

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of
Nechomah *bas* Henich *a”h*
a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of her *neshamah*

Time to Make Amends

PARSHAS VAYIKRA 5777

What is the theme of parshas Vayikra? That might seem like a “no-brainer” of a question. After all, from even a cursory glance it is hard not to notice the extensive treatment of *korbanos* (offerings), in all of their various forms, contained therein.

A “Clean” Sacrifice

Actually, while *korbanos* does seem to be the prevailing theme, a closer look reveals yet another thread. The opening directive regarding the bringing of offerings employs a curious term: **אָדָם** – “Speak to B’nei Yisrael and say to them: When a **man** from amongst you shall bring an offering to Hashem from the animals...” (*Vayikra* 1:2). Picking up on this term, Rashi quotes the exposition of Chazal who relate it to the very first person: **Adam** Harishon. They understand the implication to be a requirement for the sacrifice be free from the taint of theft: **מָה אָדָם הָרֵאשׁוֹן** – “Just as the sacrifices of Adam Harishon did not consist of stolen items – for everything belonged only to him – so should you not offer sacrifices from stolen items.” Then, in the final section of the *parshah*, we once again encounter a similar theme. The Torah there recounts some more key laws dealing with theft, such as: **וְהָשִׁיב אֶת־הַגְּזוּלָה אֲשֶׁר גָּזַל** – “And he shall return the stolen property that he stole” (*Ibid.* 5:23). We see that the *parshah* opens and closes with a focus on the prohibition of *gezel* (theft).

Thus, in answer to our original question, the following interesting picture emerges: The *parshah* centers primarily around the notion of *korbanos*, with an accompanying, underlying theme eschewing *gezel*.

Of course, as with all aspects of Torah, such an arrangement cannot be random. Perhaps we may suggest that the intent is to convey the following message. One of the principal assets associated with *korbanos* is the fact that they provide expiation for sin. We see this clearly from their inclusion in the list of agents of *kapparah* (atonement), as the Mishnah states (*Yuma* 8:8):

חֲטָאת וְאָשָׁם וְדָאֵי מְכַפְּרִין, מִיתָה וְיוֹם הַכַּפּוּרִים מְכַפְּרִין עִם הַתְּשׁוּבָה.

“Sin-offerings and guilt-offerings (in instances of definitive violation) provide atonement. Death and Yom Kippur (likewise) provide atonement when accompanied by repentance.”

But sins of the nature of *gezel* are somewhat distinct in this regard. For while *korbanos* can generally expiate violations, the standard process of offerings and *teshuvah* is not sufficient to remove the stain of *gezel*. To gain complete expiation of such a sin, there is another absolute requirement, as laid out in the aforementioned *passuk*: **וְהָשִׁיב אֶת־הַגְּזוּלָה אֲשֶׁר גָּזַל** – “And he shall return the stolen property that he stole” (*Ibid.* 5:23). Perhaps this is what the *parshah* means to impart. It provides this clear warning that while *korbanos* are an effective means of atonement for many sins, it is imperative – when it comes to *gezel* – that one make restitution. The violator will find no peace for his soul through any other method – not even death.

This notion is illustrated most starkly by the following sobering account related by the Chafetz Chaim:

R' Chaim and the *Dybbuk*

A certain dispute between neighbors was once brought for litigation before the venerated R' Chaim Volozhiner. One was quite wealthy while the other was indigent, but this distinction had never before caused any real disruption to peaceful coexistence. All of this changed one day when the poor man suddenly began pestering and berating his wealthy neighbor without any apparent cause. All of the wealthy man's entreaties to desist were ignored, and the irritations continued and intensified on a daily basis. The matter reached the point that the wealthy man was forced to bring his tormentor before the Rabbinical court.

Upon seeing the man, the astute R' Chaim instantly perceived that this was no ordinary situation. With his sagacity and spiritual sensitivities, he understood that this man had not simply "lost it" one day. Rather, this was the work of a "*dybbuk*," a departed and disembodied soul which, having been denied entry into the Afterlife, had entered within the body of this poor victim and taken possession of his faculties.

R' Chaim addressed the *dybbuk* directly to uncover which sin of his accounted for his current predicament. Speaking through the throat of his possessed victim, the *dybbuk* revealed that, in his previous incarnation, he was none other than the rich man's private tutor! The father of the wealthy man had engaged him to tutor his children in various subjects. But something else happened during his tenure. Apparently, the father was involved in some underhanded business dealings. In a scheme in which he cheated an unsuspecting victim out of 10,000 rubles, he had even drawn this tutor into the endeavor. The latter had acquiesced to sign on a forged document in return for his own cut of the "profits". It was for this reason he had been sent back to this earth -- for he could not enter the Afterlife until the matter was rectified. And so he chose to be reincarnated in this manner so that he could badger the conspirator's son to make restitution!

Listening to this narrative, the wealthy man's face was suddenly filled with rage. He remembered his tutor well and was also aware of the man's low character: "You wicked rogue!" he exclaimed. "You claim that your only wrongdoing was this instance of fraud? You were an abject sinner! I know all about the many blatant and heinous deeds that you perpetrated throughout your life!"

The *dybbuk*'s response was surprising and frightening. "Yes, it is true," he admitted. "I was guilty of many nefarious acts. But toward the end of my life, I at last came to the realization that I had trod a wicked path. And so I did a complete *teshuvah*, and even adopted a strict regimen of Torah study – learning four hours every single day.

"When my time finally arrived and I passed to the Next World, I discovered that – indeed – my repentance was accepted. Thanks to all of my Torah learning, my many sins were in fact expiated. That is, all of them except one: my participation in the financial scheme. For this, I am destined to suffer – until the ill-gotten gains are returned to their rightful owner" (*Chafetz Chaim Hachadash Al Hatorah, vol. II, pp. 32-33*).

Mishnas Chayim is brought to you by **Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah**, a network of Torah scholars dedicated to bringing the merits of Mishnah study to the greater Jewish public. Encompassing Mishnah, Gemara, and variety of other services, **Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah** primarily assists mourners interested in acquiring the merit of Torah study for their loved ones.

Contact us at 732-364-7029 or at www.ChevrahLomdeiMishnah.org.