

Human Sacrifices In Heaven

PARSHA INSIGHTS - TZAV (5757)

HOW CAN THERE BE BURNT OFFERINGS WITHOUT A TEMPLE?

The *parsha* [Torah portion] begins with a discussion of the *olah* [burnt offering]. *Pasuk Bais* [verse 2] reads: "...this is the law of the burnt offering. **It is the burnt offering** on the fire on the altar all night until morning..."

In the *Oznaim L'Torah*, Rav Zalman Sorotzkin points out that the language in this *pasuk* appears a bit repetitive. After saying "this is the law of the burnt offering", why is there a need to identify it again by stating "it is the burnt offering"?

He replies that there is probably a hint here to a *Gemara* in *Menachos* 110A, also found in *Chagiga* 12B. A *pasuk* in *Divrai Hayamim*, talking about sacrifices, states, "This is for *Yisroel* forever." How can offerings be eternal, even in the absence of the *Bais Hamikdosh* [Temple]? The *Gemara* remarks that this is a reference to an altar built in Heaven, even today, and the great prince (angel) Michael stands and offers on it *korbonos* [sacrifices]. *Tosfos* comments, based on various *Midrashim*, that there are two possibilities as to what types of *korbonos* are being offered in Heaven. These are either the souls of *tzadikim* [righteous people] being "offered" - shown to G-d to bring merit to *Bnai Yisroel* [the Children of Israel], or they are lambs of fire. *Tosfos* continues that this is what is meant in *Shemoneh Esreh* [silent standing prayer], in the section "*r'tzai*": and the "*ishai Yisroel* and their prayers with love, accept with good will..." What are "*ishai Yisroel*"? The simple interpretation is the fire offerings of *Yisroel*, like the word "*aish*" [fire]. In fact, that can be the approach if we go like the second opinion brought by *Tosfos*, that even today, fiery lambs are being offered by the angel Michael. But "*ishai Yisroel*" can also be like the word "*ish*" [man]. We are asking Hashem to accept and look with favor upon the souls of the righteous people of *Yisroel*, as Michael brings them up to show Him. Please refer to *Taz Alef* [1] in *Orach Chaim, Siman Kuf Chof* [sub-section 120] for further discussion of this *pshat* [plain meaning].

Rav Sorotzkin assumes that these "*korbonos*" of righteous souls or fiery lambs are *olos* [burnt offerings]. This is proven from that entire *pasuk* in *Divrai Hayamim* which states, "And burnt offerings (*olos*) for morning and evening, for *Shabosos* [Sabbaths] and New Months and festivals of Hashem our G-d; this is for *Yisroel* forever."

Therefore, our *pasuk* in *Tzav*, in discussing the *olah*, hints that this particular offering never leaves the *Bnai Yisroel*. This is true "for the entire night", as our *pasuk* states. What is the deeper significance of this phrase? As in other places, the *Oznaim L'Torah* explains that this is a hint to the dark and sometimes depressing times of *golus* [exile]. This *korbon* [sacrifice] will be in operation "until morning" - until *Moshiach* [Messiah] will come and build the *Bais Hamikdosh* [Temple] speedily in our days. During this entire time of darkness, the *olah* will remain on the hearth on the altar in Heaven, because the great prince Michael stands and offers on that altar.

What an appropriate theme for now, as we approach the month of Nissan and the *Yom Tov* [holiday] of *Pesach* [Passover]! On page 246 of *Ta'amai Haminhagim*, in his discussion of *Pesach* and pilgrimage to the *Bais Hamikdosh* on *Yomim Tovim* [holidays], he brings an *Agada* similar to the *Gemara* quoted above, in the name of the *Sefer* [book] *Yitav Lev*, who got his material from the *Asara Ma'amaros*. This source remarks that in addition to the angel Michael offering the souls of *tzadikim* as a "gift brought before" Hashem, another angelic being officiates. This is none other than Pinchas ben Elazar ben Aharon *Hakohen*, identified by *Chazal* [our Sages] as *Eliyahu Hanavi* [Elijah the prophet] as well (mentioned in the fourth line of *Rashi* on *Bava Metzia* 114B). He still brings the *tamidin* [perpetual offerings], every day, according to their proper procedure. This is all taking place in the *Bais Hamikdosh* on high, which is obviously operating full speed ahead, despite the absence of its earthly counterpart.

Only one mystery remains. What is in the "personality" of this angel Michael, which makes him the most eligible for bringing forth the souls of the righteous? Two sources must be studied to understand this. In *Parshas Mishpatim, Perek Chof Dalid, Pasuk Alef* [chapter 24, verse 1], the *Targum Yonasan* calls Michael the "prince (angel) of wisdom". The *Pirush Yonasan* elaborates: Michael is the angelic being appointed over wisdom, and it is known based on *kabala* [mystical tradition] that Michael himself emanates from *CHESED* [kindness], whose origin is from the sublime wisdom. Although I don't fully comprehend this, perhaps this *mida* [character trait] of *chesed*

and *chochma* [wisdom] can shed light on Michael's attributes for our purposes. It takes a lot more wisdom to defend someone than it does to indict and condemn. Thus, a defense attorney for *Klal Yisroel* [the Jewish people] possesses the highest level of wisdom imaginable. Furthermore, in *Aicha, Perek Alef, Pasuk Bais* [*Lamentations* 1:2], in the commentary known as *Palgai Mayim*, in the name of the *Midrash*, it is stated that Michael is an angel who is always defending the *Bnai Yisroel*. He is a *melamed z'chus* [defense attorney]. (Just at the time of the *churban* [destruction of the Temple], when things were in confusion and disorder, even Michael became like an enemy of *Bnai Yisroel* - see *Aicha* there.) From all this, we get a glimpse at the personality of Michael, and our understanding of his mission is more profound.

To summarize, burnt offerings are continuous and eternal. The angel Michael offers *olos* regularly. They last "the entire night" of *golus* [exile], "until the morning" of the universe, the arrival of *Moshiach*. The *tzadikim*, who sacrifice their time, comfort, and physical pleasures for the sake of Torah, constitute these offerings. The *Bais Hamikdosh* in Heaven continues to function today. May we have these thoughts in mind as we approach *Pesach* [Passover], a time of visiting the *Bais Hamikdosh* and bonding with Hashem through joy and reverence.

By Rabbi Moshe Heigh

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