



Volume 5. Issue 19

## Gifts to the Kohanim

The *Mishnayot* in chapters 10 and 11 discuss the *mitzvah* of giving certain gifts to the *Kohanim*:

- certain parts of every slaughtered domestic animal;
- certain parts of animals that are sacrificed;
- the firstborn of a cow, sheep or goat; and
- the first shearing of sheep.

There are a total of 24 gifts that are given to the *Kohanim* (*Baba Kamma* 110b) many of which are listed in chapter 18 of *Vayikra*. Some of the gifts are also listed in this week's *Parsha* (*Devarim* 18:3-5).

What is the purpose of these gifts? The gifts allowed the *Kohanim* to focus on their role of working in the *Beit Ha'Mikdash* and acting as the interface between *Bnei Yisrael* and *Hashem* without worrying about earning a living. Today, when we no longer have the *Beit Ha'Mikdash*, there are still many reminders of these gifts and the special role that the *Kohanim* play, such as:

- separating *challah* when baking bread.
- the blessing of the *Kohanim*.
- the various honours that we give to *Kohanim* such as the first *aliya* and leading the *birkat hamazon*.

Whenever we are involved in any of these activities they should serve as a reminder to us of the proper role of the *Kohanim* and of how far we have fallen.

We can learn a powerful lesson from these gifts - a lesson which is very timely given that we have just entered into *Elul* and the lead up to *Rosh Hashanah*.

Many of the gifts that we give to the *Kohanim* involve the concept of 'first':

- the firstborn of our flocks
- the first of our crops
- the first shearing of our sheep

Many of our crops are forbidden *tevel* until we first give *terumah* to the *Kohanim*.

Most of these gifts become sanctified and must be consumed in a sanctified way:

- only by the holiest members of the people i.e. the *Kohanim* and in some cases their families

- only in the holiest place – e.g. some of the gifts must be consumed within the *Bet Ha'Mikdash*
- only in a state of purity – both the item itself and the person consuming the item must not be *tamei*
- only at certain times – e.g. gifts from sacrifices which must be consumed within a certain time period.

What is the connection between 'first' and 'sanctified'?

Around the time of the high holydays, and in particular during the *Aseret Yemai Teshuva* we become more introspective and we focus on doing *teshuva*. Many have the custom of taking on an additional *mitzvah* or *chumrah*. For example, the *Shulchan Aruch* (603:1) suggests that one should be extra careful to only eat bread that was cooked by a Jew during the *Aseret Yemai Teshuva* – even if one is not so careful about this during the rest of the year.

At first glance, this custom appears somewhat hypocritical. As *Hashem* is about to judge us, it is as if we are telling *Hashem* how wonderful we are and asking Him to take into account this extra *mitzvah* that we are keeping. However we usually know, and *Hashem* certainly knows, that as soon as the *Yamim Noraim* are over we will very quickly give up this extra *mitzvah* and return to our old ways. Who are we trying to fool?

If we spend the first part of the year on a higher level we can spend the rest of the year trying to reach those heights once again. We may not make it but at least we are working in the right direction. By being extra careful around this time of year, we are demonstrating to *Hashem* and to ourselves where our priorities lie and the direction in which we are oriented. Our behaviour at the head of the year can be held up as an example of what we hope to achieve.

The same principle applies with the various gifts to the *Kohanim*. The first of our crops, the first born of our flocks, the first shearing of our sheep, etc, need to be elevated into a state of *kedusha*. They are devoted to *Hashem* by giving them to His representatives – the *Kohanim*. This can be held up as an example when we consume the rest of our flocks, crops etc. We do not have to consume the rest in a sanctified manner but at least we are reminded that we should be oriented towards *Hashem* and *kedusha*.

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<sup>1</sup> This idea is based on a shiur by Rav Zev Leff.

**Revision Questions**

חולין ט' א' – י"א ב'

- For which type of *tumah* can the hooves combine with the meat to make up the minimum *shiur*? For which type of *tumah* do they not combine? (ט' א')
- What other case is brought with there is a similar difference between these two forms of *tumah*? (ט' א')
- What part of the hide of an animal has the status of meat? (ט' ב')
- For all the skins/hides listed in the *Mishnah* that have a status of meat, when can they lose that status? (ט' ב')
- What does *R' Yochanan ben Nuri* add to this list? (ט' ב')
- At what point is the hide of an animal not considered attached to the flesh and why is this important? (Provide the three different cases) (ט' ג')
- If a hide of a *neveilah* had a *kezayit* of meat attached and one touch the hair on the other side of the hide would they become *tameh*? (ט' ט')
- Explain the debate where two half-*kezayim* of meat were still attached to the hide of a *neveilah*? (ט' ד')
- What general rule is stated regarding the relationship between *tumat magah* and *tumat masah*? (ט' ה')
- What forms of *tumah* are transferred from a complete bone that has marrow if touched, and which forms of *tumah* are not transferred? (ט' ה')
- What other case is brought similar to the previous question? (ט' ו')
- What are the two debates between *R' Meir* and *R' Shimon* regarding *ever/basar hameduldal* and in what case do they agree? (ט' ו')
- What is the status of an *ever* or *basar meduldal* of a human? (ט' ח')
- Regarding the previous question, what if that person then dies? (ט' ח')
- What parts of a slaughtered animal (*matanot*) must be given to a *kohen*? (ט' י')
- Does this law apply today? (ט' א')
- Does this law apply to *kodshim*? (ט' א')
- What are the differences if an animal had a blemish, was sanctified and then redeemed or if an animal was sanctified, then developed a blemish and was then redeemed? (List seven.) (ט' י')
- Which cases are the exception to the previous question? (ט' ב')
- What is the law regarding the *matanot* if a *bechor* got mixed with one hundred other animals? (Provide both cases.) (ט' ג')
- If person slaughters for which two people is exempt from separating the *matanot*? (ט' ג')
- In what two ways would a *Yisrael* be exempt from separating the *matanot*? (ט' ג')
- If a *Goi* had a cow and converted, when would he be exempt from separating the *matanot*? (ט' ד')
- What is the *zro'ah*? (ט' ד')
- What is the *lechi*? (ט' ד')
- How is the obligation of the *matanot* stricter than *reishit ha'gez*? (ט"א א')
- How much wool must be sheared to obligate the separation of *reishit ha'gez*? (ט"א ב')
- How much must be separated? (ט"א ב')
- What has happened to the wool if one is no longer obligated to separate *reishit ha'gez*? (ט"א ב')
- When is the seller required to separate and when is the purchaser required to separate? (ט"א ב')

**Local Shiurim**

**Sunday -Thursday**  
Between mincha & ma'ariv  
Mizrachi Shul

**Friday & Shabbat**  
10 minutes before mincha  
Mizrachi Shul

**Quick Thought...**

**A Gift Implies Responsibility**

How are we to respond to the gifts that we have received? What should our reaction be when we recognise that we been granted with talent or benefit over our peers?

The *Chovot Ha'Levavot* explains: "Whomever *Hashem* distinguishes from all others by means of some special favour must, in turn, distinguish himself from the others by accepting upon himself some special service, in addition to his efforts in the service which embraces them all."

Put simply, the more we are given, the greater the sense of obligation and the greater responsibility one must bear toward his creator.

He uses the *matanot kehuna* as the prime example of this: "You will therefore find twenty-four priestly commandments, corresponding to the twenty-four special benefits (gift) which the Creator has bestowed upon the Priests.

**Next Week's Mishnayot...**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
7 <sup>th</sup> September ז' אלול	8 <sup>th</sup> September ח' אלול	9 <sup>th</sup> September ט' אלול	10 <sup>th</sup> September י' אלול	11 <sup>th</sup> September י"א אלול	12 <sup>th</sup> September י"ב אלול	13 <sup>th</sup> September י"ג אלול
Chulin 12:1-2	Chulin 12:3-4	Chulin 12:5 – <b>Bechorot 1:1</b>	Bechorot 1:2-3	Bechorot 1:4-5	Bechorot 1:6-7	Bechorot 2:1-2

