



GROWTH

At The

SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT VAYIKRA

Sacrifice

"Failure is an event. Never a person."

The Essence of Amalek

I saw an amazing d'var Torah¹ that opens a whole new dimension to the depth of Purim. We all know that the evil decree of Haman was sealed in Heaven because the Jews partook of the feast of Achashverosh. It is difficult to understand, though, how and why the Jews even attended this party at all. Even if everything on the menu was kosher, the main reason behind this wicked feast was because Achashverosh had made a calculation that the Jews would never return to Yerushalayim and that the Bet HaMikdash would never be rebuilt. There was a prophecy that the exile between the first and second Temple would be 70 years, and according to Achashverosh's reckoning, the time had come and nothing had happened. Therefore, to celebrate and dance over the Jewish blood, he wore the sacred clothing of the *kohen gadol* and drank from the vessels of the Temple. How in the world could the Jews have enjoyed from such a feast?!

The answer is extremely profound, and sheds light unto what *really* took place. Take yourself back to the time period of the Babylonian exile, and analyze the perspective of the Jews of that time. Am Yisrael was already close to the end of their *galut*. They knew it would only be 70 years, and so they were truly in exile. They were unable to establish themselves, build homes or *shuls*, or start businesses, since they knew that very soon, the redemption would come and they would return to the Holy Land. It thus wasn't worthwhile to invest in creating any infrastructure. And so, they lived this way for seventy years with no progress, just standing and waiting for salvation. Their incredible lack of clarity was extremely difficult for them. Finally, 70 years had passed, but the *ge'ula* didn't come. They were then told that there had been a mistake in the calculation; the count didn't start from the right time (since there were several stages of exile, as explained in *Megillah* 11a). Left with no other choice, they waited a bit longer. Again and again, they were informed that there had been mistakes in the calculation, and so they waited and waited, suitcases still packed, unable to live normal lives, until they felt totally lost and confused. Afterwards, Achashverosh rose to power, and in the 3rd year of his reign, he saw that 70 years had certainly passed according to all possible figures and there was no hope for the Jews' salvation. At that point, he announced a feast, informing everyone that his kingdom had been fully established. The Jews took a deep sigh of relief. "It is certainly very painful that we won't be able to go back to Eretz Yisrael, but at least now, the situation is clear. Now, we can begin to live normally – build homes, open businesses, and so on." At that point, the *yehudim* experienced something terrible: *despair*. And that is when the evil influence of Haman was able to infiltrate and get them to attend the party. But Mordechai HaTzaddik stood up and exclaimed, "No! No! I know what is happening Above! Believe me, your place is not here – in just a little while, we will return to the Bet HaMikdash! This is precisely what everything depends on; if you give up now, then in truth, you will remain here!" But no one understood what he was talking about and why he was so upset. In their minds, they had just gone out to eat a little, and when the time would come, they would go back to Jerusalem. However, in the meantime, the redemption had not yet begun... The *tzaddik* understood, though, that it was specifically their despair that would set them back and even further stall the *ge'ula*.

Chazal say that the story of the *megillah* is a microcosm of our own individual lives. We all have a personal "Haman" that is set on destroying us, and his power rests in causing us to lose hope. We all want to serve our Creator with authenticity and reach the lofty levels of *kedushah* that are described in the *sefarim*, and indeed, that ambition is within reach. However, the force of Haman gets in our heads and has us despair of our aspirations, whispering lies and making us feel the uncertainty that leads to the lack of progress and patience. However, although Haman murmurs the tune of despair, Purim is there to remind us to heed the call of Mordechai: "Never give up!" In fact, Chazal state that in the verse of the *Megillah*, "*Kirtzon ish ve'ish*" ['like each man's wishes'], the word "*ish* / וְאִישׁ" refers to Mordechai, whereas "*ve'ish* / וְאִישׁ" is a reference to Haman. The *Sefer Oneg Shabbat* reveals that וְאִישׁ, representing Mordechai, is an acronym for וְאִישׁ אֵין שׁוֹמְרֵי [there is no reason to despair]; on the other hand, וְאִישׁ, symbolizing Haman, has the same letters as "ye'ush / וְאִישׁ" – despair. *Be strong, and don't give up!*

Refuah Sheleimah, b'toch she'ar cholei Yisrael:

Ariel Ben Frida Rahamim Ben Shifra Frida Bat Yaffa
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1. From "Open Gates to Purim and the Megillah."

In this week's Parsha, we read about the various sacrifices offered upon the *Mizbe'ach*.

Nowadays, while we are waiting for the reinstatement of the Bet HaMikdash, how can we tap into what the *korbanot* bring to a person? We currently cannot offer an animal upon an altar; what can we do in its stead?

Our Sages give a few answers, one of which is the following. Although we cannot sacrifice an animal to G-d, we can sacrifice of *ourselves* to Hashem. A core idea and fundamental concept in Judaism is to love Hashem. Of course, it is priceless when we speak to Boreh Olam and tell Him that we love Him, but how can we solidify those feelings in action? The answer is: *mesirut nefesh* (self-sacrifice). There is nothing more powerful than giving up on certain pleasures or desires, or pushing one's limits to do something positive, for the sake of and in love for the Creator. Thus, while we can't offer physical *korbanot* now, the concept of sacrifices has probably never been more relevant.

A friend of mine was once having somewhat of an internal struggle on a motzai Shabbat; the delicious aroma of fresh pizza was teasing him, and he had eaten meat not too long before. I shared with him a thought along these lines, that in these unique times, right before *mashiach's* arrival, we are gifted with instances like these to sacrifice for Hashem and truly show our Father that we love Him; cherish these moments...