

Lesson 7-The Significance Of Reciting Korbanos

Welcome to this session of Take 5 for Tefila, a program sponsored by the Orthodox Union, as part of their Tefila Education Initiative. In this session, I will try to answer the question: Why are the Korbanos, the recitation of the order of the daily sacrifices, such an important aspect of Tefila?

We have already noted that the paragraphs that were included within the section of Tefila known as Korbanos were chosen to help us fulfill the Mitzvah of studying Torah each day. That Torah study is divided into three segments, an excerpt from the Torah, an excerpt from the Mishnah and an excerpt from the Gemara. There is a second purpose to our reciting Korbanos. To understand that purpose, we need to study a Midrash, found in the Gemara. It concerns the covenant that G-d entered into with our forefather, Avrohom Aveinu, known as the **ברית בין הבתרים**, the covenant between the parts. The significance of that moment lies in the fact that it is first time in the Torah that G-d asks any man to bring an animal sacrifice on G-d's behalf. That request led to the following conversation between Avrohom and G-d:

Abraham said: Tell me, G-d, on account of what deed will I merit to have descendants who will inherit my beliefs? G-d answered: Bring a sacrifice on my behalf. Take a heifer which is three years old and a goat which is three years old. Abraham continued: Sacrifices will be an appropriate way to serve You while the Beis Hamikdash is standing. That will provide a means by which my children can obtain forgiveness for their sins. How will they gain forgiveness for their sins when the Beis Hamikdash is no longer standing? G-d responded: I have already prepared for them the text that describes the order of the sacrifices. As long as they read the text before Me, I will consider their reading as equal to bringing the sacrifices and I will forgive their sins.

When the second Beis Hamikdash was destroyed our Sages faced the challenge of finding a suitable substitute for the sacrifices that had once been brought in the Beis Hamikdash. A verse from the book of Hosea provided them with a solution:

הוֹשֵׁעַ פָּרַק יָד- (ג) קָחוּ עִמָּכֶם דְּבָרִים וְשׁוּבוּ אֵל ה' אִמְרוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ כָּל תְּשׁוּבָה עֵינֵינוּ וְנִשְׁלָמָה
פָּרִים שְׁפָתֵינוּ:

Take with you words, and return to G-d; say to him: Forgive all iniquity, and receive us graciously; allow the words of our lips to be substitutes for the calves we once brought as sacrifices to You.

Our Sages concluded that G-d directed Hosea to say those words in order to provide a solution to the problem of finding a substitute for bringing the sacrifices. The solution was: recite the sections of the Torah that describe the sacrifices. Therein lies the significance of reciting each day the paragraphs that describe the daily service in the Beis

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Hamikdash. That explains why our Sages provided that we recite the excerpts from the Torah that portray the removal of the ashes, the Tamid sacrifice and the Kitores, the burning of the incense. We recite an excerpt from the Mishnah that describes where in the Beis Hamikdash the sacrifices were performed. All of those paragraphs are recited based on G-d's directive that the words that we utter with our lips can be a substitute for the animal sacrifices.

This rule known as **וְנִשְׁלָמָה פְּרִים שְׁפָתֵינוּ**: influenced other parts of Tefila. That rule is the basis for our practice of describing the Mussaf sacrifices in the Shemona Esrei of Mussaf on Shabbos and on Yom Tov. It explains why we describe the service of Yom Kippur in the repetition of the Mussaf Shemona Esrei on Yom Kippur. It also explains why we observe four special Shabbosim before Pesach, the **פרשת שקלים. ארבע פרשיות** is observed as a substitute for the Half Shekel that each male Jew over the age of 20 was required to contribute to the maintenance and upkeep of the Beis Hamikdash each year. We commemorate that practice either on Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Adar or on the Shabbos on which we announce Rosh Chodesh Adar. That represents the date, the 1st day of Adar, when an announcement was made in every Jewish community that the time to contribute the half shekel to the Beis Hamikdash had arrived. The month of Adar was the Jewish tax season. And unlike our tax system, the Jewish tax system was a flat tax, meaning that every person contributed the same amount, no matter whether he was rich or he was poor. The contribution was the same for all so that no Jew could claim a greater share than the other in the service of the Beis Hamikdash.

We commemorate Parshas Parah to remember the burning of the red heifer so that its ashes could be used to purify those who had become impure. This was particularly important before Pesach because every Jew was commanded to be part of a Korban Pesach. We commemorate Parshas Hachodesh, the celebration of the fact that G-d turned over to Man the job of selecting the dates on which the holidays were to be celebrated. Our Sages chose Rosh Chodesh Nissan or the Shabbos before Rosh Chodesh Nissan to commemorate that practice because it was before the month of Nissan that our Sages had to decide whether to declare a leap year. In other words our Sages needed to determine whether to schedule a second month of Adar. What hung in the balance was the date on which Pesach would be celebrated.

It is quite clear that so much of what we do during the course of the year is based on those three words uttered by the Prophet Hosea as he was directed to do so by G-d: **וְנִשְׁלָמָה פְּרִים שְׁפָתֵינוּ**, allow our words to act as a substitute for the animal sacrifices once brought in the Beis Hamikdash.