

Shechitah Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dayan Shlomo Cohen

In July 2014, there was a major debate in the British parliament whether all animals should be pre-stunned before slaughtering. As this is unacceptable according to Jewish law, the conclusion of the committee was that more research was needed on the *shechita* method and the likelihood and duration of pain felt. That in fact is a declaration by the opponents of *shechita* that we have no proof that *shechita* is inhumane. In Nov. 2014, there was a debate in parliament whether pre-stunning is more humane. A quote from Mr. Parish, a longtime opposer of *shechita*, admits that they do not have evidence that *shechita* is inhumane. "What is clear is that there is a gap in our understanding of the *shechita* process."

The RSPCA concurs that they do not have evidence, yet they say, "We will give the benefit of the doubt to the animal and ban the Jewish method of slaughter." Why not give the benefit of the doubt to the Jews who've been slaughtering animals this way for thousands of years and whose source material is so careful about causing suffering to animals? In 2012, Bill Riley, the president of the British

Veterinary Association said, "The current situation is unacceptable. I do not believe that there is any scientific robust evidence to support the contention that non -stunned slaughter has the welfare of animals in mind. I do not accept that the initial religious texts reflected concern for the welfare of animals and were a major step forward to the protection of animals." Yet the whole method of *shechita* is in fact designed to cause the least amount of pain to animals.

There are many nerves in the animal's neck and he can move after his throat is cut. We might assume that means he's suffering after *shechita*. That would be true if the animal was conscious. However, a famous cardiologist, Dr. Rose, wrote that the animal becomes unconscious between 2-5 seconds after the cut. Although he may not be dead yet, he cannot feel anything. *Shechita* is a clean cut to the throat made with a razor- sharp knife which is checked regularly for nicks. Cutting in a back and forth sawing motion makes the animal unkosher. It has to be a razor- sharp cut which immediately cuts the food and wind- pipe. On the two sides of this pipe are the two main

jugular arteries that carry the blood to the brain. At the moment when the knife cuts the pipe, it automatically cuts those two arteries and the flow of blood to the brain is stopped. Within 2-5 seconds of the cut, the animal becomes unconscious and cannot feel anything. It's a brilliant method of sending off animals painlessly.

The brain is about two percent of the body's weight, but it receives 20 percent of the cardiac output. This was proven by Paul Wilson in 1989. The brain is very sensitive to the requirement of oxygen and therefore is well supplied by blood. When the slaughterer makes a cut to the main artery, it causes an immediate drop in blood pressure and the flow of blood will spurt out. When the brain is denied oxygen, the animal falls unconscious. In 1958, Duke proved that after *shechita* 33 percent of an animal's blood is lost in 30 seconds and 50 percent is drained in one minute. The blood flow to the brain was found to be zero after the animal was slaughtered, which means the animal is totally unconscious and cannot feel pain.

Elul in the Midst of Summer

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

Shir Hashirim depicts the special bond between Hashem and *Bnei Yisrael* "Ani l'dodi v'dodi li- I am for my beloved and my beloved is for me." The first letters of this verse spell *Elul* which encapsulates the unique power of this month. The Baal Hatanya brings the famous parable of a king who would come out to the field every year to the people. While the Three weeks were days of concealment, *Elul* is a period of revelation and closeness. It's a time when Hashem comes down to us and accepts our *teshuva*.

Teshuva should be *b'ahava*, with love and joy. The Mishna in Sotah says that *Iyov* served Hashem with love. This seems contradictory as *Iyov* is referred to as an *ish yashar* (upright) and a *yarai Hashem* (one who fears Hashem). But the Mishna states that his level of love was so great that in essence what he was saying was – "No matter what I go through, my love for You remains." This is

what true love is. It isn't contingent on anything external.

Elul completes the year on a positive note. It's like bringing *bikurim* and saying, "Here's what I struggled for and here's my offering." In the course of the year some of us may have experienced profound suffering and major moral failures. What should *Elul* feel like from that angle? There are things we did that we forgot about because it's convenient for us to forget or because we live in time and new things always replace old things. But in Hashem's accounting, nothing is forgotten. He remembers everything. The things we knew and forgot and the things we didn't even know about.

Picture a child who is not just off the path of *Torah* but so far off that he's not on any path. Picture drugs and dishonesty. It reaches a point where the parents as much as they love

him, have to ask him to leave because of the effect he's having on the other children and on them. His parent's dream isn't revenge. They dream that one day he'll knock on the door and say that things will be different. Hashem is our father. He knows everything we've done, where we've been, how far we've sunk. But he wants us to knock on the door and say that now things will be different.

Hashem also remembers all the seemingly insignificant good acts we did, things for which we wouldn't even give ourselves credit. You pass someone on the street and you give *zedakah*. You smile and wish someone a good day, you see something slippery on the floor and bend down and pick it up. Hashem remembers all this. He knows everything about us, the good and the bad. But he wants us to knock on the door. What holds us back? Let's look at the parable of *Shir Hashirim*. A king desires to marry a woman of the common

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people who is fine and humble. And he finds her. She has every possible virtue, but she finds living in the palace stressful. You have to be well mannered and constantly well dressed. Finally, when she can no longer bear it, she returns to her native village. She views the common people as vulgar and boorish and they sense it and deride her.

The king searches for her. He reaches her

village and sends a messenger. She ignores his messages until finally the king himself comes and knocks on the door. He pleads with her, "Open up for me, my sister, my beloved, my dove, my perfect one." Hashem so to speak says, "You don't see yourself as perfect, but I see your inherent perfection." She responds that she cannot open the door. If you imagine Hashem calling you all those names, what would you be thinking? "That's not me, I

know who I am, what I said and did. I've shed those clothing, I've let it all go. How can I open the door?"

The clothing of the soul are thought, speech, and action. We confuse the clothing with the soul itself. Our thoughts, feelings, speech, and action are not perfect. But they are only garments. The soul itself remains perfect. All we have to do is open the door.

Elul Through Yom Kippur: 40 Days of Recreating Our Reality

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

The month of *Elul* is a special *eit ratzon* (time of favor). Let us study what happened during this period and thereby better understand what *Elul* is about. *Klal Yisrael* experienced great miracles in Egypt. Hashem revealed himself on the night of Pesach and later on at the Red Sea. Eventually the Jews arrived at *Har Sinai* and experienced more miracles and revelation. There was an intense and close relationship with Hashem. However soon after they failed with the Sin of the Golden Calf. When Moshe delayed in returning with the *luchot*, they saw in it a lack of fulfillment of his prophecy. They also saw a vision of Moshe lying dead in heaven. They assumed he had died. Then they got over the reality of being without a leader and created the golden calf. It was a very difficult test. The nation who followed Hashem into the desert and said *naaseh v'nishma* were on a very high spiritual level. They were the foundation of *Klal Yisrael*. If they failed, it must have been a very tough challenge. Why did Hashem test them? Moreover, it seems as if He set them up for failure by enabling the Satan to fool them into thinking Moshe was dead.

The miracles in *Mitzrayim* and on *Yam Suf* were gifts given to the Jews. In *Shir Hashirim*

it says, "*Dodi li v'ani lo*- My beloved one is to me and I am to him." Hashem first gave us these gifts that we did not deserve fully. Gifts received without much effort can be lost easily. It's not as precious as something earned. When Hashem gave Moshe the first *luchot* it was supposed to stay with *Klal Yisrael* forever. If they wouldn't have failed with the golden calf, *Mashiach* would've come. The Jewish people needed to get to a high spiritual level and they needed to draw the other nations with them. However, before the giving of the *Torah*, Amalek came to fight the Jewish people and cooled off the 'waters of the bath,' not only for the Jewish people but for the other nations as well. As a result, *Mashiach* could not come yet. Shem MiShmuel explains that *Klal Yisrael* were in fact ready and could go in to *Eretz Yisrael*, but the others nations weren't worthy. It seems unfair, as if we were liable to suffer for the other nations. But in reality, it gave us another opportunity to bring *kiddush Hashem* into this world. If the nations would come back to Hashem as a result of our influence, it would be our accomplishment.

Hashem gave the Jewish people a very difficult test. If they would've overcome it, they would have turned all the gifts they got into

something they deserved and their mission would've been accomplished. However, the effort needed to do so was almost beyond human capacity. And even more so, Hashem helped the Satan bring the Jews to sin. *Chazal* explain that the generation of the desert had to pave a new path to teshuva for *Klal Yisrael* for all generations. When they failed and then repented, they created the DNA for *teshuva*. *Chazal* say each time Hashem brings a punishment to the Jews, there's a trace of *cheit haegel*. What was not accomplished in *cheit haegel* would be accomplished in all generations. As a result of their failure, we are part of the mission to overcome the struggles Hashem places before us.

The *Sefas Emes* says Hashem always gives good with greater measure than he gives difficulties. If we are part of the difficult consequences, we are also given the opportunity to do *teshuva*. The 40 days from Rosh *Chodesh Elul* to Yom Kippur correspond to the 40 days in the desert when the Jews repented and returned to Hashem. It's a period of time where we can tap into the power of *teshuva* forged by our forefathers and recreate our relationship with Hashem.