

Pardes Yehuda

Weekly Torah insights translated and revised by Dovid Pinchas Rose, based on the Yiddish יהודה פארשױס by Yehuda Zvulun Klitnick

פרשת ויקרא
תשע"ז

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לעילוי נשמת אביו מרדכי בן ראובן ואמו שרה לאה בת אביגדור ע"ה

A ba'al teshuva is similar to a korban

דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אָנֹכִים כִּי-יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם קֹרְבָן לַיהוָה: (א' ב')

Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: When a man from [among] you brings a sacrifice to Hashem... (1:2)

We hear a lot about bringing estranged or unlearned Yiddish brothers and sisters closer to Torah observance under the rubric of "kiruv" or being "mekarev" somebody. This noble activity is reflected in "when someone is doing kiruv work". The Gemara (Rosh HaShanah 3a) maps and equates the word כי to four similar conjunctions: דא, דילמא, אלא, דהא: if, perhaps, but, because. But conveying the appropriate equivalent in English is not exact because of semantic overlap. So we can map יד to אלא meaning "when" or "only when" or "if." [Perhaps the point is that "ONLY" when one is "mekarev" Yidden is he an "odum" in the fullest sense. [DPR]] For if a mentor is "mekarev" a student, we expect that he will do teshuva – repenting and embracing Yiddishkeit. And in the posuk's terms, teshuva is similar to the end-product of offering an animal-korban, as if to say "when you induce a wayward Yid to become a ba'al teshuva, that process will be a modern-day korban/sacrificial offering for Hashem." Being "mekarev" him is our way of being "makriv" him.

In this framework, we recall an event from the Ahavas Yisroel, Rebbe of Vizhnitz, who was vacationing in Karlsbad, a favourite spa of Rabbonim, to take the mineral baths. A secular Jew there had just received a subpoena to a criminal case in which he was indicted, with a long prison term if he were convicted. The Yid tore his hair from worry. A friend advised him to consult the Vizhnitzer Rebbe, who was known to secure salvations for Yidden. The man was highly skeptical, since he had never had any connection with Jewish religious leaders of any stripe, let alone Chassidic Rebbes. But so distraught was he at the prospect of years behind bars that he dragged himself to the Rebbe. As he saw it, his main need was for a large amount of money to hire a lawyer who might secure an acquittal. The Ahavas Yisroel posed many questions to delve into the man's case, and ended by asking how much funding he needed for the attorney. The man was stunned, to say the least, when the Rebbe took out the needed sum from his purse and said, "I'm loaning you this money, my good man, and I bless you that with Hashem's help you should be completely acquitted in the case you are facing." The man was incredulous that the Rebbe could trust a total stranger with such a substantial loan. He lost no time in hiring a skilled criminal defense advocate, which exhausted the entire sum of money. Only a month or two later he returned to his benefactor the Vizhnitzer Rebbe with the good news that he was acquitted in court, as the Rebbe had foreseen, and repaid his loan to the penny. "I can't take back that money, because the Oibershter has provided me with other funds in its stead." The Yid was totally flustered by this outpouring of generosity and saw that if what the Rebbe had done was what Yiddishkeit taught, then he wanted to become a full-fledged ba'al teshuva, and follow the Torah path. The Rebbe prescribed a learning programme for him until he emerged a shomer Torah umitzvos. Our posuk's teaching, as we explained it, was exemplified: being "mekarev" a Yid catalyzed his teshuva process. And this message is fully extensible to all Yidden we may meet, and is something we must all be poised to emulate. (Yehuda Z. Klitnick)

Not all animals' blood has the same effect on a person

וְקָרְבוֹ וּקְרָעוֹ יִרְחֹץ בַּמַּיִם: (א' ט')

And [the bull's] innards and its legs, he shall wash with water (1:9)

Our meforshim raise some questions on our passage of korbanos, hinging on some subtle textual contrasts. The Holy Chid"ah, in his Nachal Kedomim, records a question attributed to Rav Eliezer of Germaiza (Worms, Germany). In the case of a sacrificial bull, we read of washing וקרבו וקרעו, his innards and his legs, whereas in the case of sheep or goats, the instructions are different: (1:13) וְהִקְרַב וְהִפְרָעִים יִרְחֹץ בַּמַּיִם And the innards and the legs, he shall wash with water. The explanation lies in the very essential nature and purpose of the korban: the sinner must see himself as deserving of the treatment imposed upon the animal which is slaughtered in his stead. That machshava/thought engenders repentance and humility, by which the korban finds favour in Shomayim.

The Ba'al HaTurim adds another question in the same vein, highlighting another seeming inconsistency in the text. Why, when describing the korban of a bull, does the posuk write וְהִקְרַב וְהִפְרָעִים יִרְחֹץ בַּמַּיִם וְהִקְרַב וְהִפְרָעִים יִרְחֹץ בַּמַּיִם the kohanim, shall ..., dash the blood upon the altar (1:5), whereas in the case of a sheep, the procedure is וְהִקְרַב וְהִפְרָעִים יִרְחֹץ בַּמַּיִם וְהִקְרַב וְהִפְרָעִים יִרְחֹץ בַּמַּיִם the kohanim, shall dash his blood upon the altar. (1:11) His insight, which is key to both our textual questions, is that goat or sheep blood closely resembles human blood. [Recall that Yosef's brothers dipped his raiment in goat's blood to bring to Yaakov Avinu, which they assumed would "prove" that Yosef had met a violent death. [YZK]] The parallel to Eliezer of Worms's teaching is clear: a sacrificial goat or sheep simulated personal and vicarious slaughter of the bringer of the sacrifice – and spurred him to repentance. Yet why should the machshava of the person offering a bull (Eliezer of Worms) be any different than that for a sheep (Ba'al HaTurim)? Both are sacrificial animals. The "machshava" explanation should apply equally to both species. And yet it does not. Regarding sheep, when the Kohen sprinkles its blood, the thought that this korban is a surrogate for the person has already arisen in his mind. Therefore, there is no further reason for his innards; we see instead וְהִקְרַב וְהִפְרָעִים יִרְחֹץ בַּמַּיִם וְהִקְרַב וְהִפְרָעִים יִרְחֹץ בַּמַּיִם the innards and the legs, he shall wash with water, since the connection to the person has already been made, so "his" innards need not be invoked. In the case of a bull, whose blood appears distinctly non-human, the idea of a person's similarity to a korban, his surrogate, arises at the later stage of offering the limbs and organs, and not by the blood-sprinkling. Therefore, we need וקרבו וקרעו, his innards and his legs, to implant the notion that if strict judgment were the operant principle, then his organs and limbs should be lying on the Altar, and not the animal's, who really was guiltless. The bull's blood could not have the same symbolism as the sheep's, owing to its different appearance, and hence lack of evocative power for the sacrificer. (בן יאיר מזרחי)

Rav Nechemia Yechiel Rabinovitz, a son of the Yid HaKodosh of Parszyszkha, was a staunch talmid of the Heiliger Rav Yisroel of Rizhin. Once, he merited to stand in the Rizhiner's presence as the Rebbe was salting fish for Shabbos. The Rebbe spun a spellbinding tale: A wealthy and powerful king once possessed some lush fields and forests among his royal estates. As an amateur botanist, he especially enjoyed strolling through the forests, which contained a spate of exotic and striking species of trees. He once chanced upon a Jew who was also strolling around, but with a keen eye to the palette of stunning and rare trees in the royal forest. The king accosted him: "What's attracting your attention, my good man? Are you a connoisseur of arboriculture?" "Nothing quite so grandiose, Your Majesty. Truth is, I build luxury mansions for wealthy clients, and some of the trees I see here would yield perfect lumber for some jobs I envision." This of course planted an idea in the impulsive king's head. "Sounds intriguing. I hereby direct you to design and build a new palace for me, using any of my trees which you see fit, for which I will pay you a sum befitting a royal commission." The builder took to his drawing board, sharpened his pencil, cudged his brains and came up with a truly splendid design for the new palace. He proceeded to oversee the construction and the resulting edifice was a marvel to behold. The king was spellbound by his new palace and paid the builder a princely sum, and promptly appointed him Royal Architect. Only one glaringly important element was missing from the new palace. The architect had not installed any window glass, since he said he did not know of any glazier who could supply "windows fit for a king." And that's where things stood until the king went walking in his arboretum again. Whom does he encounter but a visitor who was eyeing his prized trees the same way the architect had done. His reply to the king's questioning was: "My name is Alex and I am an expert glazier. I can make glass that no one else can. I see in these trees the potential to provide a key ingredient for some superb glass. You see, mixing in ash from quality burned trees is a crucial step in producing glass from my workshop." Said the king: "I need you to supply me with the finest window glass for the finishing touches on my new palace. You may use any of the trees here that you deem necessary to come up with what the palace needs." Alex accepted the job and set out to work. The window glass he delivered was splendiferous and shimmering; the entire building shone like crystal when the windows were installed. The king sponsored an inaugural feast to show off his new prize, and invited nobility and townsfolk from miles around. The Jewish architect and Alex the glazier were seated in places of honour at the banquet, for all to congratulate. True to the tried-and-true adage *הרבה עשו שונא ליעקב*, Alex soon began to envy the attention that the Yid was getting and made it his business to bring him down. He succeeded in planting slanderous lies in the king's head that the builder embezzled large sums from the treasury. The king hauled him before a kangaroo court on the trumped-up charges and to no one's surprise the builder was convicted and condemned to hang. But the king began to have misgivings at the blatant travesty of justice carried out in his realm – but a judgment was a judgment, and judicial "integrity" was at stake. Yet the king strove mightily to think of a way to remove him from the vicinity. He hatched a scheme, involving a loyal servant of his who lived on a remote tropical island, where the king would sometimes spend leisure time. The cunning idea was to send the Yid to the island, under guard, bearing a letter

STORY OF THE WEEK:
LEVYOSON'S PALACE
(ע"פ נוסח ריזשין)

from the king instructing the servant to summarily execute the Yid upon his arrival. But there was a twist. The Yid gave the sealed letter to the servant on the island, who read it, astonished that the king would order the death of a loyal member of the court – and balked at the order. The king had not reckoned on a streak of good will in the man's character. The Yid picked up on it, and begged for his life. "We're so far away that the king won't know if you kill me or not. You know in your heart I don't deserve to die. Let me live and I'll be your personal servant as long as I live."

One day the king was on a short boat ride and started fiddling with his signet ring. A gust of wind blew it out of his hand and into the river. The king was very superstitious and saw a bad omen meaning that he was destined to lose his kingdom. His mood turned morose.

In the interim, Alex the glazier had insinuated himself into the king's good graces. He suggested a short ocean trip to divert the king's worryment from his lost ring. They sailed, and the king's mood picked up a bit. While sailing, the king remembered the distant island where his loyal servant lived and decided to pay a visit. He sent word ahead that he would be arriving soon, with enough time for the servant to prepare a suitable welcoming meal, befitting the king's honour. The messenger also informed the islander about the king's lost ring. The servant panicked when he learned of the impending visit. "If the king sees us both here alive, he will kill the both of us!" he wailed to the Yid, who counseled calmly, "Not to worry. I'll go catch some nice big fish for the meal, which you will cook. I know a good hiding place where I can lie low until the king departs. Everything will be fine." Both signed on to the plan. When the Yid opened the fish to clean it, what did he spy but the king's signet ring. He immediately sized it up as his ticket to freedom. What he did was to wait by the shoreline until the king's boat approached. He then dived into the water. The ship's crew dragged him to safety, as is done with any "man overboard" – and promptly stood him before the king. The monarch was dumbstruck when he recognized his former architect. "What! You're still alive? I ordered your execution on this island!" "Your Majesty, I beg leave to tell you my entire story. Your servant living here followed your instructions exactly: he sought to kill me by drowning me in the ocean. But a giant fish swallowed me and brought me to Levyoson, ruler of the Deep. I told Levyoson how I had built a magnificent palace for the king, after which he showed his gratitude by throwing me into the sea. Levyoson decided that I should build a comparable palace for him in his realm, after which he would return me to dry land. I carried out his orders. But then he asked about the missing windows. I told him that a man named Alex was the craftsman who completed the windows. 'Return to your king and have him throw that Alex into the sea, where my messenger fish will find him and bring him to me. I want windows just like the king of the dry land!' Your Majesty, as a guarantee of his truthfulness, Livyoson gave me this signet ring, which His Majesty lost." The king's joy at retrieving his precious ring knew no bounds. He dispatched his soldiers to seize Alex and fling him into the ocean, giving him his just deserts. In this way, the Yiddish contractor's life was saved."

This was the tale told by the Heiliger Rizhiner Rebbe as he salted fish for Shabbos. His intention in telling the story? We cannot say with any certainty, because this story (*parable?*) presents a textbook example of *הסתרת נה' הנסתרות* (Devarim 29:28), *The hidden things belong to Hashem Elokeinu* זי"ע.

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