

Parshas Tzav – Petirah of Rav Chaim Kanievsky Zatzal

There is a pasuk in this parshah that is explained in a fascinating way by the Gemarah, and the same sentiment seems to be repeated in the Haftorah, and I believe it relates very strongly to the petirah of Rav Chaim zatzal. I'm not qualified to be maspid, and we can't be maspid on Shabbos, but I wanted to relate a feeling I have based on my interactions with Rav Chaim Zatzal.

The pasuk says after the parshah concludes with all the halachos of korbanos, which span through Vayikrah and Tzav:

זאת התורה לעלה למנחה ולחטאת ולאשם ולמלואים ולזכח השלמים

Seemingly summarizing all we have learned, the pasuk says that this is the halachos of Oleh, Mincha, Chatas, Asham, Miluim and Shlamim. However, the Gemarah in the very end of Minachos [דף קי עמוד ב] has a different approach to the pasuk:

אמר ריש לקיש Mai Dkntib zat haTorah leuolah l'mnachah v'lchata'ah v'la'ashem k'l ha'uvos ba'Torah ca'ilio
ha'keriv u'olah m'nachah chata'ah v'ashem amr rava h'ai leuolah l'mnachah u'olah v'mnachah mi'bavi lih ala amr
rava k'l ha'uvos ba'Torah aiino zrich la'olah v'la'chata'ah v'la'mnachah v'la'ashem

Reish Lakish says, that the pasuk means anyone who learns Torah is as if he has brought the korbanos mentioned. Rava disagrees and says, if so, it should say, that this is the Torah – oleh, mincha etc. Why does it add a 'lamed – la'oleh' and so on? Rava therefore says, that someone who learns Torah doesn't require an oleh or Minchah or chatas or asham.

What is the difference between Reish Lakish and Rava? The Chafetz Chaim explains that whenever we find the term 'ca'ilio' in Chazal it means that the thing we are comparing to is actually much greater. For example, it says – **כל הכוועו.ca'ilio עובד עבודה זרה** – whoever rages is as if he served an idol. Now, obviously serving an idol is much worse than raging, and we are merely comparing raging to idolatry. Here too, Reish Lakish is saying that learning Torah is as if one brought the korbanos, but essentially bringing the korbanos is greater. However, Rava disagrees, and he explains the pasuk on the contrary, someone who learns Torah doesn't require an oleh, mincha, or chatas – learning Torah is much greater! It's fascinating! According to Rava, the Torah just took all this time through Vayikra and Tzav to detail all the korbanos, and it concludes by saying, learning Torah is much greater!

This sentiment seems to repeat in the Haftorah. This Haftorah isn't leined often, because Parshas Tzav is either Shabbos Hagadol or Parshas Parah. It happens to be the pesukim just before and just at the end of the Haftorah of Tisha Bi'Av. The pasuk begins in Yirmiyah:

כִּי לֹא דָבַרְתִּי אֶת אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם וְלֹא צִוִּיתִיכֶם בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֲוֹתָם מְאֵץ מִצְרָיִם עַל דְּבָרַי עוֹלָה וְזַבְחָה. כִּי אִם אַתְּ
הָדָבָר הַזֶּה צִוִּיתִי אֲוֹתָם לְאמֹר – שְׁמַעַן בְּקוֹלִי וְהִיְתִּי לְכֶם לְאֱלֹהִים וְאַתֶּם תָּהִיו לִי לְעֵם וְהַלְכָתָם בְּכָל הַדָּרָךְ.
אֲשֶׁר אָצַח אֲתֶכְם לְמַעַן יִתְבּוּ לְכֶם.

I didn't tell your forefathers, and I didn't command them the day I took them out of Mitzrayim about an oleh or korban. I only commanded them this thing – listen to My voice, and I will be your God and you will be My nation, and you will walk in all of the path that I command you, so that it will be good for you!

Here we have the Haftorah of the Korbanos which you would imagine would encourage the bringing of Korbanos, and instead it gives over a very different message! Did I ever ask you to bring korbanos? I never commanded bringing Korbanos – all I want is for you to listen to My commandments and follow in My ways!

The vision of Rav Chaim Kanievsky zatzal that developed over the last 20 years, is that he served literally like the prophet – the navi of Klal Yisrael. People would approach him with all questions of life and death and beyond. He would be asked why they are sick, and he would provide miraculous approaches to receiving a cure – often involving learning a particular masechta. They would want to know how to be zocheh to a shidduch, children, what they should name their children, how to be successful with their children, and all other life questions, and so many other things. Rav Chaim zatzal was a baal Ruach Hakodesh on the highest level. Stories of such abound.

One story I recall hearing from someone who was close to him, was that a rebbi had brought his talmidim to visit Rav Chaim, as was the practice – it was the 'end of year' trip in Eretz Yisrael. As the talmidim left, Rav Chaim mentioned to the rebbi that he believes this certain talmid was struggling with Basar Bi'Chalav! The rebbi took the talmid aside, and eventually he admitted that one time, he was still fleishigs and yet couldn't hold back and ate a piece of milk chocolate. Since then, he'd been having trouble keeping the halachos of milchig and fleishigs at all! The rebbi worked with him to overcome this, but eventually went back to Rav Chaim and asked him, how

did he know?! Rav Chaim said, that the Zohar says someone who is nichshal in Basar Bi'Chalav, has the image of a goat (**גַּע**) imprinted on his forehead. Rav Chaim saw such an image on this bachur!

But when I was a bachur, no one knew him in that capacity at all. Rav Chaim was someone you asked a stirah in Tosafos in different masechtos, you asked him what would be the source for an unusual statement of Chazal, which no one knew where it was from, you asked him to explain difficult concepts in Medrashim, and so on. But this? I remember when I was in Brisk, my chavrushah was redt a shidduch, which he agreed to and was slated to go out when he came home for Pesach. On Purim, someone brought him to a mekubal and he asked for a brachah for his upcoming date. The mekubal asked for the names, and once he heard the names he said, 'There's no way you can go out with this person! If you would get married terrible things would come out of it – your names don't match up.' He was very distressed by this, and didn't know what to do about it. Someone in Yerushalayim told him he should go speak to Rav Chaim Kanievsky zatzal. I remember us thinking, 'Who? Rav Chaim? About this? What connection could there be? Rav Chaim isn't busy with names and things like that!' But he went, and Rav Chaim assured him it is nothing, and he can be comfortable going out!

As a bachur, Rav Chaim represented someone who very simply knew the whole Torah inside and out. He knew the whole Torah not because of any special brilliance, or extreme ability and capability – no! He knew the whole Torah because he simply didn't stop learning, again and again, until he knew it all!

But the greatest thing to us at the time, was that you could write him letters – and he would answer! It seems his grandson would read them to him while he ate lunch, and he would write a few word answers – sometimes if you were lucky, you got a whole line. I have four such letters – I wrote about anything and everything, from Bava Kama, to Eruvin, to Hilchos Tefillah, to other esoteric questions, and he answered them all, (except one where he wrote **אין ידוע מה אתה** **נו** – I don't know what you are talking about!) What an amazing inspiration this was for us all – there was no reason why we couldn't be the same gadol like he was!

In this capacity, it reminded me of these pesukim, Hashem doesn't need or want Korbanos – all He really wants is for us to learn His Torah. All that we know now of Rav Chaim, was the natural outgrowth of someone who had nothing in his life except Torah. Someone who has Torah, doesn't need an oleh or chatas – Torah is much more than all those!

The last pasuk in the Haftorah says:

כה אמר ה' אל יתהיל חכם בחכמתו ואל יתהיל הגבור בגבורתו אל יתהיל עשיר בעשרו. כי אם בזאת
יתהיל המתהיל השכל וידע אותי כי אני ה' עשה חסד ומשפט וצדקה בארץ כי באלה חפצתי נאם ה'.

Hashem said, don't be haughty and proud of your wisdom, nor of your strength or wealth. The only thing worthy of being proud is knowing Hashem! This was something that Rav Chaim represented to us on every level. He was the son of the Steipler and the nephew of the Chazon Ish, and lived in Bnei Brak for just about his whole life. You'd think he had all the ability in the world, having a photographic memory and brilliant head. Yet that was never his approach. He always pounded and learned and learned and covered more and more ground. The Steipler was even concerned that he was taking such a different approach than the typical yeshiva bachur learning bi'iyun, and the Chazon Ish reassured him saying, 'Don't worry, he'll end up in the same place!' His ability was not the 'chacham' and he certainly didn't care for strength or wealth – it was simple amailus bi'Torah on the highest level, learning and learning and never stopping.

I saw how he lives – there was nothing but Torah in that house! I was there with my father in law, and I remember he was making havdalah, with many people in attendance. We had permission to remain until after, and while everybody was filing out after Havdalah, Rav Chaim was sitting in a swivel chair. As soon as he finished havdalah, he swiveled to the side where there was a washing sink, and while he washed, they removed the havdalah and placed a roll in front of him. He made hamotzi, turned to wash mayim achronim, and the plate was removed. He swiveled back, bentched, and there was already his shtender and a sefer in front of him! We then disturbed him with our questions, but he was waiting to get to his Gemarah!

While I was there, I looked at his shelves, and saw some of his notebooks. He had a little one which I opened, and it went through all of Rambam, perek after perek, and summarized each halachah in a word or two. It was clearly something he had made to assist in remembering the

Rambam, and it was a wonderful idea to try and summarize it that way. He learned through Rambam every year, but he employed whatever measures he could to try and remember it all!

One of the korbanos in the parshah is the Korban Todah which was brought when someone went through a life-threatening situation. The korban is unique in that it has 40 challos, and 10 of them are chametz. Normally, the Beis Hamikdash was like Pesach all year, no Chametz was allowed in any of the korbanos. But the korban Todah did have chametz – why? The Avnei Nezer brings from a Rishon, that chametz typically represents haughtiness and gaavah, which we avoid at all costs. But when someone goes through a life-threatening situation, it is very humbling, and at that point, when he is doing teshuvah, we want him to remember what brought his to that point, so we remind him of his gaavah.

I was thinking another pshat, which I saw something similar in the sefer Mishchas Shemen, that it is true we must beat down our gaavah in every way – but there is one place where it isn't good to knock ourselves down, and that is in Avodas Hashem. There, instead of telling ourselves how nothing we are, we should be realizing our great potential and self-worth – **ו.יגבה לבו בדרכי ה'** – I thought that this represents the last pasuk in the Haftorah. The Todah had 40 challos, 4 sets of 10. Three of the sets were matzah and one was Chametz. This is what the pasuk is saying, don't be haughty in these three things, wisdom, strength, and wealth, those are the 30 challos of matzah, but you can be proud of your knowledge of Hashem – that is the 10 challos of Chametz!

Why can you be proud of knowledge of Torah and Hashem? Because the Torah is compared to an ocean – **רחבת מני ים** – why is it like an ocean? When you look at an ocean you have absolutely no idea how deep it is. It could be one foot deep. You dive in and you start to see, wow! It is quite deep. You now have a knowledge somewhat of the depth, but you see it is way deeper than you have gone yet. You go deeper, and now you know even more of the depth, but yet you still see it stretches down way deeper! That's why you can always be proud of what you know, but it won't lead to gaavah, because the knowledge only reinforces in your mind how little you actually know of Torah!

Rav Chaim would publish seforim just during the leap years, because normally he had such a strict regimen of learning Kol Hatorah, that he didn't have time to organize his chiddushim. During the

extra month he would prepare his chiddushim for printing. His seforim as well, just emphasized to us, that when you know Kol Hatorah, then the chiddushim flow forth like a wellspring! The seforim he wrote are brilliant – but the brilliance is the fact that he knows everything. When you know everything, then each Tosafos, is connected to three others in Shas, which are contradicted by this Gemarah, that Medrash, another Rambam, and so on and so forth. The questions are followed by answers, the answers are reinforced by proofs – all brilliant and clear – and not because of special high IQ – no! Simply because of unparalleled hasmadah and bekius in all of Torah. This is what Rav Chaim always represented to us, and was a Yeshiva Bachur's source of so much inspiration.

We can only hope that someone will be able to provide that level of inspiration for us all. May Rav Chaim be a *מליץ ישר* for us all.