

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Ki Sisa - Parah 5786

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The Torah gives instruction on how a tameh mes can become pure.

וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־יִטְמָא וְלֹא יִתְחַטֵּא וְנִכְרְתָה הַגִּזְפָּשׁ הַהוּא מִתּוֹךְ הַקְּהָל כִּי אֶת־מִקְדָּשׁ הַ טְמֵא
מִי גִדָּה לֹא־נִרְקַע עָלָיו טְמֵא הוּא:

“And a man that is impure and has not cleansed his soul and his soul is to be cut off from the assembly, because he made impure the Sanctuary of Hashem; the cleansing *niddah* waters was not sprinkled on him, he is impure.” (Bamidbar 19:20).

The Torah provides the law of the parah aduma, the red heifer. This is a special procedure that takes away even the most stringent of tumeh, that of tumeh mes – contact with a corpse or grave. When the Torah states the person will be cleaned, it uses the word יִתְחַטֵּא. This word seems to mean “he shall sin.” (Ibid 19:12). It also uses that word, in conjunction with “not” to indicate not cleansed. (Ibid 19:20). How can the word for sin also mean to be cleansed of impurity? And why is the impurity of a corpse tumeh associated with this word for sin?

There are two words the Torah uses in relation to sins and forgiveness. Chet is used for sin. Sin crouches at one’s door. (Bereishis 4:7). If a person sins unintentionally. (Vayikra 4:2). Then the word for atonement is kaper. The Kohen shall make expiation (atonement) for him. (Ibid 4:26). Yom Kippur is an eternal day of atonement. (Ibid 16:30). In those instances, the words seem clear to mean sin and atonement. However, there are places where this chatos offering is brought when the person is without sin.

A chatos offering is brought after childbirth. (Ibid 12:6). A nazir brings it after his period of nezirus. (Bamidbar 6:14). The metzora brings it after being cleansed. (Vayikra 14:19). Likewise, the zav (ibid 15:15) and zavah (15:30) bring it, too. Likewise, the word kaper also is used when it does not refer to sin. The kohen helps provide expiation for the woman who gave birth (ibid 12:8), the zav (ibid 15:15) and zava (15:30), and the metzora (ibid 14:20). The ceremony on Yom Kippur also provides expiation for the Sanctuary itself. (Ibid 16:16). The mizbeach was dedicated and it was “atoned” for. (Shmos 29:36). The Gemara does give possible sins that would warrant a woman after childbirth, or the others mentioned here, to bring a chatos. However, contextually and simply, there must be another and better translation for chatos and kaper. Especially since the Mikdash and the mizbeach do not sin.

Note that by the nazir there is no expiation done after his period of nezirus. There is an expiation in the case that while he was a nazir he became defiled with corpse tumeh. (Bamidbar 6:11). However, that kaper is for the corpse tumeh. After his regular nezirus there is no expiation even though he brings a chatos offering.

Chet does not mean sin. It means to cleanse the soul. The Torah uses it euphemistically (in clean language) to refer to sin. On Yom Kippur we call sin three

names: Chatos (inadvertent sins), avon (intentional sins), and peshaim (rebellious acts). Chatos, really, means a shogeg, inadvertent act. The *solution* to sin is where the word gets its name. The result of sin is some sort of impurity to the soul. Chatos is the process to cleanse the soul of the dent the sin caused to the soul. That is why it can be used for tumeh situations, too. When a person is tameh, his soul gets a dent. Inadvertent and possibly unavoidable, yes, but his spiritual body is in a state of impurity. Now the soul needs a cleansing. Sins and tumeh cause a dent in the soul. The solution is a Korban Chatos – a Cleansing Offering.

In all of the examples above, the spiritual body reflects the physical body. The physical body became unclean and that uncleanliness makes the spiritual body – the soul – impure. That is why the offering brought is a chatos as it removes that dent. That dent was not caused by sin but by tumeh. Even so, it is the same cleansing offering.

Kaper does not necessarily mean atone. It also means expiation – an act to repair a wrong. It is a cleansing of the soul. It cleanses the soul whether the soul was dirtied by sin or was dirtied by tumeh. That is why the nazir does not get “atoned” for. The nazir does not have an unclean soul. He brings a chatos because the entire purpose of his nezirus was to help him attain spiritual purity and a higher level of ruchnios. Therefore, of course he brings a korban meant to reflect that self-sacrifice. Since he did not actually sully his soul, he does not get atoned or expiated for. The exception is if he becomes corpse-tumeh during his nezirus. Then he will be expiated because then his soul did actually become tameh.

With corpse-tumeh the person does not have to bring an offering and no chatos offering is brought. Likewise, no kapara is made for him. Instead, the Torah uses the word tahor – he is made pure. The ashes of this special offering are mixed with water, that water is a reversal of status. Anyone pure touches it becomes impure and those that are impure become pure. The purity takes two doses and seven days. However, it works without immersion in a mikveh. The people who prepare the cow and the waters have to bathe but the tameh mes himself or herself only gets sprinkled with waters.

“A man that is impure and does not get cleansed (yischata).” He did not cleanse his soul. The dead are a physical body without a soul. Touching it may make a person unclean physically and thus tameh spiritually, but since there is no soul in that body anymore, it makes no dent to his soul. His status is special. Considered tameh without any harm to his own soul. Also, until he gets tahor, he cannot become more tameh. His soul has a static status. Therefore, there is no expiation/kapara but there is a cleansing. A person who does not purify himself gets cut off (kares) because he is not allowing himself to grow in kedusha and he cannot visit the Mikdash. If he does, he makes the Mikdash tolerate impurity, and thus his soul should get cut off. In this way, and in regards to actual sin (avon), chet is used euphemistically, to mean cleanse – or need a cleansing.

A person should try to find ways to judge favorably. The Torah gives the great example of using a clean language, avoiding bad or demeaning words in favor of positive ones. As the Torah considers a person who sins or is tameh to merely have committed an act *requiring a cleansing*, that is a great example to treat others with the benefit of the doubt.