

TURNING THE CORNER

Understanding Blood Applications on the *Mizbe'ach*

The teachings of this chapter *Eizehu Mekomam* were selected for daily recital because this *perek* uniquely contains no *machlokes* (difference of opinion), displaying an antiquity as handed down directly from Moshe Rabbeinu. The text must be very old because we find expressions such as *לפניהם מן הקלוותים*, within the curtains, which refers to the *Azarah*. Now we know that once the Beis HaMikdash was built, there were no more curtains. These were used in the *Mishkan*, and were replaced by stone walls when Shlomo HaMelech built the Beis HaMikdash. This indicates that this text must have been in use since the time of the *Mishkan* (*Tiferes Yisrael*).

DRAWING NEAR TO HASHEM

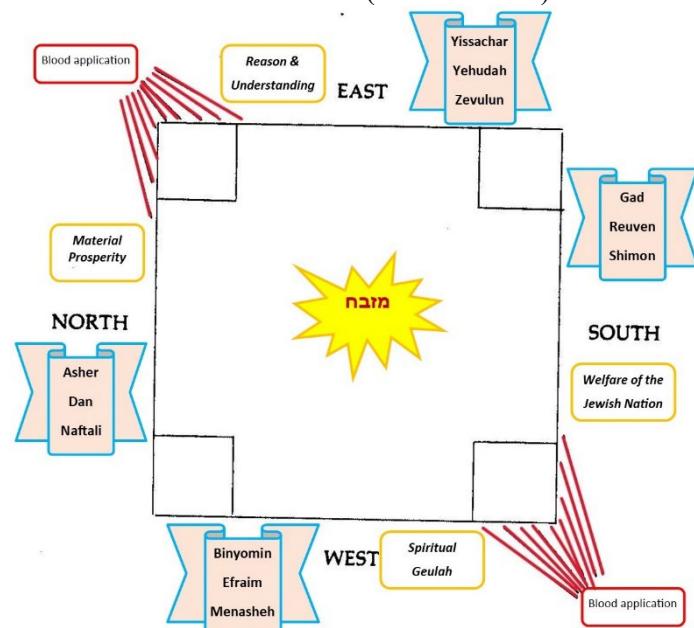
Our *tefillos* were instituted by *Chazal* to correspond to the daily *Tamid* sacrifices (*Berachos* 26b) and it is appropriate to recite these *halachos* which appertain to all the *korbanos* at the beginning of our morning prayers. Our *tefillah* makes it possible to come close to HaShem like a *korban* – which comes from the word *karov* – bringing the person close to HaShem. How does a *korban* bring man close to HaShem? Man is a combination of two components; one is his substantive physical being, as in any animal creature, and the other is his spirit, his soul crafted from under the *kisei hakavod*, the heavenly throne. Man faces an ongoing challenge in this world between his need to attach himself to materialism to maintain his physical body, which also acts to entice him away from his spiritual self. The structure of our formal service of HaShem is designed to counter this challenge, by dedicating the physical tools that the human body is endowed with, to spiritual service. Devoting his efforts to come close to HaShem, will protect him from misdirecting his physical abilities and instead channel them to assist in his spiritual growth. As his soul, from its holy Heavenly source, is enjoined with his physical body, this service acts to draw the person closer to that source, the *Shechinah*. Offering a *korban* in the Beis HaMikdash enacts the sanctification of all his abilities for a higher purpose, acknowledging his true aims in life and thereby connecting him to his spiritual source (*Lehavin, Avodas HaKorban* by Rav Aharon Schwab).

PRAYER PARALLELS THE SACRIFICES

Chazal utilized the architecture of the Beis Hamikdash as a blueprint for the order of our prayers. The fifteen *Birchos HaShachar* correspond to the fifteen steps which lead up to the *Ezras Nashim*. Rav Shimon Schwab describes how we progress through various parts of the Beis HaMikdash through the *Shacharis* prayers until we arrive at the *Shemoneh Esrei*, which corresponds to the *Kodesh HaKadoshim* (Rav Schwab on Prayer). Rav Elie Munk, in his book *World of Prayer* (p. 123) explains that the purpose of the daily *Tamid* sacrifices was to express man's readiness to surrender unconditionally to the will of HaShem. The idea that sacrifice in its profoundest sense signifies the conquest of one's own nature, is most deeply impressed on our minds when considering that the *shechitah* of the animal represents the "slaughtering" of the evil urge within us. Specifically, it is the *zerikas hadam*, the offering of the blood upon the *mizbe'ach* for which the *tefillah* acts as a substitute. The Torah designates the blood as *nefesh*, the substance and essence of the human personality. The offering of the blood on the walls of the altar triggers the atonement (*Zevachim* 26b). As we shall demonstrate, the twelve (or thirteen) intermediate *berachos* of the *Amidah* are structured to parallel the blood offerings on the altar, while the three preparatory and three concluding *berachos* serve as the introduction and conclusion respectively. He explains the symbolic significance of the rule of the Mishnah (*Zevachim* 53b) that the *Olah*'s blood requires two applications that are equivalent to four. Although blood could only be placed on two opposite corners, and the south-east corner was excluded because it had no base, the blood still had to be applied to all four sides of the altar. This was achieved by first pouring blood over the northeast corner, so that the blood ran over both the north and east sides. The Kohen then walked round the altar to the southwest corner and repeated the act so that all four sides had a blood application.

TWO BLOOD OFFERINGS WHICH ARE FOUR

There is an accepted symbolism for the four points of the compass having specific ritualistic significance. The East represents spirituality, as shown by the position of the menorah placed at the East wall of the sanctuary. The North, the side where the *Shulchan* with the *lechem hapanim* stood, represents material prosperity. Towards the West we always look for the *Shechinah*, while the South where the sun rises to its zenith, is considered the source of the beneficial forces of



fertility. According to this view, then, the northeast corner of the altar is the meeting place of the spiritual and material powers of the individual, while the southwest corner symbolizes the same forces as they affect the community (*Shechinah* and fertility). The sprinkling of the blood on the four corners of the altar then expresses the readiness of the worshipper to surrender his powers both as an individual and as a member of the nation to the Divine. The above-mentioned twelve *berachos* which correspond to the offering of the blood, contain, as we shall presently show, four groups of three blessings each, which correspond to the two applications that are equivalent to four. This means that they represent the confluence of the spiritual and physical forces of the individual and the nation.

ENCAMPMENT OF TRIBES IN THE MIDBAR

However, this connection between the four basic categories of forces and the four points of the compass is not a mere symbolism. It is a profound insight according to which the basic harmonies of the universe rest on a firmly established order, held in check by the interaction of the forces of nature. So in the affairs of man, the proper cooperation of all forces for the good of society has its basis in a harmonious Divinely established order. An illustration of this order was the encampment of the twelve tribes around the *Mishkan* in the desert. This in turn has its ultimate prototype in the Divine Throne itself, supported by the four *Chayos, Cherubim*. The *Midrash* says: **כַּשְׁמָ שְׂבָרָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא אֶרְבָּעָה רְחוּחָה הַעֲלָם, כִּי סְבָבֵל כְּסָאוֹ אֶרְבָּעָה סִוִּות, וּלְמַעַלָּה מִקְלָמִים כְּפָא הַכְּבָד, וְכַגְּדוֹן סְדָר הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא הַקָּנְגָּלִים לְמַשְׁה.** Just as HaShem created four directions to the world, so He surrounded His Throne of Glory with the images of four beasts, and above them all is the Throne of Glory. HaShem arranged the banners for Moshe in a manner corresponding to the four directions. This order therefore has timeless significance and the scale of values reflected in it was adopted by Chazal when they composed the petition man makes when he prays for the benefits he needs.

REASON AND UNDERSTANDING

Following the natural path of the sun, traversing daily from East to West, the encampments encircled the *Mishkan*, and so did the Kohen on the altar. On the East of the *Mishkan*, we first encounter the tribe of Yehudah, together with Yissachar and Zevulun. These three tribes excelled in the knowledge of Torah (*Yalkut*). Accordingly, the first of the twelve intermediate *berachos* of the Amidah seeks the gifts of reason and understanding – **אֶת חַזְנָה**. True understanding leads to a return to HaShem – **הַשִּׁיבָּנוּ** – which in turn results in moral rehabilitation – **לְלִיחָה**. After this first group composed of moral and spiritual aims, the Kohen turns the corner, realigning himself to the next concept.

MATERIAL WELFARE

The second group comprises the physical, material goods, just as the tribes encamped on the North side were distinguished by their material prosperity. Asher received Yakov's blessing of **מְאַשֵּׁר שָׁמַנָּה לְתִמְנוֹ** (*Bereishis* 49:20 - from Asher shall come the richest foods), Naftali was designated by Moshe as **שְׁבֻעָ רְצֹוֹן וּמְלָא בְּרִכָּה** (*Devarim* 33:23 - has the fullness of good things and filled with HaShem's blessing), while Dan, who is called **מְאַסְפֵּר לְכָל הַמְּקֻנָּה** (*Bamidbar* 10:25 – gatherer of the camps) is the leader of the group. Hence, the second unit of *berachos* contains all those petitions that ask for the preservation of our material welfare – liberation in our struggles, physical health and material sustenance. While the first group of *berachos* referred to the Spirit, the second group is concerned with needs of the body. At this juncture, the seventh and central blessing of the thirteen *berachos* stands by itself. The gathering of the exiles into the community, the reunion of all individuals, represents the transition from the spiritual and material gifts bestowed on the individual, to the development of these benefits in the life of the nation as a whole.

GEULAH

Turning the corner again, the third group comprises the spiritual preconditions for the reunion of the Jewish nation under HaShem's rule. The reinstatement of an equitable system of justice - **הַשִּׁיבָּה**, is followed by the destruction of the sinners who hinder the progress of mankind - **לְלִמְלָשִׁינִים**. This is followed by the vindication of the righteous – **עַל הַצְדִיקִים**. This group has the character of the camp of Efraim located on the West, which united with the tribes of Menasheh and Binyamin, in whose territory the *Shechinah* stood. These three petitions for the establishment of the spiritual background for the *geulah*, are followed by the last three, which mention the material blessings necessary for the welfare of the Jewish nation.

SUMMIT OF SPIRITUAL ASCENT

We have finally reached the South side of the camp where the tribes of Shimon and Gad are united under the leadership of Reuven. These *berachos* too follow the order set by prophetic prediction (*Hoshea* 3:5) that the return to HaShem will precede the installation of Moshiach. The erection of the City of HaShem where He will establish His glory, **בָּזָה רְוֹשָׁלִים**, comes first. Then the royal heir, Moshiach ben David, will be enthroned – **אֶת צְמַח דָוד**. The last *berachah*, **שָׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלָּה**, represents the very summit of the spiritual ascent; for in the coming realm of eternal nearness to HaShem, all our individual and national prayers will receive generous fulfilment. The cycle of the thirteen intermediate *berachos* is now completed. Man, free as an individual, but at the same time a member of his nation, lays all his spiritual and material requests before HaShem, seeking fulfilment and spiritual elevation from Him. This idea was expressed symbolically in the avodah of the daily *Tamid* sacrifice, when the life blood was offered on the altar. It is faithfully reflected in our prayers, the service of the heart. Though we have no altar, we walk in spirit round its corners daily to receive purification (World of Prayer, p.127).