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## פרשת כי תשא

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פרק ל פסוק יד

כָּל הָעֹבֵר עַל־הַפְּקוּדִים מִבְּנֵי עֲשָׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה יָתֵן תְּרוּמַת יְ-הוָה:

חז"ל

שנה עליו (נאמר פעמיים כל העובר) לדורות, שבזמן שבית המקדש קיים היה אדם שוקל שקליו ומתכפר לו, עכשיו שאין בית המקדש קיים חייב ליתן מתנות לאביונים, כדתנן (פאה פ"ח מ"ז) אין פוחתין לעני העובר ממקום למקום מככר בפונדיון (לקח טוב).

מושג

בזמן שבהמ"ק קיים היה אדם שוקל שקליו ומתכפר לו, עכשיו שאין בהמ"ק קיים חייב ליתן מתנות לאביונים.

### Translation:

When the המקדש בית stood one would bring his Shekel and be forgiven, now that the המקדש בית is not standing one is obligated to give gifts to the poor.

### Explanation:

The מקדש בית which were earmarked towards the purchase of קרבנות which atone for our sins. Now that the המקדש בית is no longer standing we can receive the same atonement by giving gifts to the poor<sup>1</sup>. This is because one who feeds the poor is using the very food that generally satisfies his physical needs, for spiritual purposes; to be מקיים מצוה of feeding the poor. This is the underlying purpose of sacrifices as well, to teach us that physical objects can be elevated towards spiritual pursuits<sup>2</sup>.

### Looking in the Pasuk:

The Midrash is bothered by the term כל העובר על הפקודים, all who pass. This term is not used anywhere else in the Torah, and here it used not once, but twice. The Midrash answers that the repetition comes to teach us that the obligation to bring the מקדש applies for all time, even when there is no בית המקדש. The use of the word עובר was used to focus our attention on another עובר, a poor man who is עובר, who passes from place to place. Taken together it teaches us that even in times when one cannot bring his מקדש to the בית המקדש one may fulfill the obligation by giving to the poor.

### Musag Learning Outcomes:

Know: When the המקדש בית no longer stands the Mitzvah of מקדש is replaced by the giving of gifts to the poor.

Understand: There is a parallel between the sacrifices at the time of the המקדש בית and giving food to the poor. In both instances one takes a physical object and dedicates it for spiritual purposes, forming the basis for his atonement.

Think: Words in the Torah can be unique both within the context they are used and in the frequency of their use in the Torah.

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1 See note #1

2 See note #2

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## NOTES

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1. Our Musag creates a parallel between the מחצית השקל, whose purpose was to facilitate the bringing of קרבנות, and giving מתנות לאביונים.

This idea is echoed in the Gemoroh (ברכות נה.) which praises those who stretch out the length of their meals:

והמאריך על שלחנו, דלמא אתי עניא ויהיב ליה (אולי יבא עני ויתן לו), כתיב (יחזקאל מ"א) המזבח עץ שלוש אמות גבה, וכתיב וידבר אלי זה השלחן אשר לפני ה'. פתח במזבח וסיים בשלחן? רבי יוחנן ורבי אלעזר דאמרי תרוייהו (שניהם) כל זמן שבית המקדש קיים מזבח מכפר על ישראל, ועכשיו שלחנו של אדם<sup>3</sup> מכפר עליו.

The Gemoroh parallels bringing sacrifices to giving food to the poor. It is interesting to note that both sources refer to giving food as opposed to charity in general. Why would this be so?

Additionally, one might ask, “Why is giving to the poor compared to bringing sacrifices”? Why choose that מצוה?

To answer, we must first delve into the reason that bringing sacrifices helps one achieve atonement. One of the more popular explanations is that when one brings a קרבן, he or she should be thinking that what is happening to the animal should be happening to me<sup>4</sup>. This will bring a person towards repentance, which, in the end result, is the necessary component of atonement. On a slightly deeper level, by bringing a sacrifice one is acknowledging the fact that his physical component is that which brings him to sin. Slaughtering the animal is to be symbolic of one who is ridding himself of the physical or the animal side of man which will result in a focus on the spiritual and angelic side of man.

At this point there seems to be no parallel whatsoever to giving charity to the poor. However, if we were to take this idea one step deeper we could explain that perhaps an even higher, albeit more difficult to achieve, level of atonement might be attained. While there is no doubt that the suppression of the physical, symbolized by the slaughter and burning of the sacrifice, is an effective tool towards achieving a focus on the spiritual, another method might be effective as well. This is achieved by turning the physical into the spiritual<sup>5</sup>. That is to take a physical object, normally used to satisfy physical needs, and use it towards spiritual pursuits. Thus, the sacrificing of an animal may now be understood not as the negation of the physical but rather as the elevation of the physical to the spiritual realm. Such an act finds spiritual significance even in the most physical of acts and will lead one to regret even more so that he allowed the physical within him to lead him to sin.

Thus understood, we can now explain the why our Musag and the Gemoroh parallel sacrifices and giving food to the poor, and why this applies most clearly with food and not with every type of charity. For when one takes food from his table, which he has used to satisfy his hunger, and gives it to the poor, he is effecting the exact process achieved in bringing a sacrifice. He thus turns his table into a מזבח, making even his own meal into a means by which to come closer to Hashem.

2. I once heard a beautiful homiletic explanation of a Midrash Tanchumah, quoted by Rashi (פסוק יג) based on this idea. The Midrash tells us that Hashem showed Moshe a coin of fire:

זה יתנו: אמר ר' מאיר כמין מטבע של אש הוציא הקדוש ברוך הוא מתחת כסא הכבוד והראהו למשה ואמר לו, זה יתנו, כזה יתנו.

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<sup>3</sup> Rashi (in חגיגה כז.) explains this to be referring to הכנסת אורחים as the Gemoroh in ברכות infers. The תוספות quote the Gemoroh in (קז.) which teaches the extreme importance of feeding others (גדולה לגימא).

<sup>4</sup> This is very similar to when we do כפרות before Yom Kippur and recite לחיים ואני אכנס ואלך לחיים.

<sup>5</sup> One might understand the concepts of טהרה and קדושה along these lines. טהרה is an absence of impurity, a passive state. In effect, one is born טהור and as long as they do not come in contact with טומאה they will remain in this state, with no active effort required on their part. Even if one were to become impure, טהרה is achieved by ‘washing away’ the impure; basically returning to the original pure state. However קדושה is the turning of a physical object into a spiritual one. We make קידוש on wine, and call marriage קידושין. This state cannot be achieved without active effort; man is not born קדוש.

While it is clear that the Midrash is coming to explain the words זָה יָתֵנוּ, which usually refers to something that is being pointed to<sup>6</sup>, it is still unclear why Hashem needed to show Moshe such a coin. The answer is that Moshe was bothered by the fact that money, the proverbial source of all evil, would be used as a means of atonement. To answer, Hashem showed Moshe a coin of fire. Hashem was telling Moshe that the coin was to be compared to fire. Fire could be used to burn and destroy, but could also be used to heat, cook or illuminate. In the end result, even the most destructive of objects could be harnessed to benefit man. So too money or any physical object. It can be used to corrupt or to indulge in physical pursuits, but it can also be used to purchase קרבת and bring man closer to G-d.

3. Questions for further discussion:

- a. Can you think of examples in our lives in which the Torah requires us to deny physical pleasure and examples where the Torah requires us to dedicate the physical towards our service of Hashem?
- b. Which do you think is holier, for one to deny physical pleasure or for one to dedicate physical pleasure to Hashem?

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6 See בהעלותך ח:ד and Teachers Notes #1 for a more detailed discussion of the word.