

Burn Fat for Free Stock

PARSHA INSIGHTS - EMOR (5759)

YOM KIPPUR - JUST FIVE MONTHS AWAY

A GENUINE “SACRIFICE”

Since our *parsha* [Torah portion] talks about the *Yomim Tovim* [Jewish Holidays], it is an opportune time to focus on the extreme sanctity of *Yom Hakipurim* [the Day of Atonement]. Although *Tishrai 10*, the date of *Yom Kippur*, is almost five months from now, it takes a person all year to ready himself properly for this awesome occasion.

“You shall afflict yourselves (by fasting); you shall bring a fire offering to Hashem. You shall not do any work on this very day, for it is the Day of Atonement...” (23:27-28). The *Oznaim L'Torah* notices something peculiar about the structure of the *pasuk* [verse]. There are three commands: fast, offer a sacrifice, and abstain from labor, listed in this order. Two of them are incumbent upon every INDIVIDUAL - fasting and refraining from work. These are listed first and third. The second one is to offer a fire offering, a COMMUNAL responsibility. Why this order? Wouldn't it make more sense to finish telling about the two individual responsibilities, fasting and not doing work, and then to discuss the obligation the *tzibur* [community] has to offer a *korbon* [sacrifice]? In fact, this is generally the pattern of the Torah. It usually informs us of the requirement to bring a *korbon* only after telling of the prohibition to engage in regular work. If so, how do we explain the order in our *pasuk*?

One solution is that the *pasuk* is hinting to a profound idea. The bodily affliction on *Yom Kippur*, the day-long fast, IS CONSIDERED THE SACRIFICE we offer to Hashem in the absence of the *Bais Hamikdosh* [Temple]. For that reason, the Torah says to fast and then immediately mentions the need to bring a *korbon*. The “fire offering” is achieved through our fasting! This is logical, after all. Just as the fats of an animal sacrifice are offered on the *mizbaiach* [altar] in the *Bais Hamikdosh*, we reduce our “fat” by abstaining from food, and it is regarded like a genuine *korbon*.

I would like to add a comment to support this approach of the *Oznaim L'Torah*. A special prayer is said by many people right before *Kol Nidrai* on *Yom Kippur*, called *Tefilas Zaka*. In it, we totally forgive anyone who has wronged us, and we *daven* [pray] that any person we have harmed will wholeheartedly forgive us. Additionally, in this *tefila* [prayer], the concept analyzed today is spelled out clearly. “Through the decreasing of our fat and blood by means of the fast, may what we sinned before You be atoned. May the fast be considered before You as if we have offered our bodies on the altar. May it be accepted before You as a sweet fragrance, like a *korbon* and a burnt offering.” We see that abstaining from food and drink is, by its very nature, similar to bringing a sacrifice to Hashem.

IT'S YOUR DAY, NOT MINE

A few verses later, we are given an indication that the effort we put into this most holy day can surely pay off for us. We can make a true “*kinyan*” [acquisition] in *Yom Kippur*. The service performed by *Bnai Yisroel* [the Children of Israel] on *Yom Kippur* causes its holiness to enter us and become part of our very being. The *Oznaim L'Torah* brings us some evidence to this.

We are told in 23:32: “Observe *YOUR* day of rest.” This is a summary statement about *Yom Kippur*, a true day of rest from constructive, weekday labor. It is noteworthy that the Torah calls it “*YOUR* day of rest.” Usually, *Shabbos* [Sabbath] days are attributed to Hashem alone, not to *Bnai Yisroel*. Here are some examples. In today's *parsha*, it says “HASHHEM'S Sabbaths...” (23:38). In *Parshas Ki Sisa* 31:13, we are exhorted: “You must observe MY Sabbaths...” In *Parshas Beshalach* 16:25: “Today is a Sabbath FOR HASHHEM...” Yet, *Yom Kippur* is described as “belonging to” the Jewish people, as we quoted before from today's *parsha*, 23:32. What is the message?

(Harav Dovid Spetner (one of the *Roshei* [heads of the] *Kollel* [place of Torah learning] in Cincinnati), upon hearing this question, suggested a straightforward approach. The Sabbath day usually discussed in the Torah is *Shabbos*, the seventh day of the week. That one is “credited” to Hashem, because the Creator “rested” on the seventh day, as explained in *Beraishis* [Genesis]. Of course, this topic itself is quite profound. The point is,

though, that the Jewish people have nothing to do with establishing which day will be *Shabbos* on any given week. It has been this way since the formation of the world. Thus, it is called “Hashem’s *Shabbos*”. *Yom Kippur*, on the other hand, is contingent on the new moon appearing and being officially declared by *Bais Din* [the Jewish court]. Only after *Rosh Chodesh* [the new moon/start of a Hebrew month] is established each month by the *halachic* [legal] decisions of humans, we are able to observe the *Yomim Tovim* in their proper times. Tractate *Rosh Hashana* analyzes all of these *dinim* [laws] in minute detail. Consequently, *Yom Kippur* is considered “our *Shabbos*”. That is why the Torah says “*Shabatchem*” or “your *Shabbos*”, in regard to *Yom Kippur*.

The *Oznaim L’Torah* answers this question a different way. Why is *Yom Kippur* viewed as OUR *Shabbos*? After standing all day, fasting and *davening* [praying] and resembling angels, the Jewish people actually “own stock” in *Yom Kippur*. It is such an intense experience, that Hashem calls it “YOUR day”. We actually ingest its sanctity and grow spiritually from its extreme holiness.

A similar concept exists concerning Torah study. The matter is discussed by *Rava* in the *Gemara Avoda Zara*, middle of 19A. Before a person engages himself in diligent learning, the Torah is called “Hashem’s Torah” (*Tehillim* [Psalms] 1:2). After he involves himself in earnest, it becomes “his (the student’s) Torah” (*ibid.*). Since he has toiled day and night to comprehend it, he has genuinely taken possession of it as his own.

This same idea relates to the topic at hand. Once we immerse ourselves fully in the sacred service of *Yom Kippur*, it is no longer just Hashem’s fast day. It has become our own acquisition. That is why the *pasuk* says “*Shabatchem*,” YOUR day of rest.

We see that *Yom Kippur* is to be taken quite seriously. Refraining from food and drink resembles a sacrifice on the altar. Our fat and blood are reduced a bit, just as parts of a *korbon* were offered to Hashem in the *Bais Hamikdosh*. Furthermore, when we perform the *mitzvos* [commandments] of the day properly, repentance and *davening*, we are viewed as having taken ownership of some aspect of *Yom Kippur*. This is an accomplishment of which to be proud. It is cause for true joy. May Hashem allow us to enter every *Yom Tov* [holiday] in fine health and pure jubilation. Hopefully, thinking about *Yom Kippur* five months ahead will assist us in preparing for it in a more meaningful way.

By Rabbi Moshe Heigh

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