

חמודי שי על התורה והמועדים

Chamudei Shai on the Torah and Holidays

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Parashas Shemini

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- ▶ The Erev Rav disparaged the kehunah of Aharon
- ▶ Aharon transformed the trait of zeal inherent in his tribe into love of peace
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- ▶ In the middle of Megillas Eichah, we proclaim: "The kindnesses of Hashem

Parashas Shemini

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I

"וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי קָרָא מֹשֶׁה לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו וּלְזִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: (ויקרא ט, א)

In the Holy Torah, "And it was on the eighth day, Moshe called to Aharon and his sons and to the elders of Yisrael" (Vayikra 9:1).

This marks the beginning of the *kehunah* by the kohanim, and the transfer of the *kehunah* from Moshe Rabbeinu to his brother Aharon and his sons. The holiness of these two brothers is beyond measure. We learn from this that each brother took pride in the other and his sacred role.

During the seven days of inauguration, Moshe Rabbeinu erected and dismantled the Mishkan and served as Kohen Gadol, though without priestly garments, wearing only a single white linen garment, like a *kittel*. This was because he himself was intrinsically a holy man, as we explained in *Chamudei Shai* on Sefer Shemos. In *Parashas Tzav*, Moshe dressed Aharon in the priestly garments and anointed him as a kohen. During these seven days of inauguration, Moshe fulfilled the role that Aharon will perform henceforth. Now, on the eighth day, in this parasha, Moshe called to Aharon and his sons and to the elders of Klal Yisrael. This is a period of transition, the

have not been exhausted"

► **Within all that appears as suffering, there is hidden goodness**

formal transfer and of the sacred service and the inauguration of the *kehunah*.

There are some who hold that Aharon required the wearing of the priestly garments because of his involvement in the sin of the Golden Calf/*egel*. Be that as it may, Aharon still felt apprehensive in his heart about the sin of the *egel*, especially since he was required to bring a calf for a sin-offering from his own money (Mishnah Yoma 3:1). "And he slaughtered the calf of the sin-offering from his own resources: אשר לו".

Thus, "Moshe said to Aharon, 'Approach the *mizbaiach*.'" The Satan showed Aharon the image of the *egel* near the *mizbaiach*, and Aharon was afraid to approach. With Moshe's encouragement, Aharon overcame his fear and brought the korban, as the *pasuk* continues, "And Aharon approached the *mizbaiach* and slaughtered the calf of the sin-offering that was his אשר לו." The calf of the sin offering was to atone for his involvement in the sin of the *egel*. We will expand upon this further, with Hashem's help.

The source of the holiness of the anointing oil: Moshe Rabbeinu

The Maharal Tzintz explains in a wondrous way how the anointing oil became holy. Moshe imparts from his own holiness onto the anointing oil. By the power of Moshe's holiness, the anointing oil becomes holy, and in turn it sanctifies the garments. All the vessels, Aharon, his sons, and all the components of the Mishkan become holy. Moshe did not wish to be the Kohen Gadol himself, rather he assisted his brother Aharon in the transition and enabled his *kehunah*. Importantly, Moshe's encouragement of Aharon, was a key role in this process as we will now discuss.

In our parasha, "And Moshe said to Aharon, 'Approach the *mizbaiach* and perform your sin-offering and your burnt-offering and atone for yourself and for the people, and perform the korbanos of the people and atone for them, as Hashem commanded.'" (9:7)

Rashi explains: Approach the *mizbaiach*: "For Aharon was ashamed and afraid to approach. Moshe said to him: Why are you ashamed? For this you were chosen."

The Erev Rav and humiliation of leadership: understanding the meaning of "For this you were chosen"

The holy Rabbi Yechiel Meir of Gostynin zt"l, explained that when Aharon was chosen as the Kohen Gadol, the *Ervev Rav* (mixed multitude) mocked and disparaged his honor, saying, "Look at the son of Amram who danced before the calf and now serves Hashem in the exalted role of Kohen Gadol."

Aharon heard this and became so ashamed that he could not continue in his *kehunah* service. Moshe said to him, "Why are you ashamed? For this you were chosen." This is an essential trait of leadership, the ability to deal with shame and disgrace!" Moshe's words came from personal experience, as is well known.

Aharon transformed the trait of zeal into love of peace

When Moshe came to the Burning Bush, where he received his first direct prophecy, Hashem told him that Aharon his brother was coming to meet him and would rejoice over Moshe leading Klal Yisrael. Because Aharon rejoiced in his heart over the exalted role given to his younger brother, he was chosen to bear the חושן המשפט - breastplate of judgment upon his heart, as the Kohen Gadol.

After losing two of his sons, Aharon embodied the trait of an extraordinary inner strength of soul, וידם אהרן "And Aharon was silent," alongside his defining trait of being a lover of peace and a pursuer of peace.

This stands in contrast to the trait of his ancestor Levi, about whom Yaakov said to him and Shimon, "Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce." Aharon worked on himself to bring his inherent traits to the opposite extreme, becoming a lover of peace and pursuer of peace. As our Sages teach, he would tell each

party in a dispute that the other wished to reconcile, thereby establishing peace between them. Chazal learn from this that one may alter the truth for the sake of peace, for the sake of *shalom bayis*, or to establish peace between a person and his fellow. Chazal also cite that we learn this from the Torah as Hashem altered the recounting of what Sarah said for the sake of peace in the home.

The humility of Aharon HaKohen

Aharon's humility approached that of Moshe Rabbeinu. Both were in the category of "ונחנו מה" - "And who are we?", total self-effacement. Moshe himself testified regarding Aharon: "ואהרן ומה הוא." This level surpasses even that of Avraham Avinu, who said, "ואנכי עפר ואפר" - "I who am but dust and ashes." When one reaches this state of "מה," one becomes worthy to perform the sacred service.

Yet there is a distinction between the humility of Moshe and that of Aharon. Because of this difference, Aharon required encouragement to approach the *avodah* service, while Moshe did

not during the seven days of inauguration.

The Sfas Emes (5645/1885) explains that from the eighth day onward, the *avodah* required the aspect of a *baal teshuvah*. Moshe's humility was that of a complete tzaddik, while Aharon's self-nullification came through *teshuvah*. Therefore, one whose humility comes through *teshuvah* requires encouragement to approach.

He further teaches on Rashi's words, "Aharon was ashamed... he (Moshe) said to him, approach," that a person must indeed feel shame, yet nevertheless approach the mitzvah by virtue of Hashem's command, for that is precisely why he was chosen. This shame is appropriate.

True shame does not lead to sadness

The Sfas Emes adds that Aharon's immediate fulfillment of the mitzvah demonstrates that his shame was *emes* and genuine. True shame and trepidation do not lead to sadness or paralysis. If the shame was not in the proper place, you would not be able to proceed with the mitzvah. True shame does not prevent one from serving

Hashem, and ultimately leads to joy, as it is said: "I rejoiced from my awe, and I feared within my joy."

Thus, shame is one of the principles in *avodas Hashem*. A person should possess some measure of shame, but the moment he overcomes it, he must act with alacrity, and this leads to joy. This proves that the shame was constructive, not obstructive.

Proper shame emerges from humility

This shame is not the counsel of the evil inclination, but rather an expression of humility. Through such humility, one prepares himself properly for the mitzvah. As with Aharon, once Moshe said, "Approach," he immediately approached and fulfilled the command.

Measured shame is one among many essential traits, alongside zeal and all proper character qualities. A degree of shame is an outgrowth of humility. In this way, we fulfill the mitzvos.



II

Levels in Accepting Suffering

"And Aharon was silent." "וידם אהרן" - The holy Rabbi Yisrael of Ruzhin explained that there are several ways a person may respond to suffering. Some remain quiet on the outside but inwardly filled with anger and resentment. But regarding Aharon, the Torah testifies, "And Aharon was silent" his inner self was like his outer self. Aharon fully accepted the Divine decree.

The Ruzhiner Rebbe and the author of *Tiferes Shlomo* explained the pasuk, "למען יזמרך כבוד" - ולא ידום ה' אלוקי לעולם אודך" - "So that my soul may sing to You and not be silent, Hashem my G-d, I will give thanks to You forever," and adjacent to it, הפכת מספדי למחול לי פתחה, שקי ותאזרני שמחה - You have turned my mourning into dancing for me, You have removed my sackcloth and girded me with joy."

This means that the intention of Dovid Hamelech was that not only was he not quiet when suffering comes, "and not be silent," he elevated himself to sing

words of praise to Hashem. This virtue is greater than the virtue of Aharon, for regarding Aharon it is written only "And he was silent," but with Dovid Hamelech, when he faced afflictions, he succeeded in transforming suffering into joy through song to Hashem.

There is an expression I heard from my parents, of blessed memory, when they went through difficult times, and this expression helped me and others: *Tracht gut, un es vet zein gut*. "Think good, and it will be good." Even in difficult times, do not lose faith. Pray to Hashem with complete faith and absolute trust that He will help and save, to the point of singing to Hashem! When a person does so with complete trust in Hashem, Hashem combines good thoughts to action, and answers his prayers.

Rashi explains the final two *pesukim* of the Psalm of מזמור שיר הנוכת of the Psalm of the story of Mordechai and Esther. The fact that we always sing the praises of Hashem refers to the fact that the holiday of Purim will never be annulled and is a nice connection to

the holiday of Purim that we recently celebrated.

**In the middle of
Eichah, an exalted
song**

Klal Yisrael never relinquishes hope. Even within the middle of Eichah (3:22), we say the *pasuk* of song, חסדי ה' כי לא - "The kindnesses of Hashem

have not ended, nor are His mercies exhausted." And we incorporate this *pasuk* into our daily prayer, "The Good One, for Your mercies have not ended, and the Merciful One, for Your kindnesses are not exhausted, for we have always hoped in You."

"The kindnesses of Hashem have not ended,

nor are His mercies exhausted." We always have trust in Hashem. "So that my soul may sing to You and not be silent, Hashem my G-d, I will give thanks to You forever," "We give thanks to You, Hashem our G-d, for Your miracles that are with us every day." After every circumstance, we must sing Hashem's praises.

Maharal Tzintz ב-י-ל-א ואמן

PEARLS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE GAON FROM PLOTZK

Chazal state that when Aharon looked at the *mizbaiach*, it appeared to him in the form of a calf, and he recoiled. They have already explained that Heaven forbid, it is not to say that Aharon participated in the sin of the *egel*, the Golden Calf. On the contrary, all his actions were intended to delay the people in the making of the *egel* as much as he could. He himself did not sin in the worship of the *egel* and did not need atonement for it.

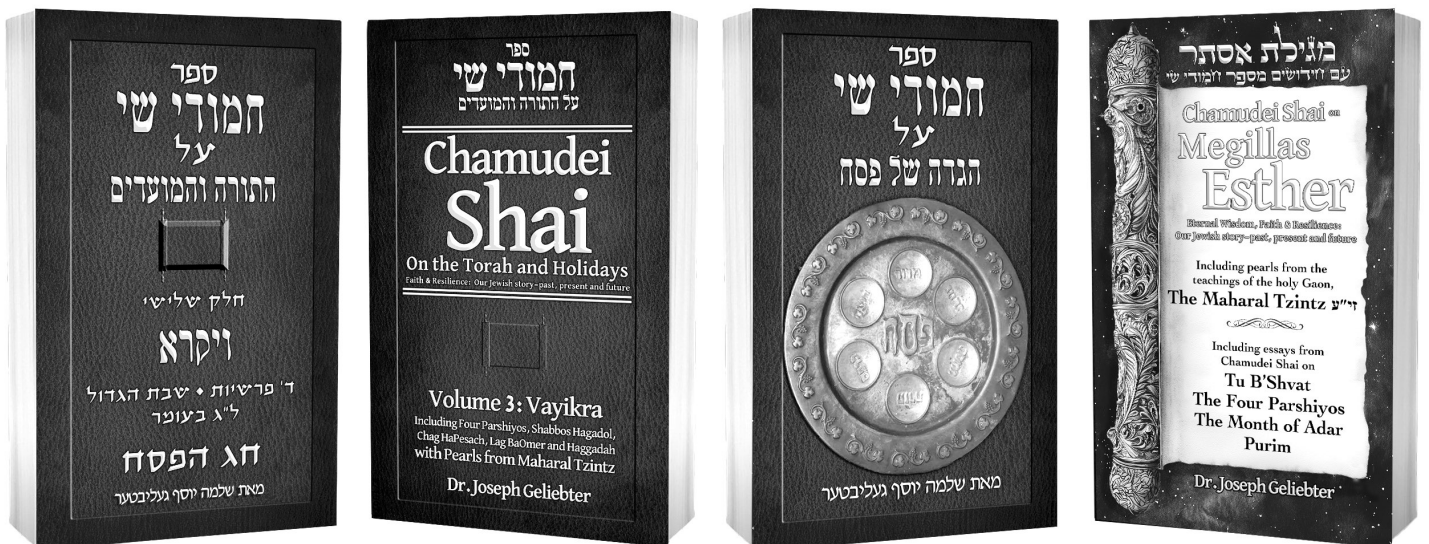
Yet, Rashi, explains the *pasuk*, "And Aharon approached the *mizbaiach* and slaughtered the calf of the sin-offering that was his" "אשר לו" to teach us that the sin of the *egel* is atoned for, and this *egel* of the sin-offering is "that was his." In the Baal HaTurim, it is stated that "*egel ben bakar*," in gematria, is "to atone for the sin of the *egel*." How can it be that Aharon needs atonement for the sin of the *egel*?! According to the words of the Gaon of Plotzk, everything will be explained with a different approach, with the help of Heaven.

The Maharal Tzintz, of blessed and holy memory, in his sefer *Melo HaOmer*, on our Parasha, on the *pasuk*, "And Moshe said to Aharon, Approach the *mizbaiach*, etc." Rashi explained that Aharon was ashamed and afraid to approach. Moshe said to him, "Why are you ashamed? For this you were chosen!" The Maharal Tzintz explains: "It seems that he was ashamed because he built a *mizbaiach* before the *egel*, as it is written, 'And Aharon saw and built a *mizbaiach* before it.'" The Maharal Tzintz continues: "In truth, Aharon's intention was for the good, as explained in several ways, and therefore Moshe said, on the contrary, approach the *mizbaiach*, for you have a closeness due to the *mizbaiach*." Meaning, your intention was good, and even though you built a *mizbaiach* before the *egel* with the intention to delay the people, this does not disqualify you from serving and offering on the *mizbaiach* of Hashem. On the contrary! For this you were chosen! So, approach the *mizbaiach*!

The Maharal Tzintz continues, "The matter is that in truth, Aharon did not sin, only that it appeared as if a transgression was attributed to him, and he came under suspicion." Meaning, those who saw him suspected him of having sinned in the sin of the *egel*, even though in truth he did not sin, but wanted to delay the people from actually worshipping an idol until Moshe returned. "If so, it can be said, as Chazal stated, 'He (the Kohen Gadol) withdraws and weeps, and they (the elders) withdraw and weep.' Why? He, because they suspected him, and they, because they suspected him unjustly."

The people suspected Aharon of participating in the sin of worshipping the *egel*. To suspect the righteous is a grave sin. "And here, Aharon caused them this suspicion." Meaning: Through his actions, Aharon caused them to suspect him, and this violates *למישראל* - And you shall be clear before Hashem and before Yisrael," and therefore "atonement is needed for both. However, Aharon did not participate in the sin of the people and has no part in it."

The words of the Maharal Tzintz are precise and beautifully aligned with the *pasuk*, like a "bud and blossom!" First, it is written, "Approach the *mizbaiach* and perform your sin offering and your burnt offering and atone for yourself and for the people," which refers to the sin of suspicion, in which Aharon is also guilty for causing it. The *pasuk* continues, "And perform the *korban* of the people and atone for them..." which refers to the sin of worshipping the *egel*, in which Aharon had no part, and this is clear and evident.



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