

Daniel Kahneman

Daniel Kahneman,¹ a Nobel Prize-winning behavioral psychologist, passed away this week. He is best-known for the research described in his book *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, in which he argued that human beings practice two modes of thought:

- Naturally, we think slowly and logically.
- But all of that neural processing is taxing, so we often think quickly, taking shortcuts to reach conclusions which may be incorrect.

These two styles of thinking are reflected in two korbanot - one Fast, and one Slow.

The Dark Side of Modern *Chipazon*

Our first *Korban pesach* was fast and anxious. We talked about this in the derashah on Parshat Bo;² Hashem's imperative of rushing הפזון demanded, paradoxically, that we eat this royal korban in haste, with a slave's emotional turmoil and lack of control. In that derashah I highlighted a benefit of the *chipazon* for our ancestors in Egypt – we re-lived our traumatic slavery, but we gave it a positive, therapeutic ending with yetziat mitzrayim.

That initial *chipazon* has shaped Pesach for thousands of years, in both Halachah and popular practice:

- Halachically –
 - We produce matzah with *chipazon*, mixing and kneading and rolling out and baking in 18 minutes.
 - We consume chametz and burn it in a sprint on Erev Pesach, careful to finish in time.
 - And then at the Seder, we swallow a shiur of matzah within a defined period of time - which may be as little as three minutes – and we race to finish the afikoman by the deadline.
- Beyond Halachah, in a very limited amount of time before Pesach we
 - Hurry to clean our homes and turn over and kasher the kitchen,
 - We rush around stores in a scavenger hunt to find all of the products we need, and
 - We plan recipes and meals, and prepare them.
- If Adar is the month of Simchah, Nisan is the month of *Chipazon!*

Korban olah: Give Your Time

But if the *korban pesach* of Parshat Bo was fast, the *korban olah* that opens our parshah takes the opposite, slow approach, as explained by Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin, a.k.a. the Netziv.

The body of the *korban olah* is burned on the mizbeiach at the end of the day's activities.³ A gemara⁴ licenses the kohen on duty to burn the korban at any time during the night, but the Netziv noticed that the Torah actually says **היא העולה על** היא העולה על – it burns on the altar all through the night, until morning. So he wrote, “The instruction to the kohanim is that they see to it that the flesh of the *korban olah* should be placed [on the altar] and consumed, little by little, until the morning. It should not be consumed immediately, lest the altar be empty of the offering.”⁵

This slow, smoldering process is counterintuitive. Ours is such a time-conscious religion! זריזין מקדימין, we perform mitzvot at the first opportunity!⁶ *Chipazon!* Burn the korban as quickly as possible!

But it's a gorgeous epilogue for the korban process.⁷ At this point the gift has been given, the donor's vow fulfilled, and any necessary atonement achieved. The sponsors of the korban have gone home, the instruments of the leviyim are silent,

¹ Interesting side note: I'm told he was the nephew of the Rosh Yeshiva of Ponovezh, Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahneman

² <https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/1086554/Bo-5784Treating-the-Trauma>

³ Vayikra 6:2

⁴ Megillah 21a

⁵ Haameik Davar to Vayikra 6:2

⁶ Pesachim 4a. Indeed, meforshim ask why Hashem says זריזין, as opposed to just telling Moshe to convey the instructions as usual. Perhaps it's a product of the counterintuitive nature of this command?

⁷ I call it the epilogue for reasons I detail in the text – but it's worth noting that this is also the time when the korban actually becomes an *olah*, as it is burned entirely on the mizbeiach

and almost all of the kohanim have shed their splendid uniforms and nodded off to sleep. At this stage, it is only the barefoot kohen standing alone in a darkened Temple in worship of his Creator, a warm bed waiting somewhere else. Hashem beckons to this kohen: give Me your time.⁸ Forego your other pursuits. Stay with Me.

We see a similar epilogue in the mitzvah of *linah*, in which people who bring certain korbanot are obligated to remain in Yerushalayim overnight, after their avodah is complete.⁹ In a third example, a gemara¹⁰ describes Shemini Atzeret as one last day on which Hashem asks us to remain, after the seven days of Succot are complete. The goal is for us to take unrushed, *unchipazoned*, thoughtful time to remain with Hashem.¹¹

Pesach, Fast and Slow

Both the *chipazon* of the *korban pesach* and the slow process of the *korban olah* are important for our Pesach celebrations.

Chipazon can be beneficial, despite the risks of thinking fast. The Seder provides a great example. Some of us are fortunate enough to have at our Seder young children or restless teens, or guests who are not accustomed to a long Seder. For them, a slow, reflective Seder could turn into a nightmare. Trapped at their seats while people talk about what they've learned and read, they wonder when we're going to get to the food or the singing or the afikoman, and then when we're going to bed. We need to know how to deploy *chipazon* at our Seder, to help people who need it.

But slow reflection is also important for Pesach.

- Beforehand, in sitting down with a Haggadah or a Chumash, reading about yetziat mitzrayim slowly and contemplating what that felt like, and what Hashem did for us.
- During the Seder, during Hallel, where the participants are capable, giving our time to feel the moment and to feel our proximity to Hashem.
- And in that gorgeous epilogue, after the Seder, after cleaning up, sitting with Shir haShirim, singing of Hashem's love for us throughout history.
- And this Pesach has five days of Shabbat and Yom Tov for Jews outside of Israel, not to mention chol hamoed; we can carve out some of that time to be like the kohen, lingering in the dark, shifting the *korban olah* on the mizbeiach. To us, too, Hashem commands: Give this great care and attention, all night, until morning.

Closer

Professor Kahneman and Professor Vernon Smith earned the 2002 Nobel Prize in Economics for showing how our speedy mental shortcuts can lead to irrational behavior. The *korban olah* offers an antidote: Shelve the *chipazon*, stop rushing, give your time to tend to the smoldering *korban olah*. Reflect, and just be with Hashem.

⁸ The kohen is not "taking his time". The kohen is giving it.

⁹ Chagigah 17a-b

¹⁰ Succah 55b, and see Rashi to Vayikra 23:36 for the popular formulation of קשה עלי פרידתכם

¹¹ Worth contemplating: Human beings are both body and soul, formed that way by Hashem in separate acts of Creation in Gan Eden, and we strenuously apply both in our service of Hashem. The active *chipazon* of Pesach presses our bodies to their limits; the reflective overnight avodah of the *korban olah* does likewise for our neshamot. Parshat Bo harnessed our bodies; Parshat Tzav harnesses our souls.