

פרשת צו/שבת הגדול

Even with the many restrictions that limit us and the quarantine that sequesters us, undoubtedly all of us are cleaning for Pesach. It may be that there will be some differences this year: perhaps we will just dispose of the *chometz* by ruining it and making it unfit even for a dog without burning it and not clean those areas about which we be allowed to be lenient.

But, in a normal year, the custom of all of Israel is to burn *Chometz*.

We burn *chometz* as part of our efforts to avoid transgressing the prohibition of:

בל יראה ובל ימצא

“Chometz should not be seen and Chometz should not be found”.

The source for this prohibition is learned from three P’sukim. The first two verses are in Parshas Bo. We read there (Sh’mos Perek 12/ P’sukim 7, 19):

מִצּוֹת יֵאָכְל אֶת שִׁבְעַת הַיָּמִים וְלֹא יֵרָאֶה לְךָ חֶמֶץ וְלֹא יֵרָאֶה לְךָ
שָׂאֵר בְּכָל גְּבֻלְךָ:

Matzos should be eaten for seven days; Chometz should not be seen by you and yeast should not be seen by you in your entire borders.

שִׁבְעַת יָמִים שָׂאֵר לֹא יִמָּצָא בְּבֵתֵיכֶם כִּי כָל אֹכֵל מִחֶמֶץ וְנִכְרְתָה
הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא מֵעַדַת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגֵר וּבְאִזְרַח הָאָרֶץ:

Seven days yeast should not be found in your houses because anyone who eats leavening – that soul will be excised from the Congregation of Israel, in the convert or the citizen of the land.

The third instance is found in Parshas R’eh (D’vorim Perek 16/Posuk 4) where we read:

וְלֹא יֵרָאֶה לְךָ שָׂאֵר בְּכָל גְּבֻלְךָ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים וְלֹא יִלִּין מִן הַבָּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר
תִּזְבַּח בְּעֶרְבֵי בַיּוֹם הַרְאִשׁוֹן לַבֶּקֶר:

Yeast should not be seen by you in all of your border for seven days; do not leave over the meat [of the Korban Pesach] that you slaughter at night until the morning of the first day.

A detailed explanation of each of these P'sukim with their seemingly repetitiveness as well as the nuanced differences are interpreted by Chazal.¹

The simple, and correct, definition of the prohibition of **בל יראה ובל ימצא** is that it is forbidden for a Jew to own Chometz during Pesach, in addition to the obligation to destroy Chometz.

There are many *simanim* in Shulchan Aruch² that deal with this prohibition and we will cite selections from a very few and then, only very briefly.

Shulchan Aruch writes (Orach Chaim Siman 431/s'if 1):

בתחילת ליל י"ד בניסן בודקים את החמץ...

At the beginning of the night of the 14th of Nissan we search for Chometz.

In Siman 432 (s'if 1) we read:

קודם שיתחיל לבדוק יברך: 'אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על ביעור חמץ'. ואם התחיל לבדוק בלא ברכה, יברך כל זמן שלא סיים בדיקתו:

Before he begins to search for Chometz, he recites, 'Boruch atoh... Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us regarding destroying Chometz.'

In Siman 434 (s'if 2) we read:

¹ See for example Masseches Pesachim 5 b and the Mechilta to these verses in Sefer Sh'mos.

² Beginning with Siman 431 through Siman 451, 21 Simanim (!) deal with various aspects of the prohibition of owning Chometz during Pesach.

אחר הבדיקה מיד בלילה יבטלנו ויאמר: כל חמירא דאיתיה
ברשותי דלא חזיתיה ודלא ביערתיה לבטיל וליהוי כעפרא
דארעא. הגה: ויאמר הביטול בלשון שמבין:

Following the search at night, immediately, he should nullify the
Chometz and say, 'Any leavened products that are in my
possession that I did not see and that I did not destroy, let them be
nullified and like the dust of the ground.'

Rama – He should recite the *bitul* – nullification in a language that
he understands.

Shulchan Aruch continues (ibid. s'if 3):

בביטול היום יאמר: דחזיתיה ודלא חזיתיה, דביערתי ודלא
ביערתי.

When reciting the *bittul*-nullification in the daytime he should say,
'that I saw and that I did not see, that I destroyed and that I did not
destroy.'

We read in Siman 445 (s'if 1):

כיצד ביעור חמץ שורפו פוררו וזורה לרוח או זורקו לים... הגה:
והמנהג לשורפו. וטוב לשרפו ביום דומיא דנותר שהיה נשרף
ביום:

How is chometz to be destroyed? He burns it³ or crumbles it and casts it into the wind or throws it in to the sea.

Rama – the custom is to burn the chometz. It is good to burn it in the daytime (not at night after the *bedika*-search) just like *nosar*-the remains of a Korban that may *not* be consumed any longer⁴ - that was burned during the day.

Mishnah Brura (*s'if koton 6*) explains:

והמנהג לשורפו - דחוששין לדעת הפוסקים שפסקו כרבי יהודה
דאמר אין ביעור חמץ אלא שריפה דילפינן מנותר שהוא בשריפה.

The minhag is to burn it – We are careful to consider the opinion of the *Poskim* who decided the Halachah is like Rabi Yehuda who

³ Mishna B'rurah (*s'if koton 1*) writes here:

שורפו - עד שנעשה פחמים

He burns it – Until it turns into coals.

If the Chometz is not burned into coals or ashes it may remain ראוי
לאכילת כלב, edible for animals, and the Mitzvah of destroying Chometz has not been fulfilled.

Therefore, one needs to burn the chometz in time for it to become coals or ashes prior to the recitation of *כל חמירא* that is done after the burning of the chometz and prior to the beginning of the sixth hour on Erev Pesach morning.

Beginning with the sixth hour on Erev Pesach morning (local Rabbonim publicize the time), Chometz is no longer in one's possession and thus there is no possibility of nullifying it since it is no longer the property of the owner since the Halacha has removed it from his possession.

⁴ We read in Parshas Bo (Sh'mos Perek 12/Posuk 10) in connection with the *Korban Pesach*:

וְלֹא תוֹתִירוּ מִמֶּנּוּ עַד בֹּקֶר וְהִנְתֵּר מִמֶּנּוּ עַד בֹּקֶר בְּאֵשׁ תִּשְׂרְפוּ:

Do not leave over from it until the morning; that which is left over until the morning – burn it in fire.

Nosar is a subject that is replete in our Parshas Tzav.

said that the destruction of chometz must be done by fire⁵. They base it on the *Nosar* that is burnt.

Mishnah B'rurah writes here (*s'if koton 3*):

או זורקו לים – והוא הדין לנהר והטעם בכל זה משום דכתיב
(שמות יב/טו) תשביתו שאור מבתיכם בכל דבר שאתה יכול
להשביתו:

Or throws it into the sea – And it is the same if he throws it into a river. The reason for all this [that different methods may be used as long as the Chometz is destroyed] is that it is written, 'Destroy yeast from your homes' – in any method that you destroy it.

That is, the literal translation of *תשביתו* is not 'destroyed'. The literal translation of *תשביתו* is closer to 'cause it to cease'. Since the Torah did not write a term that would mean literally burn, the implication is that any means of destroying fulfils the Torah's commandment of ridding the Chometz from one's possession.

⁵ We learn in the Mishnah in Masseches Pesachim (21 b):

רבי יהודה אומר: אין ביעור חמץ אלא שריפה, וחכמים אומרים: אף מפרר וזורה לרוח או מטיל לים.

Rabi Yehuda says, 'Destroying Chometz is done only by burning.' The Chachamim say, 'also one can crumble and cast into the wind or throw into the sea.'

Most *Poskim* decide the Halachah like the *Chachamim* in consonance with the principle of:

יחיד ורבים הלכה כרבים

When there is an opinion held by a single authority against an opinion held by many, the Halacha is like the many.

However, there are various opinions that in this specific *machlokes*, the Halachah is like Rabi Yehuda and thus the prevalent *minhag* is to burn *chometz* which is a fulfillment of the Mitzvah according to all opinions.

⁶ The entire verse reads:

שבעת ימים מצות תאכלו אך ביום הראשון תשביתו שאר מבתיכם כי כל אכל חמץ
ונכרתה הנפש ההוא מישראל מיום הראשון עד יום השבעי:

Seven days you shall eat Matzos but on the first day you shall cease leaven from your homes because anyone who eats chometz – that soul shall be excised from Israel from the first day until the seventh day.

Our final selection from Shulchan Aruch is in Siman 448 (s'if 3) and reads:

חמץ של ישראל שעבר עליו הפסח אסור בהנאה אפילו הניחו
שוגג או אנוס.

Chometz that belonged to a Jew during Pesach, and even when Pesach has passed, is forbidden from benefit – even if he left it over unintentionally or by accident.

In the following sections, Mishnah B'rurah explains the need for both *bedika* -searching for and destroying the chometz as well as *bittul* – nullifying and relinquishing ownership as well as the text of the Bracha – על בעור חמץ.

Mishnah B'rurah writes in Siman 431 (*s'if koton 2*):

בודקין וכו' - וגם צריך לבטל אז את החמץ וכדלקמן בסימן תל"ד
סעיף ב' ומן התורה באחד מהן סגי דכשמבטלו בלבו ומפקירו שוב
אינו שלו ואינו עובר עליו וכל שכן כשבדקו ומחפש אחריו ומבערו
מן העולם אלא שחז"ל החמירו דלא סגי באחד מהן אלא בשניהם
דוקא לפי שחששו אחר שהביטול תלוי במחשבתן של בני אדם
ובדעותיהן אולי ירע בעיני האדם שיש לו חמץ בעד כמה אלפים
להפקיר ואף שבפיו יאמר שיהיה בטל והפקר וחשיב כעפרא מכל
מקום לבו לא כן יחשוב ולא יבטלנו בלב שלם והרי הוא עובר בבל
יראה שהרי לא הוציא מביתו ועוד שמא מתוך שרגילין בו כל
השנה אם יהיה בביתו ורשותו גזרינן שישכח ויבוא לאכול ולכן
תקנו חז"ל שאף על פי שמבטל לא סגי אלא צריך לבדוק לבערו מן
העולם ומכל מקום צריך לבטל גם כן שמא לא יבדוק יפה וימצא
חמץ בפסח ויעבור עליו:

We search etc. – and he also has to nullify the Chometz then as we learn later on in Siman 434 s'if 2.

From the Torah either one of the methods, *Bittul Chometz* or *Biur Chometz*, is sufficient because when he nullifies it in his heart and relinquishes ownership the chometz is no longer his and he will not have a transgression of owning Chometz during Pesach.

All the more so if he searches and pursues it and destroys it from existence that he will not transgress for owning it.

However, Chazal imposed strictures that it is not enough doing one of the methods but he must certainly do both. The reason is that Chazal said that we have to be concerned that since the *Bittul* – nullification is dependent upon people's thoughts and attitudes, perhaps a person will look unfavorably upon relinquishing ownership of chometz that is worth thousands. And even if he recites the formula for *Bittul* and says that it is null and ownerless and considered like the dirt of the ground, nonetheless his heart will not agree with his mouth and will not nullify the chometz wholeheartedly and thus would transgress the prohibition of owning Chometz during Pesach because he did not rid it from his house.

Additionally, since people are used to having Chometz the rest of the year, if he would only nullify the chometz and leave it in his house and in his possession, we forbid it lest he forgets and comes to eat it.

For this reason, Chazal enacted that even though he nullifies the chometz, that isn't sufficient and he has to search for chometz and destroy it from existence.

And yet, he still must nullify and relinquish ownership because perhaps he will not search well and will find chometz during Pesach and violate the prohibition of owning Chometz.

Regarding the Bracha that is recited at the *Bedika* and what is done when it isn't recited prior to beginning the *Bedika*, Mishnah B'rurah explains in Siman 432 (*s'if katan 3* and *s'if katan 4*)

על ביעור חמץ – דאף על גב דאינו מבער עד למחר מכל מקום כיון
דבדיקה זו לצורך ביעור הוי מעין הביעור. ואין מברכין על בדיקת
חמץ דאין זה סוף מצותו וגם אין מברכין על ביטול חמץ כיון דעיקר
הביטול תלוי בלב ואין מברכין על דברים שבלב.

ואם כבר סיים הבדיקה לא יברך עכשיו אלא יברך למחר בשעת
שריפה דהא מברכין על ביעור חמץ.

For burning Chometz. -Even though he only burns the chometz the following day, nonetheless since this *bedika*-searching is to find chometz that needs to be burned, it is part of the essence of burning.

We don't make a bracha of 'searching for chometz' because the goal of the Mitzvah of searching isn't completed by searching alone without burning.

The ashes that are the result of the proper treatment of Chometz prior to Pesach are an indication that the requirements have been fulfilled and the ashes have no significance any longer.

And not only do the ashes lack significance, they are no longer considered *Chometz*. That is what Shulchan Aruch teaches us in Siman 445 (s'if 2):

ואם שרפו קודם שעה ששית, הרי זה מותר ליהנות בפחמין שלו
בתוך הפסח;

If the chometz was burned before the sixth hour, it is permissible to be used and benefit from the coals [even] during Pesach⁷.

⁷ Mishnah Brurah continues there:

אבל אם שרפו משעה ששית ולמעלה, הואיל והוא אסור בהנאה הרי זה לא יסיק בו תנור וכיריים ולא יבשל ואם בישל או אפה, אותה הפת ואותו התבשיל אסורים בהנאה הפחמין שלו אסורים בהנאה, הואיל ושרפו אחר שנאסר בהנאה.

But, if he burned the chometz from the sixth hour onward, since it is forbidden to benefit from the chometz after that time, the ashes are also prohibited from having any benefit from them.

Therefore, one is not allowed to use the charcoals or ashes to fire any type of oven or stovetop and cannot cook from their flames.

If one did cook or bake from their flames, that bread or cooked food cannot be used for any benefit whatsoever and any other charcoal or ashes that are produced cannot provide any benefit since the burning took place after the chometz was forbidden.

However, see *Biur Halachah* d.h. *a'surin b'ha'no'oh* who brings the *Shach* who is lenient *b'di eved*.

That is, the ‘identify’ of the chometz material is erased when it is burned until it turns into ashes and coals – as long as it was not yet considered ‘prohibited Chometz’. And the chometz is considered prohibited beginning with the last Halachic hour of the morning of Erev Pesach.

However, there is another type of ash, one that is described in two consecutive P’sukim in our Parsha that has a very different status and a very different *din*.

We read in Parshas Tzav (Vayikro Perek 6/P’sukim 3-4):

וְלִבַּשׁ הַכֹּהֵן מְדוּ בַד וּמְכַנְסֵי בַד יִלְבַּשׁ עַל בְּשָׂרוֹ וְהָרִים אֶת הַדָּשָׁן
אֲשֶׁר תֹּאכַל הָאֵשׁ אֶת הָעֵלֶה עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְשָׂמוּ אֶצְל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: וּפָשַׁט
אֶת בְּגָדָיו וְלִבַּשׁ בְּגָדִים אֲחֵרִים וְהוֹצִיא אֶת הַדָּשָׁן אֶל מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה
אֶל מְקוֹם טָהוֹר:

The Kohen dons a properly-sized *K’sones*-tunic of linen and pants of linen and he dons it on his flesh and he raises the ashes that the fire consumes from the *Oloh* upon the altar and he shall place it on the altar. He shall remove his clothes and don other clothes and he shall take the ashes out to outside the camp to a pure place.

The context of our Posuk is the Korban Oloh, the burnt-offering, because the Torah begins its descriptions of the service of Korbonos in our Parshas Tzav with the Korban Oloh just like it began its descriptions of the various types of Korbonos in Parshas Vayikro with the Korban Oloh.

Rashi explains the first of the two verses brought above.:

וְהָרִים אֶת הַדָּשָׁן - הִיא חוֹתֵה מֵלֵא מַחֲתָה מִן הַמְּאוֹכְלוֹת
הַפְּנִימִיּוֹת וְנוֹתֵן בַּמִּזְרָחוֹ שֶׁל כֶּבֶשׂ:

He raises the ashes – the Kohen would stir into the *machtoh*-pan from the ashes that had been consumed in the innermost part of the altar and he would place them [on the floor of the Mishkan/Beis HaMikdosh] on the eastern side of the altar’s ramp.

This action is called *תרומת הדשן*, raising and removing a small amount of ashes from the altar. As we will see soon, this was a daily service of the Mishkan/Beis HaMikdosh.

Rashi explains the second of our two verses:

ופשט את בגדיו - אין זו חובה אלא דרך ארץ, שלא ילכלך בהוצאת הדשן בגדים שהוא משמש בהן תמיד. בגדים שבשל בהן קדרה לרבו אל ימזוג בהן כוס לרבו, לכך ולבש בגדים אחרים פחותין מהן:

He removes his clothes – this is not an obligation but just proper behavior so that the Kohen does not become dirtied when he takes the ashes out while wearing the *Bigdei Kehunah* he normally wears when serving. [The parable is] Clothes that one wears for cooking for the master are not the clothes he should wear when pouring the master's cup of wine [i.e. serving him]. Therefore, the verse says 'he should wear other clothes'. That is different clothes, of lesser value.

והוציא את הדשן - הצבור בתפוח, כשהוא רבה ואין מקום למערכה, מוציאו משם. ואין זה חובה בכל יום, אבל התרומה חובה בכל יום:

He shall take out the ashes – the ashes that are piled high⁸ on the altar. He takes them out when there is much and there is no room for the new Korbonos on the wood on the altar – the Kohen takes the ashes out from there.

There is not an obligation to do so daily and this is unlike the *Terumas HaDeshen* (of the previous verse) which is a daily obligation of the service in the Beis HaMikdosh.

Thus, it appears that there are two separate and distinct Mitzvos here, both related to the ashes of the altar.

⁸ The term for the piled-high accumulation of ashes on the altar is called a תפוח-an 'apple' because that is the shape that the ashes take as they are piled high. *Tapuach* – which does mean 'apple' – means that which is swollen or grown in size.

This is how Rambam expresses it⁹ (Hilchos T'midin U'Musafin Perek 2/ Halachos 10-15):

הרמת הדשן מעל המזבח בכל יום מצות עשה שנאמר והרים את הדשן, והיא עבודה מעבודות כהונה...

אימתי תורמין הדשן בכל יום, משיעלה עמוד השחר, וברגלים מתחלת שליש אמצעי של לילה, וביום הכפורים מחצות הלילה.

Raising the ashes daily from on top of the altar is a positive commandment as it says, 'He shall raise up the ashes'. This is one of the *avodos*-required services of Kohanim in the Mishkan/Mikdash.

כיצד תורמין, מי שזכה לתרום טובל...ומקדש ידיו ורגליו...ואחר כך לוקח המחטה...ועולה לראש המזבח ומפנה את הגחלים אילך ואילך וחותה מן הגחלים שנתאכלו בלב האש ויורד למטה לארץ...ומהלך בארץ למזרח הכבש כמו עשר אמות כלפי הצפון, וצובר את הגחלים שחתה על גבי הרצפה רחוק מן הכבש שלשה טפחים, במקום שנותנים מוראת העוף ודשון המזבח הפנימי והמנורה, וחתיה זו שחותה במחתה ומוריד לרצפה אצל המזבח היא המצוה של כל יום.

⁹ When learning this section in the Rambam it will be obvious that there are differences between Rashi's understanding of the interplay between הרמת הדשן, the taking a small amount of ashes and placing them on the floor of the *Azara* near the outer Mizbeach and הוצאת הדשן, taking the ashes outside of the Mishkan/Beis HaMikdash.

Those differences, as important as they are, are not our focus here. There are full and comprehensive discussions in the *Meforshim*, particularly those on Mishneh Torah LaRambam.

How was this Mitzvah performed? The Kohen who won the draw¹⁰ to do this act of *teruma* immersed himself in the Mikveh and sanctified his hands and feet in the *kiyor*-basin and took a shovel-pan and went to the top of the altar and move the coals about and about and shoveled the coals that were consumed in the heart of the fire and goes down to the ground and walks east of the altar

¹⁰ We learn in the Mishnah in Masseches Yoma (22 a):

בראשונה, כל מי שרוצה לתרום את המזבח - תורם. ובזמן שהן מרובין - רצין ועולין בכבש, כל הקודם את חבירו בארבע אמות - זכה. ואם היו שניהן שוין - הממונה אומר להן: הצביעו... מעשה שהיו שניהם שוין ורצין ועולין בכבש, ודחף אחד מהן את חבירו ונפל ונשברה רגלו. וכיון שראו בית דין שבאין לידי סכנה - התקינו שלא יהו תורמין את המזבח אלא בפייס. ארבע פייסות היו שם, וזה הפייס הראשון.

Originally, any Kohen who wished to perform the Mitzvah of *Terumas HaDeshen* did so. When many Kohanim wished to do so, they would run up the *kevesh*-altar ramp and whoever first reached within the four amos of the altar, won the right to perform this *Avoda*. If there was a tie, the Kohen in charge would tell them to show their fingers and they would make a drawing.

It happened that there was once a tie between two Kohanim who reached the top of the Mizbeach and one pushed the other off of the ramp and his leg broke.

When the Beis Din saw that there was a danger, they enacted that the Kohen who would perform *Terumas HaDeshen* would be chosen by a drawing.

There were four drawings in the Beis HaMikdosh for performing certain *Avodos* and this was the first.

We read there (25 a and 26 a, respectively):

הפייס השני: מי שוחט, מי זורק, מי מדשן מזבח הפנימי, ומי מדשן את המנורה, ומי מעלה אברים לכבש. הראש והרגל, ושתי הידים, והעוקץ והרגל, והחזה והגרה, ושתי הדפנות, והקרבים, והסולת, והחביתין, והיין, שלשה עשר כהנים זכו בו.

The second drawing regarding the *Korban Tomid shel Shacharis*: Who will slaughter, who will throw the blood, who will take ashes from the inner Golden Altar; who will take the ashes from the Menorah; who will place the limbs of the animal on the altar ramp; who will take the head and the right hindleg; who will take the two forelegs; who will take the tailbone and he left hindleg; who will take the chest and the *geira* stomach; who will take the two sides; who will take the intestines; who will take the flour and the *chavitin*-daily offering of the Kohen Godol; who will take the wine.

There was a total of 13 Kohanim who won this draw.

הפייס השלישי: חדשים לקטרת באו והפיסו. והרביעי: חדשים עם ישנים, מי מעלה אברים מן הכבש למזבח.

The third drawing: 'New Kohanim to offer the *Ketores*, come and participate in the drawing.'

The fourth drawing: 'New and veteran Kohanim -who will take the limbs from the *Kevesh*-altar ramp and place them on the altar.'

towards the north, about 10 *amos*. He piles the shoveled coals on the floor, three *tefachim* away from the *kevesh*-ramp of the altar – in the place where the innards of fowl-offerings and the ashes from the inner Golden Altar and the Menorah were placed.

This shoveling that he shoveled with the shovel-pan and bringing it down to the floor near the Mizbeach was a daily Mitzvah.

אחר שירד זה שתרים רצים אחיו הכהנים ומקדשין ידיהם ורגליהם במהרה, ונוטלין את המגרפות...ועולין לראש המזבח, ו...גורפין את הדשן במגרפות מכל צדדי המזבח, ומעלין אותו ערימה על גבי התפוח, וגורפין אותה הערימה...ומורידין אותו למטה, וברגלים לא היו מורידין אותו אלא מניחין הערימה גבוהה באמצע המזבח מפני שהוא נוי למזבח.

After the Kohen who took the ashes comes down, his fellow Kohanim run and quickly sanctify their hands and feet and take rakes and go up to the top of the altar and rake the ashes with their rakes from all of the sides of the altar and make a pile upon the *tapuach*.

They rake from that pile and take the ashes below. On the Yomim Tovim they did not take the ashes down but left the pile high in the middle of the Mizbeach because that makes the altar beautiful.

כל מי שירצה מן הכהנים ממלא מן הדשן שהורידו למטה ומוציא חוץ לעיר לשפך הדשן, ואין להוצאת הדשן לחוץ פיוס אלא כל הרוצה, ומעולם לא נתעצל כהן מלהוציא את הדשן.

Any Kohen who so wished would fill up a container of the ashes that were put on the floor and take them out to the dump place of the ashes. There was no draw to determine who would take the ashes out- anyone who wished could do it.

Never was there a time where Kohanim would be laggardly in regard to taking out the ashes.

ואף על פי שאין הוצאתו לחוץ עבודה, אין בעלי מומין מוציאים אותו, וכשמוציאים אותו לחוץ לעיר מניחין אותו במקום שאין

הרוחות מנשבות בו בחזקה, ולא חזירים גורפים אותו, ולא יפזרנו
...שם

Even though taking the ashes outside of the Mishkan/Mikdosh was not an *Avoda*-required service of the Beis HaMikdosh, Kohanim who were ineligible to perform *Avoda* because of a physical defect, could not take out the ashes.

When the ashes were taken out of the Mishkan/Mikdosh they were placed where the wind would not blow upon them heavily and the pigs would not move them or scatter them there.

The contrast could not be greater.

On this very same Shabbos in which we talk of the ashes of *Chometz* and we talk of the ashes of *Korbonos*.

The ashes are the same¹¹. In one instance the ashes can be discarded. They have no value whatsoever. They serve as an indication that the unwanted *Chometz* is no longer in existence.

In the other instance, the ashes possess a level of sanctity. Taking the ashes from the altar is called *Teruma*. They truly exist and verify that a *Korban* was offered.

Teruma is the term that was used for the donations to build the Mishkan in which the *Shechinah* would reside.

Teruma is the part of the agricultural produce which is given to the Kohen and must be consumed in *tahara*-purity.

Terumas HaDeshen is an *Avoda*-one of the services of the Beis HaMikdosh with all of its rules, regulations and *Mitzvos*.

And even *Hotza'as HaDeshen* -removing the ashes to outside the Mikdosh which wasn't an *Avoda* per se, had enthusiastic Kohanim vying for the opportunity to perform that act as well.

¹¹ Even though the ashes of the *Mizbeach* are from animals, they also have parts of the *Korbonos Mincha*, the meal/grain offerings. Even though almost all of the *Korbonos Mincha* were non-*Chometz*, a few were indeed *Chometz*, thus making them identical to the ashes of the *Chometz* burned on Erev *Pesach*.

The Kohanim would *run* to the top of the altar to rake the ashes. There was never incidence of laziness where the Kohen who was in charge had to seek volunteers – it was a service of holiness and thus, despite the fact that it wasn't an *Avoda*, Kohanim with imperfections could not perform this activity.

And, let us not forget that these ashes of the altar were given a name other than *אפר*, the common term for ashes.

They were called *דשן*. *Deshen* is one those words in *L'shon HaKodesh* which, depending on what particular grammatical form it takes, can have opposite meanings.

In fact, Rashi in Parshas Teruma teaches us that very fact with specific emphasis on the word *deshen* in regards to the upkeep of the Mizbeach.

The Torah says there (Sh'mos Perek 27/Posuk 3):

וְעָשִׂיתָ סִירֹתָיו לְדֹשֵׁנוּ וְיָעִיּוּ וּמִזְרְקֹתָיו וּמִזְלָגָתָיו וּמַחְתָּתָיו לְכֹל כְּלֵי
תַעֲשֶׂה נְחֹשֶׁת:

You shall make the pots of the altar to remove its ashes and its rakes and its pans to throw the blood and its forks to turn the korban over and its dust pans and all of its utensils you shall make from copper.

Rashi writes:

לדשנו - להסיר דשנו לתוכם...כי יש מלות בלשון עברית מלה אחת מתחלפת בפתרון לשמש בנין וסתירה, כמו (תהלים פ/12) ותשרש שרשיה...וחלופו (איוב לא/13) ובכל תבואתי

¹² The entire verse reads:

פְּנִיתָ לְפָנֶיהָ וּתְשַׂרְשַׁשׁ שְׂרָשֶׁיהָ וּתְמַלֵּא אָרֶץ:

Hashem, You turned others from before Israel; You set its roots and You filled the land.

¹³ The entire verse reads:

כִּי אֵשׁ הִיא עַד אֲבִדוֹן תֹּאכַל וּבְכֹל תְּבוּאָתִי תִשְׂרָשׁ:

Because it is fire that consumes until there is utter destruction; in all of my grain it will be uprooted:

תשרש...וכמוהו (מלכים א כא/יג¹⁴) ויסקלוהו באבנים, וחלופו
(ישעיה סב/י¹⁵) סקלו מאבן...אף כאן לדשנו להסיר דשנו...

L'dashno – to remove the ashes from among them.

Because in the Hebrew Language there are word interchanges when the same word can be used in opposite meanings - like 'building' and 'destroying'.

For example, 'You set its roots' and its opposite 'In all of my grain You uprooted'.

For example, 'They stoned him with stones' and its opposite, 'Remove the stones'.

Here, too, *l'dashno* means to remove the ashes.

That is that we find that *deshen* means something that is valuable and a blessing. That is what Dovid HaMelech writes in Tehillim (Perek 23/ Posuk 5):

תַּעֲרַךְ לְפָנַי שִׁלְחֹן נֶגֶד צַרְרֵי דִשְׁנֹתַי בְּשֶׁמֶן רֵאשִׁי כּוֹסֵי רוּיָהּ:

Hashem, You have set before me a table opposite my enemies; You have fattened my head with the anointing oil; my cup overflows.

Dovid HaMelech could find no better term to express the largesse of the Ribbono Shel Olom towards him when he was coronated then *deshen*.

Deshen, therefore, as a synonym for ashes means far more than אפר-ashes.

¹⁴ The entire verse reads:

וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׁנֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים בְּנֵי בְלִיעֵל וַיֵּשְׁבוּ נֹגְדוֹ וַיַּעֲדוּהוּ אֲנָשִׁי הַבְּלִיעֵל אֶת נְבוֹת נֹגֵד הָעָם לֵאמֹר בָּרַךְ נְבוֹת אֱלֹהֵינוּ...לְקִים וּמֶלֶךְ וַיִּצְאֵהוּ מִחוּץ לְעִיר וַיִּסְקְלוּהוּ בְּאֲבָנִים וַיָּמָת:

Two men without the yoke of heaven came and they sat opposite Novos and these men without the yoke of heaven testified against Novos in front of the people saying, 'Novos blasphemed G-d and the king and they took Novos outside of the city and they cast stones upon him and he died.'

¹⁵ The entire verse reads:

עָבְרוּ עָבְרוּ בְּשַׁעְרֵים פָּנּוּ דֶרֶךְ הָעָם סִלּוּ סִלּוּ הַמַּסְלָה סִקְלוּ מֵאֲבָן הָרִימוּ נֶס עַל הָעַמִּים:

Pass by, pass by the gates; make room for the people, pave, pave the road; remove it from stone; raise the banner above the nations

The ashes that are *Deshen* are rich in importance, valuable and treasured. They are not to be discarded. They have inherent worth!

And with this background we learn Rashi regarding the *Akeida* and we are not surprised at his choice of terminology.

The Torah writes (B'reishis Perek 22/Posuk 13):

וַיִּשָּׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה אֵיל אַחַר נֶאֱחָז בְּסִבְךָ בְּקֶרְנָיו
וַיִּלֶךְ אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח אֶת הָאֵיל וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ לְעֹלָה תַּחַת בְּנוֹ:

Avraham raise his eyes and he saw and behold a ram, another, was held by its horns in the brush; Avraham went and he took the ram and it brought it up as a burnt-offering in place of his son.

Rashi writes:

תחת בנו - מאחר שכתוב ויעלהו לעולה, לא חסר המקרא כלום, מהו תחת בנו, על כל עבודה שעשה ממנו היה מתפלל ואומר יהי רצון שתהא זו כאלו היא עשויה בבני, כאלו בני שחוט, כאלו דמו זרוק, כאלו הוא מופשט, כאלו הוא נקטר ונעשה דשן:

In place of his son – Since the Torah wrote, ‘he brought it up as a burnt-offering’ – what was missing that necessitated the Torah to continue writing? What does it mean ‘in place of his son’?

[It means] that every act of *Avodah* that Avraham did on the ram he would offer a prayer and say, ‘May it be Your will that this is as if I did this to my son, as if my son was slaughtered, as if his blood was thrown as if my son was flayed, as his he was placed on the altar and made into *ashes-deshen*.’

Why did Rashi choose to use the word *deshen* here instead of אפר? The answer is now clear. *Deshen* means more than ashes that are worthless and have no purpose. *Deshen* refers to ashes that are enriched with holiness and that even though their physical state is worthless, their spiritual state makes them holy.

How are we to understand this confluence of ashes and ashes that greet us this Shabbos HaGadol?

We read in Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim Siman 430):

שבת שלפני הפסח קורין אותו שבת הגדול מפני הנס שנעשה בו.

The Shabbos before Pesach is called *Shabbos HaGadol*-the Great Shabbos because of the miracle that happened on it.

Mishnah Brurah (s'if koton 1) explains:

מפני הנס - שבשנה שיצאו ממצרים היה עשרה בניסן ביום שבת ולקחו כל אחד מישראל שה לפסחו וקשרו בכרעי המטה כמו שכתוב בעשור לחודש הזה ויקחו להם איש שה לבית אבות וגו' והמצרים ראו זה ושאלום למה זה לכם והשיבו לשוחטו לשם פסח במצות ה' עלינו והיו שיניהם קהות על ששוחטין את אלהיהם ולא היו רשאים לומר להם דבר. ומפני שאז היה עשירי בחודש בשבת על כן קבעו לקרות שבת שלפני הפסח לעולם שבת הגדול:

Because of the miracle – In the year in which they went out of Egypt the tenth of Nissan was on Shabbos and every Israelite took a lamb for his Korban Pesach and tied the animal to the legs of his couch, as it is written, ‘On the tenth of this month they should take for them, each person, a lamb for his patriarchal family.’

The Egyptians saw this and asked, ‘What is this for you?’ The Israelites responded ‘to slaughter it for the Korban Pesach in accord with G-d’s commandment upon us.’ The Egyptians ground their teeth because the Israelites were slaughtering their gods but they were not allowed by Hashem to say a word.

And because of this that occurred on the tenth of the month on Shabbos, they established to always call the Shabbos prior to Pesach: Shabbos HaGodol.

Had our ancestors dared to take a lamb and proclaim that they were going to slaughter it a week earlier or even a day earlier, undoubtedly the Egyptians would have swiftly punished them harshly and without mercy.

Why was it on that 10th day of Nissan 3,332 years ago the Egyptians didn’t behave like they would have behaved at any other time?

“They were not allowed to say a word.”

Why are some ashes precious and other ashes discarded? Who decided to confer upon these flakes sanctity and Who decided that these very similar flakes were worthless?

We know the answer of course. It was G-d's decree that protected Israel from the wrath of the Egyptians on that 10th of Nissan so many years ago and it was G-d's decree that the ashes of Parshas Tzav be called *Teruma* – an offering before Him Yisborach.

In Masseches Taanis (25 a) we learn a series of episodes regarding the Tanna Rabi Chanina ben Dosa who was uniquely impoverished and exceptionally righteous, even among his fellow Chachamim.

חד בי שמשי חזייה לברתיה דהוות עציבא, אמר לה: בתי למאי עציבת? - אמרה ליה: כלי של חומץ נתחלף לי בכלי של שמן, והדלקתי ממנו אור לשבת. - אמר לה: בתי, מאי אכפת לך? מי שאמר לשמן וידלוק הוא יאמר לחומץ וידלוק. תנא: היה דולק והולך כל היום כולו, עד שהביאו ממנו אור להבדלה.

One Erev Shabbos close to nightfall he saw that his daughter was sad. He said to her, 'My daughter, why are you sad?' She said, 'I mistakenly took the bottle of vinegar instead of the bottle of oil and I lit the Shabbos candles with the vinegar.'

He said to her, 'Why do you care? He Who said that oil should burn, He will say it to the vinegar and it will burn.'

The Braisa taught: The Shabbos lights continued burning the entire day until they used them to light the Havdalah candle on Motzaei Shabbos.

We are accustomed to the world going on as we expect it to. Chazal (Masseches 54 b) teach us that that is what we expect:

עולם כמנהגו נוהג

The world continues its customary behavior.

We know what that which will happen tomorrow because that is what happened yesterday and the day before, throughout history.

The miracle of Shabbos HaGodol was the courage of our ancestors, not the silent teeth-grinding Egyptians.

The Egyptians didn't have a choice – they were not permitted to speak, let alone act violently against the Israelites.

However, the Israelites, slaves, oppressed and downtrodden, rose above saying

עולם כמנהגו נוהג

The world continues its customary behavior.

They were aware that such is merely an illusion that can be shattered with suddenness and extraordinary speed.

They knew that that illusion only exists as long as the Master of the World wishes it to exist and when they were commanded to take the lamb they overcame their fear and trepidation and proclaimed that, in fact, He Who said to the vinegar to burn, would say to the Egyptians: Silence.

The lesson that G-d is in control, not merely a worn lip-service phrase, but one that touches the reality of our lives is vibrant and vital for Pesach 5780.

The world changed overnight – literally.

Or so, it seemed.

In fact, the change was not in the world. The change was in our perception of it.

We thought:

עולם כמנהגו נוהג

The world continues its customary behavior.

We now *know*, not only 'believe', that such is a blatant falsehood.

The reality has never changed because it is HaKodosh Boruch Hu Who is the Cosmic Director. He is unchanging and immutable.

We pray that the fearful and threatening Corona Virus, Covid-19, will soon be past history.

We pray that Hashem will have mercy upon us and upon the entire world so that the dire consequences that have been predicted will not come to fruition.

At the same time let us pray no less fervently that the awareness that has come upon us these past weeks will remain embedded within us so that we can welcome the era when we will proclaim the Novi's words (Zecharia Perek 14/Posuk 9) unequivocally:

וְהָיָה ה' לְמֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יְהִי ה' אֶחָד וְשִׁמוֹ אֶחָד:

Hashem will be the King over all the land; on that day Hashem will be One and His Name will be One.

Shabbat Shalom

Chag Kosher V'sameach U'Bori

Rabbi Pollock