



A PROJECT OF CHICAGO COMMUNITY KOLLEL

PARSHA ENCOUNTERS

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Parshas Ki Savo ✍️ Rabbi Shlomo Pomerantz

Lessons of the Bikurim

There is a fascinating medrash quoted by the Ohr Gedalyahu. Moshe Rabbeinu foresaw the ultimate destruction of the Bais Hamikdash and the cessation of Bikurim, and therefore he instituted the practice of davening three times daily. Moshe Rabbeinu did this because tefillah is more precious to Hashem than sacrifices. Let's explain and analyze the correlation between tefillah and Bikurim.

1) One major function of tefillah is to recognize and internalize how much we rely on Hashem for everything that we have. This concept was a major component of the mitzvah of Bikurim. One needed to ascertain that everything that grew was not due to his accomplishments alone, rather it all came from Hashem. Therefore, one who truly internalized the lesson of Bikurim was worthy of having his tefillos accepted. Nowadays, if one recognizes that everything he possesses comes directly from Hashem, his tefillos can have the same potency as Bikurim brought in the Mikdash.

2) The Chiddushei Harim suggests another correlation between tefilla and Bikurim. Bikurim is brought when one sacrifices the **first** of his crop to Hashem. Moshe Rabbeinu instituted davening at three different "beginning times" during the day. We daven Shacharis when the day begins, we daven Mincha when the sun begins its downwards orbit, and then we daven Maariv as night begins. In this way, we are dedicating our "firsts" to Hashem as well.

3) The mitzvah of Bikurim required one to prostrate himself before Hashem. This act showed a total subordination to Him. Moshe Rabbeinu wanted this emotion to be part of Klal Yisroel's constant avodah, and so he instituted

the three tefilos which enable one to submit himself before Hashem.

We now find ourselves in Elul Zman, fondly known as Yemei Haratzon, a period of time when one can reconnect with Hashem through tefillah (amongst other avodos Hashem). Tefillah, as R' S. Pincus, writes is not just requesting that our needs be met, but it is an exercise in bonding with Hashem. It is through tefillah that one can feel a closeness to Hashem, like that of a child and a father. When we internalize the above lessons, our tefillos can find favor by Hashem just as the Bikurim did.

The Ohr Gedalyahu quotes the Zohar, that even if just one minyan of yidden would daven sincerely for the redemption, the geulah would come. May our heartfelt tefillos during this shmittah year, which is considered a year of Shabbos, bring about the coming of Mashiach which is called an era of Shabbos.

Rabbi Pomerantz, an alumnus of the kollel, is a rebbi at Arie Crown.

*The community is invited to
a special evening of*
**דברי חינוך והתעוררות
הכנה ליום הדין**
With
HaRav Avrohom Schorr, shlita
Monday, September 10, 2007
8:15 p.m. followed by Maariv
at the Kollel
6506 N. California

HALACHA ENCOUNTERS

Tefil I in Shel Rosh

Rabbi Henoch Plotnik

“And all the nations of the land will see that the name of Hashem is upon you and they will fear you- this is referring to the tefillin shel rosh (worn upon the head).” (Brochos 6a darshening the posuk in this week’s parsha). Tefillin shel rosh evoke a powerful feeling of reverence even for those who see them upon someone else’s head. Legendary stories have been told about various Gedolei Yisroel such as the Vilna Gaon and Shaages Aryeh who have indeed been able to produce feelings of fear and awe with their tefillin shel rosh, even in the hearts of non-Jews. The one caveat however being that the tefillin be worn “b’rosh”, in the head as the gemara says “eilu tefillin sheb’rosh,” as opposed to simply “al harosh”, on the head. One who dons the tefillin to the extent that they actually make a spiritually internal impression, merits much more than just the actual fulfillment of the mitzvah. He acquires an aura about him that strikes fear in the hearts of his fellow men. This is something unique about mitzvas tefillin.

There is one very basic requirement in mitzvas tefillin shel rosh, and that is that the tefillin be worn in the proper place on the head. The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 27:9) clearly spells out the proper place for the tefillin, corresponding to the wearer’s hairline. This means that the **ENTIRE** bayis rest on top of the head as opposed to the forehead. What the Torah describes as “between the eyes” refers to the area on the head opposite the space between the eyes. Since there is leeway further back on the head (until the soft spot of a baby’s head- see below) the Shelah Hakodosh advises to place the tefillin slightly behind the hairline. As a siman to remember this, he quotes the pasuk in Tehillim 53 “U’svivav mishara me’od,” which can be darshened “Nisara”, i.e. “Sa’aros”-hair surround the tefillin. This is especially important for those that have large tefillin batim and tefillin whose straps have stretched over time. A casual perusing of almost any minyan will bear out how common of an occurrence it is to have tefillin either protruding beyond the head or laying on the forehead, despite the charts, pictures, etc. hanging in many shuls.

Someone who grows hair on the forehead still needs to put the tefillin on top of his head. (See Tefillo L’Moshe from R’ Moshe Krauser Ch. 7 note 28 for a list of Rishonim that clearly state this point). One who is bald should put the tefillin on his former hairline or the place where most people’s hairline begins. (ibid in the name of Ben Ish Chai Parshas Chayei Sarah). Since there is a disagreement as to how far back the “soft spot of a baby’s head” is, one should not place the tefillin further back than halfway up the frontal slope of the head. (See Biur Halacha 27:9 “ad sof...”) In unique situations where someone has a bruise or a similar issue, there is room for further leniency and Rabbinical direction should be sought out.

The Rambam and many other Rishonim imply that the tefillin must rest in that exact area on the head corresponding to “between the eyes”. The Mishneh B’rurah (s.k. 36) emphasizes that they not veer towards one side and reinforces his words stating that deviation from this invalidates the mitzvah completely. On the other hand, there is well known teshuvah from the Divrei Chaim of Sanz (see also Os Chaim V’shalom-Munkacz) who admonishes men who use mirrors to ensure the exact place of tefillin (due to the issur of “lo yilbash gever”, adorning one’s self in a feminine manner), since the gemara tells us there is room on the head for two tefillin. (Even, according to some interpretations side by side!)

One needs to be especially careful when traveling not to have to rely on borrowing tefillin from someone whose head may be bigger or smaller than his own. As we have learned above, every little bit matters and can chas v’shalom invalidate a person’s best intentions and make him liable to be deemed a “karkafta d’lo manach tefillin”, a head devoid of tefillin. The seforim advise us to check the kashrus of our tefillin and mezuzos before the Y’mei Hadin. We would do well to ensure that our tefillin are worn properly as well, and we should try to strengthen this area amongst fellow mispallelim who may not be aware of how their tefillin are laying.

According to the Raya m’Hemna, tefillin is the vehicle we have in Golus to bring Hashroas Hashechina to this world. One who fulfills the mitzvah properly brings kedusha into his life and the life of all acheinu bais yisroel. Strengthening this mitzvah can only bring us closer to the ultimate dwelling of the shechina in our midst.

This perspective can perhaps give us a fresh insight into the custom of checking our tefillin during Elul. What better way could there be to prepare for our encounter with Hashem on Rosh Hashana than by bringing the Shechinah that much closer to us by meticulously examining our performance of mitzvas tefillin?! It has been suggested that the pasuk “K’rauhu b’heyasu karov” is referring specifically to the month of Elul. This is a time when Hashem is closer to us than usual. May we all be zoche to feel that closeness.

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