Points to Ponder

Shimini/Parah 5779

**זֶ֧ה הַדָּבָ֛ר This is the thing that Hashem commanded to do (9:6)** - What is the intent of the words Zeh HaDavar? The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 12:8) notes that the reference is to Bris Milah. **Or HaChaim** asks what the connection to Milah here is. He explains that the intent is the removal of any impediment between the people and Hashem. The Orlah here being the Orlah of the heart. **Beis HaLevi** (Ki Sisa) notes that Moshe was actually afraid of the danger of allowing the people to proceed unbridled. Indeed, he notes, the sin of the Eigel happened because the people expressed an idea that they decided would bring spirituality but they were not told to do so. Hence, the Eigel experience taught them to be cautious when approaching Hashem. **Rav Avraham Rivlin Shlita** adds that this is the intent of the command of Zeh HaDavar. One needs to take the personal passion of religious expression and express it in the manner that Hashem expected of us and designed for us.

**וַיִּשָּׂ֨א אַֽהֲרֹ֧ן אֶת־יָדָ֛יו  And Aharon lifted his hands to the people (9:22)** - We learn that in the olden days the primary style of Tefillah was with outstretched arms. **Rabbi Akiva Eiger** (OC 89:1) notes that this  is the style of the nations of the world today. Therefore, we cannot Daven that way. **Rav Hunter** (Purim 32) asks why we need to cancel a positive practice simply because others ruined it? **Rav Moti Greenberg Shlita** explains that when we are commanded to separate between Kodesh and Chol it includes making a clear demarcation in areas where the lines tend to get a bit fuzzy. It follows that even if a practice might be “nice” or it originated in the Torah (as opposed to an actual Mitzva) if it were to be corrupted by a different group, it is ripe for removal from our practice in order to curb assimilation.

**ה֩וּא אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּ֨ר  This is what Hashem had said (10:3)** - Where did Hashem say this? **Ramban** explains that Hashem didn’t really say it, but He constantly demonstrates it through His actions. **Rav Yisrael Reisman Shlita** quoted **Rav Schwab** that this is our intent in the Davening when we praise U’Divarecha Yasim Al Leebo -- the one who puts Hashem’s words on his heart. If we know the word from the Torah what is added from the words on the heart? Rav Schwab explains that when one sees that Hashem is sending him a message in a certain way and he gets the message, this is the praise of “U’Devarecha Yasim Al Leebo” .

**רָֽאשֵׁיכֶ֥ם אַל־תִּפְרָ֣עוּ  Do not uncover your heads (10:6)** - The Gemara (Moed  Katan 14b) notes that for the Kohein Gadol, all year long is the same as a Yom Tov by the rest of us as far as the practice of Aveilus is concerned. How are we to understand this? **Rav Schachter Shlita** would often quote **Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** who noted that when we are in the mikdash (as we are on Yom Tov) we stand in front of Hashem (Lifnei Hashem). This creates the sense of Simcha -- that joy of standing Lifnei Hashem. The Kohein Gadol is not to leave the presence of Hashem and as such is not allowed to be involved in Aveilus practices which would run counter to the obligation of Simcha. Simcha is being in the presence of Hashem. Aveilus, notes Rav Schachter, is when one is unable to enter His presence.

**וְהִנֵּ֣ה שׂרָ֑ף  And behold it was burned up (10:16) - The Lubavitcher Rebbe ztl.** pointed out that the difference between the psak of Moshe and of Aharon here is based on their perspectives. Moshe lived to transmit Hashem’s Torah to the people. Aharon lived to raise the people to Hashem’s Torah. Torah does not change but people do. Thus, Moshe came from the perspective that Torah is uniformly applicable in all circumstances. Aharon came from the perspective of trying to take the timeless Torah and apply it effectively on different levels. The Rebbe added that we need to strive for a Moshe perspective in our lives while allowing for an Aharon approach in the lives of others.

**זֹ֤את הַֽחַיָּה֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר תֹּֽאכְל֔וּ This is the Chaya that you shall consume (11:2)** - The Possuk begins with a conversation about a Chaya and concludes with the ideas of a Beheima. Why? **Rashi** explains that the word Chaya here refers to living things and that Bnei Yisrael are commanded to eat selectively since we are different. Rashi cites the famous analogy in the Midrash Tanchuma that compares our eating to that of a different Choleh. **Rav Yechiel Yitzchak Perr Shlita** explained that we are different from animals -- roaches eat paint. We don’t. Camels eat thistles and thorns, we do not. Dogs eat rotten meat -- we do not. Humans need a diet of health since our eating is designed in order to eat with an eye towards Nitzchiyus. When we eat, we sanctify ourselves through food and that sanctification IS the reason we merit life itself.

**לְהַבְדִּ֕יל בֵּ֥ין הַטָּמֵ֖א וּבֵ֣ין הַטָּהֹ֑ר To separate between the Tamai and the Tahor (11:47) - Rashi** explains that the intent here is to highlight things that are Tamai to US that need to be distinguished from that which is Tahor to US -- like the difference between a situation where the Simanim were partially Shechted as opposed to where they were majorly Shechted. **Rav Wolbe ztl.** points out that the difference between half and majority is a small amount. Still, it is a Havdala. In Kedusha matters the difference can simply be a little bit but it makes ALL the difference.

**Maftir:  Parshas Parah** -- It is often noted that Parshas Parah is identified by Tosafos (Berachos 13a) and others as one of the Torah readings whose obligation is M’Deoriasa. What is the nature of this biblical obligation? **Rav Schachter Shlita** would often mention the explanation of the **Steipler** that the biblical obligation is the obligation of Beis Din to warn the people not to enter the Mikdash Tamai (Rav Schachter would add that similarly, a  sign exists at the entrance to Har HaBayis from the Rabbanut, warning the people not to enter the Makom HaMikdash in a state of Tumah). This warning is best given when the Tzibbur gathers and should be provided now so that we are properly warned when the Mikdash is rebuilt B’Miheira. The **Torah Temimah** suggests that perhaps it is a different issue -- namely it is the kiyum  of the obligation to remember the Cheit HaEigel. Rather than have a Shabbos dedicated to the reading of a sad section, we use the principle of Parah Adumah which is often recognized for the comment of Yavo HaEm V’Yikanach Tzoas Binah (Let the mother (cow) come and clean up the mess of her child) as fulfillment of the obligation.

**Haftorah - Like the sheep of Yirushalaim during the Yom Tov season (Yechezkel 36:38)- Rav Leib Mitchenberg ztl.** describes the month of Adar in the Yirushalayim of old. He noted how the month began with the people rushing to pay their Shekalim obligation and, as the month continued, how they lined up to become Tahor (See Mishna Parah 12:4). This needed to be done before Rosh Chodesh because thereafter people would need to run around in order to put together their groups for Korban Pesach -- at which time, the marketplace became filled with sheep for selection for Korban Pesach. And who could forget the excitement and the crowds for the actual Shechitas HaPesach? May we get the chance to re-experience this B’Miheira B’Yameinu.