

At first glance, the *Haftorah* for *Parshas Toldos* appears to have limited connection to the *Parsha*. The first 5 verses contrast the relationships between Hashem and Jacob and Hashem and Esau. The prophet then rebukes the *Kohanim* and those that bring suboptimal sacrifices and offerings, להם מגואל. *Hilchos Kodshim* requires the individual who for whatever reason brings a sacrifice to ensure that it is an optimal sacrifice (מעולה). This is a separate Halacha from the prohibition against offering a בעל מום, an animal with a deformity. The prophet continues to discuss the *Kohen Gadol*, referring to *Aharon HaKohen*, and Hashem's covenant for life and peace with him.

What is the connection between the seemingly disparate sections of the *Haftorah*? One might suggest that indeed there is none; *Haftorah* requires we read a minimum of 21 verses so we simply continue from the conclusion of the relevant topic, which in this case seemingly is Hashem's relationship with the children of Isaac. However, the Gemara says *Haftorah* may be less than 21 verses if we read a complete topic. In fact we read several *Haftorot* that are fewer than 21 verses. Apparently Chazal noticed a connection between the various parts of our *Haftorah* and *Parsha*.

Jacob purchased the birthright from Esau. But what did it entail and require of the owner? The birthright obligates the first born with the responsibility to act as a Kohen, a priest in the service of Gd. Indeed, prior to the sin of the golden calf, the first born were designated to perform the Temple service. After the sin, the tribe of *Levi* assumed the role of the firstborn. Hence, in the home of Isaac, Esau was the Kohen until Jacob purchased the birthright and assumed the associated responsibility.

*Yalkut Shimoni* quotes a Midrash that when Jacob was wounded by the angel Michael [note: this *Midrash* says Michael was the angel who battled Jacob, in order to show him that if he is capable of battling an angel to a standstill, he need not fear Esau. Yalkut also brings another Midrash that it was the angel of Esau.] Hashem said "you are deforming My priest", and Michael asked Rephael to help him heal Jacob. Michael, who is called the Kohen Shel Maalah, the priest upon high, is sent to take responsibility for healing the *Kohen Shel Matah*, the human priest, Jacob.

Rashi comments on the verse where Jacob demands Esau sell his birthright מכרה לי: Jacob said the first born is obligated to offer sacrifices and serve as *Kohen*. This is a task that you, Esau, have no interest in, yet it is something that calls to me. Rashi comments on the verse הנה אנכי הולך למות that Esau asked what benefit may one derive from this service? Jacob responded that, on the contrary, this service carries many restrictions and prohibitions with severe penalties for transgression. For example, one performing the Temple Service in a drunken state is punishable with death. Esau responded, if that is the case, he will surely die because of this service, it is incompatible with his life style. He rejected it and sold it to Jacob. Jacob strikes a deal to ensure that it will belong to him and his children. Hence, the concept of כהונה, serving Hashem in the Temple, is emphasized in the *Parsha*.

To understand the Haftorah vis-à-vis the Parsha, we must understand the concept of כהונה. The *Kohanim* were divided into 24 shifts. Kohanim worked only twice a year. What did the *Kohanim*, and the rest of Shevet Levi, do during the remainder of the year to deserve the מתנות כהונה that they were granted? The primary task of *Shevet Levi* is to teach Torah to *Bney Yisrael*. The Torah says יורו משפטיך ליעקב, and they will teach Your laws to Jacob and Your Torah to Israel. This precedes the obligation of ישימו קטורה באפריך וכליל על מזבחיך, to place incense and sacrifices on Your altar. The Torah refers to *Sanhedrin* and Chazal as *Kohanim*, for example, ובאת אל הכהן אשר יהי-ה בימים ההם, and you shall approach the *Kohen* in your time, where *Kohen* means the scholars of the generation. Another example is their role in guiding the king in writing a *Sefer Torah*, again indicating scholars. The *Sanhedrin* included *Kohanim* among its members.

The prophet describes the role of the *Kohen* (Malachi 2:6-7) as teacher of the people, who helps them return from sin, whose Torah knowledge is sought after. The prophet rebukes the *Kohanim* for behaving improperly. They were lax in guarding the שולחן השם properly, allowing it to become a שולחן מגואל, corrupt and defiled altar. The responsibility of teaching Torah goes beyond lectures. It obligates them to practice חסד, to help those saturated with sin return to Hashem. A *Kohen* acting improperly when offering the קרבנות השם, causes חלול השם, desecration of Hashem's name. The *Kohen* must teach the people the art of הקרבת: to offer themselves as personal sacrifices to Hashem and to appreciate that experience. To do this, they must teach the people how to follow the ways of

Hashem. Ramban interprets *Korban* as self-sacrifice, each Jew should attempt to recreate *Akeidas Yitzchak*. For example, in our High Holiday Prayers we ask Hashem to look at עפרו של יצחק, the ashes of Isaac. As Isaac was not sacrificed on the altar, why don't we say that Hashem should look at the ashes of the ram that was brought in his place? Since Isaac was prepared to offer himself, he achieved the level of *Korban*. We ask Hashem to view the ashes as if they were from Isaac himself.

Why is this *Haftorah* relevant to *Parshas Toldos*? It would appear to be more relevant to *Parshas Emor*. *Toldos* introduces the concept of כהונה vis-à-vis *Bnay Yisrael*. The *Haftorah* defines the program of כהונה. Just as *Shevet Levi* are *Kohanim* to *Klal Yisrael*, the Jewish people are *Kohanim* for the world; our mission is to be ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש, to set an example of sanctity for others to follow. The individual priest must teach the people the path of Torah and kindness. Likewise, *Knesses Yisrael* is obligated to teach the rest of the world the ways of Hashem. חלול השם results when the *Kohen* defiles the שולחן השם thus driving people away from Hashem. By purchasing the כהונה, Jacob charged individual *Kohanim* to perform the temple service appropriately, and *Knesses Yisrael* to perform its *Avodah*; teach the world about חסד and sanctify the name of Hashem.

The prophet says (Malachi 1:4) "And your eyes shall see and you shall exclaim 'let the glory of Hashem overflow the boundaries of Israel'". The ultimate goal and mission of the Jewish People is that Hashem be recognized by all creation as King of the universe. The prophet warns if the *Kohanim* do not set the proper example and standard for *Klal Yisrael*, then the ultimate goal of spreading Hashem's name to all creation cannot be realized. The prophet rebukes the *Kohanim* for losing sight of their mission, instead acting in counter-productive ways that defile the name of Hashem. The Jew prays that מוקטר מוגש לשמי, ubiquitous offerings should be made to Hashem. Universal recognition of Hashem requires the Jew to act morally and ethically. However if we defile the name of Hashem this cannot happen. The prophet (Malachi 2:4) emphasizes this covenant was given to Levi, however Levi represents the entire Jewish nation. *Knesses Yisrael* was entrusted with the *Torah* and *Mitzvos* in order that they be the priests to the world and glorify Hashem's name.

The theme of *Parshas Toldos* is כְּהוֹנָה. Abraham was not granted כְּהוֹנָה, as Malki Tzedek was the *Kohen* of his generation. Isaac received the gift of כְּהוֹנָה through the *Akeidah*. Jacob purchased the rights to the כְּהוֹנָה from Esau. The *Parsha* tells us the כְּהוֹנָה passed from Isaac to Jacob, a כְּהוֹנָה that carries a history of suffering, loneliness and self-sacrifice to sanctify the name of Hashem. The *Haftarah* reiterates this message and presents us with the program that the *Kohanim* must follow.

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