



TORAH ACADEMY
of Bergen County

קול תורה

Parashat VaYikra

1 Nissan 5778

March 17th, 2018

Vol. 27 No. 21

WHAT MAKES IT A PLEASING AROMA?

by Mr. Chanan Strassman, Guidance Department

Parashat VaYikra is primarily focused on the details and procedures of offering sacrifices to Hashem. With regards to a Korban Olah that is taken from an animal, the Torah describes how “the sons of Aharon, the Kohanim, shall arrange the pieces, the head and the fats, on the wood that is on the fire, which is on the altar” (VaYikra 1:8). It is here that we discover that the sacrificial service is not only composed of just Shechitah, but it continues even after slaughtering the animal, skinning it, carving the limbs, and harvesting the organs; rather than haphazardly tossing everything onto the fire, this verse states that the Kohein is required to arrange the animal upon the altar. Specifically, he must first put down the limbs, then the head, and then top it all off with a garnish of fats. When the Kohein completes these steps, the Torah describes this offering which he burns as “a pleasing aroma to Hashem” (VaYikra 1:9). While the term “Rei’ach Nicho’ach”, “a pleasing aroma”, appears in the context of various offerings, it never ceases to pique this author’s curiosity. Some aspect of this procedure brings a sense of divine satisfaction, and yet a cursory glance at the offering itself reveals a dismembered animal with fat slathered on the head. How does this arrangement earn such a high compliment as “pleasing” to God?

Rashi seems to take an aesthetic approach to this question. First, he explains that the Kohen was supposed to smear the animal’s head with fat in a particular spot: “Michaseh Bo Et Beit HaShechitah”, “He covers the place of slaughter with it” (VaYikra 1:8 s.v. Ve’Et HaPader). So the slit on the animal’s throat made by the Shechitah knife is ground-zero for the fat when preparing this offering. Then, Rashi states: “Zehu Derech Kavod Shel Ma’alah”, “this demonstrates respect for God.” When the Gemara discusses this practice, Rashi elaborates on why it is considered a sign of respect to cover that spot on the animal’s head. Apparently, blood from the slaughter will likely stain the area surrounding the cut. Since the fats are relatively fleshy colored, their job is to cover up the discoloration (Yoma 26a s.v. BeDerech Kavod). Similar to The Food Network, where a chef’s meticulous presentation of the dish can earn extra points with the judges, the offering to Hashem will appear more “appetizing” if

we camouflage those unsightly bloodstains. Thus, the pleasing element of this Korban may arise from its respectful decor, as Rashi described.

Interestingly, the Ramban shares a different perspective on the placement of these fats during the sacrificial ceremony. While Rashi’s opinion hinges upon a cosmetic factor, Ramban’s underlying theme is utility. He begins by pointing out how the Torah used an unusual word called “Pader” when referring to the fats that are smeared at the place of the Shechitah. In fact, the Ramban (Ibid. s.v. Et HaPader) believes that this word is truly unique, as he writes “Ein LaMilah Chaveir”, “this word has no friend” from the entire corpus of Scripture. It is a hapax legomena in the Torah. Clearly, there must be a reason why “Pader” fat is required for the Korban as opposed to “Cheilev” or “Shuman.” Indeed, the Ramban explains that Pader is a special type of fat that separates between sections of the animal’s organs, which makes it an appropriate substance to use as a separation between one area of the animal and the rest; after all, that is the function of Pader fat. Furthermore, the Ramban cites the practice of “Chashuvei Ha’Umot”, “distinguished gentiles”, to cover their meat with Pader fat while it is roasting on the fire. The precedent established by those gentiles shows that it is both respectable and accepted to use Pader fat in this manner, and moreover it supports the notion that Pader is designed for this sort of job. Therefore, one could suggest that this offering is pleasing to Hashem because the service utilizes Pader fat according to the natural purpose for which it was created.

Another way to approach this question would be to step back from the trees and consider the forest. Is it possible that Hashem is pleased not by any of the individual components involved, but rather it is Hashem’s response to the offering as a whole? Rashi’s explanation of the term “Rei’ach Nicho’ach” states, “Nachat Ru’ach Lefanai She’Amarti Vena’aseh Retzoni”, “it is pleasing to Me that I spoke and My will was done (VaYikra 1:9 s.v. Nicho’ach). The Lubavitcher Rebbe asks why Rashi recorded his comment in the passive voice, saying “My will was done” as opposed to an active voice, “you did what I wanted”? The Rebbe explains that sacrificial offerings encompass so many details, and of course they are all required by the Halachah, but ultimately the goal is to fulfill God’s will (Likutei Sichot Vol. 32). While it is important to use the Pader and cover up the area of Shechitah, in the big picture we must recognize how we are engaging in Avodat HaKodesh. All of the details that comprise the sacrificial service are the nuts and bolts that build up to a relationship with our Creator. In that sense, it’s really not about any one thing that we did. It’s about the feeling we are trying to evoke, and it could be the “pleasing aroma” which signals that we achieved this objective; His will was done.

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Even without the institution of sacrificial offerings, we can still relate to the goal of activating that Rei'ach Nicho'ach before God. Our daily Avodah encompasses many of the same considerations as discussed, be they aesthetic, functional, or relational factors. Let us hope that we are blessed with the opportunity to bring forth a pleasing aroma to Hashem through our continued service, so that His will may be done.

THE KING AND THE COMMONER

by Yosef Aryeh Kahan ('18)

In Parashat VaYikra (VaYikra 3:22-31), Hashem tells Moshe what type of Korbanot should be offered if a person commits a sin. If a regular person commits a sin, he is supposed to offer a female goat. If a leader, like the king, commits a sin, he must offer a male goat. The Torah here is talking about a case where the leader personally committed a sin, and did not cause the nation to err. The procedure for offering the Korban is the same for both an ordinary person and a leader of the nation. First, the sinner places his hands on the Korban. The animal is then slaughtered. A Kohein takes the blood from the goat and places some of it on the four corners of the Mizbei'ach; the rest is poured. Finally, the animal is completely burned up on the Mizbei'ach.

The fact that a king and commoner have to bring essentially the same Korban is somewhat puzzling. Considering a king's exalted status and divine mandate, shouldn't his sin be considered to be worse than a commoner's transgression? One could try to say that there is a difference -- the king has to bring a male goat. After all, there is very little difference between a male goat and a female goat. Furthermore, the procedures for both Korbanot are identical!

The answer, I believe, lies in the Torah's view of monarchy. Throughout history, and especially during the time that the Torah was given, monarchs have traditionally been viewed as gods or like gods. Pharaohs were famous for this. Rashi (Shemot 7:15) citing Shemot Rabbah, describes how Pharaoh deified himself. Several Roman Emperors, such as Augustus were declared by the Senate to be gods and sons of the gods. When Henry VIII split from the Catholic Church, Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy, declaring that he was "Supreme Head on Earth of the Church of England." This idea of deifying leaders still exists today.

For example, according to a report delivered to the Chinese government by Wang Guosheng, a Communist Party Secretary of the Qinghai province, people living in the Qinghai province have begun to view Xi Jinping, head of the Chinese government, as a Buddhist deity. Deification of leaders, however, is resoundly rejected by Judaism. When the Jews ask for a king in Sefer Shemuel, they are severely reprimanded. The Torah also places

restrictions on the king, such as limiting the permitted number of wives, indicating that the Torah understands that kings are human. Interestingly, The Pasuk describing the atonement offering starts "Asher Nasi Yecheta" "When a leader sins" (4:22). According to the Seforno, however, the Pasuk should have read "Im Nasi Yecheta," "If a leader sins," using the conditional word Im (if) to begin the Pasuk. But since a person in a position of power will inevitably commit an Aveirah, the Pasuk does not use the word Im, clarifying that the Torah does not consider the king to be a divine being. Although the king is given some divine authority by Hashem, this is not due to the king's merit. Rather, the king is given his power because there is a societal need for a central authority. As the final pasuk of Sefer Shoftim (21:25) records, "BaYamim HaHeim Ein Melech BeYisrael Ish HaYashar BeEinav Yei'aseh," "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did as he pleased." The numerous foreign powers that invaded Eretz Yisrael in Sefer Shoftim clearly demonstrate that this is not a recipe for a safe and prosperous society. To counter this, a central authority was needed and the Jewish monarchy was established. The kingship, however, is, in reality, undesirable. When the Jews first request a king, Hashem laments to Shemuel "Ki Oti Ma'asu MiMeloch Aleihem," "They have rejected me as their king" (Shemuel I 8:7). In the eyes of the Torah, a human king is a necessary evil; this is why the King offers the same Korbanot as everyone else. He is not a divine being whose Avierot would merit a unique type of Korban. In the eyes of Hashem, there is little difference between the King and the commoner.

CHAMETZ MIXTURES AND PET FOOD – A Bold AND CONTROVERSIAL Approach

by Rabbi Chaim Jachter

Introduction

All major Kashrut organizations in the United States, including the Orthodox Union, Star-K and the Chicago Rabbinical Council, post instructions on their websites for pet owners to only keep Chametz free pet food in their homes during Pesach. Common practice throughout the Orthodox community reflects these instructions.

There is a potential alternative, however, based on the following rulings of Rav Ben Zion Abba Sha'ul and the Israeli military rabbinate. This is of major interest since, as pet owners know well, many animals react severely when their diet is changed. This is not surprising as the Gemara (Ketubot 110b and elsewhere) teaches "Shinui Veset Techilat Choli," changing one's routine triggers illness. The difficulty animals experience when their eating routine is changed is reflected in Rashi to Bereishit 7:24 s.v. Ach No'ach, which describes how the lion on No'ach's Teivah bit him when the lion's food was served late. Many animals will regurgitate frequently and suffer considerably when their food regime is altered.

Chametz Gamur vs. Ta'arovet Chametz

Chametz food which becomes inedible, such as bread which was burnt to ashes, may be retained in a Jew's possession and used for benefit on Pesach. However, this only applies to food that even a dog wouldn't eat (Nifsal Mei'Achilat Kelev; Pesachim 21b and Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 442:2 and 445:2).

A "Chametz mixture" (Ta'arovet Chametz) refers to a food which is not actual Chametz (such as bread) but merely has a Chametz ingredient mixed into it (and this food item does not have the ability to leaven other foods), such as cheese which has some flour mixed into it. Chametz mixtures share the same law as actual Chametz, in that if one retains Chametz mixtures in his possession on Pesach, he has transgressed the prohibition of "Lo Yeira'eh Lecha Chametz", do not let Chametz be seen or found in your possession.

There is nevertheless a basic underlying distinction between pure Chametz and Chametz mixtures: Whereas actual Chametz may not be retained in one's possession on Pesach unless it becomes inedible for a dog, a Chametz mixture may be retained in one's possession as long as a human being would not eat it (even if a dog would).

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 442:4) rules: "Regarding a food item which has Chametz mixed into it but is completely inedible for human beings, although it is permissible to retain it in one's possession, one may not eat it until after Pesach." The Poskim explain that it is likewise permissible to benefit from this Chametz mixture (Mishnah Berurah 442:22 and Chazon Ish Orach Chaim 116:8). The Rambam (Hilchot Chametz U'Matzah 4:8) and other Rishonim that the Bet Yosef quotes (in the beginning of the aforementioned chapter) rule accordingly.

Tropical Fish Food - Rulings of Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Sha'ul and Hacham Ovadia Yosef

Just as it is forbidden to eat Chametz on Pesach, it is likewise forbidden to benefit from it. It is therefore forbidden to feed animals Chametz food products on Pesach, since this would benefit the person feeding them. The Halacha is nevertheless different regarding fish food, according to two major Sephardic Posekim. Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Sha'ul and Chacham Ovadia Yosef. As we have explained, if a food is not actual Chametz and is merely a Chametz mixture and inedible for humans, it is permissible to benefit from it on Pesach even if it is still edible for dogs. It will similarly be permissible to feed it to animals.

Since the food for tropical fish is usually quite putrid and is completely inedible for human beings, and it also merely contains unnoticeable Chametz mixtures, one may benefit from it and feed it to one's tropical fish (although it is still, of course, forbidden for one to eat such fish food on Pesach).

Rav Ben-Zion Abba Shaul has ruled that one may feed one's fish with such food, even if contains Chametz mixtures

(Ohr Le'Zion 3:92). Rav Ovadia Yosef's grandson, Rav Yaakov Sasson writes the following on his Halacha Yomit website:

"Several years ago, we had shown this ruling of the Ohr Le'Zion to Maran zt"l (Rav Ovadia Yosef) and he replied that he would delve into the matter and notify us if it would be permissible to follow this ruling practically speaking. A short while later, he indeed notified us that this ruling is in accordance with Halacha and may be followed. We have likewise ruled accordingly for someone who had multiple aquariums and wished to feed the fish in his possession with such fish food containing Chametz mixtures. The following year, there were those who questioned Maran zt"l about this ruling which we have publicized in his name at which point Maran zt"l explained this law to them at length and proved to them that we were indeed correct."

Dog, Cat and Bird Food

Rav Sasson, however, believes that this lenient approach does not apply to dog food. He writes:

"If one raises animals at home and must feed them on Pesach, one must take care to not transgress prohibitions of Chametz, and must purchase only Chametz-free food for one's pets. This is especially true regarding birds, dogs, and cats, for although the food for these pets is not particularly tasty for humans, it is nevertheless not completely inedible and may not be used on Pesach".

Rav Sasson does not regard dog, cat and bird food to be Nifsal Mei'Achilat Adam. Indeed, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach writes (Teshuvot Minchat Shlomo 1:17) in a landmark Teshuvah regarding taking medicine that contains Chametz on Pesach writes "There are many medications that even if they are somewhat bitter, it is possible nevertheless that it is not classified as "Eino Ra'ui Le'Achilat Adam" simply because we are "Mefunakim" (fussy)". Rav Shlomo Zalman cites as evidence the Rambam's ruling (Hilchot Tumat Ochalin 10:2) that urine is not considered Nifsal Mei'Achilat Adam. Rav Shlomo Zalman suggests that the Halacha maintains a low threshold for what is considered edible for a human being, and that this might not change with the perceptions of the people of the times.

Similarly, in 1986 I told Rav Yehuda Amital that Rav Soloveitchik stated that toothpaste was not Ra'ui Le'Achilat Kelev. Rav Amital responded that he disagreed as he recalled that in the Russian labor camps during World War Two, people would put toothpaste on their bread to give it some taste. Rav

Amital's response illustrates the difficulty (and subjectivity) involved in assessing what is considered Ra'ui LeAchilat Kelev.

However, Rav Yosef Adler told me that Rav Soloveitchik did not adopt Rav Amital's approach. The Rav did not believe that we gauge the standards of Ra'ui LeAchilat Adam or Kelev based on extreme circumstances or based on the standards of pre-modern times. In much of the Orthodox community this ruling is followed and regular toothpaste is used on Pesach.

The Rav's approach seems to be supported by a straightforward reading of the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 442:4 and 442:10) as well as the Mishnah Berurah (442:45). The Shulchan Aruch writes that that which is not "Ma'achal Kol Bnei Adam," food that everyone would eat, is permitted to be retained in one's home during Pesach. Likewise, the Shulchan Aruch permits using ink made from barley on Pesach. The Mishnah Berurah adds that this is permitted even though scribes sometimes place the ink in their mouths!

A Ruling from the Israeli Military Rabbinate

An interesting article appears in Techumin volume 35 (pages 47-54) authored by Rav Avihud Schwartz, who serves as the head of Halachic policy for the Israeli Military Rabbinate. In a meticulously and thoroughly researched article, Rav Schwartz discusses protocols regarding the serving food of the very specially trained dogs of Tzahal's canine corps. These dogs are specially trained and are essential in anti-terrorist missions in discovering explosives and other dangerous devices.

As per the custom in the Orthodox community these animals were at first served non-Chametz food during Pesach. Many of the dogs reacted severely and a significant number had to be taken out of service during Pesach, since the change in food impacted them so severely.

The military veterinarians did not want the animals' diet changed for Pesach and Tzahal's Rabbinate had to decide if this was permissible. Rav Schwartz writes that it is permissible to adopt a lenient approach to this matter since the grain content is less than fifty percent. Rav Schwartz regarded the grain content of this food to be not suitable for human consumption. He cites Rav Dov Lior, the Rosh Yeshiva of the Yeshivat Hesder of Kiryat Arba, who endorsed this ruling as well. Rav Schwartz adds that Piku'ach Nefesh is a consideration since incapacitating such special animals exposes the Israeli public to the infiltrations of terrorists (Rachamana Leitzlan).

Application to Household Pets

The big question, of course, is whether this ruling may be applied to pets in a civilian home on Pesach. One could put forth the argument that as long as the grain content of the dog food is less than fifty percent, the dog food is regarded as Ta'arovet Chametz that is not suitable for human

consumption. On the other hand, one could argue, based on Rav Auerbach and Rav Amital, that dog food is not Nifsal Mei'achilat Adam. In addition, one could argue that a lenient ruling issued in the context of a borderline Piku'ach Nefesh situation should not apply to civilian situations that are not at all Pikuach Nefesh. However, beleaguered pet owners who have experienced their animals' severe suffering on Pesach will testify as to the pressing need to be lenient, if such leniency is well-founded in Halacha.

Conclusion

The standard approach in the Orthodox community for decades has been that one should not serve one's animals pet food that contain Chametz on Pesach. However, an argument could be made permitting serving pet food containing Chametz provided that the grain content of the pet food is less than fifty percent. One should consult his Rabbi for a ruling about this challenging issue. For clarification, although we cited the rulings of Hacham Ben Zion and Hacham Ovadia, there is no difference between Sepharadim and Ashkenazim regarding this issue.

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