

Shemini 5772

Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

I know that in Ch'lrz [Chutz LaAretz] this Shabbat is not Parshat Shemini, but here, in Aretz it is Parshat Shemini, so I am asking my friends and relatives in Ch'lrz to hold and save this Dvar Torah until next week, as I will, of course, follow the seder of Eretz Yisrael. The seder of parshi'ot will not synchronize until Parshi'ot Be'har-Bechukotei, May 19.

If one is traveling these weeks between Israel and Ch'lrz there should be no concern about missing a Parsha of Torah reading. Rav Soloveitchik held that the important Mitzvah is to hear a Torah reading every Shabbat, regardless of what Parsha is heard [unless it's one of the "special" Torah readings that relate to the calendaric time of season]

It is interesting to note that Chazal tried very hard to unite the two communities. On the second day of Yom Tov Pesach the Torah reading for Ch'lrz –is Parshat Emor, "Shor Oh Chesev Oh Eiz Ki Yeveled", and in Israel, although it is not Yom Tov but Chol HaMo'ed, the Torah reading is nevertheless, the same. Then, on the third day of Pesach, which is the first day of Chol HaMo'ed in Ch'lrz and the second day of Chol HaMo'ed in Israel- the Torah reading were exactly the same- Parshat Bo- "Kadesh Li Kol BeChor", and so on for all days of Chol HaMo'ed.

Now, Parshat Shemini. At the beginning we read of the Korbanot brought on the eighth day of the Milu'im, at the consecration of the Mishkan. We find [9:2, 9:3] that two Chata'ot [sin offerings were brought, a S'ir Izim [**goat**] and an Eigel [**calf**]. Targum Yonatan ben Uziel writes- "And say to Aharon, take a **calf**...for the **calf** that you worshipped on Mount Sinai...and to Bnei Yisrael say, take a **goat**...for the **goat** that the brothers used to fool Ya'akov [in Mechirat Yosef].

Rav Soloveitchik explained the connection as follows. In Teshuva, it is not enough to have HaKarat HaCheit [recognition of the sin] by the sinner. In true repentance there must also be recognition of the **motive** for the sin. If we analyze the motive of the sin of Mechirat Yosef and the sin of the golden calf, we find that the two sins were the opposite in transgression.

The cause of the transgression of the sale of Yosef, the event that jeopardized all of Jewish history- was a lack of Derech Eretz for their father. The authority of Ya'akov was undermined.

Re'uven wasn't with his brothers at the time of the sale. Where was he? The Midrash states that he went into seclusion with fasting and prayer for what he did when he moved his father's bed from Bilhah's tent to that of his mother, Leah [Bereishit 35:22]. By doing what he did, Re'uven destroyed Ya'akov's authority. Perhaps his intentions were good; he just wanted that Ya'akov sleep in the tent of his mother. He merely carried furniture, a bed, from one place to another. He did it for his mother-he was a devoted son, and he wanted his mother to have the advantage after Rachel died. Yet, Ya'akov seemed to favor one of the Shifchot over his mother. Re'uven's intentions were good, but he didn't realize that his actions were destroying Ya'akov's authority. Until that point, Ya'akov's will was holy to his children, Re'uven's action of opposition and insurrection undermined Ya'akov's jurisdiction.

No matter how angry the brothers were with Yosef, they wouldn't dare do anything to him for fear of father Ya'akov. What Re'uven did broke the ice. His motives may have been wonderful, but it was an act of defiance of Ya'akov. Once his father's control was lifted, anything could happen. This was the sin of S'ir Izim, the goat which the brothers killed to fool Ya'akov. It symbolized the revolt against Ya'akov by his sons. Thus, the atonement for this sin- is the S'ir Izim.

What was the motive for the sin of the golden calf? The people said, "For Moshe, the man that took us out of Mitzrayim-we do not know what happened to him" [Shemot 32:1]. The Gemara Shabbat [89a] gives us the full details of this event. The Satan confused the people, and they made a miscalculation of six hours; when Moshe did not descend, they presumed that he had died.

Let us say that Moshe had died. It was G-d that took them out of Mitzrayim- Moshe was but a Shali'ach, a messenger; that was it. HaShem took them out and brought them to Har Sinai. Moshe's name is not even mentioned in the Haggadah because Ge'ulah came only through G-d. Did they imagine that G-d would take them out of Mitzrayim to the desert and abandon them there? Apparently, they thought that the entire Covenant with HaShem depended upon Moshe, that all of Knesset Yisrael and the Havtachot [Ve'hi She'amda La'avoteinu] depended solely upon Moshe.

This was their mistake and reason for their sin. They were too dependent upon one person.

It is forbidden to depend entirely upon a “basar ve’dam”, a human being. Absolute reliance can only be in HaShem. The Jewish people had Emunah in Moshe, but not in HaKadosh Baruch-Hu. Had they had complete, impeccable faith in HaShem, the sin would not have happened. Their mistake was that they thought Moshe was the Go’el, and that is a misconception. That is why Moshe’s name does not appear in the Haggadah.

That is why Bnei Yisrael had to bring two Korbanot. The **goat** was due to a lack of respect for Ya’akov Avinu, and the **calf** was due to complete dependency upon Moshe. Ultimate reliance can only be in HaKadosh Baruch-Hu.