



The Fabulous Connection between Parshas Tzav and Parshas Parah Nighttime Torah-Study Protects a Person while Asleep from the Forces of Evil that Want to Control Him

The auspiciously approaching Shabbas Kodesh is referred to universally as **Shabbas Parah**. This indicates that in addition to the regular weekly parsha reading, we add the passage related to the “parah adumah” for Maftir. It provides Yisrael with the purification necessary prior to offering the korban Pesach on the 14th of Nissan. Here is the pertinent Mishnah (Megillah 29a):

”ראש חודש אדר שחל להיות בשבת קורין בפרשת שקלים... בשנייה זכור, בשלישית פרה אדומה, ברביעית החודש הזה לכם.”

If Rosh Chodesh Adar falls on Shabbas, we read parshas Shekalim on that Shabbas . . . On the second Shabbas (of Adar), we read Zachor; on the third, the passage of the Parah Adumah; on the fourth, “hachodesh hazeh lachem.” Rashi explains that we read about the “parah adumah” on the third Shabbas as a reminder to purify ourselves, so that we will offer and consume the korban Pesach in a state of purity — “taharah.” Then, on the fourth Shabbas, we read “hachodesh hazeh lachem,” which is the passage related to the korban Pesach. Rashi adds in the name of the Yerushalmi (Megillah 25b): **Rabbi Chama states that to be chronologically correct, we should actually read the passage of HaChodesh prior to the passage concerning the Parah, since the Mishkan was erected on the first day of Nissan, while the “Parah Adumah” was burnt on the second day of Nissan. So why do we read the parsha of the Parah first? Because it describes the process by which all of Yisrael were purified.**

Thus, it is fitting for us to explain the connection between parshas Tzav and the mitzvah of the Parah Adumah, and the vital, practical lesson we are supposed to learn from this special mitzvah. Although we no longer perform the ritual with the ashes of a red heifer—a “parah adumah”—nevertheless the Torah is eternal, and its precepts apply to each and every generation.

So, let us begin with the opening passuk of this week’s parsha (Vayikra 6, 1): **”וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר, צו את אהרן ואת בניו לאמר זאת תורת העולה היא העולה על מזבח כל הלילה עד הבוקר ואש המזבח תוקד בו.”** Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying: **Command Aharon and his sons, saying: This is the law of the Olah. It is the Olah that stays on the flame on the mizbeiach all night until the morning; and the fire of the mizbeiach shall be kept aflame on it.** Rashi comments in the name of the Toras Kohanim: **“Command” is exclusively an expression of urging on—for the immediate moment and for future generations. Rabbi Shimon said: There is a greater need for Scripture to urge in a situation involving the loss of money.** In other words, since the “korban olah” is consumed entirely by the fire of the mizbeiach, it is considered a financial loss for the kohanim, who do not get to eat any of it.

The commentaries find this comment perplexing, seeing as most of the mitzvos of the Torah involve a monetary loss. For instance, the purchase of items such as tefillin, mezuzot, the four-minim, and the like, all require money. All of these items provide spiritual

benefits and pleasure which cost money. So, why does the Torah see fit here, specifically with regards to the “korban olah,” more so than with regards to any of the other mitzvos involving an outlay of money, to urge us on? Additionally, the author of the statement cited by Rashi is none other than Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (see Shevuos 2b). Hence, it is fitting to explain the deeper connection of this divine Tanna—who revealed the Torah of mysticism to the world—to the statement: **There is a greater need for Scripture to urge in a situation involving the loss of money.**

The Obligation to Also Study Torah at Night

We will begin to shed some light on the profound statement of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai by explaining a fundamental concept concerning the mitzvah of Torah-study. Every Jew is obligated to designate set times to study Torah both during the day and during the night. This is implied by what HKB”H says to Yehoshua (Yehoshua 1, 8): **“לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה מפיו והגית: בו יומם ולילה—this book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth; rather you should contemplate it day and night.** So, even if one studied all day long but did not study at night, or vice versa, if one studied all night long but did not study during the day, they did not fulfill this mitzvas asei completely. This means that even someone who is busy earning a living must set aside time to study Torah both during the day and at night.

Yet, we find a tremendous chiddush from Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai concerning this matter in the Gemara (Menachos 99b): **“אמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי שמעון בן יוחי, אפילו לא קרא אדם אלא קריאת שמע שחרית וערבית, קיים לא ימוש.” Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai: Even if a person merely recited the Shema morning and evening, he has fulfilled the obligation of the passuk “It (this sefer Torah) shall not depart (from your mouth; rather, you shall contemplate it day and night).” In other words, if when reciting Krias Shema in Shacharis and Arvis, a person has in mind to also fulfill the mitzvah of Torah-study, he actually fulfills the mitzvas asei of: **“This book of the Torah shall not depart from****

your mouth; rather you should contemplate it day and night.”

Nevertheless, the Gemara (ibid.) discusses whether or not it is permissible to publicize this fact. According to the opinion of the first Tanna: **“ודבר זה אסור לאומרו בפני עמי הארץ—it is forbidden to pronounce this ruling in the presence of “amei ha’aretz” (common folk; boors; people who are not learned).** Rashi explains that this Tanna is concerned that if this is taught to an “ahm ha’aretz,” he is likely to think that it suffices to recite Krias Shema, and he will not accustom his children to study Torah. There is, however, a dissenting opinion in the Gemara: **“ורבא אמר מצוה לאומרו בפני עמי הארץ—but Rava said: It is a mitzvah to pronounce it in the presence of “amei ha’aretz.”** According to Rashi, Rava believes that knowing this fact will have the exact opposite effect on an “ahm ha’aretz.” He will reason that if the reward is so substantial for merely reciting Krias Shema in the morning and the evening, and it will ensure success in his worldly endeavors, imagine how great his reward would be if he studied Torah all day long. Hence, this would incentivize him to accustom his children to study Torah.

It is worthwhile pointing out that the michaber (author of the Shulchan Aruch) and the Rama disagree as to the actual halachah regarding this matter. In the Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. Hilchos Talmud Torah 246, 1), the michaber merely cites the Rambam (Talmud Torah 1, 11): **Every Jewish man is obligated to study Torah, whether he is poor or rich, whether his body is healthy and whole or he suffers with physical ailments, whether he is young or very old. Even if he is a poor man who survives by begging from door to door; even if he is a husband and has children, he must establish a fixed time for Torah study during the day and at night, as Scripture instructs us: “You should contemplate it day and night.”** Note, there is no mention here of the option of fulfilling this obligation via Krias Shema of Shacharis and Arvis.

The Rama, on the other hand, adds in his gloss: **In times of emergency, even if he only recited Krias Shema, Shacharis and Arvis, we consider it as if “it did not depart from his mouth.”** According to

the Shach (1), the michaber adopted the viewpoint of the Smag (Mitzvas Asei 12), who concurs with the opinion of the first Tanna that it is forbidden to publicize this option in front of an unlearned Jew. The Rama, however, holds that the halachah concurs with Rava that it is actually a mitzvah to teach this fact to an unlearned Jew. Additionally, while explaining that the Rama ruled according to the opinion of Rava, he cites a pertinent passage in the Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni Yehoshua 6). In this passage, Abayei disparages someone who teaches this option to an "ahm ha'aretz," whereas Rava teaches that it is a mitzvah to do so. Now, we have a fundamental principle that in disputes between Abayei and Rava, the halachah accords with Rava.

Notwithstanding, let us not conclude erroneously, chas v'shalom, that this option fulfills the mitzvah of Torah-study in the first place. The Ran, a Rishon, comments (Nedarim 8a) that a person can fulfill his obligation of Torah-study by reciting Krias Shema, Shacharis and Arvis, only under emergent or inevitable circumstances, such as being overwhelmed and preoccupied with one's livelihood. He refers to the teaching in the Gemara (Kiddushin 30a) that a person should be proficient in Torah, such that if he is asked a Torah-related question, he should be able to answer without hesitation. Clearly, this level of proficiency cannot be acquired by simply reciting Krias Shema, Shacharis and Arvis.

It is for this reason that the Rama states explicitly that the option of reciting Krias Shema, Shacharis and Arvis, only applies under urgent, inevitable circumstances. In actuality, it is a mitzvah to study Torah whenever possible, whenever a person is unoccupied. It is fitting to add what Rava himself says in the Gemara (Yoma 19b): "השח שיחת חולין עובר" **Rava said: One who engages in trivial (mundane) conversation transgresses an asei, for it is stated** (Devarim 6, 7): **"And you shall speak of them (divrei Torah)."** **This implies "them" but not other matters.** This means that one should take advantage of every free moment to speak and learn words of Torah and not waste them on trivial matters.

In summary, we have learned a vital aspect of the mitzvah of: "והגית בו יומם ולילה". Even if a person is preoccupied and busy making a living, he is still obligated to study Torah both during the day and the night. As previously mentioned, even if a person studies Torah all day long, from morning until dark, he is still obligated to study Torah at night. Under pressing circumstances, this obligation can be fulfilled by Krias Shema, Shacharis and Arvis.

Nighttime Torah Study Protects a Person from the Forces of Evil

Let us continue to explain the obligation to also study Torah during the night. We have learned in the Gemara (Berachos 14a): "כל המשיביע עצמו מדברי תורה ולן, אין מנשרין אותו בשורות רעות, שנאמר ושבע ילין כל יפקד רע." **Anyone who satiates himself with words of Torah and only then goes to sleep, is not presented with evil tidings, as it states** (Mishlei 19, 23): **"One may rest sated and not be remembered for evil."** The Reishis Chochmah (Sha'ar HaKedushah, Chapter 17) explains the meaning of this Gemara. In the merit of learning Torah at night, prior to going to sleep, one is spared from the passionate desire elicited by the yetzer hara; consequently, he will not be considered a bad person. This is conveyed by the Gemara's elucidation (Kesubos 46a) regarding the passuk (Devarim 23, 10): "ונשמרת מכל דבר רע, מכאן אמר רבי —פנחס בן יאיר, אל יהרהר אדם ביום ויבוא לידי טומאה בלילה" **"You shall guard against anything evil."** **From here Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair concluded: A man should not contemplate immoral thoughts by day and come thereby to tumah by night.**

This explains the follow teaching in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 92a) beautifully: "כל בית שאין דברי תורה נשמעים בו בלילה אש אוכלתו" **any home in which words of Torah are not heard at night will be consumed by fire.** The sages are alluding to the fiery passion elicited by the yetzer hara, chas v'shalom. If one neglects to study Torah at night prior to going to sleep, his home will not be protected from the fire and evil influence of the yetzer hara.

We can elaborate by referring to what our master, the Arizal, teaches in Sha'ar HaKavanos (Krias

Shema, Drush 3): **כי שליטת וממשלת החיצונים האמיתית אינה אלא "בלילה—because the real control and dominance of the "chitzonim" (the external forces of evil) is only during the night.** This fact is alluded to by the passuk (Tehillim 104, 20): **"תשת חושך ויהי לילה בו תרמוש כל—חיתו יער—you make darkness, and it is night, in which stirs every beast of the forest.** The passuk is interpreted as a reference to the klipos and the harmful forces that are represented by the beasts of the forest; they aim to devour all that is kadosh, chas v'shalom. Hence, we desperately need special protection at night from the forces of the yetzer hara; this is accomplished by nighttime Torah-study.

Thus, the halachic ruling in the Shulchan Aruch reads as follows (O.C. 238, 1): **One must be more scrupulous about studying Torah at night than during the day; one who fails to do so, his punishment is severe.** The source for this ruling is the aforementioned Gemara: **"Any home in which words of Torah are not heard at night will be consumed by fire."** As explained, this alludes to the fire of the yetzer hara that prevails in the home of someone who neglects to study Torah at night. Conversely, someone who satiates himself with divrei-Torah before going to sleep is assured that the yetzer hara will not prevail over him.

The Forces of Tumah Seek to Take Advantage of the Absence of the Neshamah at Night

I would like to propose an intriguing explanation as to why the "chitzonim" are so determined to prevail over a person specifically at night. I would like to begin by exploring the mitzvah of the Parah Adumah (Bamidbar 19, 1): **"וידבר ה' אל משה ואל אהרן לאמר. זאת חוקת התורה אשר צוה ה' לאמר, דבר אל בני ישראל ויקחו אליך פרה אדומה Hashem spoke to Moshe and Aharon, saying: This is the statute ("chukah") of the Torah, which Hashem has commanded, saying: Speak to Bnei Yisrael, and they shall take to you a completely red cow, which is without blemish, and upon which a yoke has not come.**

The Ohr HaChaim hakadosh asks: Why does the Torah say **"this is the 'chukah' of the Torah"** rather

than **"this is the 'chukah' of tumah"** or **"this is the 'chukah' of taharah** (purification)? After all the function of the "parah adumah" is to purify a person of corpse tumah. To explain the matter, he refers to the Gemara (Nazir 61b) and the ruling of the Rambam (Hilchos Tum'as Meis 1, 13): **A goy (gentile) does not contract corpse-tumah. Instead, if a goy touches a corpse, carries it, or stands over it, it is as if he did not touch it. To what can the matter be compared? To an animal that touched a corpse or stood over a corpse.** Based on this understanding the Ohr HaChaim explains the stark difference between the people of Yisrael and the nations of the world with regards to tumah by means of an analogy:

I have already compared this elsewhere to a homeowner who has two containers—one full of honey and one full of manure. He emptied them and took them out of the room. The one that had been full of honey attracts all of the flies and insects. The one that had been full of manure attracts a few insects but not as many as the one with honey. The same is true of a Jew who dies, who had been full of kedushah, which is sweet and pleasant. When the living soul leaves, and the physical body is emptied, an infinite number of klipos will gather around it. For, they are the forces of tumah that constantly crave to attach to kedushah and derive pleasure from the sweetness. Hence, it contracts tumah in a covered space. Even if there are one thousand covered houses connected to each other, the tumah will fill the entire empty space (void) that is covered. This is not true of someone who is not Jewish, who is devoid of kedushah. The forces of tumah are not so attracted to them . . . The reason for all of this is the Torah.

We can now begin to comprehend the grave danger that awaits a person sleeping in his bed at night. As the Zohar hakadosh explains, the forces of evil surround his body and want to enter it, since the holy neshamah leaves it at night. We express this fact in the Krias Shema we recite at bedtime (Tehillim 31, 6): **"בידך אפקיד רוחי"—in Your hand, I will entrust my spirit—hoping and praying that HKB"H will return our neshamos to us in the morning.**

Furthermore, from the sacred remarks of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh in parshas Vayechi on the passuk (Bereishis 47, 29): "וּיִקְרְבוּ יְמֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לָמוּת"—**the time approached for Yisrael to die**—we learn that when the neshamah ascends to heaven every night, all of the Torah and mitzvos that a person was occupied with that day also ascend with him. Furthermore, the Gemara (Berachos 57b) informs us that sleep is one sixtieth of death. Now, when a person dies and his neshamah and his Torah leave him, the "chitzonim," the forces of evil, are attracted to his corpse, because they want to nourish themselves from the remnants of the light of the Torah. Therefore, the same holds true when a person goes to sleep. When a person's neshamah leaves along with his Torah and mitzvos, they "chitzonim" want to enter his physical body.

Therefore, HKB"H provided a remedy prior to the ailment. Even if a person studied Torah all day long, he is instructed to also study Torah at night before going to sleep. As HKB"H instructed Yehoshua: "וְהִגִּיתָ בּוֹ יוֹמָם וּלְיָלֵהָ". In fact, HKB"H alluded to this in the first passage of Krias Shema: "וְדַבַּרְתָּ בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלַכְתְּךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ"—**and you shall speak of them while you sit in your home and while you walk on the way.**

This prompted Chazal, with their "ruach hakodesh," to teach us the importance of also studying Torah at night: "**Anyone who satiates himself with words of Torah and only then goes to sleep, is not presented with evil tidings, as it states: 'One may rest sated and not be remembered for evil.'**" This is the unique, auspicious quality of the Torah; anyone who studies it at night is provided special protection from the "chitzonim" while he is asleep—even though sleep is one sixtieth of death, and his neshamah along with his Torah and mitzvos have left him. Yet, when he dies, G-d help us, when he can no longer study Torah, his physical body is shrouded in tumah.

It is with immense pleasure that we can now explain the incredible lesson that is incumbent upon us to learn even in these times from the mitzvah of Parah Adumah—that purifies a person from corpse tumah. As the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh taught us,

HKB"H specifically said: "**This is the 'chukah' of the Torah**"—to teach us that only a Jew, who studies Torah, is afforded protection from the yetzer hara and its evil forces. Hence, when a Jew passes away, and his neshamah and Torah abandon him, his corpse becomes shrouded in tumah.

Thus, we have learned that a Jew must learn Torah day and night. Failure to do so allows the yetzer hara and its forces to affect him and influence him, chas v'shalom. This situation was compared to a jar of honey that had been emptied out; it becomes the domain of flies. This explains why the Gemara states (ibid. 18b): "רְשָׁעִים שְׂבַחֲיֵיהֶן קְרוּיִין מֵתִים"—**the wicked (reshaim), who even while they are still alive are considered as if they are dead.** Since their neshamos abandon them even during the day, they are the domain of the external forces of evil—the "chitzonim." All the more so during the night. This is also the message conveyed by the following Gemara (Pesachim 49b): "שָׁנָה וּפִירֵשׁ יוֹתֵר מִכוּלֵּן". If a person used to learn Torah and then left it, he is worse than an "ahm ha'aretz," because the void he created makes him more attractive and vulnerable to the "chitzonim."

"A fire shall burn continuously on the mizbeiach" Alludes to the Torah

Proceeding along this sublime path, we will now address the passuk at the beginning of this week's parsha: "**Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying: Command Aharon and his sons, saying: This is the Torah (law) of the Olah. It is the Olah that stays on the flame on the mizbeiach all night until the morning; and the fire of the mizbeiach shall be kept aflame on it.**" Now, we know that Aharon and his sons were occupied with Torah-study and the service of Hashem, as it is written (Malachi 2, 7): "כִּי שִׁפְתֵי כֹהֵן יִשְׁמְרוּ דַעַת וְתוֹרָה יִבְקֶשׁוּ מִפִּיהוּ"—**for the lips of the kohen should safeguard knowledge, and people should seek teaching from his mouth.**

This is the implication of the words: "**This is the Torah of the Olah**"—this is the Torah that ascends ("oleh") to the heavens as a pleasant aroma to Hashem. "**It is the Olah that stays on the flame**

on the mizbeiach all night until the morning—in the merit of the Torah that burns during the night, that is studied during the night, a person is safeguarded from the “chitzonim” while he is asleep until the morning. Thus, the passuk assures that it portends the following: **“And the fire of the mizbeiach shall be kept aflame on it”**—even during one’s sleep, the fire of the Torah will burn within him warding off the “chitzonim,” preventing them from exerting their negative influence over him.

This explains magnificently the continuation of the text: **“אש תמיד תוקד על המזבח לא תכבה”**—**a fire shall remain aflame continually on the mizbeiach; you shall not extinguish it.** According to the Zohar hakadosh (Tzav 28b), this passuk alludes to the Torah that is compared to fire. It is not extinguished, because even an aveirah does not extinguish the fire of the Torah. And the mitzvos of the Torah performed by the Rabbis is Torah within them that is not extinguished day or night, because they uphold the dictum: **“You should contemplate it day and night.”** And the smoke that ascends from their mouths with words of Torah is the fire of the array (on the mizbeiach).

Now, this illuminates for us the profound message of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in relation to the words: **“Command Aharon and his sons.”** He explains that **there is a greater need for Scripture to urge in a situation involving the loss of money.** In keeping with our current discussion, we can suggest that he is alluding to the need to study Torah at night, so that we will be afforded protection while

asleep, when a person’s neshamah and the Torah he learned that day leave him.

This then is what he means by a **“loss of money”**—**“chisaron keese”** (literally: an empty pocket). He is hinting to us a fascinating concept. The human body resembles a pocket that holds a Jew’s pure neshamah and all of his Torah inside it. Accordingly, during the day, when he is studying Torah and performing mitzvos, the body does not resemble an **“empty pocket.”** It is filled with the brilliant light of the Torah! As David HaMelech expresses it (Tehillim 40, 9): **“לעשות רצונך אלקי הפצתי ותורתך בתוך מעי”**—**to fulfill Your will, my G-d, do I desire, and your Torah is in my internal organs.**

The situation changes, however, at night. Since the neshamah along with the Torah the Jew learned that day and the mitzvos he performed vanish, his body can be compared to an **“empty pocket.”** As such, he is not protected by his Torah and mitzvos; the “chitzonim” view this as an opportunity to invade and prevail over him. Therefore, the Torah issues a stern, urgent warning—a remedy to avoid this undesirable situation: **“זאת תורת העולה היא העולה על מוקדה כל הלילה עד הבוקר”**. A Jew should study Torah at the beginning of the night, so that the fire of the Torah will continue to burn within him and protect him throughout the night until HKB”H returns his neshamah to him in the morning. To reinforce this warning, the Torah adds: **“אש תמיד תוקד על המזבח לא תכבה”**—this fire must be constant; it must burn both during the day and during the night; it should never be extinguished!

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