

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XXV: Tzav (Lev. 6:1–8:36)

Essay 6. Learning about the offerings in lieu of bringing them

מְנַחֵת פָּרָק י"ג אָמַר רַבָּא כָּל הָעוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה אֵינוֹ צָרִיף לֹא עוֹלָה וְלֹא מְנַחֵת לֹא חֲטָאת וְלֹא אָשָׁם ע"כ. קוֹשֶׁה דְּהָא אֲמַרְיִנְן בְּפָרָק ד' דְּתַעֲנִית אָמַר אַבְרָהָם לְפָנֵי הַקָּב"ה, רַבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, שְׁמָא יִשְׂרָאֵל חוֹטְאִים לְפָנֶיךָ, אַתָּה עוֹשֶׂה לָּהֶם כְּדוֹר הַמַּבּוּל וְכְדוֹר הַפְּלִגָּה? אָמַר לוֹ לָאוּ. אָמַר לְפָנֶיךָ, רַבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, רַבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם "בְּמָה אֲדַע" וְכו'. אָמַר לוֹ "קַחְהָ לִי עֵגְלָה מִשְׁלֵשָׁת". אָמַר לְפָנֶיךָ, רַבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, תֵּינַח בְּזִמְנוֹ שְׁבִית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ קַיָּים. בְּזִמְנוֹ שְׂאִינוֹ בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ קַיָּים מָה תְּהֵא עֲלֵיהֶם? אָמַר לוֹ, כְּכַר תִּקְנֵתִי לָהֶם סֹדֵר הַקְּרָבָנוֹת, בְּזִמְנוֹ שְׂקוּרְאִין בָּהֶם מַעֲלָה אֲנִי עֲלֵיהֶם וְכו'. וְאִם עוֹסְקִים בַּתּוֹרָה מֵה צוּרְף לְסֹדֵר הַקְּרָבָנוֹת.

Tractate **Menachot**, chapter 13: **“Rava said: For everyone who engages in Torah, there is no need for a burnt offering, and not a meal offering, and not a sin offering, and not a guilt offering.”**¹

There is a difficulty: Isn't it said in the 4th chapter of tractate Ta'anit:

Abraham said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: **“Master of the Universe, perhaps Israel will sin before you. Will you act toward them like generation of the flood and the generation of the dispersion?”** He said to him: **“No.”** [Abraham] said before Him: **“Master of the Universe, ‘How will I know this?’”**² He said [to Abraham]: **“‘Bring Me a three-year-old heifer.’”**³ [I.e., through offering sacrifices, one may achieve atonement.] [Abraham] said before Him: **“Master of the Universe, this works out well when the Temple is standing, but when the Temple is not standing, what will become of them?”** [G-d] said to him: **“I have already enacted for them the order of offerings. When they read them before Me, I will ascribe them [credit] as though they had sacrificed them before Me and I will pardon them for all their transgressions.”**

- Ta'anit 27b

But if they engage in Torah, and according to Rava such people would not need to bring offerings, **what is the need for the order of the offerings?** I.e., if someone sins, why do they need to bring an offering (if the Temple is standing), or to learn about the offerings (when the Temple is not standing), if they could, as Rava implies, instead learn Torah in general?

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¹ Menachot 110a.

² Gen. 15:8.

³ Gen. 15:9: “Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old she-goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young bird.”

ואף מאי דאמרינון במגילה אלמלא מעמדות לא נתקיימו שמים וארץ, קשה דהלא אמרינון "אם-לא בריתי יומם ולילה תקות שמים וארץ לא-שמתיו", דשמע מינה על קיום התורה עולם עומד. ומהו אלמלא מעמדות וכו'. ויש לומר דאיתא במדרש גלקוט על פסוק "הנפש החטאת היא תמות", שאלו לתקמה, חוטא מה ענשו, אמר לו "חטאים תרדף רעה". שאלו לנבואה, חוטא מה ענשו, אמר לו "הנפש החטאת היא תמות". שאלו לתורה וכו'. אמר לו יביא אשם ויתכפר לו. שאלו להקב"ה וכו' אמר לו יעשה תשובה ויתכפר הך הוא דכתיב "טוב-וישר ה' " וכו' עכ"ל. והשתא נחא שפיר למימר אלמלא מעמדות וכו', שהעולם עומד על התורה ועל העבודה, מפני שנה תלוי בנה, שהתורה אומרת מי שחטא יביא קרבן.

Likewise, consider what is said in tractate Megillah (31b): **“Were it not for [the non-priestly] watches, heaven and earth would not exist, as it is stated: ‘Were it not for My covenant with day and night, I would not have placed the laws of heaven and earth.’⁴ We hear from this that the world exists because of the existence of Torah. What is the meaning of “were it not for [the non-priestly] watches”?** It can be said as is brought in Midrash Yalkut Shimoni on the verse, **“The soul that sins, it will die”⁵:**

They asked Wisdom, “What is the punishment of the sinner?” She told them, “Evil will pursue sinners.”⁶ They asked Prophecy, “What is the punishment of the sinner?” She told him, “The soul that sins, it will die.” They asked Torah, “What is the punishment of the sinner?” She told him, “He should bring a guilt offering, and he will be forgiven.” They asked the Holy One, Blessed be He, “What is the punishment of the sinner?” He told him, “He shall repent and he will be forgiven.” This is as it is written, “Good and upright is the L-rd; therefore, He shows sinners the way.”⁷

- Yalkut Shimoni, Ezek., remez 358

Now, with this understanding, **it’s perfectly fine to say “Were it not for [the non-priestly] watches, heaven and earth would not endure,” that the world exists because of Torah and the Temple service, because this depends on that, that the Torah says, “One who sins shall bring an offering.”** I.e., if one sins, the Torah tells him to bring an offering, and he achieves atonement, and the world continues to exist.

ובמדרש זה נמי יש לזקוק מאיזה טעם נתנו כל אחד מהם דוקא תשובות אלו. והנה אמר ז"ל "ונטמתם בם" העבירה מטמטמת לבו של אדם. וכן אמרו השוכח דבר אחד ממשנתו מעלה עליו הפתוב פאילו מתחייב בנפשו שנגמר "רק השמר לך" וכו'.

In this Midrash of Yalkut Shimoni we have to check for what reason each of Wisdom, Prophecy, Torah, and G-d gave these specific answers. Here, [the rabbis] of blessed memory said: “[Regarding the verse,] ‘You shall not make yourselves impure therewith **and thus become impure,**’ it means, ‘Sin stupefies the heart of a person [who commits it],’ for one should not read ‘and be impurified [*ve’nitmeitem*] [ונטמתם]’; rather, [read it as]: ‘And your [hearts will] be

⁴ Jer. 33:25.

⁵ Ezek. 18:20.

⁶ Prov. 13:21.

⁷ Ps. 25:8.

stupefied [ve'nitamtem] [ונטמטם].'⁸ Similarly, they say in Pirkei Avot 3:8, “Whoever forgets one word of his study, Scripture accounts it to him as if he were mortally guilty, as it is said, ‘But take utmost care and watch yourselves scrupulously, so that you do not forget the things that you saw with your own eyes.’ ”

ויכששוואלים לתקמה חוטא מה ענשו, היא אומרת חטאים נכו, הוא טמטם לבו וגרם שתאבד ממנו התקמה נתחייב בנפשו, ועל זה נאמר "מענות לא יוכל לתקן" כדאמרינן בתגיגה.

Then when they asked Wisdom, “What is the punishment of the sinner? She told them, “Evil will pursue sinners.” He who stupefies his heart and causes the wisdom to be lost from himself is liable for capital punishment. About this it is said, “A twisted thing that cannot be made straight,”⁹ as it is said in tractate Chagigah 9a.

אחר כך שאלו לנבואה נכו, דבסוף מסכת סוטה אמרינן: ראת חטא מביאה לידי חסידות, וחסידות מביאה לידי רוח הקדש, ורוח הקדש מביאה לידי תחיית המתים. ומי שאינו רוא חטא אינו בא לכלל חסידות, ומכל שכן לידי רוח הקדש, ומכל שכן לידי תחיית המתים. וכמו שאמרו י"ל על פסוק "מתים בלי יחיו" נכו. לכן אומרת הנבואה, דהיינו רוח הקדש, הוא לא השתדל להיות רוא חטא ולזכות לרוח הקדש דהיינו הנבואה שאז היה זוכה גם כן לתחיית המתים, משום הכי תמות הנפש החוטאת נכו.

Afterward they asked Prophecy, “What is the punishment of the sinner?” She told him, “The soul that sins, it will die.” For at the end of tractate of Sotah, it is said: “The fear of sin leads to piety; piety leads to Divine inspiration; Divine inspiration leads to the resurrection of the dead.”¹⁰ One who does not have the fear of sin is will not enter the category of piety, and even more so to Divine inspiration, and even more so to the resurrection of the dead. As [the rabbis] of blessed memory say on the verse, “ ‘The dead do not live,’¹¹ common, uneducated people will not [come] alive [in the future] . . . the verse is speaking of one who weakens himself from matters of Torah.”¹² Therefore, Prophecy—which is Divine inspiration, says “[The sinner] will not strive to be fearful of sin and to merit Divine inspiration, which is prophecy, for then he would merit also resurrection of the dead. Because of this, the soul that sins shall die.”

שאלו לתורה נכו דאמרינן במדרש על פסוק "ואתי עזבו ואת תורתתי לא שמרו", הלואי שאומי עזבו ואת תורתתי שמרו שמתוך כך המאור שבה מתזרין למוטב. שהרי לפי מאמר התורה צריך שביא קרבן, שטעם הקרבן הוא להורות על מציאות ה'. וזהו שהתורה אומרת, החוטא שעזב הקב"ה וצדיק לא נתקרב יביא קרבן ויחשוב בלבו שיש מציאות ה'.

“They asked Torah, what is the punishment of the sinner? She told him, ‘He should bring a guilt offering, and he will be forgiven.’ ” For as it is said in a Midrash on the verse, “they

⁸ Yoma 39a.

⁹ Eccl. 1:15.

¹⁰ Mishnah Sotah 9:15.

¹¹ Isaiah 26:14.

¹² Ketubot 111b.

deserted Me and did not keep My Instruction,”¹³ “If only they would desert Me but keep My Instruction, for while doing so, the light that comes will restore them to the good path.”¹⁴ After all, according to the words of the Torah, one must bring a sacrifice, that the purpose of the sacrifice is to instruct about the reality of G-d. This is what the Torah is saying, “The sinner who has left the Holy One, Blessed be He and who has still not drawn close to Him must bring a sacrifice and think in his heart that G-d does exist.”

והקב"ה פי קדוֹשׁ הוא וְחַפֵּץ לְהַצְדִּיק וּמִבְקֵשׁ כְּבִיכּוֹל לִישׁוּל אֶת שְׁלוֹ דְהֵיִינוּ לְקַבֵּץ כָּל הַלְקֵי הַקְדוּשָׁה שְׁנִתְפָּזְרוּ, אָמַר, יַעֲשֶׂה תְּשׁוּבָה, יִתְקַן הַמַּעֲוֹת יִחְזִיר הַנִּיצוּצוֹת לְקְדוּשָׁה וְיִתְכַפֵּר לוֹ.

Finally, the Holy One, Blessed be He, because He is holy and He desires to make righteous and to request, so to speak, to give of Himself, which is to gather all the portions of Holiness that were dispersed, He says, “[The sinner] should repent; he should correct the errors and he should return the sparks to the Holiness, and he will be forgiven.”

וְהַשְׁתָּא רַבָּא שְׁפִיר קָאָמַר כָּל הָעוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה בְּשְׁלִימוֹת וּבְכָל לְבוֹ אֵינוֹ צָרִיךְ וְכוּ', כִּי מַעֲצָמוֹ יוֹדֵה עַל מִצִּיאוֹת ה' בְּלֵי קִרְבּוֹ, אִם יִתְעַסֵּק בָּהּ בְּלֵב שְׁלֵם. וְאַבְרָהָם אָמַר לְפָנָי הַקָּב"ה, שְׂמָא יִחְטְאוּ לְפָנָיָהּ וַיִּבְטְלוּ הַתּוֹרָה וְתַעֲשֶׂה לָהֶם כְּדוֹר הַמַּבּוּל וְכְדוֹר הַפְּלִגָּה, כְּלוֹמַר פְּתוּשׁוּבוֹת הַחֲכָמָה וְהַנְּבוּאָה, שְׁדוֹר הַמַּבּוּל מִתּוֹ וְדוֹר הַפְּלִגָּה רַדְפָתָם רָעָה. אָמַר לוֹ לֹא אַעֲשֶׂה אֵלָא כְּמַאֲמַר הַתּוֹרָה שְׂיָבִיא קִרְבּוֹ וּבְנֵדָאֵי שְׂיַעֲשֶׂה תְּשׁוּבָה, שְׂבִלָא תְּשׁוּבָה "זָבַח רְשָׁעִים תוֹעֵבָה", גְּמַצָּא שְׂחִיבֵי הַקִּרְבָּן גּוֹרֵם לוֹ לְהַתְּנִידוֹת וְלַעֲשׂוֹת תְּשׁוּבָה, וְגוֹרֵם גְּמִי הַתְּקַרְבוֹת לְמִקּוֹם לְאַסּוּף פְּזוּרִים וּלְקִרְבַּי רְחוּקִים. תֵּינַח וְכוּ' בְּזִמְנָא שְׂאִין בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ. כְּבָר תִּקְנִית לָהֶם סֵדֵר וְכוּ', וְזֵהוּ הַטַּעַם שְׂכַשְׁהוּ כּוֹפְרִים בְּעֵינָהּ בִּימֵי אֲלִיָּהוּ, כְּדִי לְהַחְזִירָן לְמוֹטֵב שְׂיִדּוּ עַל מִצִּיאוֹת ה' עֲשֶׂה קִרְבָּן וְאָמַר "וַיִּתְּנִי-לָנוּ שְׁנַיִם פְּרִים", וְאִז עָנּוּ כָּל הָעָם וְאָמְרוּ, "ה' הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים", וְאִין הָכִי גְמִי שְׂאִם לֹא הָיוּ מְבַטְלִים הַתּוֹרָה לֹא הָיוּ חוֹטְאִים, שְׂהַתּוֹרָה "מְגַנָּא וּמְצִילָא", וְזֵהוּ מַה שְׂאָמַר רַבָּא כָּל הָעוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה אֵינוֹ צָרִיךְ וְכוּ', אֵלָא שְׂכִינּוּ שְׂחֲטָאוֹ הוּא סִימָן שְׂבִטְלוּ הַתּוֹרָה, וְהַתִּיקוֹן שְׂלָהֶם הוּא לְלִמּוּד סֵדֵר הַקִּרְבָּנוֹת כְּדִי לְשׁוּב אֵל ה', וְלְחַזֵּר וְלַעֲסוֹק בַּתּוֹרָה.

Now, we can finally understand the teaching of Rava from the Gemara in Menachot. It's fine that he said, “For everyone who engages in Torah completely, and with all his heart, there is no need for a burnt offering, and not a meal offering, and not a sin offering, and not a guilt offering.” For on his own he acknowledges the existence of G-d without an offering, if he will engage in it with a complete heart.

Abraham said before the Holy One, Blessed be He, “Perhaps they will sin before you and will nullify the Torah, and you will act toward them as the generation of the flood and the generation of the dispersion. That is according to the answers of Wisdom and Prophecy, viz, “Evil will pursue sinners” and “The soul that sins, it will die,” for the generation of the flood died, as per Prophecy, and the generation of the dispersion was pursued by evil, as per Wisdom.”

[G-d] said to [Abraham], “I will only act as the Torah says, that he should bring a sacrifice and surely he should repent, for without repentance, “The sacrifice of the wicked

¹³ Jer. 16:11.

¹⁴ Eikhah Rabbah, Petichta 2.

man is an abomination.”¹⁵ It is found that the obligation of the offering causes him to confess and to repent, and also causes him to draw near to the Omnipresent, to gather those sparks that are scattered and to draw near those who are distant from following the Torah.

Abraham also said: “**This works out well** when the Temple is standing, but **when the Temple is not standing**, what will become of them?” [G-d] said to him: “**I have already enacted for them the order of offerings**. When they read them before Me, I will ascribe them [credit] as though they had sacrificed them before Me and I will pardon them for all their transgressions.” **This is the reason that when there were those who denied the fundamental belief in G-d in the days of Eliyahu, in order to return them to good, that they should acknowledge the existence of G-d, [Eliyahu] performed a sacrifice and said, “Let two young bulls be given to us,”**¹⁶ challenging the prophets of Ba’al to bring down fire from Heaven, and when they were unable to do so, Eliyahu successfully beseeched G-d to bring down fire to take Eliyahu’s sacrifice. **Then all the people answered and said, “The L-rd—He is G-d!”**¹⁷

It is indeed so that if they had not nullified the Torah, they would not have sinned, as the Torah “protects and saves.”¹⁸ This is the meaning of what Rava said, that “**For everyone who engages in Torah, there is no need for a burnt offering, and not a meal offering, and not a sin offering, and not a guilt offering.**” **Rather, the fact that they sinned is a sign that they nullified the Torah. Their correction is to learn the order of the offerings in order to return to G-d, and to return and to engage in Torah.**

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¹⁵ Prov. 21:27. Also see Zevachim 7b, in which Rava cites this verse and states that a burnt offering can atone for violating a positive commandment only if it is accompanied by repentance.

¹⁶ I Kings 18:23.

¹⁷ I Kings 18:39.

¹⁸ Sotah 21a.