

## פרשת שמיני

The last sections of Parshas Tzav are intrinsically attached to the beginning of this week's Parshas HaShavua – *Parshas Shemini*.

Without that connection I would not understand how to interpret the *Yom HaSh'mini* in this Parsha's opening verse.

Let us see the opening verses of our Parsha and investigate some of their aspects.

We read (Vayikro Perek 9/P'sukim 1-3):

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי קָרָא מֹשֶׁה לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו וּלְזִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל אַהֲרֹן קַח לָךְ  
עֵגֶל בֶּן בָּקָר לְחַטָּאת וְאַיִל לְעֹלָה תְּמִימִם וְהַקָּרֵב לְפָנַי ה': וְאֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תְּדַבֵּר  
לֵאמֹר קָחוּ שְׁעִיר עֲזִים לְחַטָּאת וְעֵגֶל וְכֶבֶשׂ בְּנֵי שָׁנָה תְּמִימִם לְעֹלָה:

It was on the eighth day and Moshe called to Aharon and to his sons and to the elders of Israel. He said to Aharon, 'Take for yourself a calf from the cattle as a *Chattos*-sin offering and a ram for an *Oloh*-burnt offering, both are to be without blemish; offer them before Hashem. And speak to B'nei Yisroel saying, 'Take a male goat for a *Chattos*-sin offering and a calf and sheep, both within their first year and unblemished, for an *Oloh*-burnt offering.'

What is that 'eighth day'? Rashi writes:

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי - שְׁמִינִי לְמַלּוּאִים, הוּא רֵאשׁ חֹדֶשׁ נִסָּן, שֶׁהוּקָם הַמִּשְׁכָּן בּו  
בַּיּוֹם:

*It was on the eighth day* – It was the eighth day of the consecration which was Rosh Chodesh Nissan. The Mishkan was erected on that day.

We read at the end of Parshas Tzav (Vayikro Perek 8/Posuk 2) Hashem's command to Moshe Rabbenu regarding the seven days prior to our Parshas 'Bayom HaShmini':

קַח אֶת אַהֲרֹן וְאֶת בָּנָיו אִתּוֹ וְאֶת הַבְּגָדִים וְאֶת שֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה וְאֶת פֶּר הַחַטָּאת וְאֶת  
שְׁנֵי הָאֵילִים וְאֶת סֵל הַמִּצּוֹת:

Take Aharon and his sons with him and the clothes [of the *Kehuna*] and the anointing oil and the bullock for the *Chattos*-sin offering and two rams and the basket of Matzos.

In the subsequent verses (P'sukim 6-32) we read of the entire procedure of offering *Korbonos*, dressing Aharon and his sons in their respective

*Kehuna* clothing and their anointment with the oil that was made and dedicated for that purpose.

The Torah then writes (P'sukim 33-36) the further instructions that were given to Aharon and his sons:

וּמִפֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֹא תֵצְאוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים עַד יוֹם מְלֵאת יְמֵי מְלֵאֵיכֶם כִּי שִׁבְעַת יָמִים  
יִמְלֵא אֶת יְדְכֶם: כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה צְוָה ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת לְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם: וּפֶתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד  
תִּשְׁבּוּ יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת מִשְׁמַרְתּוֹ ה' וְלֹא תָמוּתוּ כִּי כֵן צִוִּיתִי:  
וַיַּעַשׂ אֶהֱרֹן וּבָנָיו אֶת כָּל הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר צְוָה ה' בְּיַד מֹשֶׁה:

Do not go out from the opening of the Ohel Moed for seven days until the completion of the days of consecration because for seven days Hashem will consecrate you. Just like you did on this day, Hashem commanded to do to atone for you. You shall remain by the opening of the Ohel Moed, day and night, for seven days and you shall guard the guarding of Hashem and you will not die because so I was commanded. Aharon and his sons did all of the things that Hashem commanded through Moshe.

And that eighth day culminated the consecration of Aharon and his sons as Rashi teaches, based on what the Torah wrote in Parshas Pekudei<sup>1</sup>, that the Mizbeach and the Mishkan were dedicated on Rosh Chodesh Nissan –that day, the first of Nissan, was the eighth day that the Torah discusses here<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> We read there (Sh'mos Perek 40/Posuk 17):

וַיְהִי בַחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן בַּשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁנִיָּת בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ הַיּוֹקֵם הַמִּשְׁכָּן:

It was in the first month of the second year, on the first of the month, the Mishkan was erected.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Ezra writes here:

וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי - הָיָה נִרְאָה לָנוּ כִּי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי - שְׁמִינֵי לַנִּסָּן, כִּי הַמִּשְׁכָּן הוּקָם  
בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ. רַק הַמַּעֲתִיקִים אָמְרוּ שֶׁהִיא רֹאשׁ חוֹדֶשׁ נִסָּן, וּבִשְׁבַעַת יְמֵי הַמְּלוּאִים  
הָיָה מִשֶּׁה מְקִיָּם אֶת הַמִּשְׁכָּן בְּכָל יוֹם וּסוֹתְרוּ כַּדִּי לַהֲרַגִּיל בּוֹ וּלְלַמֵּד.

*It was on the eighth day* - It would have appeared to us that 'the eighth day' was the 8<sup>th</sup> of Nissan because the Mishkan was erected on the first of the month of Nissan [and the events described here occurred eight days later].

However, those who passed on the *Masorah* said that this 8<sup>th</sup> day was Rosh Chodesh Nissan and on each of the Seven Days of Consecration Moshe would erect the Mishkan and dismantle it daily in order to accustom and to teach the Kohanim.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky Shlita (*Ta'ama D'Kro*) calls our attention to one of the initial verses of the in our Parsha that we read wrote above:

וְאָל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תְּדַבֵּר לֵאמֹר קָחוּ שְׁעִיר עִזִּים לְחֻטָּאת וְעֵגֶל וְכֶבֶשׂ בְּנֵי שָׁנָה תְּמִימִם  
לְעֹלָה:

And speak to B'nei Yisroel saying, 'Take a male goat for a *Chattos*-sin offering and a calf and sheep, both within their first year and unblemished, for an *Oloh*-burnt offering.'

Moshe Rabbenu is addressing Aharon HaKohen HaGodol and is telling him to instruct Israel regarding the offerings Israel is to bring on that day of the dedication of the Mizbeach and of the Mishkan.

Rav Kanievsky asks why did Moshe Rabbenu instruct Aharon to tell Israel what offerings they should bring? Why didn't Moshe Rabbenu himself give those instructions to Israel?<sup>3</sup>

This is the explanation that Rav Kanievsky gives:

ויש לומר שגם זה היה חלק מן החינוך לפי שלדורות מוטל על הכהנים לדאוג לצרכי הקרבנות ולגבות מישראל כמו שכתוב בפרשת קרח (במדבר יח/4) ואת ובניך איתך תשמרו את כהונתכם לכל דבר המזבח וכו'.

ועיין רמב"ם פרק ד' מהלכות כלי המקדש הלכה יח'. ובפרק קמא דשקלים תנן 'אין ממשכנין את הכהנים מפני דרכי שלום' והיינו משום שהן עצמם הממשכנין וזה בזיון להם עיין שם בירושלמי ולזה חינוכו כאן בזה שהוא ידאג לזה.

It may be said that also this [instruction] was part of the consecration because throughout the generations it would be the responsibility of the Kohanim to see to the needs of bringing

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<sup>3</sup> After all, Moshe Rabbenu spoke to B'nei Yisroel directly many times so that telling Aharon to command Israel is exceptional. Instead of Moshe communicating directly with Israel as would be expected, he made Aharon his *sh'liach*.

<sup>4</sup> The entire verse reads:

וְאַתָּה וּבְנֵיךָ אִתְּךָ תִּשְׁמְרוּ אֶת כְּהֹנְתְּכֶם לְכָל דְּבַר הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְלִמְבִּית לְפָרֶכֶת וְעַבְדְּתֶם  
עַבְדַּת מִתְּנָה אֶתֶּן אֶת כְּהֹנְתְּכֶם וְהִזְרַתְּכֶם יוֹמָת:

You [Aharon] and your sons with you shall guard your *kahuna* for all matters of the altar and for inside the *paroches*-dividing curtain, you shall serve; I Hashem have given you this service as *Kohanim* as a gift; the non-Kohen who shall approach shall die.

*Korbonos* and to collect the necessary funds from Israel<sup>5</sup>. This is as it is written in Parshas Korach, ‘and your sons with you shall guard your *Kehuna* for all the matters of the altar, etc.

See Rambam in the fourth Perek, Halacha 18 of *Hilchos Klei HaMizbeach*<sup>6</sup>. See the first Perek of Masseches Shekolim where the Mishnah teaches that Beis Din does not hold collateral from Kohanim to assure that they will pay their due for the communal *Korbonos*<sup>7</sup>. The reason for not doing so, even though such is the practice regarding non-Kohanim is *Darchei Shalom*, in order to promote peace and avoid dispute.

That is, since the Kohanim themselves are obligated to collect the funds for the communal offerings, it would dishonor them if we would collect guarantees from them. See the Yerushalmi there<sup>8</sup>.

Therefore, Moshe Rabbenu consecrated and instructed Aharon in this matter as well [by commanding *him* to instruct Israel regarding

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<sup>5</sup> We read in the opening Mishnah of Masseches Shekolim:

באחד באדר משמיעין על השקלים

On the first of Adar we inform regarding the *Shekolim*.

That is, beginning with the month of Nissan, the funding for communal *Korbonos* for the coming year had to come from ‘new’ funds. Therefore, in the month prior to Nissan, Adar, the collection of those funds took place.

<sup>6</sup> Rambam writes there:

וממנין גזברין מתחת ידי האמרכולין, ואין פוחתין משלשה גזברין והגזברין הם שגובין כל ההקדשות, ופודין את הנפדה מהן ומוציאין אותן בדברים הראויין להן להוציאן.

The Kohanim appoint treasurers who serve under the directors. There cannot be less than three treasurers. They collect the monies and objects donated to the Beis HaMikdosh and they oversee the redemption of articles from *hekdesh* and outlay monies appropriately.

<sup>7</sup> Beis Din enforced the collection of funds for the communal *Korbonos*. Failure to pay one’s share was concomitant to not repaying a loan and thus Beis Din would temporarily confiscate an item of worth from this ‘debtor’s’ property as collateral and a guarantee until he fulfilled his obligation.

<sup>8</sup> The relevant quotation there (Halacha 3) reads:

אין ממשכנין את הכהנים מפני דרך הכבוד:

We don’t take collateral from the Kohanim because it would not be honorable [for them].

the offerings to bring] so that he would be concerned to make sure the offerings that were to be brought would be available.

However, we can still raise a question. If the responsibility of collecting these funds was part of the responsibility of the *Kehuna* and thus they had to be consecrated and educated in that task as well, why did Moshe Rabbenu wait until the 8<sup>th</sup> day of consecration and education to direct Aharon to this task? Why didn't Moshe instruct Aharon in this regard from the very beginning of the week of *mi'lu'im*?

Before we will attempt to answer this question, we can see that a similar question regarding a delayed instruction is raised a little bit later in the Parsha.

The Torah tells us that on that eighth day, Aharon followed Moshe's instructions precisely and offered all of the *Korbonos* in the prescribed way.

The Torah is about to tell us that Hashem revealed Himself after that service that Aharon performed. However, before that long-awaited Divine appearance, we read an unexpected, intervening verse (Posuk 23):

וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וַיִּצְאוּ וַיְבָרְכוּ אֶת הָעָם וַיֵּרָא כְבוֹד ה' אֶל כָּל הָעָם:

Moshe and Aharon entered the *Ohel Moed* and they went out and blessed the People and the Glory of G-d appeared to the entire nation.

It is certainly questionable why Moshe and Aharon would leave their respective places before all of Israel, while anticipating the appearance of the Shechinah, and go into the *Ohel Moed*.

Rashi explains:

ויבא משה ואהרן וגו' - למה נכנסו, מצאתי בפרשת מלואים בבחייתא הנוספת על תורת כהנים שלנו למה נכנס משה עם אהרן, ללמדו על מעשה הקטרת. או לא נכנס אלא לדבר אחר, הריני דן ירידה וביאה טעונות ברכה, מה ירידה מעין עבודה, אף ביאה מעין עבודה, הא למדת למה נכנס משה עם אהרן, ללמדו על מעשה הקטרת.

*Moshe and Aharon entered* – why did they enter the *Ohel Moed*? I found in the section of *Miluim* in the Braisa that is appended to our *Midrash Toras Kohanim*:

Why did Moshe enter with Aharon? To teach him how to offer the *Ketores*-incense. Perhaps they entered for another purpose?

[I know they entered for the *Ketores*] because I make the following judgment: I see that the descent and entering required a *Bracha* [as it says in the verse]. Just like the descent stemmed from a service [of Aharon performing his prescribed service] so the entering had to be a type of service. From this you learn that Aharon entered with Moshe so that the latter could teach the former regarding the

*Ketores* [since all of the other services were already taught during the Seven Days of Consecration].<sup>9</sup>

However, *Mizrachi*, also brought by *Sifsei Chachamim*, raises a very simple question: why didn't Moshe Rabbenu instruct Aharon regarding the *Ketores* during the Seven Days of *Miluim*? Moshe instructed Aharon

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<sup>9</sup> Rashi offers a second explanation for the descent and entering of Moshe and Aharon. That explanation reads:

דבר אחר כיון שראה אהרן שקרבו כל הקרבנות ונעשו כל המעשים ולא ירדה שכינה לישראל, היה מצטער ואמר יודע אני שכעס הקדוש ברוך הוא עלי ובשבילי לא ירדה שכינה לישראל. אמר לו למשה משה אחי כך עשית לי, שנכנסתי ונתביישתי. מיד נכנס משה עמו ובקשו רחמים וירדה שכינה לישראל:

*Another explanation* – When Aharon saw that all of his offering were offered and all the actions that he was required to do were done and the Shechinah did not descend upon Israel, he was pained and said, 'I know that HaKodosh Boruch Hu is angry at me and it is because of me that the Shechinah did not descend.'

He said to Moshe, 'Moshe my brother, is this what you did to me? That I entered and was shamed?'

Immediately Moshe entered with him and they sought mercy and the Shechinah descended upon Israel.

I think that we can support the first explanation over the second from the language of the verse itself.

The verse writes:

ויבוא משה ואהרן

Moshe and Aharon came.

In the English translation the nuance of the verse is not apparent. However, in *L'shon HaKodesh* we immediately notice that the Torah writes ויבוא, in the singular, which out of context would have been translated as *he* came, not *they* came, even though the discussion is about both Aharon and Moshe.

As we have noted elsewhere, when an action is undertaken by more than one person and yet the Torah writes the action verb in the singular, there is an intimation that the individual mentioned first initiated the action.

According to the first *p'shat* in Rashi, Moshe called Aharon into the *Ohel Moed* to teach the latter regarding the *Ketores*. Moshe initiated the action and thus the verb is in the singular.

regarding all of the other procedures during that week. Why was *Ketores* different?<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Mizrachi first brings the explanation of *Rabi Yeshaya* who evidently preceded him in raising this question.

Rabi Yeshaya, as explained by Mizrachi, opined that during the Seven Days of *Miluim*, there was no *Ketores* offering.

Mizrachi points out that the Kohanim were told, as we brought earlier:  
וּמִפֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֹא תֵצְאוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים עַד יוֹם מְלֵאת יְמֵי מְלֵאֲיִכֶם כִּי שִׁבְעַת  
יָמִים יִמְלֵא אֶת יְדְכֶם:

Do not go out from the opening of the Ohel Moed for seven days until the completion of the days of consecration because for seven days Hashem will consecrate you.

Mizrachi explains that during the Seven Days of *Miluim*, the Kohanim were also not allowed to enter the area where the *Mizbach HaZahav*, the Golden Altar upon which the *Ketores* was offered and thus until this Eighth Day they did not bring a *Ketores* offering. therefore, Moshe only commanded regarding the *Ketores* when it became a relevant service.

In his notes to his annotated edition of *Mizrachi*, Rav Moshe Phillip Shlita notes that one of the commentators teaches that Ramban writes that the *Ketores* indeed was brought during the Seven Days of *Miluim*. [I looked but did not find a source for that Ramban and Rav Phillip does not bring a citation directly from Ramban either.]

Thus, according to Ramban, the question of why Moshe chose that time to teach Aharon about the *Ketores* has not been answered.

[There is no commentary from Ramban on our verse and thus we cannot say how he interpreted it or if there is some difficulty in his interpretation.]



The *Ketores* offering figures significantly in the Torah. In addition to the Mitzvos associated with it<sup>11</sup>, the *Ketores* played a prominent part in many historical events in the Torah<sup>12</sup>.

The first such instance of the centrality of the *Ketores* in history occurs in our Parsha.

The Torah teaches us the event that occurred immediately after the Shechinah was revealed to Israel. We read (ibid. Perek 10/Posuk 1):

וַיִּקְחוּ בְנֵי אַהֲרֹן נֹדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא אִישׁ מִחֶתְתּוֹ וַיִּתְּנוּ בָהֶן אֵשׁ וַיִּשְׂימוּ עָלֶיהָ קִטְרֶת וַיִּקְרִיבוּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֵשׁ זָרָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוָּה אֲתֶם:

The sons of Aharon, Nodov and Avihu, each took his incense pan and they placed in them fire and they placed *Ketores* upon it and

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<sup>11</sup> See Parshas Tetzaveh (Sh'mos Perek 30/P'sukim 1-10) and Parshas Ki Siso (ibid. Perek 30/P'sukim 35-38).

<sup>12</sup> We read in Parshas Korach (B'midbar Perek 16/P'sukim 5-7):

וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל קָרַח וְאֶל כָּל עֵדְתוֹ לֵאמֹר בִּקֶּר וַיֵּדַע ה' אֶת אֲשֶׁר לוֹ וְאֶת הַקְּדוֹשׁ וְהַקְּרִיב אֵלָיו וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר בּוֹ יִקְרִיב אֵלָיו: זֹאת עֲשׂוּ קָחוּ לָכֶם מִחֶתוֹת קָרַח וְכָל עֵדְתוֹ: וַתֵּנוּ בָהֶן אֵשׁ וַשִּׂימוּ עָלֶיהֶן קִטְרֶת לִפְנֵי ה' מִחֵר וְהָיָה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה' הוּא הַקְּדוֹשׁ רַב לָכֶם בְּנֵי לֵוִי:

Moshe spoke to Korach and his entire congregation saying. In the morning G-d will make known who is His and who is holy and He will bring him near to Him and whom He will choose and He will bring him near to Him. This is what you are to do: take for yourselves incense pans, Korach and his entire congregation. Place in them fire and place on them *Ketores* before Hashem tomorrow; and the man whom Hashem will choose he is the one who is holy; you have taken more than you should, Sons of Levi.

In that same Parshas Korach (ibid. Perek 17/P'sukim 11-13) we read further regarding the aftermath of Korach's rebellion and the people's reaction:

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל אַהֲרֹן קַח אֶת הַמִּחְתָּה וְתֵן עָלֶיהָ אֵשׁ מֵעַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְשִׂים קִטְרֶת וְהוֹלֵךְ מִהָרָה אֶל הָעֵדָה וְכַפַּר עֲלֵיהֶם כִּי יֵצֵא הַקֶּצֶף מִלִּפְנֵי ה' הַחַל הַנִּגָּף: וַיִּקַּח אַהֲרֹן כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּרָץ אֶל תּוֹךְ הַקֶּהֱל וְהָיָה הַחַל הַנִּגָּף בָּעָם וַיִּתֵּן אֶת הַקִּטְרֶת וַיִּכַּפֵּר עַל הָעָם: וַיַּעֲמֵד בֵּין הַמֵּתִים וּבֵין הַחַיִּים וַתֵּעָצֵר הַמִּגַּפָּה:

Moshe said to Aharon, 'Take the incense pan and place upon it fire from upon the altar and place *Ketores* and go quickly to the congregation and atone for them because the anger has gone out from before Hashem; the plague has begun. Aharon took as Moshe spoke and he ran into the midst of the congregation; and behold the plague had begun against the people; Aharon placed the *Ketores* and he atoned for the people. Aharon stood between the dead and the living and the plague stopped.

they brought a foreign fire as an offering before Hashem that He did not command them.

The result of their sin was swift in coming as the following Posuk (2) writes:

וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי ה' וַתֹּאכַל אוֹתָם וַיָּמָתוּ לִפְנֵי ה':

Fire went out from before Hashem and it consumed them and they died before Hashem.

It is true that the various *meforshim* attend to the specific sin that these two sons of Aharon committed. We will deal with the opinion that teaches that the sin itself, with all of its gravity, was exactly like what the Torah writes: the two sons of Aharon, *Nodov* and *Avihu*, brought a *Korban of Ketores* about which they were not commanded.

Of course, a most significant question is raised when we see the words of consolation that Moshe Rabbenu offered his brother Aharon on the loss of the latter's two sons. We read (ibid. Posuk 3):

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל אַהֲרֹן הוּא אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' לֵאמֹר בְּקִרְבֵי אֶקְדֹּשׁ וְעַל פְּנֵי כָל הָעָם אֶכָּבֵד וַיִּדַּם אַהֲרֹן:

Moshe said to Aharon, ‘This is what Hashem spoke saying, “With those who are close to Me I will be sanctified and I will weigh heavily upon the face of the entire People”’; Aharon was silent.

If Moshe Rabbenu spoke so positively about Nodov and Avihu, his words are obviously true.

Certainly, Nodov and Avihu sinned. They sinned grievously; there is no doubt. The Torah writes that. They were holy people – about that there is no doubt either. Moshe Rabbenu said that.

How then do we reconcile their sinful behavior with their holiness?

The word קטורת in *L'shon Kodesh* means a pillar of rising smoke<sup>13</sup>. However, in Aramaic it is the equivalent of *kesher*, a knot.

And thus, the commentators note that there is a special power to the *Ketores* offering – it makes a unique connection between Man and G-d.

Recanati (Sh'mos Perek 30/Posuk 1) expresses this idea most succinctly:

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<sup>13</sup> See B'reishis Perek 18/Posuk 28.

ולשון קטורת נראה לי שהוא לשון ארמית, וענינה קשר ודבוק מרכבה עליונה:

The term *ketores* appears to me to an Aramaic word and its subject is of a tying or cleaving to the Chariot upon high.

The uniqueness of the *Ketores* offering finds its expression in an interesting Halacha.

The various services of offering *Korbonos* were performed by the Kohanim who were serving that particular week<sup>14</sup>. The Mishnah in the second Perek of Masseches Yoma teaches that the services were apportioned by lottery<sup>15</sup>. Kohanim who were interested in participating in a particular *avoda* took part in a type of lottery. It certainly stands to reason that many of the Kohanim performed many of the same services multiple times – perhaps even in their particular week of service – but certainly in their lifetime.

However, the choice of who would perform the service of *Ketores* was different. We read in the Mishna (Masseches Yoma 26 a):

הפייס השלישי: חדשים לקטרת באו והפיסו:

The third daily lottery: Those who are new for the *Ketores* – come and take part in the lottery.

Kohanim who, even once in their lifetime, previously offered the *Ketores* would not participate in this lottery.<sup>16</sup>

What was the uniqueness of the *Ketores* that made it such an exclusive service?

When Moshe Rabbenu gave his blessing to *Shevet Levi* at the end of his life, he said (D'vorim Perek 33/Posuk 11):

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<sup>14</sup> Kohanim were divided into 24 families and each family served two weeks a year with all Kohanim being eligible for certain service during the Yomim Tovim. Each of those weeks of service is called a משמרת.

<sup>15</sup> Rambam (Hilchos Temidin UMusafin Perek 4/Halachos 3-4) describes the method of the lottery.

<sup>16</sup> In Hilchos Temidin U'Musafin (Perek 4/Halacha 8), Rambam teaches what was done when all the Kohanim in that week of service, that משמרת, had already offered the *Ketores* once in their lifetime.

בְּרַךְ ה' חֵילוֹ וּפְעָלָיו יִדְּיוֹ תִרְצָה מִחַץ מִתְנַיִם קָמְיוֹ וּמִשְׁנֵאָיו מִן יְקוּמוֹן:

Hashem, bless the strength of Levi and accept the work of his hands; crush the loins of those who will arise up against him and from his enemies that they should not arise.

Although the translation of חילו, its strength, could certainly refer to an army, and such would be appropriate for the conclusion of the verse, others, including the Targum, understand the word 'strength' to refer to its wealth.

Perhaps the commentary of *B'chor Shor* expresses it best:

ברך ה' חילו: שמפני הקטורת והעולות היו נכסים מתברכים, ולכך לא שונים לקטורת, שכל אחד רוצה להקטיר. ולכך אומר "חדשים לקטורת בואו והפיסו":

Hashem, bless Levi's strength – because the *Ketores* and the *Olos*-burnt offerings<sup>17</sup> the property of Levi would increase. That is why a Kohen did not repeat as the one bringing the offering of *Ketores* – every Kohen wanted to bring that offering. Therefore, it says, 'New Kohanim for the *Ketores* -come and join the lottery'.

However, this reason does not seem to be relevant in our particular case. It would certainly seem inappropriate to attribute the motivation of the sons of Aharon to bring an illicit *Ketores* for motives of wealth. Moshe Rabbenu called them holy people. Holy people don't cheat just to have extra income.

Perhaps, then, we can understand that the motivation of Nodov and Avihu was related to the explanation of *Ketores* that we saw before. *Ketores* means to tie, to bind, to cleave. Nodov and Avihu wanted to forge a unique and close connection to the Ribbono Shel Olom. They understood that *Ketores* implied a unique bond to the Ribbono Shel Olom and they sought that bond.

They wanted the holiness that they had already achieved to reach an even higher level.

Of course, they were in error. *Ketores* was able to serve as a bond with Hashem only when it was so empowered by G-d's Mitzvah. Bringing an *אש זרה*, a foreign fire, tragically enough accomplished the exact opposite.

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<sup>17</sup> In the continuation of his commentary, *B'chor Shor* explains why those who brought an *Oloh* one time were able to do so multiple times and participate in multiple lotteries for that purpose even though they seem to have been put on the same level as the *Ketores*.

Rather than being an act of forging a closeness with the Ribbono Shel Olom, the fire that they brought was one of זרות, estrangement. The estrangement that they caused was so severe that Hashem responded to their action perfectly and proportionately: מידה כנגד מידה. The sons of Aharon brought a fire; G-d sent a fire to consume them and to permanently remove, in this world, whatever closeness that they could have achieved.

The extreme closeness to G-d that man can reach is signified by the service of the Kohen Godol on Yom HaKippurim about which the Torah teaches in Parshas Acharei Mos. On that day, one time a year only, the Kohen Godol entered the Kodosh Kodoshim and brought the special *Ketores* offering that was unique for that day.

The similarity between what the Kohen Godol was commanded to do and that which the sons of the Kohen Godol did so erroneously is given emphasis in the first verses of that Parsha.

We read there (Vayikro Perek 16/P'sukim 1-2):

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְנֵי אַהֲרֹן בְּקִרְבָּתָם לִפְנֵי ה' וַיִּמְתּוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה דַּבֵּר אֶל אַהֲרֹן אַחִיךָ וְאֵל יָבֵא בְּכָל יַעַת אֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִבֵּית לְפָרְכָת אֶל פְּנֵי הַכַּפֹּרֶת אֲשֶׁר עַל הָאָרֶן וְלֹא יָמוּת כִּי בָעֲנַן אֶרְאֶה עַל הַכַּפֹּרֶת:

Hashem spoke to Moshe after the death of the two sons of Aharon when they drew near before G-d and they died. Hashem said to Moshe, 'Speak to Aharon your brother that he should not enter the Holy all of the time, from inside the dividing curtain to face the *Kapores* that was on the Ark, and he won't die; because I Hashem will appear from above the *Kapores*.

Rashi writes:

וידבר ה' אל משה אחרי מות שני בני אהרן וגו' - מה תלמוד לומר, היה רבי אלעזר בן עזריה מושלו משל לחולה שנכנס אצלו רופא. אמר לו אל תאכל צונן ואל תשכב בטחב. בא אחר ואמר לו אל תאכל צונן ואל תשכב בטחב שלא תמות כדרך שמת פלוני. זה זרזו יותר מן הראשון, לכך נאמר אחרי מות שני בני אהרן:

*Hashem spoke to Moshe after the death of the two sons of Aharon etc.* -What does this come to teach? [We know that this is after the deaths of Nodov and Avihu.]

Rabi Elazar ben Azaria made a parable of one who was ill who was visited by a doctor. The doctor told him, 'Don't eat cold food and don't sleep in damp places.

Another doctor came and said to him, ‘Don’t eat cold food and don’t sleep in damp places so that you won’t die like that one died.’

The second doctor emphasized the urgency more than the first.

That is why it says, ‘After the death of the two sons of Aharon’.

Why did both Moshe and Aharon need to receive such a dire warning? Evidently, He Who is Omniscient knew that if such could befall Nodov and Avihu, other great people could make the same type of error<sup>18</sup>.

And with this background of information we can perhaps understand why Moshe Rabbenu waited until the *Eighth* day to teach Aharon about the *Ketores* -immediately before the Shechinah appeared.

The appearance of the Shechinah was far more than the fulfillment of the Divine promise (Sh’mos Perek 25/Posuk 8) of

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכָם:

They shall make for Me a Sanctuary and I Hashem will dwell among them.

The appearance of the Shechinah caused a spontaneous outburst from Israel.

The Torah writes in our Parsha (Perek 9/Posuk 24):

וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי ה' וַתֹּאכַל עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֶת הָעֹלָה וְאֶת הַחֲלָבִים וַיֵּרָא כָּל הָעָם וַיִּרְאוּ וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל פְּנֵיהֶם:

Fire went out from before Hashem and it consumed the *Oloh*-burned offering and the fats on the Altar; the people saw and they praised and they prostrated themselves.

What does the term וַיִּרְאוּ mean?

We recognize that word’s connection with רִינָה meaning happiness. How was that happiness expressed? With praise of Hashem – and as the other commentators explain with song.

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<sup>18</sup> We cannot say that it is preposterous to say that Moshe and Aharon could fall victim to the same type of error as did Nodov and Avihu.

Rashi brings the words of consolation that Moshe said to Aharon:

עַכְשָׁיו רוֹאֵה אֲנִי שֶׁהֵם גְּדוּלִים מִמֶּנִּי וּמִמְּךָ:

I now see that Nodov and Avihu were greater than me or you.

How different was that song than that of Crossing the Yam Suf! *Shiras HaYam* was led by Moshe Rabbenu, as the Posuk itself says (Sh'mos Perek 15/Posuk 1):

אָז יָשִׁיר מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַה' וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְאֵמֶר אֲשִׁירָה לַה' כִּי גָאָה  
גָּאָה סוּס וְרִכְבּוֹ רָמָה בַיָּם:

Then Moshe and B'nei Yisroel sang this song to Hashem and they said saying: 'I will sing to Hashem because he is most great – the horse and its rider were cast up in the sea.

*Shiras HaYam* was led by Moshe Rabbenu because the people, on their own, did not know how to express their praise

The song on that first day of Nissan was very different; it was spontaneous. The people all knew what to say without prompting and without instruction. The appearance of the Shechinah and the obvious acceptance of that initial service of the newly erected Mishkan brought unmitigated happiness to the hearts of Israel.

*All* the people saw and praised and sang.

It was *davka* on that day, before the spontaneous outburst that came from the people, that Moshe had to *teach* Aharon about the *Ketores*. It could very well be that it was not the procedure of how to make the *Ketores* and how and when it was to be brought that Moshe taught. It could very well be that Moshe had taught those Halachos and repeated them daily during the previous week of *Miluim*. If that is so, Aharon undoubtedly knew exactly what he was to do, how he was to perform that service.

What Moshe did have to teach Aharon, though, was that the spontaneous outburst of the People could have a devastating effect – like the one that it did have on Nodov and Avihu.

Spontaneity, even when motivated by good intentions, requires control.

The desire to come close to HaKodosh Boruch can be emotional. *Loving* and *fearing* G-d is emotional and both are Mitzvos. However, those emotions must be contained within the parameters of Torah and Mitzvos.

Spontaneity that excludes the clear rules of Torah and Mitzvos can be disastrous – as it proved to be minutes after the lesson that Moshe Rabbenu imparted to Aharon HaKohen HaGodol.

And with this understanding, we can expand upon the teaching of Rav Chaim Kanievsky.

Part of the inauguration of Aharon, and his successors, to the role of Kohen Godol was the responsibility of assuring that the service in the Mishkan and Beis HaMikdosh would be undertaken as commanded.

Perhaps that command was already taught to Aharon during the Seven Days of Miluim.

However, whether for the first time or as a repeated lesson, it had to be taught on the *Eighth Day* as well.

The *Korbonos* were not an act of magic. They were not an act of influencing the Divine. The opposite is true. The offering of Korbonos before the Ribbono Shel Olom was to be a sign of servitude to His mastery.

The Mishnah that we will read this week as we begin the weekly study of Masseches Ovos (Perek 1/Mishnah 2) tells us the lesson that Shimon HaTzaddik wished to imbue for all generations.

שמעון הצדיק היה משירי כנסת הגדולה הוא היה אומר על שלשה דברים העולם עומד על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים:

Shimon HaTzaddik was among the remnants of the *Anshei Knesses HaGedolah*. He would say:

The world stands on three things: Torah, *Avodah* and Lovingkindness.

*Avodah* is the service in the Beis HaMikdosh. *Avodah* is prayer.

It is wonderful if we are moved by an event, hopefully one that is joyful and offer a spontaneous prayer.

But what if that spontaneous prayer, let us say *Shehecheyanu*, is not appropriate for that particular circumstance and one has said שם שמים לבטלה. The desire for closeness to G-d has led to a sin.

The same is true with the offering of a *Korban*. If the *Korban* is not appropriate for the particular circumstance, then rather than bringing 'closeness', as the word *korban* implies, the result is one of distancing. Such a erroneously brought *Korban* is called *Chullin* – profane and devoid of sanctity.

And, of course, that was precisely the error of Nodov and Avihu. They wanted to come close to the Ribbono Shel Olom but they ignored the basic guidelines for coming close: Follow G-d's Mitzvos and His Torah.



And it was that very same type of error that Moshe and Aharon were warned against in Parshas Acharei Mos.

That message had to be transmitted on the day of thrilling excitement and exhilarating inspiration, the First Day of the month of Nissan, the 8<sup>th</sup> day that culminated with the full inauguration of the Mishkan that was 'home' to the Shechina and in which the Kohanim were to serve for all generations. It had to be imparted *davka* on the day that the Hashem revealed His Shechinah.

And that message of religious emotion guided by Torah dictates was been expressed for all generations by Dovid HaMelech *Olov HaShalom* (Tehillim Perek 100/Posuk 2):

עבדו את ה' בשמחה וגילו ברעדה:

Serve G-d with joy; rejoice with trembling.

May we find the *derech* to serve HaKodosh Boruch Hu with joy, always mindful that it is He Who teaches us the way to make His service pleasing before Him Yisborach.

With best wishes for a Good and Healthy Summer.

Shabbat Shalom

Chodesh Tov

Rabbi Pollock