire by setting a personal example. The phrase “who would bring them out and bring them in” means, according to the *Sifrei*’s reading, that the leader’s image is embedded in the minds of the people, such that wherever they go, they see the leader in front of them. The leader Moshe wanted was an inspiring role model, a person of piety and greatness that makes a lasting impression which the people carry with them at all times. This is a leader who goes before the people not only in the literal sense, marching in the front lines in battle, but also in the figurative sense, by setting an impactful example which accompanies the people wherever they go and whatever they do.

Monday

The Torah in Parashat Pinchas tells of God’s command that when *Benei Yisrael* would enter the Land of Israel, the land’s territory should be distributed by a “*goral*” – a lottery (26:55).

However, the Gemara in Masekhet Bava Batra (122a), as cited by Rashi here in Parashat Pinchas (26:54), teaches that the distribution of the territory was also determined by the *Urim Ve-tumim* – the prophetic device worn by the *kohen gadol*. Elazar, the *kohen gadol* at the time, would declare based on the *Urim Ve-tumim* which territory was assigned to a certain tribe, and then the tribe’s leader would draw from the lottery. The result matched the territory announced by the *kohen gadol*.

The Rashbam, in his commentary to Masekhet Bava Batra, explains the reason for this system. He writes that by having the lottery drawing confirmed by the *kohen gadol*’s prophetic pronouncement, “Israel’s minds were put to rest, as they saw that the lottery turned out the way it was first prophesied, and they knew that the distribution was fair, and they would not question it.” According to the Rashbam, the primary means of distributing the land was the lottery. The *Urim Ve-tumim* was needed for the purpose of reassuring the people that the lottery’s results truly reflected the divine will, and determined precisely what each tribe was to receive.

This reassurance given to the people at the time of the initial distribution of *Eretz Yisrael* was likely intended not only for them, but also for all of us, for all generations. So often, life appears random, like a lottery, with people receiving their “shares” arbitrarily. Some people receive more and some less, and there does not appear to be any logical system determining which share is given to whom. The initial distribution of *Eretz Yisrael* among the twelve tribes may perhaps be viewed as a model aimed at reassuring us that God is behind the “lottery” of life. Just as *Benei Yisrael* were shown that the results of the drawing reflected God’s will, so must we always trust that our share of this world, which appears entirely random, is, in truth, what was precisely allocated for us by the Almighty, who, in His infinite wisdom, determined that this is the share perfectly suited for our unique mission in the world.

Tuesday

The Torah in Parashat Pinchas tells of the census taken of *Benei Yisrael* in the *Eiver Ha-Yardein* region, shortly before they crossed the Jordan River into the Land of Israel. After this census, God instructs Moshe that “*la-eileh teichaleik ha-aretz*” (26:53) – the land was to be divided among the people counted in this census, meaning, all males aged twenty and above, excluding the tribe of Levi.

The implication of this command, as discussed by the Gemara in Masekhet Bava Batra (117a), is that each person who was counted in this census received an equal portion of *Eretz Yisrael*. God commanded that the land should be divided among “*eileh*” – these people, who were just counted, suggesting that they all received equal shares.

However, as the Gemara notes, this issue is actually subject to a debate among the *Tanna’im*. Rabbi Yonatan indeed maintained that the land was divided equally among “*ba’ei ha-aretz*” – the adult males who entered *Eretz Yisrael*. Rabbi Yoshiya, by contrast, maintained that the land was divided among “*yotz’ei Mitzrayim*” – the adult males of the previous generation, who left Egypt forty years before *Benei Yisrael*’s entry into the land. This means that if two men left Egypt, and one had one child while the other had three children, the only child of the first received a whole share, whereas each of the three children of the second received just one-third of a share. Since the land was – according to Rabbi Yoshiya – divided among those who left Egypt, the children of those men were treated as inheritors of their father’s portion. As such, those who had brothers at the time *Benei Yisrael* entered the land received a smaller portion than those who did not.

Rabbi Yoshiya is thus forced to reinterpret the command, “*la-eileh teichaleik ha-aretz*,” which, as mentioned, certainly seems to suggest that the land was divided equally among those who entered *Eretz Yisrael*. He explains by offering a somewhat strained reading of this command, whereby it should be understood to mean “*ka-eileh*” – “like these.” According to Rabbi Yoshiya, God instructed Moshe to distribute *Eretz Yisrael* among the generation that left Egypt – but only among those who resembled the people who were just counted, in that they were twenty years of age or older. The phrase “*la-eila teichaleik ha-aretz*,” according to this view, instructs not dividing the land among the current generation, but rather dividing the land among those of the previous generation who were twenty years old or older when they left Egypt.

The basis for Rabbi Yoshiya’s view, as the Gemara discusses, is the phrase two verses later, in which God instructs that *Benei Yisrael* should be allotted portions of the land “*li-shmot matot avotav*” – “according to the names of the tribes of their fathers” (26:55). This phrase suggested to Rabbi Yoshiya that the land was apportioned not among the current generation of *Benei Yisrael*, but rather to their parents, and the current generation “inherited” land from their parents. This meant that those who had brothers at the time *Benei Yisrael* entered the land received smaller portions that those who had no brothers, because those with siblings effectively “inherited” the portion of the land which was assigned to their deceased father.

Rabbi Yonatan, as mentioned, disagreed, and understood that the land was apportioned equally among those who entered *Eretz Yisrael*. Accordingly, he must explain why the Torah requires distributing the land according to “the names of the tribes of their fathers,” which suggests that the distribution was among the previous generation. Rabbi Yonatan’s explanation of this verse will *iy”H* be the subject of tomorrow’s discussion.

Wednesday

Yesterday, we noted the dispute brought by the Gemara in Masekhet Bava Batra (117a) concerning the initial distribution of the Land of Israel. In Parashat Pinchas (26:53), God commands distributing the land “to these” (“*la-eileh*”), seemingly referring to the generation that was about to enter the land of Israel and of whom a census had just been taken. The implication is that all those who were just counted – every male aged twenty and above – received an equal portion of the land. This is, indeed, the view of Rabbi Yonatan. Rabbi Yoshiya, however, points to God’s command two verses later – “*li-shmot matot avotam yinchalu*” (“according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit”) – as suggesting that the process worked differently. In his view, the land was distributed among the generation that left Egypt, which died in the wilderness, and the current generation that entered the land were treated as their inheritors. And thus according to this view, if a man who left Egypt had three children, and another man had only one child, the first man’s children each received one-third the portion received by the second man’s child.

Making this subject particularly complicated is the Gemara’s discussion of Rabbi Yonatan’s view. Although Rabbi Yonatan maintains that the land was distributed among the “*ba’ei ha-aretz*” (those who entered the land), he must account for the command to distribute the land “*li-shmot matot avotam*,” which refers to the parent generation. Rabbi Yonatan therefore explains that when it came to the initial distribution of the Land of Israel, “*meitim yoreshim et ha-chayim*” – “the dead inherit the living.” Meaning, if there were two brothers who left Egypt, and one had just one son and the other had two sons, such that the three cousins all received full shares, we view those three shares as then being “bequeathed” back to their fathers, who left Egypt and died in the desert. The two brothers who left Egypt theoretically receive the entire territory allotted to their three sons, which is then divided equally among the two brothers. Each brother in turn bequeaths the territory back to his son or sons. In the end, then, the first’s only son receives a full share, and the second’s two sons receive a half-share each. And so although Rabbi Yonatan in principle maintains that the land was distributed among “*ba’ei ha-aretz*,” in actuality, the land is divided among those who left Egypt.

Of course, this gives rise to the obvious question as to the difference between these two views. It appears that both Rabbi Yoshiya’s view and Rabbi Yonatan’s view yield the same result – that the land in effect was apportioned among those who left Egypt, whose children inherited the parents’ shares.

This question was asked by Tosafot (there in Bava Batra), and they explained that the difference between the two views is seen in the case of two unrelated men who left Egypt, and who did not have brothers. If one had one son and the other had two sons, then, according to Rabbi Yonatan, each of the three cousins received a full share in the land. In this case, each father “received” only what his children were given – since he had no brothers – and he then bequeathed it back to them, so nothing was lost. But if two brothers left Egypt, they “received” all the land apportioned to all their children, and it was then divided equally among them, and thus in this case, indeed, there is no difference between Rabbi Yonatan and Rabbi Yoshiya. It is only in regard to a person who left Egypt without brothers, and had several sons, that these *Tanna’im* argue. According to Rabbi Yoshiya, the sons divide the father’s portion, whereas according to Rabbi Yonatan, they each receive a full portion.

Thursday

The Torah in Parashat Pinchas presents the *mitzva* of the *korban tamid* – the daily sacrifice which was to be offered each and every day in the *Beit Ha-mikdash*. As the Torah commands, this sacrifice consisted of a sheep offered each morning, and a second sheep offered each afternoon.

*Ketav Sofer* notes a subtle shift in this context from the plural form to the singular form. The Torah begins with the plural form – “***tishmeru*** *le-hakriv li*” (“you shall ensure to sacrifice to Me” – 28:2); “*zeh ha-isheh asher* ***takrivu***” (“this is the offering which you shall sacrifice” – 28:3) – but in the next verse, the Torah commands, “*Et ha-keves ha-echad* ***ta’aseh*** *ba-boker*” (“One sheep you shall prepare in the morning”), utilizing the singular form.

To explain this nuance, *Ketav Sofer* observes the unique nature of a public *mitzva*, such as the *korbenot tzibur* – the sacrifices offered collectively by the entire nation. God wanted us to not only perform individual, personal *mitzvot*, but also participate in communal and national *mitzvot*, whereby we all merge together into a single, collective unit that serves God. The value of public *mitzvot* lies in the fact that an aggregate whole is greater than the sum of all its parts; that the power of a large, unified group of people combining their efforts far exceeds that of a group of individuals working alone. Therefore, God wanted us to serve Him both as individuals – so we can grow and achieve on a personal and individual level – and also as a nation, whereby we can accomplish so much more than we can as isolated individuals. And so He gave us both personal *mitzvot* to observe and collective *mitzvot* in which we are to participate along with the rest of our community and our nation.

However, there appears to be a distinct disadvantage to collective, public *mitzvot*, in that individuals lose their personal identity, becoming just a piece of a large puzzle. When participating in communal or national undertakings, people may feel as though they receive no credit for the *mitzva* being performed, since they do not achieve anything on their own. Moreover, when a *mitzva* is observed by a collective unit, individuals might find it unfulfilling, as they play such a small, seemingly insignificant role in the *mitzva*’s performance, which included the participation of such a large number of people.

For this reason, *Ketav Sofer* suggests, the Torah transitions from the plural form to the singular form in its presentation of the command of the *tamid* sacrifice – the quintessential public *mitzva*. The Torah begins in the plural form, because this *mitzva* is directed towards the nation as a whole. But it then shifts to the singular form to emphasize that each and every individual is credited with the full performance of a *mitzva*. It should not trouble us that we each fill a very small role in communal obligations, because the success of these undertakings requires the participation of every individual, and so every individual is to be considered as having personally facilitated the *mitzva*. Even when it appears that our role is insignificantly small, the Torah considers every person’s role vitally important and indispensable, and credits each and every one of us with having individually facilitated the *mitzva* that was achieved.

Friday

The daily *tamid* offering, as the Torah commands in Parashat Pinchas (28:1-8), consists of two sheep which were sacrificed each day, one in the morning and another in the afternoon.

Rav Eliezer Papo, in his *Elef Ha-magein*, views these two daily sacrifices as symbols of the two basic spiritual struggles that we are to wage in our effort to properly serve the Almighty. We must restrain our instincts to avoid violating the Torah’s prohibitions, and we must overcome our innate laziness to fulfill the Torah’s obligations. The two basic realms of religious commands – *mitzvot lo ta’aseh* (prohibitions) and *mitzvot asei* (required actions) – necessitate exercising two very different qualities: self-restraint, and energetic, proactive assiduousness. Rav Papo suggests that the word “*keves*” (“sheep”) is associated with the verb *k.v.sh.*, which denotes “conquest,” and thus alludes to the requirement to seize control over our natural human tendencies. Two sheep are sacrificed, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, representing the two general stages in life which pose different challenges. Youth is characterized by energy and passion, thus necessitating self-restraint and self-control to comply with the Torah’s restrictions. Later in life, energy levels decline, and the greater challenge thus becomes driving oneself to act and achieve all that the Torah requires. And so one sheep is offered in the morning – symbolizing the need to overcome the spiritual challenges of youth – and another is offered late in the day, symbolizing the struggle that must be waged in our older years.

In a slightly different vein, we might suggest that these two sacrifices are offered daily to instruct that these struggles in truth present themselves each and every day of our lives. Even in our older years, we still have certain youthful, frivolous tendencies that need to be restrained, and even in our younger years, we at times experience a degree of lethargy that we must overcome so we can achieve and maximize our potential. Each day, we have both the challenges of “the morning” and the challenges of “the afternoon”; there are things we want to do which we should not do, and there are things we do not want to do which we should do. The *tamid* sacrifice signifies the need for consistent, ongoing work and effort to meet the different challenges that we invariably confront in our quest to live our lives in the devoted service of our Creator.

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