

In this week's *Parashah*, we begin to learn the laws of the *Korbanot* / sacrificial offerings. R' Moshe ben Maimon z"l (*Rambam*; 1135-1204; Spain and Egypt) writes that the *Korbanot* are among the *Chukim* / decrees whose reasons we cannot comprehend.

R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv z"l (1910-2012; Yerushalayim) asks: The *Gemara* (*Yoma* 67b) teaches that the term "*Chukim*" applies to *Mitzvot* that gentiles mock because they seem irrational--for example, the prohibition against wearing *Sha'atnez* / a mixture of wool and linen. How can this term refer to *Korbanot* when gentiles themselves brought such offerings? Indeed, Adam, Kayin, Hevel, and Noach brought *Korbanot*! And, when Moshe Rabbeinu told Pharaoh that *Bnei Yisrael* would travel into the desert to bring *Korbanot*, Pharaoh did not mock this idea!

R' Elyashiv explains: It is a natural human instinct to give gifts that express our gratitude, even when we know that the recipient has no need for our gift. That is why we bring a *Korban Todah* / thanksgiving offering. We read in *Shir Ha'shirim* (2:14), "For your voice is sweet and your countenance is pleasing." *Midrash Rabbah* comments: "For your voice is sweet" refers to the songs of the *Levi'im* in the *Bet Hamikdash*; "and your countenance is pleasing" refers to the *Korbanot*. The *Midrash* is teaching, writes R' Elyashiv, that just as the song of the *Levi'im* is merely an expression of our thanksgiving, but it gives *Hashem* nothing, so it is with the *Korbanot*. - **Continued in box inside** -

## Bitachon

This year--a *Shemittah* year--we will *iy"H* devote this space to discussing the related subject of *Bitachon* / placing one's trust in *Hashem*.

*Rabbeinu Bachya ibn Pekudah z"l* (*Saragossa, Spain; early 11<sup>th</sup> century*) lists ten benefits of *Bitachon*. The fifth of these benefits is as follows:

A person who trusts in *Hashem* will never be tempted to trust in his wealth instead, for he views his wealth as a *Pikadon* / something that was entrusted to him as a caretaker for a limited amount of time. Such a person will not mention his own kindness nor demand gratitude or thanks from those he helps with his money; rather, he will thank *Hashem* for giving him the opportunity to be *Hashem's* agent to do good. If he loses his money, he will not worry or mourn; he will give thanks to *Hashem* no differently than when he had the *Pikadon*.

(*Chovot Ha'levavot: Sha'ar Ha'gemul*, Introduction)

In some versions of *Chovot Ha'levavot*, instead of, "He will not mention his own kindness," it says, "He will not remember his own kindness." (In Hebrew, there is a difference of only one letter between "*Yazkir*" / "mention" and "*Yizkor*" / "remember.")

R' Chaim Avraham Katz z"l (*Mogilev, Belarus; died 1804*) explains: A person with *Bitachon* not only will not demand gratitude or thanks from those he helps with his money, he will not even "remember" it, *i.e.*, he will not pat himself on the back and tell himself what a fine person he is.

(*Pat Lechem*)

R' Baruch Aryeh Halevi Fischer *shlita* (rabbi and educator in Brooklyn, N.Y.) writes: There is an entire section of the *Shulchan Aruch* / Code of Laws that emphasizes that private property is just that--private property. Even so, a person with *Bitachon* understands that his property was given to him by *Hashem* to use in a certain way.

(*Lev Ha'ari*)

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**“Speak to *Bnei Yisrael* and say to them, ‘When a man among you brings an offering to *Hashem* -- from animals, from the cattle or from the flock shall you bring your offering.” (1:2)**

Among four-legged animals, only the cow, sheep and goat families are fit for sacrificial offerings. Why were these species chosen?

R’ Yitzchak Abarbanel z”l (1437-1508; Portugal, Spain and Italy) offers several explanations:

(1) By their natures, temperaments, and diets, these are the finest of all four-legged animals.

(2) These are the most widely-available of all animals. [The two preceding explanations are offered by R’ Abarbanel in the name of R’ Levi ben Gershon z”l (*Ralbag*; 1288-1344; Provence, France)].

(3) These three animals allude to the merits of the three Patriarchs. About Avraham we read (*Bereishit* 18:7--when Avraham “fed” the three angels), “Avraham ran to the cattle, took a calf, tender and good . . .” About Yitzchak we read (*Bereishit* 22:13), “Avraham went and took the ram and offered it up as an offering instead of his son [Yitzchak].” Finally, about Yaakov we read (*Bereishit* 27:9), “Go now to the flock and fetch me from there two choice young kids of the goats.”

(4) The Jewish People are compared to these three species in many verses, including: “For *Yisrael* has strayed like a wayward cow” (*Hoshea* 4:16); “*Yisrael* is like scattered sheep” (*Yirmiyah* 50:17); and “I will put an end to the pride of the mighty / ‘*Azim*’ [same spelling as ‘*Izim*’ / goats]” (*Yechezkel* 7:24). When we offer animals of these three species, *Hashem* views it as if we have sacrificed ourselves to Him.  
(*Peirush Al Ha’Torah: Hakdamah L’Vayikra*)

**“If a person commits *Me’ilah* / misuse of objects or funds sanctified for the *Bet Hamikdash* . . .” (5:15)**

The *Gemara* (*Nedarim* 9b) relates that the Sage Hillel would not consecrate an animal for a sacrifice until he was already inside the Temple courtyard. That way, it was offered immediately, and no one ever had an opportunity to misuse his sanctified animal.

R’ Ben Zion Neshet *shlita* (one of the senior rabbis in Tel Aviv, Israel) observes that this practice is alluded to in *Tehilim* (116:18--part of *Hallel*), “I will pay my vows to *Hashem*.” Where? “In the courtyards of the house of *Hashem*.”

(*Haggadah Shel Pesach Shir Tziyon* p.100)

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Because it is a natural instinct, Adam, Noach, and their gentile descendants also brought thanksgiving offerings, just as we bring a *Korban Todah* and, in the absence of the *Bet Hamikdash*, recite *Birkat Ha’gomel*. However, writes R’ Elyashiv, a new aspect was added to the *Korbanot* when the Torah was given: the idea that we are offering an animal in place of ourselves, and that *Hashem* views that as if we have offered ourselves. That aspect of a sacrificial offering is unique to the Jewish People and is certainly a *Chok*, something that we cannot explain rationally.  
(*Divrei Aggadah*)

**“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, also, why our verse notes that *Hashem* spoke to Moshe “from the *Ohel Mo’ed*.” *Hashem* spoke to Moshe because of Moshe’s feelings about the *Ohel Mo’ed*.  
(*Chochmat Ha’Torah: Vayikra* p.84)

R’ Chaim Vital z”l (Tzefat and Damascus; 1542-1620) writes: This verse illustrates our Sages’ teaching that *Hashem* elevates a person who humbles himself. We read at the end of last week’s *parashah*, “Moshe could not enter the *Ohel Mo’ed*, for the cloud rested upon it, and the glory of *Hashem* filled the *Mishkan*.” This does not mean that Moshe Rabbeinu was physically unable to enter the *Ohel Mo’ed*; after all, he had stood on Har Sinai in the presence of *Hashem*’s Glory. Rather, he humbled himself and did not enter “*Hashem*’s house” until he was invited, as our verse says, “He called to Moshe.” And what does our verse say next? “*Hashem* spoke to him from the *Ohel Mo’ed*, saying.” *Hashem* told him: the purpose of this structure is to be a Tent of Meeting in which to speak to you.  
(*Etz Ha’da’at Tov*)

**“When a man brings an offering to *Hashem* from among you . . .” (1:2)**

R’ Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson z”l (1880-1950; *Lubavitcher Rebbe*) writes: If the Torah’s intention is merely to teach the laws of the sacrifices, the verse should have said, “When a man among you brings an offering to *Hashem* . . .” *i.e.*, with the phrase “among you” placed earlier. Why does the verse say, “When a man brings an offering to *Hashem* from among you”? [Ed. note: Many popular *Chumashim* do, in fact, translate our verse as if “among you” is placed earlier, but that is not a literal translation.]

The *Lubavitcher Rebbe* explains: The word “*Korban*” shares a root with the word that means “close.” The Torah is teaching: When you want to bring a *Korban*, to come close, to *Hashem*, it is within you to do so. It is up to you to offer your talents, abilities, and feelings in the service of *Hashem*.

(*Ma’amar Bati Le’gani* ch.2)