



Sicha Summary

Chelek 17 | Vayikra | Sichah 3

The Verse:

Discussing the procedure for offering a bird as an *olah* (ascent) sacrifice, the Torah states:

“The *kohen* shall bring it near to the altar, and nip off its head, and cause it to go up in smoke on the altar, and its blood shall be pressed out upon the wall of the altar.” (*Vayikra* 1:15)

The Rashi:

And its blood shall be pressed out — The word *וַיִּמְצָה* is an expression similar to “pressing (*מִיץ*) anger” (*Mishlei* 30:33); and, “for the milking (*מִלְכָה*) has come to an end” (*Yeshayahu* 16:4). He presses the place of the slaughtering (on the bird’s neck) against the wall of the altar, and thereby, the blood is pressed out and runs down the wall.

The Questions:

Rashi does two things in his commentary. First, he interprets the meaning of the word *וַיִּמְצָה* by means of two scriptural references. Then, he explains how the bird’s blood was applied to the altar.

- 1) Why does Rashi need two source-texts, and why specifically these texts and not other verses where the same expression is used?
- 2) Why does Rashi include both the translation of the word and the explanation of how the blood was applied in the same gloss? Seemingly, they have two distinct interpretative objectives and belong in separate glosses.

The Explanation:

The verb *הִנְמָצָה* — it shall be pressed out — is passive, implying that the *kohen* does not proactively press out the blood, but that it, somehow, happens on its own.

This is difficult, however, because an *olah* offering brought from birds should mirror the previously discussed *olah* offering brought from animals. Regarding an animal, the Torah prescribes that the *kohen* must “throw the blood.” (*Vayikra* 1:5)

Rashi is thus bothered by the passive verb in our verse, because it implies that there was no active application of the blood in a bird offering as there was in an animal offering.

Therefore, Rashi explains how the blood was applied, “He presses the place of the slaughtering against the wall of the altar, and thereby, the blood is pressed out and runs down the wall,” thus providing an active sense to the verb. To substantiate this, Rashi offers two verses where the verb *נָמַץ* is specifically used in an active sense.

The Verses:

The entire verse in *Mishlei* reads, “For pressing milk will give out butter, and pressing the nose will give out blood, and pressing anger will give out strife.” In the first two metaphors, the effect can happen passively — butter can coagulate out of milk and blood can drip from a nose — but in the third metaphor, it is specifically the pressure of a person’s anger that causes strife to emerge. Thus, “pressing anger will give out strife” offers good support for Rashi’s explanation, that the verb in our verse is an active verb.

However, the pressing of anger is merely figurative, necessitating Rashi to cite a second verse, “for the milking (*נָמַץ*) has come to an end,” which leaves no doubt that the verb refers to the human action of applying pressure. Rashi could not only rely solely on this verse, however, because the word *נָמַץ* may refer to the end of the wealth the people amassed through the milk

of their flocks. (See Rashi there.) The first proof-text uses the verb expressly as an action, albeit as a figurative one.

The Deeper Dimension:

Physically offering a sacrifice is meant to elicit within the person spiritual self-reflection and repentance. Applying blood to the altar represents the effort to channel one's blood-like passion toward Divine pursuits. Specifically, the manner that this blood is extracted is, as Rashi says, to "press the... bird's neck against the wall of the altar." This corresponds to a person pressing the "animal" within himself, until his "blood" — his life-force and energy — is expressed in spiritual pursuits, symbolized by "the wall of the altar."

The verses Rashi cites are further allusions to this spiritual work. The verse "pressing anger will give out strife" alludes generally to the process of sin and repentance. Anger is compared to idolatry, a cardinal sin, because it evinces a lack of trust and belief that G-d directs the world. Thus, when a person gives themselves over to anger, they cause "strife" to emerge, namely, a divide between himself and G-d. Yet, when a person brings a sacrifice and has thoughts of repentance, he "presses anger" in a positive sense, oppressing the "anger" of the animal within, causing "strife" between him and his evil inclination.

The second verse, which refers to the process of milking, alludes to the purpose for the possibility of sin and repentance. Why would G-d allow a person to sin to begin with? There are reasons to believe that milk should be a forbidden substance, being that it is made from an animal's blood, and that it may be considered a "limb of a living animal," yet the Torah makes clear that not only is milk permissible, it is a laudatory substance for which the Land of Israel, the land of milk and honey, is praised. Milk represents the transformation of potential negativity into something that brings pleasure to G-d.

By offering the second verse, Rashi alludes to the deeper objective of sin and repentance: like milk, repentance allows a person to take the most

negative elements of himself — his deviations from G-d's will — and, through repentance, to transform them into experiences that bring him even closer to G-d.