Jewish Tribune – Tzav

**A Special Thank You**

Our parsha talks of the korban todah, the thanksgiving offering. While we cannot bring this korban nowadays, its modern application certainly came alive in my shiur room this week.

But first some background. The Gemara in Berachos (54b) informs us that there are four individuals are obligated to thank Hashem through a korban todah. These are people who recovered from illness; were freed from jail; crossed the sea; or crossed the desert.

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 219) sets out all the details and there are many interesting related halachos. When is the brocho of hagomel said nowadays? Air travel? Eurostar? Does a woman make the brocho after childbirth? What about someone who was involved in a car accident? What if it was a near miss? These questions make for an interesting shiur, but it was not this that featured in my shiur room in Hasmonean.

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 219:9) cites a machlokes if the bracha is only said in the above four categories (recovered from illness; freed from jail; crossed the sea; crossed the desert) or if it can be broadened to other situations. The Mishna Berura (219:32) says our custom is to say it whenever a person is saved from a dangerous situation.

I have the privilege of giving a daily Dirshu Mishna Berurah shiur and happened to be up to this very point in the Mishna Berurah. On the very same day as learning this halocho, I had arranged for three young men from Israel to come to school to speak to students about their experiences. All three live on a kibbutz less than a kilometre from Gaza and experienced the events of 7 October up close; very close. They are currently displaced and are living in a hotel south of Netanya.

One of the boys (all aged about 17 years old) described his experiences of that Shabbos, 7 October. He described how when the sirens went off, the members of his family went to the sealed room; an occurrence that was sadly not unfamiliar to them. They soon began to realise that the situation was extremely serious and not before to long, armed terrorists had broken into their home. Boruch Hashem, the terrorists could not access the sealed room and the boy described how petrifying it was for them all.

They remained locked in this room for 16 hours. It was actually the boy’s bedroom and it was an extremely tense and unpleasant 16 hours. They were locked in the room fearful of their lives and remained there without food or bathroom facilities. But at least they survived unscathed.

As they were speaking, I remembered the halocho I had learned earlier that morning and gently enquired if they had ever made the brocho of hagomel since that fateful day. One of the boys had, but the other two had not.

After the presentation drew to a close, I thanked them all and asked if the boys who had not yet done so, were willing to make the hagomel bracha now. They were more than willing and did so, receiving the heartfelt response of:

מִי שֶׁגְּמָלְךָ כָּל טוֹב, הוּא יִגְמָלְךָ כָּל טוֹב סֶלָה

May He who has bestowed goodness on you, always bestow every goodness on you.

There is another unusual aspect of the korban todah offering. Whereas a korban shelamim may be eaten until nightfall of the next day **after** it is offered, the korban todah must be eaten **before** the morning after it was offered, a much shorter period of time. Chazal further shortened the time it may be eaten — permitting it to be eaten only until halachic midnight — to assure that no one eat the korban when it is forbidden to do so.

Thus, there are three ways in which the korban todah is treated differently from an ordinary shelamim: 1) the todah is accompanied by an absolutely huge amount of bread, made from a total of twenty isronim of flour (**twenty times the amount of flour**that requires one to separate challah!); 2) half of this bread is chometz and half matzoh; and 3) the korban and its bread must be consumed within a very short period of time.

Why would the Torah “impose” these additional requirements on the offerer of the korban? He has a significant amount of holy meat that must be eaten by midnight, and a huge amount of accompanying bread with the same restrictions. What will he do?

The Seforno explains that he will have to invite a large crowd to join him in his feast and will thereby explain to them the reason for his bringing the korban. He will need to publicise his salvation and publicly thank Hashem.

That is why the brocho of hagomel needs to be said in front of a minyan. An essential aspect of thanking Hashem is doing so publicly and proclaiming your thanks in front of others.

May all those displaced and traumatised by the experiences of 7 October return home swiftly and be comforted, and may we all hear besuros tovos very soon.

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