

Parshas Tzav

This week's Parsha is Tzav, along with Shabbos Hagadol. The Parsha discusses sacrifices, but one point to reflect on is Perek 7:12, which discusses offering a thanksgiving sacrifice. The Gemara in Berachos 54b describes four types of people who must give a thanksgiving offering: those who travel across the sea or desert, those who recover from illness, and those who were imprisoned and then released. Generally, in Ashkenazic tradition, these are the four individuals who would "bench" Gomel. Instead of a sacrifice, a blessing (Bracha) is recited. The reason these four situations prompt saying thanks is that in each case, your fate is visibly out of your hands, and you trust in Hashem that everything will be alright. Even though today, global travel may seem safe and straightforward, reaching your destination can still be outside your control—and perhaps that's why, in the Sephardic tradition, even simple travel is considered a reason to bless. Similarly, when someone is sick or in prison, parts of their lives are beyond their control. Most importantly, we hold onto faith that good outcomes will come, and that is why we must offer thanks for the journey or experience. Although today we are limited in the physical sacrifices we can offer to Hashem, there are opportunities to give blessings in lieu of a sacrifice to attain the same goal. The blessings themselves reflect a consistency in our faith and practice:

there are alternative ways to achieve the same outcome before Hashem, even in Golus, because our faith, religion, and practice are eternal, as they are linked to the Torah. Now, this Parsha usually falls on Shabbos Hagadol, which is really called Shabbos Hanes Hagadol, when Hashem performed a great miracle: preparing the lambs, an Egyptian deity for sacrifice, and nothing happened to the Jews. According to the Mefharshim, the society of Egypt turned on itself after the firstborn realized that the Jews were moving ahead with their plans, as evidenced by their gathering of the lambs; they then realized that Egypt was going to lose, and revolted to get the government to stop their nonsense. The Jews had faith to plow forward as commanded, and the result was that the world around them realized they must not resist further, meaning the Jews' salvation was at hand. When the captors realized the captives would be free, they lost control, as it was in Hashem's hand, i.e. salvation to give thanks. This also applies in our times; we are in the throes of Golus, and Mashiach is here, about to be revealed. The enemies around us will lose their minds if we stick to the path of faith and follow the path of Hashem. Then, when salvation comes, we will thank Hashem, as we would with Gomel, or with a physical offering of thanksgiving.

Good Shabbos