



DVAR TORAH

ACHAREI MOS-KEDOSHIM



By: Rabbi Rory Meyerson

Avodas Hashem Needs a Place

Among a small crowd in one of the convention rooms at an Agudah Convention, I listened to a Shul Rav share, “What he wishes he could tell his Kehilla.” The message he shared has relevance to this week’s parsha.

In the beginning of this week’s parsha, the תורה warns against שחוטי חוץ, bringing קרבנות outside the בית המקדש. Immediately afterward, the pasuk (Vayikra 17:7) states: וְלֹא יִזְבְּחוּ עוֹד אֶת־זִבְחֵיהֶם לְשָׂעִירִים... אֲשֶׁר הֵם זֹנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם, a prohibition against offering sacrifices to שעירים, a form of עבודה זרה.

From the juxtaposition of these פסוקים, we see a striking connection between שחוטי חוץ and עבודה זרה. This raises the obvious question: how is bringing a קרבן in the wrong place so severe? So much so, it is akin to serving עבודה זרה?!

To understand this, let us look at the מדרש תנחומא. The מדרש tells us of a wealthy, nobleman who had no wife or home. When people came to him, or brought him gifts, he would have to send them away since he had no home. Then he took for himself a wife and thus had a home. Now, he told his visitors to stay and bring the gifts up to his home.

The מדרש explains that this is a משל for our relationship with ה'. Before the construction of the בית המקדש there was no fixed place for השראת השכינה. Once the הקב"ה commanded (Shemos 25:8), וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וּשְׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכָם, a permanent מקום for connection was established.

Having a permanent place to dwell is not a foreign concept, we all have houses, which are places of consistency and permanence. A house is a place we come to feel at home. The word home carries both a literal meaning and a figurative one. Perhaps this answers why bringing קרבנות brought outside the בית המקדש is so severe. After ה' established a Home for our relationship with Him, שחוטי חוץ became the ultimate gesture of dismissal. To offer a קרבן elsewhere is saying, “No, Thanks” to our relationship with ה'.

Let’s look at how this applies to us today. The בית המקדש serves as a model for עבודת ה'. Yiddishkeit demands of us קביעות and ויקר, consistency and continuity. This is reflected in the language used regarding בלעם. The pasuk (Bamidbar 23:4) states, וַיִּקַּר בְּלַעַם, which Rashi explains is a לשון עראי, a chance encounter that reflects a relationship lacking permanence and intention.

The רמב"ם writes: מצות עשה לעשות בית לה' מוכן להיות מקריבים בו הקרבנות (הלכות בית הבחירה א:א). The mitzvah is not only to bring קרבנות, but to create a בית for the הקב"ה. Even without a בית המקדש, this idea lives on in our בתי כנסיות and בתי מדרשות. They are our מקדש מעט.

Many of us have multiple shuls. We all have the Shul we daven at for this or that type of minyan or the Shul we daven when we feel such and such. Many Jews suffer from an illness called ‘Shul-hopping’ or ‘catching’ the next minyan.

So what would the Rabbi wish he could tell you? “Try to find a shul that can become your main מקום for tefillah. Daven there consistently when you are able. At the same time and in the same spot. Not because there is anything wrong with different minyanim or flexibility, but because consistency can help build a stronger relationship with tefillah and with Hashem. The goal is to build a מקום קבוע in your עבודת ה'. When tefillah has a steady place it becomes more rooted and meaningful. Instead of constantly moving from place to place, try to establish a מקום, and in that מקום you may be זוכה to a greater sense of השראת השכינה.”



By Rabbi Chaim Yeshaya Freeman

INSIGHTS INTO PIRKEI AVOS



As we enter the days of Sefiras HaOmer, there is a longstanding custom to study Pirkei Avos each Shabbos afternoon. This practice reflects the nature of this time of year. The days between Pesach and Shavuot are a period of preparation for receiving the Torah. Since Pirkei Avos focuses on character building, it serves as a guide for that preparation.

In that spirit, we can focus on one Mishnah that captures a central idea and offers a timely lesson for these days. The Mishnah (Pirkei Avos 4:1) teaches: "Who is honored? One who honors others." This is not just practical advice. It is a definition. Honor is not something a person gains from others; it is something a person becomes. One who consistently treats others with respect is, by definition, honorable.

This reflects the Torah's approach to kindness. Society often presents the "golden rule" of treating others as you want to be treated as a way to ensure good treatment in return. The Torah teaches something different. "You shall love your fellow as yourself" (Vayikra 19:18). Hillel (Shabbos 31a) explains that a person should not do to others what he would not want done to himself. The focus is on the other person, not on personal gain.

This idea becomes especially relevant during Sefiras HaOmer. The Gemara (Yevamos 62b) teaches that the students of Rabbi Akiva died during this period because they did not treat one another with proper respect. Why did this deserve such a severe consequence, and why specifically during this time? Rav Aharon Kotler explains that these days are designated for preparing to receive the Torah. Pirkei Avos (6:6) lists the qualities needed to acquire Torah, and proper respect for others is one of them. Since these students lacked that quality, they were not fit to serve as part of the transmission of Torah.

After this loss, Torah was rebuilt by a new group of five students, including Rav Elazar ben Shamua. The Gemara (Megillah 27b) records that he was careful never to recite Birkas Kohanim without the proper blessing beforehand. This seems obvious, but it highlights a deeper point. Another student, Rav Yose, said he never went against his colleagues, even when they told him to duchan despite not being a Kohen (Shabbos 118b). Rav Yose stressed the importance of going to great lengths to show respect for others as a way of correcting the flaws of the earlier students. Rav Elazar ben Shamua, however, taught that this sensitivity must operate within the boundaries of halacha.

The message of these days is clear. Growth in Torah is not only about learning more. It is about becoming more refined in how we treat others. Pirkei Avos teaches that honor comes from honoring others. Sefiras HaOmer reminds us that without that foundation, Torah cannot last.

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