

פרשת שמיני/פרשת פרה

It's a little dangerous when Parshas Sh'mini follows so closely after Purim. The associations can be very misleading.

Parshas Sh'mini teaches us about the dedication of the Mishkan that occurred on the first day of Nissan, almost an entire year after the Exodus.

That celebration of the Mishkan's dedication was terribly marred, and disturbed¹, by the deaths of two of the sons of Aharon HaKohen – Nodov and Avihu.

Those deaths were not accidental; they did not happen naturally. Rather, the Torah tells us clearly (Vayikro Perek 10/Posuk 2):

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

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

What was the reason why Hashem killed them? The Torah had already told us about their sin, but in a most cryptic manner. We read in the preceding verse:

וַיִּקְחוּ בְנֵי אֶהֱרֹן נֹדָב וְאָבִיהוּא אִישׁ מִחֶתְתוֹ וַיִּתְּנוּ בָהֶן אֵשׁ וַיִּשִּׂמוּ עָלֶיהָ קִטְרֹת וַיִּקְרִיבוּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֵשׁ זָרָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוָּה אֹתָם:

The sons of Aharon, Nodov and Avihu, each took his incense pan and they placed in them fire and they placed upon it incense and they offered a foreign fire before Hashem, one that He did not command them.

While one may think that the Torah is presenting us with straight-forward information, facts that do not need interpretation, the fact is that Chazal and our commentators see in this verse repetition that requires elucidation.

Once we are told that the offerings that Nodov and Avihu brought were an אש זרה – a foreign fire – that should be sufficient to inform us the nature of their sin. Or, if the Torah would have only written אֵשׁ זָרָה – an offering that G-d did not command, that, too, would have been sufficient to tell us the nature of their sin.

¹ See footnote 3.

However, the combination of **אשר לא צוה** and **אש זרה** leaves room to explore the specific violation that these two sons of Aharon committed.

And, thus, as we continue to read in the following verses, we are surprised that the narrative of the event is interrupted by a new Mitzvah² given to the Kohanim.

That narrative continues for a number of verses, including a discussion of the changes that occurred after the death of Nadav and Avihu that interfered with the expected procedures following the offering of the Korbonos on that day³.

What was that Mitzvah that seemingly did not belong in the context of the narrative of the deaths of the sons of Aharon?

We read (ibid. P'sukim 8-11):

² In fact, there were two Mitzvos that were given at that time. One will be discussed immediately. The other Mitzvah that was given here certainly belonged to the narrative because it contained the instructions of how Aharon and his surviving sons were to refrain from various Mitzvos that would be standard for others who were in the status of **און**, a mourner prior to burial, and *Aveilim*.

See P'sukim 6-7 here.

³ Various offerings were brought on that day, some were the standard offerings such as the Korban Musaf of Rosh Chodesh and other were to mark the special and unique event of the dedication of the Mishkan. Offerings that were a *Korban Chattos* were to be eaten by male Kohanim. Some of the *Musaf* offerings were a Korban Chattos and thus should have been consumed by Aharon and his remaining sons.

However, we read there (Posuk 17):

וְאֵת שְׂעִיר הַחַטָּאת דָּרַשׁ דָּרַשׁ מֹשֶׁה וְהִנֵּה שָׂרָף וַיִּקְצַף עַל אֱלֻעֶזֶר וְעַל אִיתָמָר בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן הַנוֹתְרִים
לְאמֹר:

Moshe thoroughly investigated and behold the goat that was a *Chattos* offering was burnt [and not eaten]; Moshe was angry regarding Elazar and I'somor the remaining sons of Aharon and he said to them...

As the Torah continues, with Rashi's accompanying explanation, that offering was not eaten because of the death of the son and brothers of Aharon and Elazar and I'somor and that they acted correctly by refraining from it. That is the concluding verse of this section (Posuk 20) that reads:

וַיִּשְׁמַע מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּיטֵב בְּעֵינָיו:

Moshe heard and it was good in his eyes.

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: יַיִן וְשֵׁכָר אַל תִּשְׁתֶּה אֹתָהּ וּבְנֵיךָ אִתָּךְ בְּבֹאֲכֶם אֶל אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד
וְלֹא תָמְתוּ: חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם: וְלִהְבְּדִיל בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבֵין הַחֵל וּבֵין הַטְּמֵא וּבֵין הַטְּהוֹר:
וְלִהוֹרֹת אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת כָּל הַחֻקִּים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' אֲלֵיהֶם בְּיַד מֹשֶׁה:

Hashem spoke to Aharon saying: Do not drink wine and intoxicating beverages, neither you nor your sons, when you come to the Ohel Moed and you will not die; this is an eternal statute for your generations. To distinguish between that which is holy and that which is profane and between that which is impure and that which is pure. To teach B'nei Yisroel all of the statutes that Hashem spoke to them in the hand of Moshe.

What is the reason for the interruption of the narrative of the events of the deaths of the sons of Aharon with this Mitzvah to Kohanim? After all, the Torah set aside the first sections of Parshas Emor, later on in Sefer Vayikro, to teach us many of the Halachos of Kohanim, when in service in the Beis HaMikdosh, and even when not in service.

Rashi has already provided us with an answer. He writes (Posuk 2):

רבי ישמעאל אומר שתויי יין נכנסו למקדש, תדע שאחר מיתתן הזהיר הנותרים שלא יכנסו שתויי יין למקדש.

Rabi Yishmael says that the sins of Nodov and Avihu were that they entered the Sanctuary after drinking wine. The proof is, that after their death, Hashem warned⁴ those who remained that they should not enter the Sanctuary after having drunken wine.

And, this is the danger when we read these passages so close to Purim. Perhaps we have in our mind pictures, imaginary or real, of drunks in a stupor, behaving wildly and without control, staggering at the best, or passed-out or more at the worst, and we conjure a picture of Nodov and Avihu holding an almost-empty bottle in their hand acting out unacceptable behavior in the holiness of the Mishkan, in front of all of Israel who were celebrating the dedication of that holiest of places.

⁴ The commentators discuss how it could be that Nodov and Avihu were punished for a violation that seemingly was given after they committed their act.

And, we make a similar comment regarding the other commentaries offered to explain the sins of Nodov and Avihu⁵. Are we to have the impression that they were ‘off the derech’?

Perhaps we may think of these two sons of Aharon as being wayward youth⁶. Perhaps we can think of them as being delinquent and perennial violators, riffraff who interrupted a solemn and joyous occasion with their misconduct and ruined an extraordinary event with their wrongdoing.

Such a hypothesis, though, seems to be contradicted by the verses themselves. Immediately after the loss of Nodov and Avihu, Moshe Rabbenu speaks to his older brother Aharon (Posuk 3):

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל אֶהֱרֹן הוּא אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' לֵאמֹר בְּקִרְבִּי אֶקְדֹּשׁ וְעַל פְּנֵי כָל הָעָם אֶכָּבֵד
וַיִּדְם אֶהֱרֹן:

Moshe said to Aharon, ‘This is what Hashem spoke saying, ‘With those who are close to me I Hashem will be sanctified and upon all of the people I will be honored’; Aharon was silent.

Rashi writes:

⁵ See a list of four explanations brought by Sifsei Chachamim here, in his note ת. Many more explanations are noted by the various commentators.

Kli Yokor, in particular, attempts to connect many of those explanations with the words of the verse.

⁶ Perhaps we have tendency to see individuals who are seen as the ‘sons’ of someone else as still being in their youth. In fact, there is no source that I know of to think that Aharon’s sons were particularly young.

At the time of the dedication of the Mishkan, Aharon was at least 84 years old. We read in Parshas Vo’eiro (Sh’mos Perek 7/Posuk 7):

וּמֹשֶׁה בֶּן שְׁמֹנִים שָׁנָה וְאַהֲרֹן בֶּן שְׁלֹשׁ וּשְׁמֹנִים שָׁנָה בְּדִבְרֵם אֶל פְּרַעֲה:
Moshe was eighty years old and Aharon was eighty-three years old when they spoke to Par’o.

This Posuk was written at the early meeting between Moshe and Aharon with Par’o. Almost a year elapsed until the Exodus and the Mishkan was dedicated almost a full twelve months after the Exodus.

הוא אשר דבר וגו' - היכן דבר ונועדתי שמה לבני ישראל ונקדש בכבודי (שמות כט/מג). אל תקרי בכבודי אלא במכובדי. אמר לו משה לאהרן אהרן אחי יודע הייתי שיתקדש הבית במיודעיו של מקום והייתי סבור או בי או בך, עכשיו רואה אני שהם גדולים ממני וממך:

This is what Hashem spoke – Where did Hashem say this? [In the verse] ‘I Hashem will be there to meet there with B’nei Yisroel and I Hashem will be sanctified there with My Honor’. Do not read the word as ‘with My Honor’ but as ‘with those whom I am honored with’.

Moshe said to Aharon, ‘Aharon my brother – I knew that this House of Hashem [the Mishkan] would be sanctified with those who are known [uniquely⁷] to the Omnipresent and I thought that it would be with me or with you. Now I see that they are greater than me and you.

Rashi is careful to emphasize that part and parcel of the dedication of the Mishkan would be an event that would emphasize the greatness of Hashem. That is, we should not think that Moshe’s words of comfort were meant to assuage the feelings of Aharon only and were empty of real content.

Moshe’s words reflected the reality of the nature of the dedication of the Mishkan and saw in the deaths of Nodov and Avihu the focus of that reality.

The continuation of Rashi underscores the fact that the words of Moshe Rabbenu reflected the nature of the personalities of Nodov and Avihu.

We read:

ועל פני כל העם אכבד – כשהקדוש ברוך הוא עושה דין בצדיקים מתיירא ומתעלה ומתקלס, אם כן באלו, כל שכן ברשעים, וכן הוא אומר (תהילים סח/לו⁸) נורא א...ל'קים ממקדשיך, אל תקרא ממקדשיך אלא ממקודשיך:

⁷ This is an instance when ידע, ‘knowing’, refers to an intimate closeness, not factual knowledge.

⁸ The entire verse reads:

נורא א...ל'קים ממקדשיך קל ישראל הוא נתן עז ותעצמות לעם ברוך א...ל'קים:
G-d is awesome from Your holiness; the G-d of Israel He gives power and strength to the people; Blessed is G-d.

*And upon all of the people I Hashem will be honored*⁹ – When G-d metes out justice to the righteous, He is feared and becomes sublime and is praised. If so with these who are righteous all the more so with the wicked. And so it says, ‘G-d is awesome from Your Holy Places’. Do not read it as ‘from Your Holy Places’ but ‘from those who are sanctified to You’.

Nodov and Avihu were righteous. Nodov and Avihu were holy.

They sinned and they were punished fiercely but they were still righteous and holy¹⁰.

Given that they were righteous and holy, our task is to understand the underlying error of their behavior. Where did they go wrong and what can we learn from them so that we can improve ourselves?

Parshas Sh’mini’s beginning and conclusion have similar themes. That similarity may not be apparent from a simplistic reading of the verses at the beginning that discuss the inauguration of the Mishkan and the deaths of Nodov and Avihu and the conclusion of the Parsha with its exhortations for sanctity.

Nevertheless, insight into the theme of the Parsha’s beginning will allow us to see the connection to its conclusion.

It is not far-fetched at all to see that the error that Nadav and Avihu made was one in the pursuit of *kedusha*. As we learned in last week’s Parshas Tzav¹¹, and as

⁹ In this context, it is appropriate to note that the word כבוד, honor, and the word כבד, heavy, stem from the same source word.

That is *kovod* is not merely an outward gesture that I display, such as rising before a parent or an elder but, more significantly, it is a sense of the weight of the value of the person whom I honor.

In the context of our verse here, B’nei Yisroel were to sense viscerally the ‘weight’ and import of Hashem upon them.

¹⁰ See, in particular, Or HaChaim HaKodosh and Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch to Posuk 2.

¹¹ The entirety of Vayikro Perek 8.

mandated in Parshas Tezaveh in Sefer Sh'mos¹², the seven days prior to Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the day of the Mishkan's dedication, the five Kohanim, Aharon, the Kohen Godol-designate and his four sons, each a Kohen-designate underwent a week of inauguration.

It is not difficult to think of those days filled with anticipation of the opportunity of serving G-d in a new and unique way, unprecedented in human history. It is also not difficult to imagine that righteous and holy people, like Aharon and his sons, wished to strive to reach the heights of sanctity, the pinnacle of serving G-d.

At the same time, the sons of Aharon could only see that Moshe Rabbenu, who served as the Kohen Godol during the seven inaugural days, and Aharon who would be installed as the Kohen Godol in one week's time had reached what they perceived to be that pinnacle.

Isn't it easy to imagine and to appreciate that the sons of Aharon would wish to emulate the sublime levels of their father and uncle?

And, we dare not think of such ambitions as being merely personal. The Torah sets before us the goal of achieving sublime sanctity as we read in the final verses of our Parsha (Perek 11/P'sukim 43-44):

כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְהִתְקַדְּשֶׁתֶם וְהִיִּיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי וְלֹא תִטְמְאוּ אֶת
נַפְשֵׁיכֶם בְּכָל הַשָּׂרֵץ הָרֹמֵשׁ עַל הָאָרֶץ: כִּי אֲנִי ה' הַמַּעֲלֶה אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְהִיִּת
לְכֶם לֹא...לְקִיָּם וְהִיִּיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי:

Because I am Hashem your G-d, you shall make yourselves holy and you shall be holy because I am holy; do not make yourselves impure with the rodents that creep on the land. Because I Hashem Who brings you up from the Land of Egypt to be a G-d for you; you shall be holy because I Hashem am holy.

However, when we consider it, the desire that likely took hold of Nodov and Avihu to emulate the sanctity of Moshe and Aharon cannot be similar to what is expected of us when Hashem tells us to be holy because He is holy.

¹² Perek 29/P'sukim 1-37.

No one normal can expect to be holy like G-d. And the Torah does not command us to be holy like Him Yisborach. The Torah does command us to be holy because holiness is His 'nature'.

If the Torah wants us to be holy, by definition it is not commanding us to be holy like Hashem. That is impossible.

But, the Torah has already given us guidance regarding how we are to emulate G-d.

In Masseches Sotah (14 a), Chazal contend with two verses that seem to be in opposition.

One Posuk (D'vorim Perek 13/Posuk 5) commands:

אַחֲרַי ה' אֲלֹהֵיכֶם תֵּלְכוּ וְאֹתוֹ תִירָאוּ וְאֶת מִצְוֹתָיו תִּשְׁמְרוּ וּבְקוֹלוֹ תִשְׁמָעוּ וְאִתּוֹ תִעֲבְדוּ וְבִי תִדְבְּקוּן:

You shall go after Hashem your G-d and Him you shall fear and His commandments you shall guard and in His voice you should listen and Him you should serve and with Him you should cleave.

However, the Gemara asks, another verse tells us of the impossibility to cleave to Him. We read in Parshas Voeschanan (ibid. Perek 4/Posuk 24):

כִּי ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֵשׁ אֹכֵלָה הוּא אֵלֹהֵינוּ לֹא יִקָּבַל:

Because Hashem your G-d is a consuming fire; He is a jealous G-d.

The Gemara expounds as follows:

אמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא, מאי דכתיב: אחרי ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ תֵלְכוּ? וכי אפשר לו לאדם להלך אחר שכינה? והלא כבר נאמר: כי ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֵשׁ אֹכֵלָה הוּא! אלא להלך אחר מדותיו של הקדוש ברוך הוא, מה הוא מלביש ערומים¹³... אף אתה הלבש ערומים. הקדוש ברוך הוא ביקר חולים... אף אתה בקר חולים; הקדוש ברוך הוא ניחם אבלים... אף אתה נחם אבלים; הקדוש ברוך הוא קבר מתים... אף אתה קבור מתים.

¹³ In each instance, the Gemara brings a proof text that teaches that these are actions that Hashem does.

Rami Chamo the son of Rabi Chanina said, 'What is that that is written: 'You shall go after Hashem your G-d'? Is it possible for a person to go after the Shechinah? Is it not already written, Because Hashem your G-d is a consuming fire'?

But, [this means] 'follow the 'behaviors¹⁴' of HaKodosh Boruch Hu. He dresses the unclothed, so also you should dress the unclothed. He visits the sick so also you should visit the sick. He comforts the mourner so also you should comfort the mourner. Hashem buries the dead so also you should bury the dead.

We do not imitate G-d in reality. Rather, He demonstrates to us the behaviors that we are to imitate and to undertake and that is His prescription for us to become holy.

In fact, when we look once again at the P'sukim from the end of our Parsha we will see that there is the very same prescription.

Hashem does not say 'be holy' and leave it at that. Rather, in the context of the laws of impure animals, fowl and other creatures that the Torah forbids, He tells us that our avoidance of those foods, distancing ourselves from their impurities is one of the prescriptions for becoming holy.

It is observance of G-d's Word that makes us holy.

And so we find later on in our Sefer Vayikro when we will read Parshas Kedoshim.

The Torah there (Perek 19/Posuk 2) tells us:

דְּבַר אֵל כָּל עֲדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם קְדָשִׁים תִּהְיוּ כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

¹⁴ The common and correct translation of מִידוֹת is 'attributes'. However an attribute may be thought of as a 'personal profile' and we are not able to know Hashem's 'personal profile'. Thus, in this instance at least, the reference is to how Hashem interacts with His creations, i.e. His behaviors.

Compare this idea to the stanza in the *piyut* of זמירות אנעים where we read:

דימו אותך ולא כפי ישך; וישווך לפי מעשיך:

The prophets imagined You, but not according to Your Being; they understood You by Your deeds.

Speak to all of the congregation of B'nei Yisroel and you shall say to them,
'You shall be holy because I Hashem your G-d am holy.

And although this verse does not specify a particular prescription, Rashi and Ramban each tell us the prescription that they see in this verse.

Rashi writes:

הוּו פרושים מן העריות ומן העבירה, שכל מקום שאתה מוצא גדר ערוה אתה מוצא
קדושה...

You should be separate from forbidden relationships and from sin.
Wherever you find a fence against forbidden relationships you find holiness.

Ramban writes that this Mitzvah teaches us *not to be*:

נבל ברשות התורה:

An abhorrent person who seemingly is doing what the Torah says.

That is, the command to be holy here means that our behavior should be one that sanctifies G-d and His Torah, not defames it.

Thus, the commandment to be holy is a prescription of human holiness, not true emulation of G-d.

That is, the Torah speaks to us as we are and gives us direction as we are. It is upon the Torah's direction, guidance and Mitzvos that we are able to seek the sanctity that the Torah wants for us.

There is no reason to think that Elazar and I'somor, the sons of Aharon who were not stricken, had any less of a desire for sanctity than did their two brothers who died.

However, it does seem that they understood the path that leads to *Kedusha* and they followed it carefully¹⁵.

¹⁵ Already at the very beginning of Parshas Pekudei, at the conclusion of Sefer Sh'mos, we find that I'somor is given special recognition. We read there (Perek 38/Posuk 21):

אלה פקודי המשכן משכן העדות אשר פקד על פי משה עבדת הלוים ביד איתמר בן אהרן הכהן:

Nodov and Avihu veered from the path that Hashem set for them as well as for all of Israel.

They brought an *אש זרה*, a fire that was foreign. What made it foreign? The Torah writes explicitly:

אשר לא צוה ה'

It was foreign because G-d did not command it.

The theme of Parshas Poroh that is the second reading this week is not dissimilar.

We read in Parshas Chukkas (B'midbar Perek 19/Posuk 2):

זאת חקת התורה אשר צוה ה' לאמר דבר אל בני ישראל ויקחו אליה פרה אדמה
תמימה אשר אין בה מום אשר לא עלה עליה על:

This is the statute of the Torah that Hashem commanded saying, 'Speak to B'nei Yisroel and they should take for you an entirely red heifer, without defect, upon which a yoke was not placed.

Rashi¹⁶ writes:

פרה אדמה - משל לבן שפחה שטינף פלטין של מלך. אמרו תבא אמו ותקנח הצואה,
כך תבא פרה ותכפר על העגל:

These are the accountings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of testimony that were accounted for by Moshe; the work of the Levi'im in the hand of I'somor the son of Aharon the Kohen.

There is a wide-range of discussion as to why I'somor is singled out here and the nature of this responsibility that the Torah writes. But, whatever the reason, he is certainly mentioned because of his unique merit.

Elazar became the second Kohen Godol, succeeding his father after the death of Aharon. He is already mentioned in Parshas Poroh as being assigned the Mitzvah of preparing the Red Heifer.

¹⁶ Rashi comments on each of the verses, explaining their *p'shat* and Mitzvah in the Perek in the order of their appearance. Following Posuk 22, he brings the Midrash of Poroh Aduma. This quotation is found there.

Red heifer – The parable is to the son of the [lowly] maid-servant who dirtied the palace of the king. The king's people said, 'Let his mother come and clean the refuse'. So, here too, let the [mother] cow come and atone for the Golden Calf.

The *Eigel HaZahav* is an eternal stain upon Israel. It threatens us all whenever Hashem's wrath is raised against us¹⁷.

What is the goal of the *Porah Aduma*?

Of course, the Halachic goal of *Porah Aduma* is to allow those who are *tomei* due to exposure to a dead body to be purified.

But there is another goal to *Porah Aduma*, one that is enunciated by the *Novi Yechezkel* as we read in this week's Haftorah.

A central verse makes this selection perfectly fitting for Parsha Poroh. We read (*Yechezkel Perek 36/Posuk 25*):

וְזָרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מַיִם טְהוֹרִים וְטָהַרְתֶּם מִכָּל טְמֵאוֹתֵיכֶם וּמִכָּל גְּלוּלֵיכֶם אֶטְהַר אֶתְכֶם:

I Hashem will cast upon you pure waters and you will be purified from all of your defilements and from all of your filth I will purify you.

Rashi writes there that the verse is referring directly to *Porah Aduma*:

מַיִם טְהוֹרִים - אֶכְפֹּר עֲלֵיכֶם וְאֶעֱבִיר טוֹמְאוֹתֵיכֶם בְּהִזִּית מִי חֲטָאת הַמַּעֲבִירִין טוֹמְאֵת הַמַּת:

Pure waters – I Hashem will atone for you and I will remove your defilements with the sprinkling of the water of the *Porah Aduma* that removes the impurity of the dead.

And we do not forget the words of Rabi Akiva that conclude the Mishnayos of *Masseches Yoma* (85 b):

¹⁷ See *Sh'mos Perek 32/Posuk 34* and Rashi there.

אמר רבי עקיבא: אשריכם ישראל, לפני מי אתם מטהרין, מי מטהר אתכם - אביכם שבשמים, שנאמר וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם ואומר (ירמיהו יז/ג'¹⁸) מקוה ישראל ה' מה מקוה מטהר את הטמאים - אף הקדוש ברוך הוא מטהר את ישראל.

Rabi Akiva said, 'Happy are you, Israel. Before Whom are purified? Who purifies you? Your Father in heaven as it says, "I will cast upon you pure waters and you will be purified." And it says, "Hashem is the *mikveh*¹⁹ of Israel". Just as the Mikveh purifies so does Hashem purify Israel.

However, I would like to draw attention to the final two verses of the Haftorah²⁰ which have much to teach us about seeking holiness and becoming holy.

We read (P'sukim 37-38):

כֹּה אָמַר אֱלֹהִים...נִי ה' עוֹד זֹאת אֲדַרְשׁ לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת לָהֶם אֲרָבָה אֲתָם כְּצֹאן אֲדָם: כְּצֹאן קִדְשִׁים כְּצֹאן יְרוּשָׁלַם בְּמוֹעֲדֶיהָ כֵּן תִּהְיֶינָה הָעָרִים הַחֲרוּבוֹת מְלֵאוֹת צֹאן אֲדָם וַיִּדְעוּ כִּי אֲנִי ה':

So said G-d E...lokim, further - for this I can be sought for the House of Israel to do for them: I will increase them like the sheep of man. Like holy sheep, like the sheep of Yerushalayim in its holidays; so will the destroyed cities will be full with the sheep of man and they will know that I am Hashem.

Dovid HaMelech had already taught us that being the sheep of G-d means that He cares for us and guides us like the tender shepherd cares for his flock. That is what we read in Sefer Tehillim (Perek 100/Posuk 3):

דָּעוּ כִּי ה' הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ...לִקְיָם הוּא עֲשָׂנוּ וְלוֹ אֲנַחְנוּ עִמּוֹ וְצֹאן מִרְעִיתוֹ:

¹⁸ The entire verse reads:

מִקְוֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' כָּל עֲזָבֶיךָ יִבְשׁוּ וְסוּרֵי בְּאֶרֶץ יִכְתְּבוּ כִּי עָזְבוּ מְקוֹר מַיִם חַיִּים אֶת ה':
Hashem is the hope of Israel; all who forsake You should be shamed; those who turn from You shall be written down that they forsook the source of living waters, Hashem.

¹⁹ *Mikveh* can also mean 'hope'.

²⁰ This is according to *Nusach Ashkenaz*. The Haftorah is completed before the recitation of these two verses according to *Nusach Sefarad*.

Know that Hashem is G-d; He made us and we are to Him as His People, the sheep that He tends.

However, here in Yechezkel, we are called by two names:

צאן אדם

The sheep of man

צאן קדושים

Holy sheep.

How does man become holy?

In his explanation to the second verse, Malbim distinguishes²¹ between כצאן קדושים and כצאן ירושלים.

He writes:

כצאן קדושים. שכולם עולה לה' כן יהיו כולם קדושים לא...ל"קיהם, וכצאן ירושלים במועדיה שהם זבחי שלמים לאכול ולשמוח לפני ה' כן יתענגו על רב טוב, ובזה יהיו מלאות צאן אדם:

Like the holy sheep – they will all be an *Oloh*-burnt-offering to G-d, so all of them will be holy to their G-d.

And like the sheep of Yerushalyim in its holidays that are the *Shlomim* offerings that are meant to be eaten and to rejoice before G-d. So will Israel be happy for the abundance of good and with that they will be filled with the sheep of man.

There is a progression here. The first step is an *Oloh*. A *Korbon Oloh* represents selfless dedication to G-d and to His Word. That is the step that leads to sanctity, to *Kedusha*.

The result of taking such a step is the reward and satisfaction for following the Word of G-d, *His* prescription for holiness.

Had Nodov and Avihu followed the prescription that was presented to them, they could have achieved the spiritual attainments that they sought. Had Nodov and

²¹ Rashi and others do not make this distinction.

Avihu followed the prescription that was presented to them, 'אשר צוה ה', we would remember them as the righteous individuals who they truly were rather than identifying them as those who were killed for disrupting the holiness of the Sanctuary on the day of its inauguration.

Perhaps we can identify with Nodov and Avihu when we forget the paved path towards service to G-d and choose to wander from it and are left with a sense of frustration and lack of fulfillment.

Let's not wait for a *Poroh Aduma* to make amends for ourselves. Let us look at the Divine Map that G-d has presented to us with His Torah and follow the path to real self-fulfillment and striving to reach our true potential.

Shabbat Shalom

Chag Kosher V'sameach

Rabbi Pollock