



MISHNAS CHAYIM

משנת חיים

MISHNAH ON THE PARSHAH

פרשת ויקרא תש"ע ∞ Parshas Vayikra 5770

FACT, FICTION, AND SIMPLE FAITH

Beholding the scene of Tashlich on a Rosh Hashanah afternoon can be an uplifting and inspiring experience. From a spirit of contrition, the multitudes converge at the water to recite their prayers and “throw their *aveiros* (sins) into the water.”

The only issue is that this notion is a complete farce. There is no such thing as “throwing your sins away”; the intent of the verse in Michah from which the Tashlich ceremony derives its name is really laced with profound meaning, and the ritual itself has a lot more to do with awakening to repentance and recalling the merit of our forefathers than feeding our sins to the fish.

And yet, the public perception behind this event – inaccuracies notwithstanding – can actually be viewed with much admiration. We shall yet see that this is one of the important lessons derived from this week’s *parshah*.

UNFIT FOR THE JOB

R’ Itzele Peterberger, one of the leading disciples of the great *mussar* luminary R’ Yisrael Salanter, would relate the following story recorded in the *sefarim hakedoshim* (holy tomes):

There was a simple Yid who was listening one day to the lecture of the town’s *rav*. The *rav* was speaking about that aspect of the Temple Service known as the *lechem hapanim* (“show-bread”). This was comprised of twelve baked loaves that were placed in the Sanctuary and replaced weekly.

Sitting in the audience, this Yid had an idea. When he arrived home, he related his plan to his wife, who shared his enthusiasm. The couple felt that they had discovered a mitzvah that they had previously known little about.

How wonderful would it be if they would take this mitzvah and perform it to its fullest!

Imbued with the pristine joy of observing a mitzvah, the devoted couple got right to work when Erev Shabbos rolled around. The wife baked twelve fresh *challos*, which her husband brought cheerfully to *shul* with him. When he arrived, he figured that the best way to place them “before Hashem” would be to set them in the *aron kodesh* (holy ark).

Later that evening, the *shamash* (beadle) of the *shul* began his *kiddush* preparations. He approached the *aron* where the wine was stored, but a surprise awaited him when he opened the doors. In front of his eyes was a splendid arrangement of twelve fresh *challos*. “Someone must have left a charitable donation,” he remarked as he picked up the *challos*.

The *shamash* ate well that night.

Early the next morning, the “*lechem-hapanim-offerer*” went to *shul*, eager to check on the state of his offering. He opened the *aron* to discover that the “*lechem hapanim*” were not there! This discovery filled him with joy. He ran home to share the wonderful news with his wife.

“Guess what!” he told her. “Hashem accepted our offering. The *challos* have been consumed!”

The couple’s happiness knew no bounds. And so began a weekly ritual, as every Erev Shabbos they delivered twelve loaves to their special place in the *aron kodesh*.

Things continued in this fashion for a year and a half. One Erev Shabbos, the *rav* happened to be in *shul* earlier than usual and was present to witness the simple Jew bringing twelve loaves to the *aron*. The

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applies in the absence of the Beis Hamikdash.

“But there is something you should know. Since the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, no deed or offering has been so pleasing to Hashem as the one offered by this simple couple. Due to your actions of today, expect that you will not live out the year.” And so it happened.

INTENTIONS DO MATTER

R’ Itzele would conclude by comparing the Tashlich situation with the episode above. True, some people’s notions may be mistaken – and hopefully they will correct them as they learn and grow. However, for the level they are currently on, Hashem is pleased with their simple sincerity. They are under the sincere impression that it is Hashem’s Will to perform a ceremony of “casting sins away.” As they are trying their best to serve Hashem, He happily accepts their service (*Lekach Tov, parshas Emor*).

This important theme is manifest in this week’s *parshah*, which deals extensively with the laws of *korbanos* (sacrifices). The Mishnah in Menachos (13:11) encapsulates this idea in a most meaningful way:

נֶאֱמַר בְּעוֹלַת הַבְּהֵמָה אִשָּׁה רֵיחַ נִיחוֹחַ, וּבְעוֹלַת הָעוֹף אִשָּׁה רֵיחַ נִיחוֹחַ, וּבִמְנַחָה אִשָּׁה רֵיחַ נִיחוֹחַ, לְלֶמֶד, שֶׁאֶחָד הַמֵּרְבֵּה וְאֶחָד הַמִּמְעִיט, וּבְלֶבֶד שְׂיִכּוֹן אָדָם אֶת דַּעְתּוֹ לְשָׁמַיִם.

“In connection to the burnt-offering of an animal (largest, most expensive type of sacrifice), the Torah uses the term, ‘A pleasing offering (to Hashem)’; this term is also used for the (more modest) bird-offering, and for a meal-offering as well (most inexpensive). This teaches: someone who gives a little can achieve the same as one who gives a lot, as long as he directs his thoughts to Hashem.”

As long as a person strives to serve Hashem as best as he earnestly can for his individual level, he has presented the Creator with the most pleasing sacrifice.

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rav inquired as to what he was doing, and the man was only too pleased to fill the *rav* in.

“Well, Rabbi,” he began, “remember some time ago you gave a talk about the great value of the mitzvah of *lechem hapanim*? I really took it to heart, and since then, my wife and I have been preparing twelve *challos* and serving them as *lechem hapanim* every week. And look – Hashem always responds, and He consumes the *challos*!”

Unfortunately, this particular *rav* had somehow assumed his position without having perfected certain glaring character flaws. Upon hearing this explanation, he could not hide his scorn and chastised the simple Yid for his foolishness. “Hashem doesn’t eat, and the whole mitzvah only applies during the time of the Beis Hamikdash!” he exclaimed.

Needless to say, the Yid was crestfallen. Never again did he bring his precious “*lechem hapanim*.”

That night, this *rav* was visited by an ethereal messenger in his dreams. “You were correct in your assessment,” he was told. “*Lechem hapanim* no longer

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