



Parshat Tzav: Inner Service of G-d

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

When a *korban mincha* was offered in the *Mishkan*, a *kemitza*, a certain amount of flour was put on the altar and burnt for Hashem.

The rest of the flour or *matzah* was eaten by the *kohanim*. But if the *kohen* himself brought the *mincha*, the whole sacrifice was burnt on the altar. Why was this so? In addition, there's an interesting distinction between the *kohen* and the *levi*. Before beginning the service, the *kohen* was commanded to wear four pieces of clothing and the *kohen gadol* eight, while the *levi* was allowed to wear any clothing he wanted. Why did the Torah require a uniform for the *kohen* while exempting the *levi*?

The Shem MiShmuel quoting the Avnei Nezer explains that the *kohanim* signify *penimiyut*, a secret hidden holiness. The *leviim* are *chitzoni* (external) and their *avodah* is *b'hitgalut* (revealed). Much of the *kohen's* service was done privately in sanctity while the *leviim's avodah* was visible involving song and music. Inner holiness must be covered and sanctified. Outer holiness can be revealed.

Since the *kohen's kedusha* was internal, it had to be covered with clothing.

This parallels the deep inner holiness of a Jewish woman which is why they have more strictures regarding modesty. The *kedusha* of men is more outward and therefore they have less limitations on their external dress. Men are meant to be in the public arena and to serve as leaders of the community. Women are meant to reign in the private domain of their home. They are called the *akeret habayit*, the foundation of the Jewish home. According to Kabbalah, the man symbolizes the right side, which is dominant and more open, while the woman is the left hand which is not as visible or active. The right hand is *chesed*, reaching out and connecting to others, while the left hand is *din*, restraint and discipline.

Every parent is an educator as the Torah says, "*V'shinantem levanecha*." When teaching children, it's important to focus on the externals of Jewish education, on the right

side. We must also focus on the left side, which is close to the heart. It's crucial to give over to our children the technical details of how to live as a Jew. We must also convey the love and warmth inherent in *Torah*. The *kohen* represents *chesed* and the *levi* is *din*. There's a part of us that's *chitzoni*, visible holiness meant to be shared with the world. And there is a private *kedusha* that's meant to be contained within. The Avnei Nezer gives the example of Shabbat, a day of *neshama* when one can tap into the private inner sanctity of one's soul.

When a Jew brought a *mincha* offering to the *mishkan*, the *kohen* symbolically took the deepest, holiest, part of the sacrifice, the *kemitza*, and offered it to Hashem. The rest of the *mincha*, which was lighter and more superficial, was eaten by the *kohen*. However since that profound inner *kedusha* permeates the essence of a *kohen*, his own *mincha* was completely burnt.

Pesach

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dayan Shlomo Cohen

Chazal say that the Jews fell to the 49th level of impurity in Egypt. How did they reach such a state? The Torah tells us at the end of *Sefer Bereishit* that when Pharaoh first met Yaakov, he asked him, "How many days have you lived?" This seems like a strange way to ask someone how old he is. But when Pharaoh met Yaakov he was able to see that he was on a very lofty level and that he had used all his days to the fullest. We can see the tremendous respect Pharaoh had for Yaakov. Yaakov and his sons settled in Goshen, a separate neighborhood in Egypt. It was important to them that they not be influenced by the impurity of the Egyptians. Nevertheless, we find in the beginning of *Shemot* that the Jewish people mixed with the Egyptians and were enslaved by them. How did this happen?

The Torah tells us, "And Yosef died and all his brothers and that whole generation and then they were enslaved." The Ohr Hachaim notes, as long as there were still people of the first generation alive, the Egyptians could not enslave them. When Yosef served as viceroy, the Jews were highly respected by the Egyptians. When he died, they fell in their

eyes. As the brothers died, the Jews became even more lowly and less respected by the Egyptians. But they could not be enslaved because they still retained their self-respect. Only when the last of the generation died and they lost that self-respect did they become slaves. So we see from the Ohr Hachaim that there are two sides to being respectable. On the one hand, it's how people look at you. And on the other hand you need to respect yourself. The way of the *yetzer hara* is to pull us down and destroy us by making us lose our self-respect. When a person falls into that trap he becomes a slave to his own desires. The way to fight this is to hold onto our self-respect and to recognize our inner strengths. This serves to keep us away from evil, because the places that are sinful are places where a respectable person would never venture. And so even if other people don't respect you, as long as you respect yourself you are protected from sin.

The halacha states that before they give testimony, witnesses must be warned that they must tell the truth. There is a difference between the warning given in the case where the death penalty could be given and in

monetary cases. In the case of the death penalty, the warning includes the phrase, "Destroying one person is like destroying a whole world, because at the beginning there was only one man in the world." One would think they are being warned to be careful about their testimony not to kill a person falsely. But Rashi says the warning is for the witnesses themselves. You are important. It's not worth your while to lose your entire world by telling a lie. The warning doesn't say, "You'll be punished if you lie." That won't stop the person from sin. The way to stop him is to tell him how important he is. Similarly, in a monetary case, the Gemara says the warning is that witnesses who lie are lowly in the eyes of people. Therefore, they should be careful not to speak an untruth because it won't be worth their while. They will not be respected.

This is also an important lesson in *chinuch*. The way to help children or adults who have gone astray is to lift them up spiritually and nurture their self-respect. They must hear positive messages such as, "It's not fitting and right for you to do this. You're an important person with a tremendous future ahead of you."

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Chometz: Moving Beyond Self

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

What is *chometz* in essence? Why is it prohibited?

Chometz is a natural phenomenon that happens through a process of oxidation. When hot air bubbles enter a flour and water mixture, they make the dough rise. Hot air evokes the image of an inflated sense of self. On a deeper level Rabbeinu Bachya speaks about *chometz* as a symbol of *midat hadin* (the attribute of justice). Before creation, only Hashem existed. As soon as the process of creation began, there was the Creator and creation. The more bloated creation makes itself, the more it conceals its actual source, Hashem. The Egyptians were a haughty, hierarchical, society. It was an environment in which the I was epitomized by Pharaoh himself, who put himself above human frailty. The Egyptians didn't see Pharaoh as worthy of sovereignty by permission of some other force. They saw him as the force itself.

Let us trace back to the sin of the *etz hadat*. Hashem created the world for a purpose and He is committed to see it through. Adam's mistake in eating the fruit had to do with thinking that being separate from Hashem would make his search for Him more meaningful. Although there was some truth to it, it was antithetical to the command he was given. Thus, he failed. Although Hashem gave the generations after Adam a chance to rectify Adam's misstep, they too failed. The generation of the Flood was destroyed as a result of their selfish exploitative lifestyle. The generation of the Tower of Babel fell due to their inflated ego that drove them to conquer the heavens. Further generations failed, wanting to see themselves as the ultimate Being. In Egypt, Hashem knocked the Egyptians flat. After experiencing the ten plagues they were completely deflated. Hashem's severity of justice was not only meant to bring mankind to a state of rectification, it taught them humility.

The words *chometz* and *matzah* are almost the same. *Chometz* has a *chet* and *matzah* has a *heh*. It's only the little *nekuda* of self that turns *matzah* into *chometz*. The urge to be

self-serving corrupts one's thoughts and actions. If you see yourself made bigger through a *mitzvah*, then it's attractive. If you see the self being limited because of the good deed, which often happens to make room for Hashem, then it's less alluring. *Chesed* and big name *tzedakah* are popular. Honesty in business is less desirable. We see a lot of that sort of *chometz* today where people ask, "Am I in it or not?" What attracts a girl with a serious Jewish education to a non-*tzniut* outfit? She'll say, "This expresses me and I want to be me." And it's true. The basic message of such an outfit is, "I am," while the message Hashem wants us to have is, "Hashem is."

The Abarbanel views *chometz* as the cause of *taavah* (desire). It all boils down to affirming self, taking in as opposed to giving out, exploiting as opposed to connecting. We left Egypt so quickly that there was no time for the bread to rise. Why didn't we leave a little earlier? Or why didn't Hashem tell us to take fruits and vegetables instead of bread? The Ramchal explains that the Jews in Egypt were becoming a people. They needed to learn to separate from the non-Jewish world. The Gra says that we have enormous spiritual power. This differentiates us from other peoples. We can uplift materialism, but to do so we have to submit to Hashem. Because of this, the prohibition of *chometz* was specifically given at the birth of the Jewish nation.

It is interesting to note that the offering made on Shavuot, the *shte'i halechem*, had to be *chometz*. If we've separated ourselves and know our unique destiny, then there's no need to be afraid of the physical world. Torah gives us the means to elevate it.

The Zohar refers to *Matzah* as the bread of faith. Faith means recognizing that everything comes from Hashem, that He is compassionate, and that all that He does is for our good. The *matzah* is called *lechem oni*, bread of suffering, yet it also symbolizes Hashem's love. He took us out of Egypt in a hurry even though we weren't worthy. *Matzah* teaches us that His mercy and His justice all come from one source. Hashem relates to us in terms of

what we need at the moment. The Midrash says the *matzah* tasted like *mohn*. The *mohn* tasted like whatever the person had to experience. *Matzah* is also related to seeing everything as reflective of Hashem's will. *Matzah* takes us to humility, faith, and fear of Hashem. *Chometz* brings us to the opposite end. *Matzah* is *yirat shamayim*. It's seeing Hashem instead of ourselves, His control instead of our own.

The Maharal notes a difference between self-esteem and *gaavah* (arrogance). The voice of self-esteem says, "Hashem has given me strengths and I will use them and take pleasure in them." This inspires people to accomplish great things. *Gaavah* says, "I am superior to Hashem and man. I'm autonomous." *Gaavah* has to be destroyed by burning, by completely eradicating egocentricity and thoughts of self.

Before Pesach we must engage in a quest of outer and inner cleaning. What happens if someone brings a crumb into my spotless kitchen? Will I scream at him? Will I kill him? Is that selfless? What if someone has a different idea of what should be cleaned first or second? Will I negate him? Will I be so self-absorbed in my cleaning that I won't prepare food for my family? A person has to enter the period before Pesach with some firm decisions. No anger, because anger and *gaavah* are twins. No creating bad setups. When we're tired and hungry we slip back into bad *middot*. Brief escapes such as food, sleep, and music help. Make the preparations joyous and fun by getting everyone to work together towards a common goal.

How did the Jews merit to leave Egypt? They had to do a *brit milah* and bring the *korban Pesach*. They displayed incredible *mesirut nefesh*. Today we are called upon to offer up our inner selves. May the merit of ridding ourselves of our internal *chometz* lead to the *geulah sheleima* speedily in our days.