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PARSHA ENCOUNTERS

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Parshas Vayikra ✍️ Rabbi Avrohom Shultz

Imagination

In this week's parsha, we are introduced to the laws pertaining to the various korbanos. Beyond the esoteric meaning, the korban affords us opportunities to become closer to our Creator and to atone for our transgressions. How is this achieved? Why does Hashem want this service from us, and how does it affect atonement? The Rishonim deal with these questions and offer enlightening insights which expose the significance of korbanos and shed light on the human psyche.

The Ramban explains that sins are committed through the faculties of thought, speech, and actions. When a person brings a sin offering he likewise involves these three parts. He leans his hands on the animal which involves action, he confesses his sin involving speech, and finally the innards are burnt on the altar which represent the animalistic thoughts and desires. This will trigger a thought process and a realization in the mind of the sinner, that in truth, he deserves the same fate as this animal. He is spared only because of the Merciful One who accepts the shedding of the animal's blood in place of the penitents, and the animal's soul in place of his, as well as the animal's limbs in the sinner's stead. In addition, some portions are allotted to the kohen help to sustain him. The kohein dedicates his life to the furtherance of teaching Torah, and he will daven for the sinner.

The Sefer Hachinuch takes this concept one step further. "And furthermore, his heart awakens when bringing an animal offering due to the animal's physical similarities to man. Man's physical body functions virtually the same as the animal. What sets him apart is his intellect and his ability to reason. During the moments of sin, he acted without using his intellect. At that moment he became animalistic, because he was bereft of the human attribute of sechel. Therefore, he is to take an animal that he can identify with, and bring it to the chosen place of enlightenment of the sechel and burn it completely, thus leaving nothing of its body. The chinuch continues, "this is in order to envision in his heart the **strong image** that every bodily endeavor without intellect is completely void and transient. This strong **imagery** set in his soul will deter him from future sin."

We see from these illuminating words of the chinuch the strength of "dimyon"- imagination. The imagination can make such a deep impression upon the sinner's soul that he becomes transformed by the experience into someone that will lead a life of zehirus- cautious behavior.

The gemara in Berachos relates the moving story of Rabbi Akiva's martyrdom. As the sage was taken out in the morning to be tortured to death publicly for the offense of teaching Torah, he was in the presence of his students. It was the time of day to recite the Shema. As they tore his flesh with iron combs, and Rabbi Akiva cried out the words of Shema, one of his students said, "Rebbi even to this extent you show your dedication to Hashem and His mitzvos!" Rabbi Akiva answered him "All my life I agonized

over the verse in Shema "Uv'chol nafshecho"- with all of your soul- which means even if He takes your life you must love Hashem. Now that this opportunity presents itself, should I not fulfill it?" The great mussar masters explain this exchange between Rabbi Akiva and his student as follows. The students were exclaiming, "How can you muster such strength that even during such excruciating pain you have the presence of mind to accept the yoke of Heaven upon yourself with love?!" His answer to them was that every day upon reading the words "with all your heart", he envisioned himself being tortured to death to sanctify the name of Hashem. This was his secret! The imagery of this awesome scene was so potent that it was virtual reality. In his mind's eye, Rabbi Akiva rehearsed for this moment many times and was therefore able to meet the challenge.

The yetzer hara- evil inclination comes in many guises, but imagination is a prime tool he uses to ensnare us. In Beraishis 3:1 we read, "And the woman **saw** that the tree was good to eat and desirable to the eyes and the tree was attractive as a means to gain intelligence. The power of dimyon- imagery and imagination was activated, and thus she succumbed.

The mishna in Avos gives us the antidote to this. "Histakel Bishlosa Divorim... **Visualize** these three things and then you will be shielded from sin. It's not enough to merely understand, rather one must visualize those three concepts in the mishna. Rabbi Simcha Zissel of Kelm is quoted as having said, "What did the Avos and other great gedolim do to reach such lofty levels?" He answered, "They knew the mighty power of Tziur and Dimyon, imagery and imagination!"

In the Haggada we read "Every man is obligated- liros -to view himself as if he left Egypt". A verse is quoted to support this notion that indeed, **we** also left at the time of the exodus. The Rambam in his Sefer Yad Chazaka includes this requirement amongst the laws of Pesach. It isn't merely praiseworthy to imagine yourself this way, it is a requirement! Rabbi Simcha Zissel of Kelm writes that it would be an impossibility to actually see himself as a refugee of Egypt. Rather it is an obligation to **imagine** oneself leaving Egypt on this night of Pesach. The Rambam has a different way to read the word in this passage of the haggada. His reading is "Leharos". I believe this wording is significant. The Rambam is saying, "He must show himself". This means he must create his **own picture** of the exodus. Together with the Pesach, Matzah, and Marror and the reclining and four cups and the telling of the story, we can and must use our imagination. This is something we can all aspire to in order to fulfill this duty and to say the Hallel and Hodah on this night with a heart overflowing with gratitude and thanks to Hashem.

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HALACHA ENCOUNTERS

Hagol as Keilim

Rabbi Dovid Greenberg

With Pesach approaching, one of the preparations commonly done is “hagolas keilim,” literally, the purging of vessels. If one wishes to use his pots or silverware from all year round, he must remove any vestige of chometz from them- including the tastes of chometz that have been absorbed in the vessels during cooking. If the pot is not purged, then these chometz tastes will get reabsorbed into the food on Pesach. Let’s take a deeper look at the laws and premises accompanying this procedure.

The basic premise of hagolas keilim is, “k’bolo kach polto”, meaning the way the forbidden tastes are absorbed is the way in which they must be removed. For example, if one cooked non kosher meat in a pot, in order to remove the absorbed taste one must boil up water in that pot. If one only stuck a spoon into a bowl of non kosher soup one may kasher it by immersing the spoon into a bowl of water of comparable heat. However, due to the difficulty of determining the appropriate temperature of the water, as well as other mitigating factors, it is preferable to always do hagolah in a pot which is boiling over the fire. In cases of necessity (i.e. the utensil might melt in a pot over the flame), one should consult a Rabbinic Authority. When the forbidden food was absorbed directly into the hot utensil (i.e. an oven grate or skewer) a procedure called “libun”, heating the utensil in fire is required. (The details of libun are beyond the scope of this article.)

Before beginning the hagolah of a vessel, one must ascertain that the vessel has not been used in a heat related manner for twenty-four hours. Otherwise, after the forbidden tastes have been expelled into the boiling waters they can be reabsorbed by the vessel. An absorbed taste becomes putrid after a period of twenty-four hours. Although the taste inside the vessel still retains its prohibition, when the taste is expelled we are no longer concerned if it gets reabsorbed.

Which Materials May Be Kashered

One may kasher utensils made of wood, stone, or metal. The hot water allows for these materials to expand enough to expel all their absorbed tastes. Utensils made from pottery may not be kashered, for the taste cannot be fully expelled. There is a difference of opinion as to whether glass has the status of clay and cannot be kashered, or whether it absorbs no taste at all. Year round, one may rely on the latter opinion and use the same glass for milk and meat after a proper washing in between, but not with regard to Pesach. Opinions differ, as well, with regard to plastic, rubber, pyrex and duralex utensils. A rav should be consulted about kashering them.

The Procedure

Before one immerses a utensil in the water, he must ensure that it is completely clean. Rust on a utensil must be removed lest there be some food residue stuck beneath it. Discoloration of a utensil is not a problem. Vessels that are extremely hard to clean, such as graters and grinders, should not be kashered. An item which one is afraid will be ruined by the boiling

water should not be kashered, as he can be suspected of not kashering it properly.

The entire vessel, including the handles, must be immersed in the boiling water. If the handle is a separate component attached to the vessel, one must ascertain that there are no cracks where particles of food or grime could get stuck. The “hagola pot” should be boiling to the point where bubbles are seen all over the top of the pot. Preferably, one should use only water for the hagola. One should be careful when immersing many items simultaneously that all faces of the items are touching the water at some point, after the water is bubbling, (i.e. they should not be piled atop each other.) The custom is to wash the vessels with cold water immediately following the hagola. Due to the complex nature of these laws, it is advisable to have a halachic authority present when doing hagola.

Special for Pesach

Due to the stringency of eating even a morsel of chametz on Pesach, the poskim encourage having separate Pesach utensils and not relying on hagolah. If one needs to kasher utensils for Pesach, the custom is to be stricter in certain areas: 1) Glass and plastic are not kashered. 2) One should kasher the pot that will be used for the hagolah beforehand or use a new one. If one plans to use this pot for Pesach, he should kasher it again afterwards. 3) One should preferably have an amount of water in the pot which is sixty times the size of all the vessels to be kashered. One may have to refill the pot to accomplish this. 4) Don’t leave the utensils in the pot for a long period of time. 5) Hagola should not be done on Erev Pesach after the end of the fourth halachic hour, that is, after the time that chometz may not be eaten.

Although the general custom is, not to kasher milching utensils to switch them for meat use and vice versa, once they are being kashered for Pesach needs, one may also choose to change their usage.

Practical Examples:

A year round Kiddush cup which one plans to use on Pesach should be kashered with hagola due to the suspicion that hot chometz might have touched it. One must clean it thoroughly beforehand. If the designs prevent all the grime from being removed, it cannot be kashered. The cup should not be in contact with anything hot for twenty-four hours prior to the hagolah.

False teeth, dentures, retainers and other dental apparatus which can be removed, should be thoroughly cleaned and not used with hot food for twenty-four hours. If immersing them in boiling water might ruin them, one may pour hot water on top of them, or if necessary immerse them in a bowl of hot water.

If one has braces, it is preferable not to eat hot chometz for twenty-four hours prior to the latest time one may eat chometz on Erev Pesach. One should then thoroughly clean his teeth and braces and then wash out his mouth with hot water.

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