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מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד,
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Parashat Vayikra

Sacrificing One's Desires and Character Traits is the Greatest Offering of All

Questions:

- 1) In the beginning of the *parashah* [1:2] the *pasuk* states, "Adam ki yakriv michem korban la'Hashem, When a man from amongst you brings a sacrificial offering to Hashem." The word "michem" [lit. "from you"] appears to be superfluous. What is it coming to teach us?
- 2) The *parashah* details several types of sacrificial offerings: for example, there is a calf, sheep, bird, and meal-offering. About all of them, the Torah states that they are "a satisfying fragrance to Hashem." Is it possible that all of these offerings have the same status?
- 3) How is possible for sacrificial offerings to bring any satisfaction to Hashem? Hashem is not a man that He would take pleasure in animal offerings [see *Shmuel* I 15:22 and *Yeshayahu* 1:11]. One might even ask that we find that the Torah goes to great lengths to prevent Jews from spending money needlessly. Yet here, apparently just the opposite is the case, as so many animals are being slaughtered to be offered on the altar – is this not wasteful?

Hidden Behind Each Offering

In *Sefer Shemot* several *parashiot* discussed the clothing worn by the *kohanim*, as well as the *Mishkan* and its vessels, when the Jews were preparing an abode where the *Shechinah* would dwell amongst them. Now we begin *Chumash Vayikra* which discusses one of the three pillars of the world – the pillar of *avodah*, meaning the Heavenly service performed in the *Mishkan* by bringing sacrificial offerings. The Ramban [1:9] teaches that the purpose of a *korban* is to evoke man's regret over his sins, i.e., being led after his desires and urges in contrast to the Will of Hashem. This is the reason that a sacrificial offering is called a "*korban*," which implies drawing closer [*le'hitkarev*] to Hashem. By doing so, the *korban* brings satisfaction to Hashem. All of this is hinted to in the word "*michem*, from you." A *korban* must be "from you," from your very essence. In other words, the intention of the *korban* is *not* the animal that is being offered; rather, the primary intention is in what is concealed *behind* the *korban* – you. A *korban* represents relinquishing one's desires which lead him to sin, for the sake of benefitting his Divine service. Similarly, he must take the negative character traits which are part of his personality, such as arrogance for example, which is the root of all negative traits, and he must offer them to Hashem, by utilizing them only to perform the Will of Hashem. This is the meaning of "*michem*, from you." This is the reason why our Sages state [*Menachot* 110a, *Makkot* 10a] that studying Torah and forfeiting physical pleasure is greater than offering *korbanot*. In this sense, even though we presently lack a *Beit Hamikdash* in which to offer *korbanot*, the theme of the *korbanot* nevertheless remains eternal. As such, every day a Jew is able offer a *korban* to Hashem and provide the Creator with satisfaction, as it were. As we will explain shortly in the name of the Raavad, we are not referring here to an offering of great difficulty, erroneously assumed necessary by those who think that one must afflict himself with fasts and other afflictions, including abstaining from all physical needs, in order to bring such an offering to Hashem.

Sacrificing a Small Amount of Desire is Considered a Fast and a *Korban*

In his *sefer Baalei Nefesh* [*Shaar Ha'kedushah*], the Raavad writes that the optimum path to subduing the *yetzer hara* is by limiting the physical pleasure one receives from eating and drinking. He should derive pleasure from pleasant fragrances and by washing with warm water as well. The little he eats should be properly prepared and seasoned; this way he will enjoy it and be content with it despite it being small in quantity. He adds that a person should not eat everything that he needs and desires; rather, he should always leave over a small amount. The only wine he should drink is wine in which the proper amount of water is mixed so that he does not become drunk. He quotes our Sages [*Gittin* 70a] as saying that "A feast from which you enjoy – withdraw your hand from it." This teaching benefits us in two ways: the first is that by eating in such a manner, the food will not cause harm



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to one's health. The second is that it subdues the *yetzer hara*. Just as it was said regarding eating, so too, does it apply to all of worldly pleasures – man should not fully satisfy his physical craving. However, a person should not fast by depriving himself of all food and drink, for this may weaken him, as well as corrupt his deeds and nature. It will also pollute his mind, and his loss will be greater than his gain, for he will end up neglecting Torah study and prayer. Even if he does learn Torah, it will be without peace of mind and accuracy, because Torah can only be acquired when studied with joy [see *Shabbos* 30b]. The Raavad's opinion is quoted in the works of many Torah greats, amongst them *Rabbeinu Aharon* of Lunil, the *Sefer Chassidim*, *Maran Beit Yosef* [*Maggid Meisharim*], and *Maran HaChida*, and is a practice advocated by many halachic authorities as well, such as the *Shlah*, the *Chessed Le'Avraham*, and the *Ben Ish Chai*.

Nachshon Sacrificed Haughtiness

This theme can be learned from studying the *korban* that Nachshon offered in *Parashat Naso* [7:12-18].

Questions:

- 1- Why does *pasuk* 12 refer to Nachshon as belonging to the tribe of Yehudah, but does not identify him as the *nasi*, the leader of the tribe, as it does with the other tribal leaders?
- 2- In *pasuk* 13, Nachshon's *korban* is referred to as "*ve'korbano, and his korban.*" The word "and" implies that Nachshon's *korban* was brought subsequent to the other *korbanot*. This is not the case, however, for Nachshon was the first of the tribal leaders to bring such a *korban*. This question becomes all the more glaring when we make note of the fact that this expression is not used in conjunction with any of the other tribal offerings!
- 3- The *Maor Va'shemesh* [cited in the *Me'eino Shel Torah*] asks why the word "*korbano, his korban*" is mentioned twice by Nachshon's offering, as opposed to those of the other tribal leaders, where it is only mentioned once.
- 4- The *Baal HaTurim* writes that the letter *vav* [the numerical value of which is 6] added to the word *ve'korbano* hints to the fact that Nachshon merited six sons and six blessings. Why specifically did Nachshon merit this?

What emerges from the commentators, with our own elaboration, is that since Nachshon was the first of the leaders to bring *korbanot* in the *Mishkan*, there was a definite threat that it would lead to feelings of arrogance. It was therefore a very great test to perform the mitzvah for the sake of Heaven alone, without any trace of arrogance. Yet Nachshon succeeded in this trial and despite the honor involved, nullified the grand feeling of being a *nasi* that harbored inside of him, and by doing so, sacrificed his very essence. This is what the Torah is hinting to us by not mentioning that Nachshon was a *nasi*. It also explains why the *pasuk* implies that there was a *korban* offered prior to the animal offering brought by Nachshon. For in truth, Nachshon sacrificed his inner essence and only *then* brought the animal offering. This is also the reason it states "his *korban*" twice, because there were actually two *korbanot* offered by Nachshon: the first, his essence, and the second, the animal. According to this, we can understand why the letter *vav* [in the word *ve'korbano*] hints to the sons and blessings received by Nachshon, as pointed out by the *Baal HaTurim*. This is because it is the letter *vav* which signifies that Nachshon sacrificed his very essence prior to bringing the animal offering. This – our essence – is the *korban* that Hashem wants from us.

R' Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev ז"ל and the Mother's Korban

It is related in the *sefer Maaseihem Shel Tzaddikim*, that on *erev Yom Kippur*, R' Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev had the following custom: Anyone from his city who wanted the *tzaddik* to pray on his behalf on Yom Kippur would write his name on a note and donate two coins to charity. This was certainly a small price to pay for the prayers of a *tzaddik* on Yom Kippur. Therefore, by midday, two piles had already gathered on his table – one of notes and one of coins. Towards evening, a woman, out of breath, knocked on his door, wishing to submit her note. She indeed wrote the note, but jotted down *two* names, hers and her sons. Noticing this, R' Levi Yitzchak mentioned to the woman that if she wished to submit two names she was required to donate four



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coins and not just two. The woman answered that she had been running around all day trying to secure a loan for two coins and had barely managed to collect this amount. But R' Levi Yitzchak responded that even though he was truly sorry, nevertheless, he could pray only for one name; she therefore had to choose which name she wanted him to pray for. "If so," she exclaimed, "I am totally willing to forgo my own benefit, just as long as you pray for my son!"

R' Levi Yitzchak rejoiced, saying, "Now I have a great defense for the Jewish people before their Father in Heaven. If a mother is willing to sacrifice a prayer on her behalf for the benefit of her son, how much more so, will Hashem about Whom it states, 'A Father displays mercy on His children, ' show mercy and accept the prayers of *His* children!" **This teaches us that a *korban* is offered by sacrificing one's wants and desires. Each time a person yields to benefit his fellow and perform the Will of Hashem he is bringing the greatest possible *korban*. Therefore it is in man's hands to offer many *korbanot* every day, and by doing so, he will provide a satisfying fragrance to Hashem.**

Shabbat Shalom,
Rav Mordechai Malka