

## DARCHAI NOAM - דרכי נועם

### “Its ways are ways of pleasantness”

(Mishlei 3:17)

Pinchas, July 2017

[darchai.noam@gmail.com](mailto:darchai.noam@gmail.com)

How can the Parsha help us grow this week?

### Pinchas – doing the best we can with what we’ve got

This week’s Parsha of Pinchas includes a summary of the korbanot that were offered in the Mishkan and the Bet Hamikdash. We read about the various animals that were sacrificed together with their associated flour and oil offerings for the daily offering (the korban tamid) and the special offerings for Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh and the Chagim.

Today, in the absence of the Bet Hamikdash we can no longer bring these korbanot. Instead, we have to suffice with reading the portions of the Torah that describe the korbanot. Indeed, the musaf Torah readings for the Chagim and Rosh Chodesh come from this week’s Parsha. In addition, many people read various portions dealing with the korbanot before Shacharit each morning<sup>1</sup>, part of which also comes from this week’s Parsha<sup>2</sup>. Rabbeinu Yonah<sup>3</sup> notes that one of the purposes of our daily tefillot is to replace the korbanot in the Bet Hamikdash. He therefore strongly encourages us to at least recite the korban tamid passage each day<sup>4</sup>. The pre-Shacharit readings also include Chapter 5 of Mishnah Zevachim which contains the various halachot for each of the korbanot. Many siddurim include a number of brief supplications throughout this recitation asking Hashem to treat our recital of the Mishnayot as equivalent to having actually brought the korbanot.

Contemplating the korbanot should fill us with a profound sense of loss. Though Hashem provided us with detailed instructions as to how we should serve Him best, it is conditional on us having a Bet Hamikdash in which to perform this Divine service. We used to be able to achieve an unimaginable degree of closeness to Hashem. However, this awesome opportunity was taken away from us due to our sins. Instead, all that we can do now is read about the services that we used to perform in those days. This is comparable to someone who mourns a deceased relative by looking at photos and remembering conversations they had with their loved one. Obviously this is not a sufficient replacement for actually being with their living relative.

We are now in the Three Weeks of mourning for the destruction of the Bet Hamikdash. It is thus an appropriate time for us to focus on the loss of the Bet Hamikdash and how far we are from where we should be.

However, there is another perspective that we can take. The following story<sup>5</sup> can help us to gain a deeper understanding.

*Reuven was a soldier in the Israeli army during one of the wars. He was a ‘traditional’ Jew and he didn’t observe the mitzvot. During one battle, he found himself in an extremely difficult situation and he realised that he would be unlikely to escape with his life. He called out to Hashem from the depth of his soul, vowing to wear tefillin every day if he made it out alive. Miraculously, Reuven was rescued and he survived the war.*

<sup>1</sup> Sephardim also recite these portions before Mincha.

<sup>2</sup> Beginning on page 30 of the standard Artscroll Ashkenaz siddur.

<sup>3</sup> Sha’arei Teshuva.

<sup>4</sup> Pages 32-34 of the standard Artscroll Ashkenaz siddur.

<sup>5</sup> Based on a true story, heard from Rabbi Moshe Serebryanski in Melbourne.

*However, he sustained a serious injury which meant that the doctors had to amputate his left arm. This meant that he could not keep his vow. He was at a total loss as to how to make sense of his predicament. He spoke to his Rabbi who wisely told him: "Perhaps Hashem is saying that he doesn't need you to put on tefillin in order to serve Him".*

We have to serve Hashem the best that we can, but we can only do so with what we have. That is all that we can be expected to do. We are supposed to mourn the loss of the Bet Hamikdash and yearn for it to be rebuilt. However, until it is rebuilt, we have to suffice with reciting the Scriptural portions of the korbanot (which is comparable to looking at photos of our departed loved ones) instead of offering the korbanot in reality. If we recite those portions to the best of our ability and with full hearts, this is the maximum service that we can achieve at this time.

This point can also serve to remind us of the importance of serving Hashem with our hearts. Even when the Bet Hamikdash was standing, Hashem did not welcome 'empty' sacrifices that were not accompanied with the heart. The Neviim are full of such admonitions against Bnei Yisrael, for example:

*"Of what use are your many sacrifices to Me?" says Hashem. 'I am sated with the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of calves; and the blood of bulls and sheep and goats I do not want'." (Isaiah 1:11)*

*"...since your heart is not whole with Me" (Rashi to Isaiah 1:12)*

This teaches that merely going through the motions of offering sacrifices is not sufficient and we can't rely on empty rituals. Hashem wants our hearts. For example, the Shulchan Aruch<sup>6</sup> rules that it is better to recite fewer supplications with focus and attention than many supplications while day-dreaming. The Mishnah Berurah<sup>7</sup> adds that one who cannot add additional supplications due to time constraints or due to limited attention span, but focuses upon what they do manage to say, is credited as if reciting more than they actually did.

The same principle applies to Torah study and also to acts of chesed. Helping someone with a smile and a full heart is so much more meaningful than doing so in a begrudging manner. The recipient can often sense when the other person is only helping them out of a sense of obligation. This may cause the recipient to feel uncomfortable and they may even opt out of receiving the assistance at all. Thus, an insufficient attempt to perform an act of kindness can end up being entirely unsuccessful. This is comparable to the old Yiddish proverb about a cow that gives a lot of milk and then kicks over the bucket, causing all of the milk to go to waste.

The physical actions associated with mitzvot are fundamental. However, sometimes we are 'oness', that is, we are physically incapable of performing them. This is when we must remember that the intention and the heart behind that performance are also fundamentally important. Even if we are unable to perform the ideal physical actions required to perform certain mitzvot, we can focus instead on serving Hashem with a full heart, within the constraints that we have.

Let's try something this week:

1. Read through the korbanot section before Shacharit and try to contemplate what it would be like to serve Hashem in the Bet Hamikdash.
2. When performing acts of kindness, try to perform these acts with a full heart. Remember that the recipient can often sense whether or not our heart is in it.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Ledder.

---

<sup>6</sup> Orach Chaim 1:4.

<sup>7</sup> Orach Chaim 1:12.

\*\*\* \*\*

## **About Darchai Noam**

The pasuk in Mishlei (3:17) describes the Torah as follows: "Its ways are ways of pleasantness (Darchai Noam) and all its paths are peace". The Torah is our guidebook for life. It is packed full of good advice as to how we should live our lives.

The aim of the Darchai Noam weekly email is to examine an idea from the weekly parashah relating to good middot (character traits). It will focus particularly on treating each other with respect and how to interact with each other in a more peaceful and pleasant manner. It will also suggest some practical tips for implementing these ideas in our daily lives.

By learning together each week, and making an effort to regularly put the ideas into practice, with Hashem's help we can all gradually improve our character traits and our observance of 'v'ahavta l're'echa kamocho' – loving one's fellow as oneself.

If you know someone who might enjoy receiving this email please feel free to pass it on to them or email me their details so I can add them to the subscription list.

You are welcome to use the content of this email in any way that will help to spread the learning of Torah. However please attribute credit appropriately.

Many of the ideas that I use in Darchai Noam are based on ideas that I read or heard from various sources. Where possible I try to quote the source. However in some cases I cannot recall the source. For that I apologise. If I do discuss an idea that I heard from somewhere else, any errors are purely my own.

## **How to subscribe or unsubscribe**

If you would like to subscribe or unsubscribe to Darchai Noam, please send an email to [darchai.noam@gmail.com](mailto:darchai.noam@gmail.com) with the word 'subscribe' or 'unsubscribe' in the subject.