

VAYIQRA 2 - THE QORBANOT AND THE STUDY OF TORAH

Our Sages have found it essential to compare and contrast the sacrificial ritual with that of Torah study. They are justifiably comparable in that both are fundamental instruments in redeeming and elevating holiness from the lower three worlds to the highest spiritual world of Asilut. They equally share an essential rule in that what is being elevated from the lower levels must be integrated into the highest fourth level. Based on a narrative in Menahot we will assert that holiness elevated through the learning of Torah can be considered superior to the sparks elevated via sacrifice. Furthermore it might even be possible to conclude that the learning of Torah alone - can elevate sparks that are associated with the sacrificial ritual in addition of course to the holiness elevated by the intrinsic study of Torah itself.

RAISING HOLINESS FROM THE THREE LOWER LEVELS UP TO THE FOURTH

The principal purpose of the sacrificial ritual is to elevate sparks of holiness that have become entrapped in the three lower spiritual worlds of Beri'ah, Yesira and Asiya back to their origins in the highest world of Asilut. The lower three have a parallel in the delineated respective biological kingdoms - the inanimate, vegetable and animal kingdoms. The ritual include aspects from all three levels - as sacrifices are accompanied by Salt (inanimate - associated with Asiya); Wine, Flour, Oil, Levona (vegetable - associated with Yesira); Animals, Birds (living - associated with Beri'ah) - These are elevated to and via the repentant mind of the donator or the holy meditative thoughts of the participating kohen - (associated with Asilut). We know that there are also four levels in the study of Torah which are parallel to the four worlds. These are found in the acrostic PaRDeS - They are Peshat, Remez, Derash which are associated with the lower three worlds and Sod - the Torah secrets associated with the elevated level of Asilut. Here too - there must be a similar intent to elevate one's learning in the revealed portions with that of the esoteric portion of the Torah. The Ramhal writes that the true extent and significance of the revealed Torah (the three lower levels) can only be recognized and discerned by the way of the secrets. 1 R. Yoseph Hayyim notes that man must exert himself in all areas of Torah, the revealed (the lower three) and the esoteric (the highest level) in a manner that there remain no contradictions to be found between them. 2 Hakham Ovadya cites R. Hayyim Vital in that one is obligated to exert himself in all four areas of Torah to the best of his abilities in order not to incur reincarnation. 3 R. S. Donn cites a verse in our portion that unites the sacrificial ritual with that of learning Torah in that both require elevating their respective lower three levels to that of the highest. The sons of Aaron arranged Et HaRosh - the head and Et HaPaDeR - the fats ... for the head and fats are listed exclusive to the rest of the korban. 4 It is the Sod or secrets of the Torah which is hinted here when mentioning the term Rosh or head - while the fats are termed PaDeR - hinting to the acrostic of the three lower forms of Torah learning or Peshat, Derash and Remez. The Gaon of Vilna asserts that one cannot fully comprehend them without learning and understanding the Torah secrets. 5 R. Bahya notes that the expression PaDeR - is a translation of PeReD - conveying a separation. These fats or lower levels of learning are arranged to cover the area where the head or the secrets have been slaughtered or exposed. 6 So what the Torah is teaching on the verse of sacrifices is that the secrets or the highest of the four levels must be arranged next to the three lower levels. Thereby arranging the Sod next to the Peshat, Remez and Derash to complete the PaRDES. If one is negligent to attach the head by learning and integrating the Torah secrets with that of the revealed Torah - the Sages consider him a Mule or a PeReD. R. Yehuda Fataya expounds on a verse in Tehillim which warns "Be not like a Mule a PeReD - who does not join the lower levels of learning with the highest the Sod - and remain like one without understanding". 7

CAN STUDY OF THE TORAH SUPERCEDE THE BRINGING OF A SACRIFICE?

The answer to this question can be found in a narrative found in the Talmud expounding on the verse - Zot HaTorah La'olah Laminha Vele'hatah Vele'asham. 8 To this Rish Laqish claims that when one learns Torah it is as if he is offering an Olah a Minha etc. 9 Rava retorts - If the verse is simply telling us that studying Torah is merely as if one brought these offerings - then the Lamed prefix is unnecessary and the verse could have been written - "This is the Torah - The Olah, Minha etc.." rather asserts Rava - that the Lamed prefix forces us to read that Torah is "instead of" an Olah "instead of" a Minha. So whoever engages in Torah study does not need the benefits of these offerings as his learning will better accomplish the task. 10 In order to properly understand the narrative with the accompanying views we need to cite a teaching from R. HaAri. He teaches that it is obligatory for one to fulfill all

613 misvot in three ways - Action, Speech and Thought as it is written - This is the Torah.. quoting Rish Lakish - whoever engages in Torah study it is Ke'ilu Hivri - it is as if he offers an Olah. 11 This apparently conforms with the approach of Rish Lakish that Ke'ilu Hivri - is not an expression affirming that learning relieves one of his obligation to bring a Qorban - rather it fulfills the requirement to complete the Misva on the levels of speech and thought. Learning is necessary - but Rish Lakish denies its efficacy in replacing the physical Qorban offering. He admits though to its higher spiritual rectification (speech - thought) of learning Torah. Rava asserts however, that the advantages of studying the passages concerning an offering are superior to physically bringing the sacrifice. R. HaAri's teaching may even conform to this view as he holds that the learning of Torah acts as a power pack in all four celestial worlds. While proper offerings elevate sparks from the three lower worlds upwards - the roots of (animal) sacrifice are nevertheless sourced - via a power pack in the lowest world. Our Rabbi's teach that the numerical value of BeHeMaH or animal is fifty two which is a reflection of the lowest expanded divine name associated with the lowest world of Asiyah. 12 Rava teaches - The learning of Torah is La'olah instead of and to replace the bringing of an Olah. Once he ascends to complete the Tikun of speech and thought of the offering by Torah learning - it relieves him to some extent in the bringing of a Qorban! The advantages of studying the passages not only exceed the offering - but have the ability to rectify even the physical requirement which has been left undone. R.Y.M. Kagan expounds on the view of Rava and notes that during the Temple era - the study couldn't exempt one from bringing an offering as the time necessitated it be fulfilled physically. However, in our time when it is not possible to be fulfilled physically - the rectification via Torah study is actually superior. 13 Maybe this is so since the Talmud teaches that the celestial temple indeed still exists - and via the dedication of the true scholars in Torah study - the Kohen Gadol Micha'el takes the souls of these righteous ones - and offers them on the holy altar. 14

EXPOUNDING THE VERSE ON SACRIFICES IN TERMS OF LEARNING TORAH

According to the Ohr HaHayyim - The Torah reveals these marvelous properties in the verse we mentioned above. Zot HaTorah - This is the Torah - is an introduction to its powers. Le'olah - by its means we can elevate holy sparks and souls - Laminha - to a place of repose - the spiritual place of the Divine Presence - Ve'laHatat Vela'asham - these are referencing two places the sparks had descended - both before and after the sin of Adam respectively. Those which descended at the time known as Tohu VaBohu are referred to here as the Torah of the Hatat - sin offering; whereas the sparks which descended into the lower realms after the sin of Adam are referred to as the Torah of the Asham - guilt offering. The Torah informs us of this division to help us locate, identify and rescue the sparks from their exile. LaMilu'im - to bring them back to fill their original exalted spiritual place. Oolezevakh - this will enable the learner to slaughter the evil source who had hold of the sparks - HaShelamim then the stage of perfection will have been reached. 15 Hence the Talmud quotes the Creator - " I have created the evil urge within you - (who tries valiantly to retain the holy sparks) I also have given you the Torah as a remedy to overcome it". 16

LEARNING IN PLACE OF OR INSTEAD OF THE KORBANOT

Our Sages have instituted that we learn the Mishnayot associated with the Qorbanot each morning. After reading the Qorban Tamid at the start of Shaharit we find our verse reminding us of the spiritual power of learning Torah - especially the study of the order of the Qorbanot. Zot HaTorah La'olah - we then are prepared to learn about the sacrifices in Ezehu Meqoman - in order to rectify the speech and thought aspects of this Misva. According to Rish Laqish this represents an elevated level of Tiquin associated with the bringing of Qorbanot. According to Rava - through the learning we can even elevate the sparks associated with the physical Qorbanot themselves. All the while necessitating our commitment to study the Torah on all levels in order to sanctify the sparks and elevate them back to their source above.

Shabbat Shalom
Victor Bibi