

## Parshat Tsav 5782

The commentators have always sought to establish a connection between the ritual rigours of the offerings, and man's inner world. In the early part of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, R.Bachya ben Asher wrote that: "the rewards of bringing the burnt offering (the *Olah*) are great, as this offering brings atonement for uncontrolled impure thoughts and forbidden desires that take hold of the heart."

The precise location of the slaughter of an offering within the courtyard of the Mishkan is important. We are told to slaughter the *Olah* "at the side of the altar, to the north, before God." (Vayikra 1:11). The *Chatat* offering must be slaughtered in the same location as the *Olah*. "This is the law of the *Chatat*; in the place where you slaughter the *Olah*, slaughter the *Chatat* before God." (Vayikra 6:18)

The great Chassidic rebbe of Sochazew, Rabbi Shmuel Bornstein, the Shem MiShmuel, asks: What is the nature of the north? Why is the north so closely associated with the *Olah* offering? Why is the *Chatat* offering associated with the north by means of its association with the *Olah*?

The word used for north in these verses is *Tzafon*. This word is familiar to us from the Pesach seder, where stage of the Afikoman is known as *Tzafun*, because this is the stage of the hidden or covered Matzah. In a similar way, the word *matzpun*, from the same root, refers to man's hidden essence, his conscience, and for this reason the word *Tzafon* is eminently suited to represent man's intellect. The *Olah* is brought for sins of the intellect, sinful thoughts that never became actions. However, the *Chatat* is brought for accidental actions, where there was no premeditation involved. In effect the *Chatat* is brought for action without thought, surely the opposite of the sins of the intellect represented by the *Olah*. Why then is the *Chatat* slaughtered in the north?

Shem MiShmuel suggests that when a person accidentally sins there is more to the situation than mere chance. The person actually has a strong desire to sin but refrains from the sinful action because he knows that the Torah forbids it. Despite this conscious self-control, his desire for the act creates a connection between his psyche and the deed. As a result, when the person's guard is down and he is not thinking, his reflex is to perform the forbidden act.

So far we have considered the connection between the ritual of the offerings and how these relate to man's inner world. Now let us consider how the intention at the time of the offering can impact the status of the offering itself.

A series of verses in Parashat Tzav consider the time limitations for the eating of vow or voluntary offerings: "But if the sacrifice of his offering be a vow or voluntary offering, it shall be eaten on the same day that he offers his sacrifice; and on the morrow also the remainder of it may be eaten. But that which remains of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burnt with fire. And if any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering be eaten at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted; neither shall it be imputed to him who offers it; it shall be an abomination (*piggul*) and the person that eats of it shall bear his iniquity." (Vayikra 7:16-18)

The simple meaning of these verses is that the sacrifices must be eaten within their designated times. Eating the flesh outside of the designated time would retroactively disqualify the sacrifice. However, Chazal understood these verses to mean something quite different. Rambam explains that "if any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering be eaten at all on the third day" refers only to a situation where there was an intention at the time of offering that some of the flesh be eaten on the third day. In this case the entire offering was deemed to be *piggul* and was disqualified.

Rashbam, in his commentary on verse 7:18, states that "the Rabbis uprooted the plain meaning of the verse". Rashbam sees the law of *piggul* as having an exegetic basis: the Rabbis *uprooted* the plain meaning of the text (using exegetical analysis). But why did the Sages feel the need to make this revolutionary modification to the plain meaning of the text?

Possibly Chazal wanted to avoid the well-known issue that accompanies the sacrificial service, the risk of focussing on the sacrificial order, without the requisite spiritual preparation. In the well-known words of the prophet: "With what shall I come before the Lord...? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings and with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams...? He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly and to love true loyalty, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micha 6:6-8)