

# DARCHAI NOAM - דרכי נועם

## “Its ways are ways of pleasantness”

(Mishlei 3:17)

Parashat Nitzavim  
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How can the Parasha help us grow this week?

### Nitzavim – The Rosh Hashanah korban

The Mishnah in Rosh Hashanah<sup>1</sup> teaches us that judgement is passed for different aspects of sustenance during the Chagim. On Pesach we are judged concerning the year's grain harvest. On Shavuot, we are judged concerning the fruit of the trees. And on Sukkot we are judged concerning the amount of rain the world will receive for the year.

Interestingly, at the time that we are judged for a certain thing, we sacrifice some of that thing to Hashem. On Pesach, when we are judged for grains, we offer the korban omer which is made from barley. On Shavuot when we are judged for fruits, we bring the Bikkurim (the first fruits)<sup>2</sup>. And on Sukkot, when we are judged for rain, we have the water pouring ceremony ('nisuch hamayim') in the Bet Hamikdash. This demonstrates emunah – we trust that Hashem will provide us with what we need so we are confident to give up some of that thing. It also demonstrates an acknowledgement of the source of all of our bounty.

Even in current times, without the Bet Hamikdash, we give up something as a “sacrifice” during every chag. On Pesach we give up our chametz. On Shavuot we give up our sleep. On Sukkot we give up our homes. And on Yom Kippur we give up our food.<sup>3</sup> What about Rosh Hashanah? What do we give up on Rosh Hashanah? Have a think. The answer will be revealed in the next paragraph...

The Mishnah in Rosh Hashanah referred to above teaches us that there is a fourth time of the year when judgement is rendered. On Rosh Hashanah all living creatures are judged. Each of us will come before Hashem one at a time for Divine inspection. Thus, on Rosh Hashanah we offer up ourselves! We are the korbanot!

There are a number of sources that support this idea that we ourselves are the korbanot on Rosh Hashanah.<sup>4</sup>

For example, the Ashkenazi custom is to begin reciting Selichot at least four days before Rosh Hashanah.<sup>5</sup> What is the significance of this timing? In relation to the Rosh Hashanah korban, the Torah writes: “On the first day of the seventh month... you shall make (ועשיתם) a burnt offering...”.<sup>6</sup> All other korbanot are commanded in the Torah with the word ‘והקרבתם’ (and you shall offer as a korban). But on Rosh Hashanah we are commanded to ‘make’ the korban. The commentators<sup>7</sup> explain that on Rosh Hashanah we are to view ourselves as if we are the korban. Therefore, we must inspect ourselves for four days before being sacrificed. This is parallel to the law that a korban has to be inspected before being offered to ensure that it does not have any disqualifying blemishes. So too, during the days of selichot we inspect ourselves to ensure that we are free of blemishes before we are “offered up as a korban” on Rosh Hashanah.

However, there are only two types of korbanot that require a full four days of inspection<sup>8</sup> - the korban Pesach (which is offered on Erev Pesach and consumed at the Pesach seder) and the korban tamid which is offered up twice a day, every single day, at the beginning and the end of daily proceedings in the Bet Hamikdash. The korban Pesach is obviously related to Pesach, so it must be that on Rosh Hashanah we are being compared to

<sup>1</sup> Chapter 1, Mishnah 2.

<sup>2</sup> The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 16a) actually links the offering of the two loaves to the blessing of the fruits on Shavuot.

<sup>3</sup> Does this principle apply to the Rabbinic festivals as well? Perhaps on Purim we give up our sechel (sense) when we get drunk! Perhaps on Chanukah we give up our (hopefully) low cholesterol when we eat all of those doughnuts and latkes!

<sup>4</sup> Based on an article published by The International Beis Horaa, Parashat Haazinu 5785 - [www.dinonline.org](http://www.dinonline.org).

<sup>5</sup> Rama, Orach Chaim 581:1. There is also a preference to start selichot on Motzai Shabbat. Thus, if there are not four days between Shabbat and Rosh Hashanah (like this year) we start selichot on the previous Motzai Shabbat. This way we satisfy both opinions – starting selichot on Motzai Shabbat and reciting selichot for a minimum of 4 days.

<sup>6</sup> Parashat Pinchas, Bamidbar 29: 1-2.

<sup>7</sup> See Mishnah Baruah (581:6).

<sup>8</sup> Those learning Daf Yomi just started seder Kodashim and are about to be immersed in these laws. It's a whole new world!

the korban tamid. But what is the connection between the korban tamid and Rosh Hashanah? The answer is revealed in a fascinating Midrash.

The Midrash<sup>9</sup> teaches us that Hashem initially planned to give us a chag in each of the spring and summer months. In Nissan we would celebrate Pesach. In Iyar, Pesach Sheni. Shavuos in Sivan. Rosh Hashana in Tammuz. Yom Kippur in Av, and Sukkot in Elul. However, due to the sin of the Golden Calf (which took place on 17 Tamuz), Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot were pushed off until Tishrei, and Shemini Atzeret was added as Tishrei's own festival.

This suggests that the fast of 17 of Tammuz (which will eventually become a day of joy and celebration<sup>10</sup>) was originally meant to be the chag of Rosh Hashanah! Due to our past and present sins, however, it is currently a day of mourning. One of the things that we mourn on 17 Tamuz is the cessation of the korban tamid. Now we see the deep connection between Rosh Hashanah and the korban tamid. On Rosh Hashanah we transform ourselves into a korban tamid, in an attempt to rectify the cessation of the korban tamid offering in the Bet Hamikdash.

But there is more. Let's explore the deeper meaning behind the korban tamid.

There is a fascinating debate between the Tanaim as to which pasuk of the Torah is the most important.<sup>11</sup> Various pasukim are suggested.

- Rabbi Akiva suggests: "*Love your fellow as yourself*" (Vayikra 19:18).
- Ben Zoma suggests: "*Shema Yisrael*" (Devarim 6:4).
- Ben Azzai suggests: "*He [Hashem] made him [i.e. Adam] in His image*" (Breishit 5:1).

Shimon Ben Pazi said: "we have found a more inclusive verse than that and it is *"The first lamb you shall sacrifice in the morning and the second lamb you shall sacrifice in the evening."* (Shemot 29:39 and Bamidbar 28:4) [which refers to the daily Tamid offering brought every morning and evening].

Rabbi Ploni stood up and said that the halacha is in accordance with Ben Pazi.

The first three opinions make sense as they refer to fundamental teachings of the Torah. But the significance of fourth opinion (which is actually the authoritative opinion) is puzzling. How can the verse about the daily offering of a lamb in the morning and a lamb in the afternoon be the most important pasuk in the Torah?

The Maharal explains that the korban tamid was brought every single day. This teaches us the importance of serving Hashem with absolute consistency. The most effective way to improve ourselves in a sustainable manner is by constant daily commitment. By repeating positive actions on a regular basis those actions gradually change who we are and transform us into better people. We can also suggest that by serving Hashem consistently we are really serving *Him* on His terms, and not only when we feel like it (which in a sense is serving ourselves).

If we don't transform inspiration into regular practical action, the inspiration tends to dissipate. We saw that in a dramatic fashion 40 days after Har Sinai when the sin of the Golden Calf was committed. The only way to ensure that inspiration has a long-term effect is to convert it into regular practical actions.

When we 'offer ourselves up' as a korban tamid on Rosh Hashanah, we should be committing ourselves to serving Hashem on a regular and consistent basis. Just like the tamid which was offered every single day.

Let's try something this week:

1. Now that we have started reciting selichot, remember that we are inspecting ourselves for blemishes just as we one would inspect a korban before it is offered to Hashem.
2. As Rosh Hashanah approaches, think about what areas we can improve for the new year. Try to choose something manageable and focus on performing it consistently, despite any feelings or inclinations to the contrary.

Darchai Noam will take a break until after the chagim. Shabbat Shalom and Shana Tova, Rabbi Ledder.

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<sup>9</sup> Actually, this appears in a number of Midrashim: Pesikta d'Rav Kahana 28, Yalkut Shimoni Tehillim 19:10, and Yalkut Shimoni Pinchas 782.

<sup>10</sup> Zechariah 8:19.

<sup>11</sup> This debate appears in the Midrash (Torat Kohanim, Chapter 4, Midrash 12). There are actually different version of this Midrash. The version we quote above is brought by the Maharal and the Ein Yaakov.