
פרשת חיי שרה

פרק כד פסוק סג

וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לְשׁוֹם בְּשָׂדֵה לַפְּנוֹת עָרֵב וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה גַמְלִים בָּאִים:

חז"ל

יִצְחָק תִּקַּן תְּפִלַּת מִנְחָה שְׁנֵאמַר וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לְשׁוֹם בְּשָׂדֵה לַפְּנוֹת עָרֵב, וַאֲיֵן שִׂיחָה אֶלָּא תְּפִלָּה. (ברכות כו:)

מושג

יִצְחָק תִּקַּן תְּפִלַּת מִנְחָה

Translation:

Yitzchok established the Mincha prayer.

Explanation:

תפילת מנחה. Yitzchok goes out to daven in the field towards evening, thus establishing תפילת מנחה. The Tefilah is also parallel to the תמיד של בין הערבים, the daily sacrifice brought towards evening in the בית המקדש. Together with the תמיד sacrifice an offering of flour, oil and wine was brought, called a מנחה, a gift. The purpose of this additional gift was to relay a message of gratitude to Hashem even as the sun was setting and night was falling. This מנחה shows that we appreciate all Hashem does for us even during the 'sunset' times of our lives, when our fortunes seem to be falling and 'dark' times loom on the horizon. The תפילה that we offer at this time of day is therefore called מנחה, relaying this message. Yitzchok who was able to see the blessings of Hashem and daven to Him while looking at an empty field, was the first to teach us this lesson.

Looking in the Pasuk:

The Pasuk provides two pieces of seemingly unimportant information. First, that Yitzchok went to a field, and second that he went לשוב, instead of just saying that he went לדבר.

The word שיחה, which also refers to a שיח, a small plant about to sprout, describes Yitzchok's service to Hashem. He displayed the ability to see Hashem's goodness even at times when that goodness appeared hidden, much the same way a farmer looks at a barren field and 'sees' the food that the שדה will produce. This ability best describes the מנחה prayer he was establishing with his תפילה.

NOTES

The Avos established the three תפילות that we daven each day¹: תפלות אבות תקנום, which is the source of our Musag, teaches us, מסכת ברכות (כו:), in גמרא that

אברהם תקן תפלת שחרית שנאמר (בראשית י"ט) וישכם אברהם בבקר אל המקום אשר עמד שם, ואין עמידה אלא תפלה, שנאמר (תהלים ק"ו) ויעמד פינחס ויפלל. יצחק תקן תפלת מנחה שנאמר ויצא יצחק לשוה בשדה לפנות ערב, ואין שיחה אלא תפלה, שנאמר (תהלים ק"ב) תפלה לעני כי יעטף ולפני ה' ישפך שיחו. יעקב תקן תפלת ערבית שנאמר (בראשית כ"ה) ויפגע במקום וילן שם, ואין פגיעה אלא תפלה, שנאמר (ירמיהו ז') ואתה אל תתפלל בעד העם הזה ואל תשא בעדם רנה ותפלה ואל תפגע בי.

The גמרא explains further, תפלות אבות תקנום ואסמכיניהו רבנן אקרבנות, that the חכמים connected these תפילות to the daily sacrifices, thus establishing the time frames for each תפילה. Shacharis was paralleled to the תמיד של שחר, Mincha to the תמיד של בין הערבים, and Maariv was paralleled to the burning of sacrifices that had not been completely burnt during the day.

The Mincha תפילה is thus established by יצחק אבינו and is connected to the בין הערביים. However, we must explain why the תפילה is called Mincha. While the morning תפילה, connected to תמיד של שחר, is thus appropriately called שחרית, and the evening תפילה, connected to the nighttime burning of the remaining קרבנות, is thus called ערבית, we are pressed to understand how the name מנחה appropriately describes the second תפילה connected to the בין הערבים תמיד של בין הערבים.

We do find one source for the name Mincha for the afternoon תפילה. The גמרא in (ו:) teaches: אמר רבי חלבו אמר רב הונא: לעולם יהא אדם זהיר בתפלת המנחה, שהרי אליהו לא נענה אלא בתפלת המנחה, שנאמר (מלכים א' י"ח:לו) ויהי בעלות המנחה ויגש אליהו הנביא ויאמר וגו'. ענני ה' ענני ענני.

The Pasuk in Melachim refers to Eliyahu's prayer, offered on הר הכרמל in the evening, as מנחה. (From the fact that Hashem answered Eliyahu precisely at this time we are taught to always be careful to daven this Tefilah.) But, this too begs the question: Why did the Pasuk itself refer to this תפילה as מנחה? And, why is it first by Eliyahu that this term is used?

To better understand the nature of תפילת מנחה we must first better understand the parallel to תמיד של בין הערבים. The Torah (שמות כט) teaches:

לח: וְזֶה אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ כְּבָשִׂים בְּגִי־שָׁנָה שְׁנַיִם לַיּוֹם תָּמִיד:
לט: אֶת־הַכֶּבֶשׂ הָאֶחָד תַּעֲשֶׂה בִבֶקֶר וְאֵת הַכֶּבֶשׂ הַשֵּׁנִי תַעֲשֶׂה בֵּין הָעֶרְבָיִם:
מ: וְעִשְׂרֵן סֹלֶת בְּלֹוֹל בְּשֶׁמֶן כְּתִית רִבַע הַהֵיזֵן וְנִסָּה רַבְעִית הַהֵיזֵן יִיזֵן לַכֶּבֶשׂ הָאֶחָד:
מא: וְאֵת הַכֶּבֶשׂ הַשֵּׁנִי תַעֲשֶׂה בֵּין הָעֶרְבָיִם כְּמִנְחַת הַבֶּקֶר וּכְנִסְפָה תַעֲשֶׂה־לָּהּ לָרִיחַ נִיחֻם אִשָּׁה לִי-הָהָה:

The Torah begins by telling me to bring two lambs, one in the morning and one in the evening. We are then taught that one requires an additional offering of fine flour mixed with oil and a quarter of wine. The Torah then repeats and tells me to sacrifice the second lamb in the evening and tells me to bring an identical offering to the מנחה brought in the morning.

Before discussing the essence of the תמיד תמיד, קרבן תמיד, we must stop and wonder why the Torah first seemed to say that the מנחה brought with the sacrifice was only brought for one of the lambs, and then repeats the obligation to bring the second lamb, and afterwards seems to change its mind and tell me to bring an identical מנחה in the evening as well. To explain all the above we begin by understanding the תמיד תמיד sacrifice and its adjunct מנחה.

The תמיד תמיד sacrifice clearly is meant to focus our attention daily on our service of Hashem. For this very reason our daily Tefilos are paralleled to these sacrifices. One thus must begin his day and end it as well, בבוקר ובין הערבים, with a recognition that all he is about to accomplish and all that he has accomplished during his day is all dedicated to G-d. The מנחה brought with the sacrifice seeks to thank Hashem with a gift of flour, oil and wine. As the Pasuk in (קד:טו) teaches:

וַיִּזֵן יְשֻׁמָּה לַכֶּבֶב־אֲנֹשׁ לְהַצְהִיל פָּנִים מִשָּׁמֶן וְלֶחֶם לַכֶּבֶב־אֲנֹשׁ יִסְעֵד:

¹ See the Musag תיקון תפילת שחרית and the beginning of our notes on that Musag.

Rabbi S.R. Hirsch explains that flour thus symbolizes man's basic sustenance, oil his comfort and wine his joy. While focusing our attention on our sacrificial devotion to Hashem, we acknowledge that all we have in life, from our most basic food, to our greatest moments of joy, are all given to us by G-d. The מנחה, or gift offering, is our attempt to relay our appreciation.

However, the offering of the תמיד sacrifice both in the morning and in the afternoon not only marks the beginning of my work day and its end, but symbolizes something deeper as well. Rav Hirsh explains:

Day, יום, (related to קיום) the time of upright independence, is bound on both sides by the night, it rises from night to the zenith of midday and sinks from midday to night. In this rising and sinking tendency, the whole physical world of Man moves, and is the basis of his own physical existence and everything which he requires for his work and accomplishments on earth. But both the rising and the falling of day, the rising and falling of fortune, the rising and falling of earthly life, are equally an arrangement of God, the One, Only One; both are under the protection of the One Shepherd and Guide of life, and therefore the rays of the sinking day, of falling fortune, of sinking life, call us to the same mission, to the one and same happiness of life as do the rising ones. Jewish life, the Torah-life, stands under the One God, at one level, high above the change of time. As the "one sheep of God's flock", with the same symbols of food, comfort and happiness", Israel presents itself to the rising as to the sinking rays. It acknowledges the Oneness of its God, by the "oneness" of its mission in life and its happiness in life.

We now understand why the Torah first introduces the מנחה in conjunction with the תמיד של שחר and feels compelled to repeat the obligation to bring the afternoon sacrifice and only then stress the obligation to bring the מנחה in the afternoon, with the תמיד של בין הערבים, as well. For one might think that the gift of flour, oil and wine has its place only in the morning sacrifice. We thank Hashem only when things are bright, when the sun shines, when all is going well. The Torah thus makes a point of stressing that we thank Hashem in the same measure, כמנחת הבוקר, even when the sun sets in life, when things get dark, when night and misfortune loom on the horizon.

The מנחה brought with the תמיד של בין הערבים is thus the most striking aspect of this sacrifice, representing the gift we offer to Hashem even in the darkest of hours. In essence, we call the תפילה connected to the תמיד של בין הערבים by the name מנחה to highlight this point.

According to this explanation we can readily understand the use of the word שיח to represent this תפילה. The word שיח refers to a small plant², that has just begun to push its way through the ground³. It symbolizes the prayers of one who is able to look at a difficult situation and see the possibilities of growth and salvation. He is able to notice a שיח and see an אילן⁴.

Our Pasuk which tells us לשוח בשדה beautifully illustrates this concept. Avrohom's prayers were inspired by the awe inspiring mountains (אברהם קראו הר שנא' בהר ה' יראה) and Yaakov's by the creative power given to man (יעקב קראו בית שנא' אין זה כי אם בית אלקים). Yitzchok however finds Hashem in the שדה, the simple field. He looks at the fallow ground, hard and unyielding, and realizes that Hashem's blessings are to be found here as well. Even though Hashem has cursed the land, ארורה האדמה, with great effort, בזיעת אפף, man can extract his sustenance, תאכל לחם, and continue to thrive. How incredibly appropriate it is for Rivka, who will provide Yitzchok with the comfort he sought after his mother's death⁵, to appear at exactly this time!

² In fact the Rashbam here explains that Yitzchok had gone out to plant שיחים, small plants.

³ As the Pasuk states: וְכָל שִׁיחַ הַשָּׂדֶה טָרָם יִהְיֶה בְּאֶרֶץ (בראשית ב:ה)

⁴ In the same vein we call a speech that has imbedded within it deeper meaning a שיחה. A perfect example is the גמרא in (כא:): שיחת ת"ח which teaches מסכת סוכה which teaches לימוד צריכה. The reason the discussions of Torah scholars need to be examined is precisely because valuable lessons are embedded within their words. For this reason we say שיחת ת"ח and not דיבור ת"ח. Perhaps this might also explain why we say in Tehilim (קב:א) and ישפך שיחו (קמב:ג) and אשפך לפניו שיחי (קמב:ג), for the word שיח lends itself to the verb שפך, which connotes spoiling forth from a receptacle.

⁵ See Rashi (כה:סז) אמו ד"ה האהלה שרה אמו (כה:סז) who writes:

The מנחה which accompanies the תמיד של בין הערבים thus best describes Yitzchok's prayer. It is a flour offering, representing the bread of man extracted from the ground, with which we thank Hashem for his goodness even at times when we must toil to realize that He continues to bless us even during the most difficult of circumstances. As stated above, this lesson is most powerfully conveyed as the sun begins to set and darkness is about to envelop the world.

Finally, we can now understand the connection to Eliyahu on Har HaCarmel. Eliyahu, at that moment in Jewish history, looks at a people steeped in idol worship and estranged from their G-d. He sees a bleak future for a nation that has completely strayed from its glorious past. But he does not give up.

וַיְהִי בַעֲלוֹת הַמִּנְחָה וַיִּגַּשׁ אֵלָיו הַנְּבִיא וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם וַיִּצְחָק וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל הַיּוֹם וַיִּדַע כִּי־אַתָּה אֱלֹהִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וַאֲנִי עַבְדְּךָ וַיְבַדְּבְרֶיךָ [וַיְבַדְּבְרֶיךָ] עָשִׂיתִי אֵת כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה: לֹא עָנְנִי ה' עָנְנִי וַיִּדְעוּ הָעָם הַזֶּה כִּי־אַתָּה ה' הָאֱלֹהִים וְאַתָּה הַסֹּבֵת אֶת־לְבָבְךָ אֶחָדָּנִית:

Eliyahu asks Hashem for an open display of His power so that the hearts of the people might be swayed back towards Hashem. Eliyahu does not despair in this dark hour but rather realizes that the people can be persuaded to do תשובה. Even though the people have endured years of drought and see Hashem through מדת הדין, Eliyahu sees the מדת הרחמים imbedded within and offers his מנחה. The proclamation they will soon make מידות ה' הוא האלקים reflects these two מידות, both (אלקים) and רחמים (ה') working one within the other. This is beautifully described in the ילקוט שמעוני:

וירפא את מזבח ה' ההרוס: שרפא אותם והביאן מן הדרך הרעה לדרך טובה ע"י שעשה להם הנסים. וכיון שראו כן אמרו ה' הוא האלהים. בעולם הזה שאלילים מצויים אמרו ה' הוא האליהם, אבל לעולם הבא כשימלוך הקב"ה עלינו אומרים והיה ה' למלך על כל הארץ ביום ההוא יהיה ה' אחד ושמו אחד.

The Midrash teaches us that we live in world full of influences which confuse us and seek to destroy our relationship with Hashem. It causes us to often lose sight of the hand of a loving G-d who guides our lives and see instead a G-d of judgment who hides His face from us. The cry of the people מידות ה' הוא האלקים perfectly reflects this confusion⁶. However, in עולם הבא we will realize that there is only one name of G-d, that of mercy and loving kindness, אחד ושמו אחד.

It is precisely during that evening, itself a mix of light and darkness, when Eliyahu stood on Har HaCarmel facing the most difficult of challenges, that the term מנחה for the afternoon תפליה is coined. It is meant to focus our attention on the שדה in which Yitzchok was able to see the hidden benevolence of G-d, and to the gift, the מנחה, offered every afternoon in the בית המקדש as night was about to fall and the guiding light of Hashem was about to dim.

Questions for further thought:

- The גמרא (quoted above) paralleled the 3 Tefilos we daven to both the 3 Avos and to the 3 sacrifices brought each day. (The תמיד של שחר, the תמיד של בין הערביים and to the burning of sacrifices which had not been fully burnt during the day.) Can you find parallels between the lives of the Avos and these sacrifices?
- Do you think that perhaps the character of Yitzchok we have described above somehow contributed to his love for Eisav?

האֵהֶלָה שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ. "וַיְבֹאֶה הָאֱהֶלָה" וַיִּנְעֲשִׂית הַגִּמְת שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ, כְּלוּמֵר, וְהָרִי הִיא שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ, שְׁכָל זְמַן שִׁשְׁרָה קִנְיָת הָיָה נֵר דְּלוּק מִעֵרֵב שֶׁבֶת לְעֵרֵב שֶׁבֶת וַיְבָרְכָהּ מִצִּוְיָהּ בְּעֶסֶה וְעָנָן קָשׁוּר עַל הָאֵהֶל, וּמִשְׁמַתָּה פֶּסֶקוֹ, וְכִשְׁבָּאת רִבְקָה חֲזָרוּ: אֲחָרֵי אִמּוֹ. דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ, כָּל זְמַן שִׁאֲמֹ שֶׁל אָדָם קִנְיָת כְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶצְלָה, וּמִשְׁמַתָּה הוּא מְתַנַּחֵם בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ.

⁶ As does his question to the people, (פסוק כא), עד מתי אתם פוסחים על שתי הסעיפים