

This week, we begin the book of the Torah devoted to the laws of *Korbanot* / sacrificial offerings. The *Gemara* (*Menachot* 110a) derives from verses such as, "This is the Torah of the *Olah* / burnt-offering" (*Vayikra* 6:2); "This is the Torah of the *Minchah* / meal-offering" (6:7); and similar verses, that: "If one studies the Torah section dealing with the *Korban Olah* or the *Korban Minchah* or another *Korban*, the Torah views it as if he brought that offering." [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R' Yitzchak Arama *z"l* (Spain; died 1494) explains: Of course, one must perform each *Mitzvah* even if he does not know its reason. In such a case, his intention should be to fulfill the will of G-d, and, in that merit, he will be among those who "enter the King's palace."

However, continues R' Arama, those who can delve into the reasons for the *Mitzvot* will derive an added benefit. For them, a *Mitzvah* will continue to serve its purpose even after active performance of the commandment has concluded. For example, he writes, the Torah commands us to help our enemies load their donkeys [or, in modern terms, to help an enemy load groceries into his car]. The reason for this *Mitzvah*, our Sages teach, is that such an act helps eliminate our feelings of hatred toward the beneficiary. In a literal sense, this *Mitzvah* can be performed only when the enemy's donkey needs loading. However, knowing the *Mitzvah's* message, *i.e.*, that eliminating hatred is something the Torah values, enables a person to work toward that goal in other ways as well.

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Thirty Days Before Pesach

Rabbeinu Asher *z"l* (1250-1327; Germany and Spain; one of the three pillars of *Halachah* on whose works the *Shulchan Aruch* is based) writes: Trust in *Hashem* with all your heart and believe in His *Hashgachah Peratit* / Divine Providence [explained *below*]. In this way, you will fulfill in your heart the complete *Yichud* / Oneness [also explained *below*], *i.e.*, when you believe that His Eyes roam the entire world, watching all the ways of man and examining man's heart and man's thoughts. On the other hand, one who does not believe (*Shmot* 20:2), "He is the One who has taken you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery," also does not believe (*ibid.*), "I am *Hashem*, your *Elokim*." That person has not made a complete *Yichud*. This is the uniqueness of *Yisrael* over all other nations, and this is the foundation of the entire Torah. (*Orchot Chaim* No. 26)

R' David Cohen *shlita* (*Rosh Yeshiva* of the Chevron Yeshiva in Yerushalayim) explains: Rabbeinu Asher is teaching that the *Mitzvah* of believing in the *Yichud* / Oneness of *Hashem*, the *Mitzvah* found in the first verse of the *Aseret Ha'dibrot*, has two parts: believing in *Hashem's* existence and believing in His *Hashgachah Peratit* / Divine Providence. *Hashgachah Peratit* means that *Hashem's* Eyes roam the entire world, watching all the ways of man and examining man's heart and man's thoughts, and that He conducts the world in accordance with man's actions, giving each person positive or negative consequences as appropriate. [The latter follows logically from the fact that He is watching, since He must be doing so for a reason.] One's *Emunah* / faith is incomplete unless it includes both matters. If one believes that *Hashem* exists but does not believe in *Hashgachah Peratit*, his *Emunah* is incomplete. From where do we learn that *Hashem* watches man's actions and reacts accordingly? From the events of the Exodus. (*Mizmor Le'David* I p.153)

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“If the sin that he committed becomes known to him, he shall bring as his offering a she-goat . . .

“If he shall bring a sheep as his offering for a sin-offering, he shall bring a female, unblemished.” (4:28, 32)

R' Yitzchak Menachem Weinberg *shlita* (Tolna Rebbe in Yerushalayim) writes: This is the only context in the Torah in which a goat is mentioned before a sheep. From this, we can learn a very profound lesson.

The *Gemara* (*Sotah* 32a) teaches: Why did our Sages establish the silent recitation of *Shemoneh Esrei*? In order not to embarrass sinners. [*Rashi z”l*: So no one will hear others confess their sins.] From where did the Sages learn to do this? From the fact that the Torah does not distinguish between the *Olah* / burnt-offering and *Chatat* / sin-offering. [*Rashi*: Both are slaughtered north of the altar in the *Bet Hamikdash*, such that an onlooker cannot tell whether any individual Jew is bringing an *Olah*, which is a voluntary offering, or a *Chatat*, which is a sin offering.]

The *Tolna Rebbe* explains: *Hashem* has compassion on sinners so that they need not be embarrassed. As noted, when a sinner comes to the *Bet Hamikdash*, bystanders cannot tell that he is bringing a *Chatat*. Sadly, he writes, people would talk if they knew. Aside from the embarrassment this would cause, it is likely that the person’s children would have trouble being accepted into schools and *Yeshivot* and, ultimately, would have difficulties with *Shidduchim*. [As should be clear, the *Tolna Rebbe* is bemoaning certain attitudes that are widespread today.] Therefore, the Torah has compassion and allows a sinner to bring a sheep as a *Chatat*, further allowing him to blend in with those bringing voluntary *Olot*.

On the other hand, continues the *Tolna Rebbe*, the Torah permits one to bring a goat (which cannot be brought as an *Olah*) as a *Chatat*. A penitent might want the embarrassment that would accompany bringing a goat, feeling that the humiliation will bring atonement for his sin. Indeed, the Torah mentions a goat-*Chatat* before a sheep-*Chatat* to emphasize the greater level of atonement that results from the former choice, precisely because the one who brings a goat accepts the accompanying humiliation.

The *Tolna Rebbe* adds: The *Midrash Tanna D’vei Eliyahu* (ch.18) teaches: Know that a lowly and humble spirit is more pleasing to G-d than all the *Korbanot* in the Torah, as it is written (*Tehilim* 51:19), “The sacrifices G-d desires are a broken spirit; a heart broken and humbled.” Thus, our Sages said: If one offers an *Olah*, he is rewarded for an *Olah*. If one offers a *Minchah*, he is rewarded for a *Minchah*. A *Shelamim* -- he is rewarded for a *Shelamim*. But, if one is humble, the Torah equates it with bringing all the sacrifices, for the verse does not say, “The sacrifice (singular) of G-d,” but rather, “The sacrifices . . .” [Until here from *Midrash Tanna D’vei Eliyahu*] (Chamin B’Motza’ei Shabbat: Vayikra 2)

“He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Ohel Mo’ed / Tent of Meeting, saying.” (1:1)

At the end of last week’s *Parashah*, we read (*Shmot* 40:35), “Moshe could not enter the *Ohel Mo’ed*, for the cloud rested upon it, and the glory of *Hashem* filled the *Mishkan*/ Tabernacle.”

R’ Shlomo Kluger z”l (1785-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) asks: What was the purpose of placing the cloud over the *Mishkan* preventing Moshe from entering, only to then call Moshe into the cloud? If *Hashem* had not blocked entry into the *Mishkan* with a cloud, He would not have needed to invite Moshe inside!

R’ Kluger explains: *Hashem* did this because Moshe felt bad that he had not donated anything to the *Mishkan*. By blocking entry to the *Mishkan* and then allowing only Moshe inside, *Hashem* demonstrated how beloved Moshe was to Him. This explains, as well, why our verse notes that *Hashem* spoke to Moshe “from the *Ohel Mo’ed*.” It means that *Hashem* spoke to Moshe because of Moshe’s feelings about the *Ohel Mo’ed*.

(*Chochmat Ha’Torah: Vayikra* p.84)

“Speak to Bnei Yisrael and say to them, ‘When a person among you brings an offering to Hashem . . .’” (1:2)

Midrash Rabbah comments: “Thus it is written (*Yirmiyah* 31:19), ‘Ephraim, My most precious son . . . whenever I speak *Bo* / of him . . .”

What is this *Midrash* teaching? R’ Eliezer Dan Ralbag z”l (1832-1895; Yerushalayim) explains: The offering spoken of in our verse is a *Korban Olah* / burnt offering, which even a non-Jew may bring to the *Bet Hamikdash*. Why, then, does our verse say, “Speak to *Bnei Yisrael*” -- to the exclusion of gentiles?

The *Midrash* answers, explains R’ Ralbag: *Bnei Yisrael* are *Hashem*’s most precious son. Therefore, says *Hashem*, “Whenever I speak, *Bo*” -- I speak of him and to him, even though the *Halachah* in question is relevant to non-Jews as well. (Damesek Eliezer)

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In this sense, R’ Arama writes, the sacrificial service has not been lost to us. True, actual *Korbanot* are not being offered when we have no *Bet Hamikdash*. Nevertheless, King David writes (*Tehilim* 51:19), “The sacrifices G-d desires are a broken spirit; a heart broken and humbled.” When a person remembers the *Korbanot*, he can subdue himself before G-d in all areas, just as he would do when bringing a sacrificial offering. This is what the *Gemara* means when it says that learning about the *Korbanot* is like offering them -- both activities can have the same beneficial effect. (*Akeidat Yitzchak: Sha’ar* 51)