

The Narrow Bridge

גשר צר מאוד

PARSHA PERSPECTIVES

Short Divrei Torah on Parshas Vayikra

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HEARING THE CALL

Rabbi Moshe Schochet

"And He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying..." (1:1)

Rav Yisrael Meir Druck (Aish Tamid) asks why the Torah omits Hashem's name when it states that He called out to Moshe but mentions Hashem's name in the second half of the *pasuk*, when it states that Hashem spoke to Moshe?

Rav Druck explains that when Hashem called out to Moshe, it was not clear from the outset that Hashem was calling Moshe. Instead, Moshe, who was in tune with Hashem's communication, paid attention and was able to notice that Hashem was calling him. When Moshe recognized that Hashem was calling out to him, the *pasuk* then specifies that it was in fact Hashem who was the One speaking to him.

Rav Druck is teaching us a very powerful lesson. As we progress through life, we must pay more careful attention to when Hashem reaches out to us. Unfortunately, we are often too distracted to hear Hashem's communication. Hashem yearns to connect with us, but it is up to us to have our antennas raised so that we can hear when He is speaking to us. Let us work to ensure that we feel Hashem's tangible presence throughout our lives. This way, when we hear His call to us, we can act upon it.

HUMBLE GREATNESS

Ruzhiner Rebbe

"And He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying..." (1:1)

The reason there is a small *aleph* at the end of the word *Vayikra* is to teach us humility. Hashem called to Moshe because he was humble even though he was on a high spiritual level.

This teaches us that while we are in the midst of prayer or the performance of a *mitzvah*, though we may be on a high spiritual level, we must still show humility.

SEEING THE GOOD

Reb Noson of Breslov

"And He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying..." (1:1)

The small *aleph* (א) in the word *Vayikra* (ויקרא, And He called) hints at *Eleph* (אלף, one thousand). When the Torah was given, Moshe received 1,000 spiritual lights. When the Jews sinned, these lights were taken away from him and he was left with only one light.

The small *aleph* in the word *Vayikra* has a numerical value of 1, corresponding to the one spiritual light that remained with Moshe. (Sha'ar HaPesukim, p. 158; Sefer HaLikutim, Ki Sisa, p. 170)

Moshe lost his 1,000 lights when the Jews made the golden calf. They rectified that sin by building the Tabernacle. After the Tabernacle was erected, G-d "called to Moshe" to tell him that even though the people might sin terribly, Moshe could rectify their sin.

How? By steadfastly seeking out and finding the good - even the most minute measure of good - in each sinner. As long as Moshe could find a single light of good within a sinner, he could arouse the Jews to G-d's "call" and restore those spiritual lights. (Likutey Halakhos III, p. 148)

HUMBLING KNOWLEDGE

Degel Machaneh Ephraim

"And He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying..." (1:1)

The small *aleph* in the word *Vayikra* should teach us that as one learns Torah, he should acquire more humility.

There are those who learn and therefore consider themselves greater than others because they think that they know all that is to be known. However, the *Chassid* understands that the more he learns, the more he is humbled.

[Similarly, Rebbe Nachman teaches: The greatest knowledge is knowing how little we know.]

SPIRITUALLY RECEPTIVE

Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

“And He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying...” (1:1)

Rashi comments that Hashem’s “voice” came to Moshe from within the Mishkan, while Moshe stood outside. This “voice,” Rashi adds, was loud enough for everyone to hear it, but only Moshe heard it. Hashem did not speak softly to Moshe, in a low, inaudible voice, but rather in a loud voice, which could have potentially been heard even by others, but the walls of the Mishkan blocked the sound from reaching everybody except Moshe.

Rav Shmuel Berenbaum raises the question of why Hashem spoke to Moshe in such a loud voice, if in any event it would be heard only by Moshe. If Hashem was speaking only to Moshe, for what purpose did He communicate this way?

Rav Berenbaum answers that Hashem wanted to show us that everyone has the potential for greatness like Moshe Rabbeinu. If we rise to the level where we develop “antennas” like Moshe’s, where we are in tune to the sound of Hashem, then we could become like him. Hashem does not speak only to Moshe; He speaks to all of us. But in order to hear Him, we need to strive to grow and become great like Moshe. We need to eliminate the background noise, to leave behind everything that distracts us, that prevents us from listening, from picking up the signal, and then we, too, could hear Hashem’s voice.

This insight brings to mind a comment made by Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky regarding the Rama’s ruling that an infant should not be allowed to nurse from a gentile woman. The source for this *halacha* is the story of Moshe, who was adopted during infancy by Pharaoh’s daughter. Miriam, Moshe’s sister, ran over to Pharaoh’s daughter and offered to bring a woman from *Bnei Yisrael* to nurse the baby, and she brought Moshe’s mother. Chazal explain that as Moshe would, in the future, speak directly to Hashem, he could not nurse and receive sustenance from a non-Jewish woman. Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky was asked why this is applied to all Jewish babies. Moshe could not nurse from a pagan woman as an infant because he was destined to become a prophet, and communicate directly with the Almighty - but what does this have to do with other Jewish babies, who will not be prophets? Why must they be kept away from the milk of idol-worshipping women?

Rav Yaakov replied that, evidently, every Jewish child is viewed as a potential Moshe Rabbeinu. Every infant comes into this world with the ability to rise to greatness, each in his or her own way.

We must never question our abilities, or those of our children. Every one of us has been brought here to become great, and every one of us must therefore strive to become great and realize his potential to its very fullest.

WILLING TO SACRIFICE

Avnei Ezel

“And He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying...” (1:1)

Why is it customary to start a Jewish child’s training in the Torah with this *parsha*, which deals with sacrifices?

This teaches us that parents must be prepared to make enormous sacrifices in order to educate their children in the Torah. Tuition must be paid even if it means skimping on other necessities.

PRODUCT OF SELF-SACRIFICE

Rabbi Moshe Schochet

“And He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying...” (1:1)

The Midrash Rabbah comments that despite Moshe having ten different names, Hashem chose to use the name “Moshe,” as that was the name given to him by Basya, Pharaoh’s daughter.

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz (Sichos Mussar) explains that the reason Hashem referred to Moshe by the name Basya gave him is because of what the name represented. Basya had to risk her life in order to save Moshe from the Nile River. Although she was an Egyptian princess, she was, nevertheless, willing to violate her father’s edict and sacrifice it all in order to ensure Moshe’s well-being. This trait was then transmitted to Moshe as a result of what she did. Moshe’s uncompromised commitment to Hashem and *Klal Yisrael* stemmed from Basya’s courage. It was because of this unconditional self-sacrifice of Basya, which was then passed down to Moshe, that Hashem chose to use the name that Basya gave to Moshe.

While there are many important ingredients that need to be included in the formula of successful *avodas Hashem*, one invaluable component is the willingness to give everything a person has to Hashem and His Torah.

ALL FROM ABOVE

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

“And He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying...” (1:1)

The grammar in this verse seems strange. Wouldn’t it make more sense to say “And Hashem called to Moshe and He spoke to him”?

The Beis Avraham explains that the ך in the *pasuk* is written smaller than the other letters to indicate that the word should be understood as if the ך is not there; the word ויקר means “occur” to teach us that Moshe Rabbeinu understood ויקר אל משה - whatever happened to him in his life, וידבר ה' אליו - Hashem was speaking to him.

There is no happenstance or coincidence. Everything that happens to you is directly from Hashem.

YOUTHFUL PURITY

Rebbe Nachman

“And He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying...” (1:1)

It is customary to begin a child’s Torah education with Sefer Vayikra. The reason is that children are pure and Vayikra speaks about sacrifices offered in a state of ritual purity. “Let the pure come and engage themselves with the study of the pure.” (Vayikra Rabbah 7:3)

In a Torah scroll, the final letter *aleph* (א) in the word *Vayikra* (ויקרא, He called) is written smaller than the other letters. This is referred to as an *aleph ze’ira* (small *aleph*).

In Aramaic, the word *aleph* means “teach,” and *ze’ira* also connotes “young” or “small.” Thus, *aleph ze’ira* may be read as “teach the young children” - indicating that we must begin teaching Torah to our children from the Vayikra.

Vayikra follows directly after the description of the building of the Tabernacle which concludes the Exodus, because the purity of young children emanates from this Sanctuary. Each *tzaddik* also builds a sanctuary, from which the children who relate to him receive their purity. (See Likutey Moharan I, 282)

PROPER BALANCE

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“And He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying...” (1:1)

The first word of the Sefer Divrei HaYamim is the name of the first human being, Adam. The alef in Adam’s name is written larger than usual, alluding to Adam’s exaggerated sense of self-esteem over being the pinnacle of G-d’s creation. Adam allowed what should have been healthy self-esteem to degenerate into conceit, and this caused his downfall.

Moshe rectified Adam’s mistake. Despite being aware of his own greatness - and of the fact that G-d Himself selected him for his exalted role in human history - Moshe remained humble. Thus, the alef of the first word in the Book of Vayikra, “[And He] called” (ויקרא), is written smaller than usual, alluding to Moshe’s humility.

Moshe remained humble by reasoning as follows: “I cannot take credit for any of my gifts or accomplishments, since they are all G-d-given. Indeed, were another person to have been given my potential, he would have accomplished much more.”

We are all the spiritual heirs of both Adam and Moshe. When we feel inadequate, we must remember that we are Adam, formed by G-d’s own hands and fully capable of caring for His garden. But if we start to feel vain, we must recall that we are also Moshe, thereby ensuring that our self-assurance does not develop into conceit. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 17, pp. 7-8) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

ASCENDING ASPIRATIONS

Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev

“And He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying...” (1:1)

The word for “and He called” (ויקרא) is written with a small alef. This can be explained along the lines of my interpretation of the verse (Shemos 24:1), “He said to Moshe, ‘Go up to G-d,’” as follows:

When a person performs a *mitzvah*, the *mitzvah* makes an impression Above, and this impression in turn prompts the person to carry out G-d’s will continually by observing this same *mitzvah*.

Now, Moshe wanted to fulfill G-d’s commands always, and to ascend spiritually, as the Zohar (2:79b) comments on the verse (Shemos 19:3), “Moshe ascended to G-d.” Since Moshe continually aspired to ascend closer to G-d, this desire itself stirred him to constantly ascend even closer to G-d.

This is the deeper meaning of the verse, “He said to Moshe, ‘Go up to G-d.’” Moshe’s longing to ascend ever closer to G-d was what prompted him - told him - to rise even higher.

[In Hebrew, the subject of the verb “said” is not stated, allowing the allegorical interpretation that the impression made above by Moshe’s own desire to ascend is what prompted him (“said”) to ascend further.]

This is what is alluded to by the small alef. Since Moshe was known for being “exceedingly humble,” more so than any other person (see Bamidbar 12:3), the alef in the word for “and He called” (ויקרא) is written in smaller script, in order to allude to his special quality of humility.

[Moshe’s humility is alluded to by one of the letters of the term for “and He called” rather than by one of the letters of Moshe’s own name because it was Moshe’s humility - his aspiration to ascend to G-d rather than to any other form of fame or achievement - that “called” (i.e., prompted) him to ascend even further to G-d.]

STRONG FOUNDATION

Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

“And He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying...” (1:1)

The name of something is not merely a title by which it is known; rather, a name represents its true essence and defines its qualities. The Medrash tells us that Moshe had ten names, each one defining his character and achievements. (For instance, one of his names was Yered which comes from the word “lowering” to express that he was the one who brought the Torah down to This world. Another name was Avigdor because he was the “*avi gador*” - father of fences” referring to the decrees that he enacted in order to protect Torah laws. See Bereishis Rabbah 17:4 for the entire list.)

Since each of Moshe's names represented his noble acts and his role in saving the entire Jewish People, it is perplexing that Hashem only called him by the name Moshe, the name he received from Basya, which simply recalls that he was pulled out of the Nile (the name Moshe is derived from the word which means to be taken out; see Rashi on Shemos 2:10).

Why is this name a better reference to Moshe's character than the other names he was known by? And perhaps a stronger question is: Why choose this name to describe Moshe's essence at all; if anything, it refers to Basya's courageous act of saving baby Moshe - it is therefore a representation of Basya's character, not Moshe's?!

Perhaps we can answer that whereas Moshe's other names described *what* he did and *what* he achieved, the name "Moshe" describes *how* he became so great. Moshe received his name from Basya when she saved his life through an unbelievable act of personal risk and self-sacrifice after her father had ordered that all the Hebrew baby boys be thrown into the Nile (Shemos 1:22; in addition, by raising a Jewish boy in the palace, she also took a significant risk).

Therefore, although the other names tell us what Moshe achieved, the name Moshe tells us from where - and from whom - he developed the ability to achieve so much. (Rav Chaim Shmuelevits takes this concept further and explains that Moshe's nature and personality were inherently changed through Basya's act of self-sacrifice, implanting within him with the character trait of self-sacrifice.) Accordingly, Hashem chose this name by which to refer to Moshe, the name that described the foundation of his tremendous success.

From this idea we see the incredible effect on a child when he is raised through great effort and sacrifice. This lesson was aptly demonstrated in the following story told by Rav Yehudah Tzadikah, *Rosh Yeshivah* of Purat Yosef and Rebbe to many of the Sefardi Gedolei Yisrael of the last generation.

When the Imrei Emes visited Yerushalayim, a nine-year-old boy was one of many Jews who availed themselves to meet the tzaddik and seek his blessing. Upon telling the Rebbe that he was learning the Mishnayos of Maseches Shabbos, the Rebbe then asked him, "Why are there twenty-four chapters in Maseches Shabbos?" But the child had no answer.

The boy then went to the shul where Rav Yaakov Chaim Sofer learned and asked him the Rebbe's question. Rav Yaakov Chaim told him that Shabbos is likened to the Jewish People's bride; and Chazal tell us that a bride is adorned with twenty-four different types of ornaments, corresponding to the twenty-four books of Tanach. Maseches Shabbos, which represents Shabbos - which is likened to a bride - thus has twenty-four chapters.

The child ran back to the Rebbe's lodgings and told him the answer. The Imrei Emes was very pleased, took out a coin from his pocket, and gave it as a gift to the boy.

This young boy lived in dire poverty and the money he received would provide his family food for the week. Elated, he ran home, showed his mother the coin, and told her that she could take a week off her grueling work and live off this money instead.

With great excitement his mother took the coin, but to her son's surprise, she took out a piece of string and threaded it through the coin (which had a hole in its center). She then hung it around his neck and said with pride, "This should be a reminder that you gave the Rebbe a good answer. May you cherish Torah all your life."

At the end of the story, Rav Tzadikah admitted that he himself was that child, and that the joy he saw in his mother's eyes over his Torah knowledge gave him the desire for learning that started him off on his future path.

JOINT SACRIFICE

Alexander Rebbe

"When a man from among you brings an offering to Hashem; from the animals – from the cattle of from the flocks you shall bring your offering..." (1:2)

The words of this *pasuk* are written in second person plural. Rashi therefore states, "This teaches that two may donate an *Olah*-offering in partnership."

A complete sacrifice can only be offered with a sincere feeling of brotherhood and friendship. One must make an effort to participate in all communal activities.

PERSONAL SACRIFICE

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

"When a man from among you brings an offering to Hashem; from the animals – from the cattle of from the flocks you shall bring your offering..." (1:2)

Sefer Vayikra opens with G-d addressing Moshe from the newly constructed *Mishkan*. The *parashah* begins with the verse "When a person from [among] you brings a sacrifice to G-d..." (1:2) and goes on to discuss the laws of cattle, sheep, and goat offerings.

Since the Torah does not waste words and the directive could have easily done without the words "from among you," it begs the question: What is the purpose of adding those words?

Rabbi Shimon Schwab suggests that the word מִכֶּם means "from among you" but can also mean "from within you." Sharing or donating something that you have earned can sometimes feel like you are giving away a piece of yourself. G-d recognizes our sacrifices, especially when they are not mandatory.

When we give of our time, money, and effort, it is not only comforting but also vital that we know it is acknowledged and appreciated. The beginning of Parashas Vayikra looks to model that behavior for us.

CHANGE BEGINS FROM WITHIN

Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

"When a man from among you brings an offering to Hashem; from the animals – from the cattle of from the flocks you shall bring your offering..." (1:2)

Why is there a sudden change from singular to plural in this verse?

Rav Moshe Shternbuch learns from here that when a person sins, it not only affects himself, but also the public as a whole. Consequently, when he brings a sacrificial offering and amends his actions, the blemish which afflicted the nation is also healed - and the entire nation becomes elevated as a result. Therefore, the beginning of the verse is referring to the individual sinner wishing to repent and the end of the verse shows that his sacrifice will have an effect on the whole world, causing it to receive an abundance of blessings through its new heightened state of holiness.

Rav Zev Leff is fond of telling the following analogy which expresses Rav Shternbuch's point. A father was sitting comfortably in his chair, trying to read his magazine when his five year old daughter comes tugging on his jacket; she was bored. So, the father ripped out one of the pages from his magazine which happened to be a map of the world and tore it into 25 pieces. He gave it to his daughter and told her to come back to him when she had completed the "jigsaw." Assuming that it would take her at least an hour to match the contours of each rip of the paper, he was amazed to see his daughter had returned after a few minutes with a perfect map of the world.

"You've never even seen the map of the world! How could you have finished it so quickly?"

"It was easy" answered his daughter, "I did not know how to piece the world together, but on the other side of the page was a picture of a person. Once I put the person together, the whole world fell into place!"

From this example, and indeed from the verse above, if you want to change the world, all you need to do is to change yourself.

ANTIDOTE TO GREED

Rebbe Nachman

"When a man from among you brings an offering to Hashem; from the animals – from the cattle of from the flocks you shall bring your offering..." (1:2)

The sacrifices are considered the "food of the King." This "food" counters evil desires, especially avarice (see Likutey Halakhot I, p. 352).

The sacrifices are also a form of charity, mirroring the concept of "sacrificing" one's wealth to G-d. Giving charity breaks the trait of avarice, since it helps a person recognize that all of his earnings are provided by G-d. (See Likutey Moharan I, 13)

EARNING BENEVOLENCE

Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

"When a man from among you brings an offering to Hashem; from the animals – from the cattle of from the flocks you shall bring your offering..." (1:2)

It is a general principle that animal offerings correspond to the bounty that G-d gives us out of His bountiful kindness, i.e., not having been earned by our deeds. This is why offerings come from animals, since animal life comes from G-d, meaning that animals can live and reproduce without human assistance.

Wine libations, by contrast, are from grapes, part of the plant kingdom, which possesses restricted vitality and whose cultivation is therefore dependent upon man, who must plant or seed the grapes used to make the wine libations. The libations thus correspond to the bounty G-d gives us as a result of our deeds. Because of our good deeds, planting and sowing, we earn the benevolence that G-d confers upon us.

When the Jewish people journeyed in the desert, G-d provided for them out of His bountiful kindness. Consequently, what He gave them reflected this gratuitous and boundless kindness. That is, the *mann* and the well of water that G-d provided for the Jewish people were given in a way that required no work by them. In the Land of Israel, however, the bounty came by virtue of their efforts; whatever they sowed and planted provided them with their sustenance. This corresponds to the Divine flow of goodness channeled through man's deeds.

The Torah alludes to this dynamic when it says (Bamidbar 15:2-3), "When you arrive in the land of your dwelling place... and you make an animal offering, such as... an ascent offering... to G-d... you must also offer up... a libation." In the desert, however, libations were not offered up (see Kiddushin 37b). The Torah links the libations to the Land of Israel in order to allude to the above idea: The libations correspond to the bounty provided to those who work the land, as explained above.

This is why Rashi in the name of R' Yonasan (Berachos 35a) remarks that the *Leviim* only sang their prescribed songs in the *Beis HaMikdash* when the wine was being poured on the *Mizbeach*. For it is only when a person receives G-d's benevolence as a result of his own work that he truly rejoices.

SINCERE SACRIFICES

Divrei Chaim of Sanz

"When a man from among you brings an offering to Hashem; from the animals – from the cattle of from the flocks you shall bring your offering..." (1:2)

The word *mikem* (from among you) can be translated as "from within you." When a person sacrifices himself for something, it should be from "within" - that is, with sincerity and devotion of purpose.

DRAWING CLOSER

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld

“When a man from among you brings an offering to Hashem; from the animals – from the cattle of from the flocks you shall bring your offering...” (1:2)

The first few *parshiyos* of Sefer Vayikra are filled with the details and specifications of the different types of *Korbanos* offered in the *Mishkan* and *Beis HaMikdash*. Although the word “*Korban*” is loosely translated as a “sacrifice,” Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch, on his commentary on the Torah, explains that this is not an accurate translation. Rather, the word “*Korban*” (קרבן) comes from the root קרב, which means closeness. The purpose of the *Korbanos* is to engender closeness between Hashem and us. When a person brings a *Korban* from something of value that belongs to him and he offers it up to Hashem, he brings himself closer to Hashem.

A remarkable story took place a number of years ago in Israel, in the city of Haifa. One summer day, a suspicious van was seen parked outside the largest shopping mall in Haifa. The police contacted the bomb squad, who promptly arrived at the scene and discovered a sizable bomb waiting to detonate. The van had been positioned directly under one of the foundation beams of the mall with the intention of destroying the entire shopping mall. The bomb squad successfully managed to de-arm the bomb, and the lives of thousands of people were saved.

After the incident, a few people approached Rebbetzin Batsheva Kanievsky and asked her what had caused such an open display of compassion and mercy from heaven. She explained: Tragically, there was a young girl confined to a hospital bed, sick with cancer, surrounded by her visiting friends. She mentioned that she would like to offer up a *Korban* to Hashem as a *zechus* for her to merit a recovery. Her irreligious friends, ignorant of Torah and *mitzvos*, knew enough to express to their dear friend that sacrifices have not existed since the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*. The sick girl insisted, however, that she wanted to offer a different kind of sacrifice, her own personal *Korban* to Hashem. She announced that she was going to burn all of the immodest clothing in her wardrobe and offer it up, so to speak, as an offering to Hashem.

Her friends were very taken by her passion and decided to join their friend and do the same, hoping in their hearts that this would shake the heavens enough to bring their dear friend a full recovery. The date was arranged and this group of irreligious girls, in an unbelievably moving act of *Kiddush Hashem*, burned all of their immodest clothing with tears of hope and prayer. A few days later, the sick girl was released from the hospital and went with her friends on a trip to this mall in Haifa on the same day that the bomb had been scheduled to detonate. It was in their merit, and in the merit of the special sacrifice they offered to Hashem, explained Rebbetzin Kanievsky, that the bomb was discovered and hundreds of lives were saved.

GIVING OF OURSELVES

Rabbi Aryeh Dachs

“When a man from among you brings an offering to Hashem; from the animals – from the cattle of from the flocks you shall bring your offering...” (1:2)

The Talmud (Bava Kama 119a) teaches that when one steals even a minimal amount from another, it’s as if he took a bit of his soul, his *neshamah*. I once heard an interesting, yet quite literal, explanation of this passage.

Our existence can be simply quantified by our time. We only have a limited amount of time here in this world. It follows that any given moment we have can be looked at as one of a myriad of pieces that cumulatively comprise what we call our lifetime.

When we work to earn money, that money represents an investment of time, which based on this calculus is an investment of life itself.

Although in America, the phrase usually goes “time is money.” In fact, the opposite is more accurate; money is time.

Earning money requires an investment of our limited, precious time. Therefore, if one steals our money, he is literally taking a small piece of our life.

In Sefer Vayikra, we are introduced to the concept of *korbanos*, or offerings. Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch points out that the translation given as offerings in the context of *korbanos* is somewhat of a misnomer. Offerings imply a desire or need of the recipient, and the recipient here, the Almighty, has no need for burnt animals.

Rav Hirsch points out the root of the word *korban* is *karov*, which means closeness. A *korban* is not an offering to Hashem; rather, the offering is a tool for us to use to be *makriv*, to get close to Him.

When the Torah introduces the idea of a *korban*, the verse (1:2) begins, “*Adam ki yakriv mikem* - When a man from among you brings an offering.” Typically, the word *mikem* means from among the people. However, “from among you” can also be understood literally to mean “from [within] you.”

The idea behind bringing a *korban* is that when we offer something that has value (a pricey offering) to Hashem, we are effectively giving a bit of ourselves (per the Talmud, our *neshamah*), to get close to Hashem.

Although we are unable to bring a *korban* today, we do spend a significant amount of money, especially this time of year, to keep an observant lifestyle. The perspective presented here can help us find meaning in all this spending.

When we spend on Jewish education or on kosher food and clothes for the holidays, we are essentially offering a sort of *korban*; we are sacrificing a bit of ourselves to get close to the Almighty!

GETTING CLOSER

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"When a man from among you brings an offering to Hashem; from the animals – from the cattle of from the flocks you shall bring your offering..." (1:2)

The notion of sacrifices seems to run counter to the Jewish conception of G-d: G-d has no need to "consume" or be "bribed" by our sacrifices. Yet we see in this section of the Torah that G-d not only accepts sacrifices but explicitly sets down the procedures for them, giving every indication that He actually wants them!

In fact, the Hebrew word translated as "sacrifice" or "offering" - *korban* - means "getting close." Although we generally associate sacrifices with atonement for sin, the first sacrifices mentioned in this section are voluntary offerings, which an individual brings to G-d not to atone for sin but out of the desire to draw closer to Him. Of course, some of the sacrifices are indeed sin-offerings. This simply indicates that G-d calls out to all of us to draw close to Him - not only to the guiltless among us - at all times.

Nowadays, in the absence of the Tabernacle (or its permanent successor, the holy Temple in Jerusalem), there are three ways that we draw close to G-d: through studying the Torah - particularly its teachings about sacrifices; through prayer, the liturgy of which is modeled after the sacrifices; and through acts of charity and kindness. (Based on Likutei Sichot, vol. 7, pp. 24-26; *ibid.*, vol. 32, pp. 1-5) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

NEVER TOO LATE

Rabbi Aryeh Dachs

"When a man from among you brings an offering to Hashem; from the animals – from the cattle of from the flocks you shall bring your offering..." (1:2)

Elisha ben Avuyah was a great Tannaic master who infamously turned into a heretic later in his life. After his demise he was simply known as Acher, other one. There is one episode in his tragic story that speaks volumes about the mindset of someone who strays away from Hashem.

The Sages taught in the Gemara (Chagigah 15a):

There was once an incident involving Acher. He was riding on a horse on Shabbos and Rabbi Meir [his student before he strayed] was walking behind him to learn Torah from him. After a while, Acher said to him:

"Meir, turn back, for I have already estimated and measured according to the steps of my horse that the Shabbos boundary ends here, and you may therefore venture no further." Rabbi Meir said to him: "You, too, return to the correct path." He said to him: "But have I not told you that I have already heard behind the dividing curtain: Return, rebellious children, apart from Acher?"

It is striking how Acher's abysmal spiritual state was largely due to his understanding that he had reached a point of no return, a point where his *teshuvah* was no longer desired by G-d.

Korbanos address the feeling that seemed to be somewhat responsible for Acher's defiance. A *korban* allows us to negate the feeling that we are written off or spiritually damaged. The 14th-century commentator, Rabbi Levi ben Gershon, the Ralbag, explains that most *korbanos* function as a means for *teshuvah*, a way to recover from sin. If one feels that due to sin he is forever flawed and blemished, he will sin even more. Despair, *yeiush*, can severely impair spiritual progress. If we see ourselves as damaged, we no longer have the temerity we need to continue in an upward spiritual path, however nonsensical it is to add to the damage done. This is where the institution of *korbanos* fits in.

The Ralbag explains that although we may conceptually understand the effectiveness of a verbal *teshuvah* without a *korban*, it is difficult to internalize and sincerely believe its efficacy. We can find ourselves wondering if we can really clean our own slate with feelings of regret and a verbal expression. *Korbanos* serve as a physical, tactile experience in which the sinner can actively participate in the process of *teshuvah*. Furthermore, the *korbanos* are brought in the sacred Temple, which is the holiest place in the world. Physically bringing an animal as a *korban* in the *Beis HaMikdash* allows us to better relate to being cleared from our sin.

The tragic story of Elisha Ben Avuyah and Rabbi Meir illustrates just how severe a feeling of being lost without the ability to return can be. In a similar vein, the Ralbag taught that the spiritual danger of feeling "as if he has an irremovable stain on his soul," can be drastic. To prosper spiritually we must never forget or underestimate the power of return. A Jew who sins is not damaged or written off by G-d. All of us can pick ourselves up and live spiritual, meaningful lives.

TORAH OFFERING

Chacham Yehudah Elbaz of Morocco

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

The midrash states that when *Bnei Yisrael* heard the *parshah* dealing with the *korbanos* they became very frightened. They feared the time when there would be no *Beis HaMikdash*. How would their sins be forgiven? Moshe reassured them, "Involve yourselves in Torah and you will not be afraid."

Torah study atones like *korbanos*, as Chazal tell us that one who involves himself in Torah study does not need an *Olah*, *Mincha*, or *Chatas* (Menachos 110). That is what is meant by the *pasuk*, "This is the Torah for the *Olah*" (Shemos 6:1). When one learns Torah, it is like he brought a *Korban Olah*.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld

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

Are we living for ourselves, or are we living for others?

The Book of Vayikra begins, אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן - "When a person from among you will bring an offering to Hashem..." (Vayikra 1:2). Why does the verse change from the singular - "a person" (אדם) - to the plural - "from among you" (מכם) - in mid-sentence? The verse switches back to the singular (יקריב) and then again to plural (תקריבו את קרבנכם). Why does it change from singular to plural?

We are not living alone. Our value increases when we team up with others. A person who wants to get closer to Hashem by bringing a *Korban* is going to be scrutinized as to whether he is worthy of bringing it. If, however, he brings קרבנכם - if he teams up with others and generates *achdus* in *Klal Yisrael*, then surely that *Korban* will be accepted.

A *chassid* once came to his rebbe who commented that he had not seen him for a long time. The *chassid* said, remorsefully, "Rebbe, I have to be honest with you. I don't *daven* in *shul* anymore. I prefer to *daven* at home where it's calm and quiet and there are no distractions."

The rebbe responded by suggesting that they take a walk together. They walked over to the fireplace and looked at the large pile of coals burning on the fire. The rebbe took a metal rod and poked one of the burning coals and removed it from the pile. Together they watched as, within a few short minutes, the coal's fiery color diminished until it was entirely extinguished. "My dear *chassid*," the rebbe explained, "When we are together with the rest of *Klal Yisrael*, when we do things together, we have power, but when we are by ourselves eventually the fire and passion will die down."

We don't live in a bubble, nor are we here for ourselves. We are here to give and contribute to one another in a way which is meaningful. When we do that, it becomes קרבנכם - it becomes an offering with the added power of the *achdus* of *Klal Yisrael* which has tremendous power.

THE ANIMAL WITHIN

Reb Noson of Breslov

"When a man from among you brings an offering to Hashem; from the animals – from the cattle of from the flocks you shall bring your offering..." (1:2)

A person sins due to a lack of *da'at*, as our Sages (Sotah 3a) teach: "A person sins only because a spirit of foolishness overcame him." To rectify this constricted *da'at*, the offender must bring an animal sacrifice, reflecting the fact that animals lack *da'at*. In this way, he shows that he is ready to sacrifice his animalistic tendencies. (Likutey Halakhot I, pp. 39a)

The Torah reiterates "*mikem... min ha'beheimah* - from you... from the animal" because the sacrifice must be from the animal within, from one's base characteristics (ibid., V, p. 48a). If you bring a sacrifice "from the animal," you merit to be classified as "man." (ibid., I, p. 174)

WILLFUL SACRIFICE

Maggid of Mezeritch

"If one's offering is an olah-offering from the cattle, he shall bring a perfect male; he shall bring it to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, in accordance with his will, before Hashem." (1:3)

The *pasuk* teaches that a person who brings a *Korban Olah* must do so "*lirtzono lifnei Hashem* - of his own [voluntary] will before Hashem." The word *Olah* denotes "height" or "elevation," teaching us that if a person truly desires to lift himself up to higher heights and draw near to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, he must sacrifice "his own voluntary will" before the will of Hashem, like Chazal (Avos 2:4) tell us: Nullify your will before His will.

SHOW THEM THE WAY

Rabbi Jeremy Finn

"If one's offering is an olah-offering from the cattle, he shall bring a perfect male; he shall bring it to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, in accordance with his will, before Hashem." (1:3)

Rashi tells us that the words יקריב אותו mean that we force a person to bring a sacrifice. However, the word לרצונו teaches us that a sacrifice is only valid if brought willingly. How can it be forced and willing at the same time? The answer is that we force him until he agrees willingly.

The Chasam Sofer explains the possibility of forcing someone to bring a sacrifice willingly in the following way:

Imagine a Jew who lives far from the *Beis HaMikdash* and is busy all day long working hard to make a living and till the land. After being engaged in these activities for a prolonged period, the subtlety of spiritual endeavors may be lost on him - to the point that he may view them as a burden.

However, if we bring him to the Holy City, where the air is saturated with the words of Torah and spiritual yearnings, and he sees for perhaps the first time in a long while the *Kohanim* in the Temple performing their service and hears the *Leviim* singing their songs of praise, then his heart will be overwhelmed with a desire to grow closer to Hashem and observe His commandments. The atmosphere automatically has a positive effect and melts even the most stubborn of hearts.

Therefore, the *pasuk* reads that if someone is refusing to bring a sacrifice, then אל פתח אהל מועד - force him to come to the entrance of the מועד אהל and let it work its magic. The natural outcome will be יקריב אותו לרצונו לפני ה' - "he will willingly offer it up to Hashem."

The message is that we need to attract Jews to living a Torah lifestyle not by forcing or legislating against them, but by showing them the majestic beauty of living a Torah life. If we manage to do so, then any opposition that people may have will simply melt away.

We need to start by ensuring that we are in love with Hashem and His Torah, and then others will automatically be drawn to follow suit. (Talei Oros, p. 46)

THEIR TRUE WILL

Rambam

"If one's offering is an olah-offering from the cattle, he shall bring a perfect male; he shall bring it to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, in accordance with his will, before Hashem." (1:3)

They press him until he says, "I wish to do it." (Rashi)

How can it be a free-will offering if the person making it must be pressed until he says, "I wish to do it"?

The concept of "pressing" applies only in cases where someone is pressed to perform an act other than a Divine commandment, for instance, to give a gift or sell some object.

But if someone whose evil thought compels him or her to violate a commandment or commit a sin is constrained by another person to perform the commandment or to refrain from committing the sin, this person cannot be said to be "pressed."

On the contrary, this person is regarded as someone who has overcome the evil thought that "pressed" him or her to do wrong. For indeed, every Jew has a desire to observe all the commandments and keep away from sin. It is only the evil inclination that "presses" him or her to do evil.

Hence, if they are "pressed" not to allow the evil inclination to dominate them, if they are belabored until the appetites of their bodies grow weaker and their bodies, too, cry out: "I wish to do it," that is not "pressure" at all but only an improvement of their inner will so that they willingly do as they are commanded.

TRANSFER OF SINS

Rebbe Nachman

"He should lean his hands onto the head of the olah-offering; and it will be considered pleasing on his behalf, to atone for him." (1:4)

One who brings a sacrifice must lean upon the animal and, as he does so, confess his sins. (Yoma 36a)

With that, one transfers his sins, which were caused by his animalistic tendencies, to the animal itself.

The animal is then sacrificed, indicating that the person has sacrificed his base, animalistic desires. (See Likutey Moharan I, 25)

PROPER PRIORITIES

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"He shall slaughter the bull before Hashem; the sons of Aharon, the Kohanim, shall bring the blood and they shall throw the blood on the Mizbeach, all around – which is at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting..." (1:5)

In today's "civilized" society, many pundits cite the practice of *shechitah* (ritual slaughtering) as barbaric and inhumane. They seek to alter our time-honored ways because they do not understand its inherent value.

In fact, *shechitah* is one of the most humane forms of slaughtering, and Hashem, in His infinite mercy, prescribed this method with a very specific intent: to highlight the concept that "the Jewish People are merciful ones." For this reason, an animal and its offspring are not to be slaughtered on the same day, nor may one slaughter an animal until it is eight days old.

R' Yisrael Salanter zt'l once lodged at an inn. Recognizing the guest as a Torah scholar, the innkeeper asked, "Are you perhaps a *shochet*? I have a cow to be slaughtered and it would save me a trip into the city if you could do it."

R' Yisrael responded, "I'm sorry, I am not a *shochet*. But perhaps you could do me a favor and lend me five rubles which I will repay in a week."

The innkeeper was shocked. "I don't even know you. How can I lend money to a total stranger?"

R' Yisrael responded, "Just listen to your own words. You were willing to trust a total stranger as being a competent *shochet*, although you might have thereby subjected many people to eat non-kosher meat were the person not proficient. Yet you would not trust that same individual for a few rubles. Your priorities seem to be out of order."

We would be wise to follow R' Yisrael's observation and re-evaluate our own priorities.

DAILY SACRIFICES

Reb Noson of Breslov

"He shall slaughter the bull before Hashem; the sons of Aharon, the Kohanim, shall bring the blood and they shall throw the blood on the Mizbeach, all around – which is at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting..." (1:5)

Jewish law stipulates that we recite the Parashat HaTamid (the passage of the daily sacrifice) every day (Orach Chaim 48).

Each day has its unique *birur* (process of clarification and rectification); in other words, each day is a new day, a new creation with its own unique qualities.

A person, too, is a renewed creation each day. Therefore, man's responsibilities can change each day, as G-d places him in new circumstances so he can improve himself in different ways.

Furthermore, the new challenges that a person confronts accord with the rectifications he must make on that particular day. For on each day, there exist possibilities to rectify sparks of holiness that hitherto were unable to be rectified.

We bring a daily sacrifice to separate the animalistic level from the human level and elevate the sparks of holiness embedded in the lower levels. During the day, sins cause a person to descend from the human level to the animalistic level, as our Sages (Sotah 14a) state: "She committed an animalistic act; let her sacrifice be that of an animal's feed." By offering a daily animal sacrifice, even symbolically, we sacrifice our animalistic behavior and tendencies and return to the human level. (Likutey Halakhot I, p. 110a)

Today, even without the Temple, we can still bring sacrifices. These are a person's unending desire and longing to serve G-d.

So powerful are these positive expressions of will that they subdue the forces of evil. (Likutey Halakhot II, p. 81a)

ACCEPTING SINCERITY

Reb Noson of Breslov

"He shall wash its innards and its feet with water; and the Kohen shall cause it all to go up in smoke on the Mizbeach – an olah-offering, a fire-offering, an appeasing fragrance to Hashem." (1:9)

The phrase "an appeasing fragrance" is written in reference to an ox, a sheep, and a meal-offering. This teaches us that whether an offering is large or small, G-d accepts it as long as the person's intentions are directed towards Him (Menachos 110a).

Each person's perception of truth is different. This one has a broader outlook, this one a narrow outlook. But the sincerity of each one's devotions is all that counts. (Likutey Halakhot VII, p. 318)

FRAGRANT FORESHADOWING

Rabbi Jeremy Finn

"He shall wash the innards and the feet in water; the Kohen shall bring it all and cause it to go up in smoke on the Mizbeach - it is an olah-offering, a pleasing fragrance to Hashem." (1:13)

The Torah refers to the acceptance of the *korban* using the phrase 'ריח ניחוח לה', a sweet-smelling aroma or fragrance to Hashem. What does this phrase mean?

Rabbi Shalom Rosner quotes Rav Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenberg, who suggests a unique approach in his commentary, HaKesav V'Hakabbalah.

ריח ניחוח does not describe the scent of the *korban*, but rather it describes the person who offers it.

A ריח ניחוח is a pleasant fragrance; if one enters a home on *Erev Shabbos*, he can smell that there is something tasty cooking. As he walks further into the house, the aroma becomes stronger and stronger until he reaches the kitchen and lifts off the pot cover, finally discovering the source of the scent. The smell hit him immediately upon opening the door, and it informed him that something was coming - that there was something tasty to anticipate.

Similarly, if you walk into a garden and you immediately smell a flower, the scent informs you that there is a sweet-smelling flower in the vicinity.

When we offer a *korban*, we provide a ריח ניחוח. It is a sweet-smelling "aroma" that we put out to Hashem, saying, "Hashem, I am putting out a delicate 'scent' now, but I am going to improve even more."

I am going to use this to lead me to change my actions for the better.

Just like a smell precedes the item, so too, the *korban* is our ריח ניחוח. We provide a good smell to Hashem as a foreshadowing of what is going to transpire in the future.

Our actions have to mirror what we just did - we brought a ריח ניחוח, so we need to make sure that our actions improve as well.

Anybody who offers a *korban* should contemplate *teshuvah* to return and get closer to Hashem.

The sacrifices we offer should lead us to further our connection to Hashem, placing our finer "fragrance" before Him. (Torah Tidbits, Vayikra 5780)

PLEASING TO HASHEM

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"The Kohen shall cause it to go up in smoke on the Mizbeach, on the wood that is on the fire... it is an appeasing fragrance to Hashem." (1:17)

When offering up a voluntary animal ascent-offering, the offeror had the choice of bringing a bull, a sheep, a goat, a turtledove, or a pigeon.

It obviously cost more to offer up a bull than a pigeon, so it was usually the richer people who offered up bulls and the poorer people who offered up sheep, goats, or fowl.

Rashi tells us that the reason the Torah says that cattle, sheep, goat, and fowl offerings are all "pleasing to G-d" is because "It is the same whether one brings a lot or a little [for his offering], as long as he directs his heart to heaven."

One indication that this is so is the fact that the whole bull is not placed on the Altar to be consumed - the hide is given to the *kohanim*. In the case of fowl, however, the entire bird is consumed on the Altar. Thus, the fowl "compensates" for being less valuable by being wholly burned, as opposed to the bull, which is mostly but not completely burned.

This reminds us that whenever we do something for G-d, what matters most is the heart that we put into what we do. - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

SACRIFICING COMFORTS

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

"When a soul will bring a meal-offering to Hashem..." (2:1)

The *parashah* introduces the voluntary meal-offerings with the phrase: "And if a soul brings a meal-offering" (2:1). While other sacrifices that are brought also cleanse the soul, Rashi explains that this is the only instance where the word "soul" is used to designate the donor. Why is this the only meal-offering being provided by the soul? What is the significance?

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch provides valuable insight into how these voluntary offerings are different from all others. While other offerings represent the souls themselves being offered, the *Minchah* offering is the soul giving of its possessions. The *Minchah* offering consists of flour, oil, and frankincense. Flour represents essential nourishment, oil reflects comforts, and frankincense corresponds to the added satisfaction of luxuries. By donating each of these items for the service of G-d, we are literally sacrificing our own personal comforts for a voluntary offering. When we sincerely and voluntarily sacrifice our own interests and conveniences in our actions toward others, the recipients can sense and appreciate the personal and meaningful nature of these gifts, which draws us closer to each other each time.

CHERISHED OFFERING

Chasam Sofer

"When a soul will bring a meal-offering to Hashem..." (2:1)

Who usually brings a meal offering? A poor man. The Holy One, blessed be He, says, as it were, "I will regard it from him as though he had brought his very soul as an offering." (Rashi)

At first glance, it is difficult to understand why the word "soul" is used to refer to a person's bringing of a meal offering but not to describe individuals making burnt-offerings of fowl. Wouldn't it be logical to assume that the flour, oil and frankincense needed for a meal offering cost much more than a turtle-dove or a young pigeon and that, therefore, an individual offering fowl would be poorer than one who brings a meal offering?

However, if someone brings a meal offering it is obvious that he does not even have the pennies to buy a pigeon. Therefore, he takes a little flour and a little oil from the produce he has gathered as the "poor man's leavings" or "forgotten sheaves" from the fields and offers this as a sacrifice, depriving himself of the little food he managed to scrape together. This is a sacrifice that may be said to be considered as though "he had brought his very soul as an offering."

HUMBLE SINCERITY

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"If your offering is a meal-offering in a deep pan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil..." (2:7)

When someone brought a beautiful animal as an offering to G-d, he was liable to take pride in his generosity and in the fact that he fulfilled G-d's will in the best and most beautiful manner.

In contrast, when all a person could afford to bring G-d was a grain-offering, such feelings of pride were most likely absent. As such, the sole reason he was bringing his sacrifice was to subjugate himself to G-d.

It was therefore specifically the grain-offering that most eloquently expressed the essence of the sacrifices - the offering up of ourselves to G-d.

When we truly negate our sense of self, serving G-d with simple faith devoid of any ulterior motives or personal ambitions, we are assured that G-d will accept our efforts, atoning for our past misbehavior and drawing us closer to Him. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 27, p. 15) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

JOYFUL REPENTANCE

Koznitzer Maggid

"If your offering is a meal-offering in a deep pan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil..." (2:7)

If a person wishes to be like "fine flour," he must divest himself of all wrongdoing. Then he should mix his repentance "with oil," repenting with free will and joy. Repentance with joy is the honest return to a spiritual life.

ACTIVE EMOTIONS

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"Any meal-offering that you offer to Hashem shall not be prepared leavened, for you shall not cause to go up in smoke from any leavening or any honey as a fire-offering to Hashem." (2:11)

The latter half of this verse can be read literally as, "for you must not burn up anything that is wholly leavened or wholly sweet as a fire-offering to G-d."

Based on this reading, Rabbi Shmuel of Lubavitch interpreted this verse homiletically: "One who is always sour (like leavening) or always sweet (like sweet fruits), without ever changing and showing signs of life, cannot be a fire-offering to G-d."

We are not meant to be static; being alive means experiencing the full gamut of emotions in the process of spiritual growth. (Sefer HaSichot 5704, p. 151; Hitva'aduyot 5710, p. 115) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

FLAVORED WITH JOY

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

“You shall salt your every meal-offering with salt; you may not discontinue the salt of your G-d’s covenant from upon your meal-offering – on all your offering shall you offer salt.” (2:13)

Parashas Vayikra describes various sacrifices. Among the descriptions, one *pasuk* (2:13) says that every sacrifice requires salt, repeats that salt should not be omitted, and reiterates that salt should be used. Why is salt such an essential ingredient?

The Sefer HaChinuch explains that offering a sacrifice lacking flavor would be inappropriate, so salt, while an odorless substance on its own, adds taste to food, which elevates the sacrifice. This “giving” substance represents our consideration of others’ needs, which is why we still have this custom today when we add salt to challah. This generosity is crucial to the sacrifices and key to our personal growth. Rather than simply pleasing ourselves, we should strive to find ways to bring flavor and joy to others.

SACRIFICIAL EATING

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“You shall salt your every meal-offering with salt; you may not discontinue the salt of your G-d’s covenant from upon your meal-offering – on all your offering shall you offer salt.” (2:13)

All four kingdoms of creation are incorporated in the sacrifices: Salt is the mineral element; the oil, wine, and flour that accompany sacrifices are the vegetative element; the animal itself is the animal element; the person offering the sacrifice and the *kohen* officiating at the sacrifice are the human element. Through these representatives, the sacrifice elevates all four kingdoms of creation into holiness.

Similarly, the animal and vegetable food that we eat is our own personal “sacrifice,” since by eating it, we transform it into the fuel that enables us to fulfill G-d’s commandments, thereby elevating it into holiness. In this context, our tables are our own personal “altars.” Traditionally, the bread that we eat is first dipped in salt. In this way, we elevate all four kingdoms of creation at our table, just as they were in the sacrifices. (Sefer HaMa’amarim 5745, pp. 3, 129)

GIVING OUR BEST

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein

“When you will bring a meal-offering of first fruits to Hashem: from ripe ears, parched over fire, ground from plump kernels, shall you offer the meal-offering of your first grain.” (2:14)

Rashi (Shemos 20:22) enumerates three instances in the Torah where the word אם, literally if, is employed not as a condition but as an imperative.

One of the three is this verse, which deals with the offering of the *Omer*. Another is Shemos 20:22, which specifies the command to lend money to the poor. The third is *ibid.* v. 24, where the Torah speaks of building the Altar. In our verse, this wording can be accounted for as follows: A person must bring a sacrifice willingly, and not merely because it is obligatory. Consequently, it is as if one had a choice in the matter, and, as such, it is worded conditionally.

Likewise, one should not consider his daily prayer as being a burden upon him, which must be recited only because he is obligated, but one must rather pray out of love for Hashem.

The same applies to lending money and other matters בין אדם לחברו, between man and his fellow, which must be performed willingly and cheerfully.

The Bartinura in his commentary to Avos (1:15) states that if one gives *tzedakah* with “his face pressed to the ground,” i.e. under duress, it is as though he did not give. Although he will certainly receive a reward, yet, since he gave because of Hashem’s *mitzvah* and feels compelled, he has not performed the *mitzvah* in the manner which Hashem wishes, i.e. willingly and lovingly.

The same applies to the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim* or *omer*. The owner, who worked to see his first fruits grow, surely enjoys them more than anyone else, and they mean much more to him. Why, then, did the Torah command that they be given to the *Kohanim*? The answer is that the fact that the owner gives away the fruits of his labor and toil and that which he looked forward to harvesting is the greatest sign that he is performing these *mitzvos* willingly and lovingly.

For this very reason, Cain was punished when he brought his inferior crop as a sacrifice. He felt that the quantity or quality one brings for an offering makes no difference to Hashem. Accordingly, he reasoned that bringing inferior produce was acceptable. It is only to man, he thought, that quality makes a difference. Cain was punished because he misunderstood the essence of sacrifices. It is a fact that Hashem does not need anything, for everything is His, but the whole idea of a sacrifice is that one should see that he is giving away what is dear to him because that is Hashem’s will, and as such he must offer his best.

Therefore, one must give the *bikkurim*, the first and the best, to Hashem, for although to Hashem they mean very little, to him who is offering them they mean a great deal. For that reason it says on in the context of *bikkurim* and *omer* to teach that one should give his best with the attitude that although one has free choice whether or not to give, he still gives of his own free will, and the eagerness with which he fulfills the *mitzvah* attests to his righteousness and his faith.

DECLARATION OF FAITH

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"If his offering is a sacrifice of a peace-offering..." (3:1)

The Rambam writes the following: All *korbanos* fall under the category of *chukim*. The Sages have said that the world exists because of the service of *korbanos* (Megillah 31b). It is through the observance of *chukim* and *mishpatim* that the upright merit the World to Come (Hilchos Me'ilah 8:8).

The Manchester *Rosh Yeshivah*, Rav Yehudah Zev Segal zt'l, writes that various reasons for the *korbanos* are given by many of the classic commentators. However, even with all that has been written and explained, it is still beyond us to grasp just why the slaughter of a sanctified animal, the placing and sprinkling of its blood and the burning of its flesh upon the Altar, should bring Hashem's *Shechinah* down to this earth. It is impossible to fathom the ramifications of each particular service, be it an animal-offering, meal-offering, wine libation, or any of the other aspects of the sacrificial service that was performed in the *Mishkan* and *Beis HaMikdash*. Therefore, the Rambam places *korbanos* in the category of *chukim* - commandments whose reasons are not known to us.

When a Jew offers a *korban*, he is demonstrating his unquestioning submission to Hashem's will. It is as if he is saying, "I do not understand why this offering will accomplish great things for myself and for the world, but I do know that it will accomplish great things, for that is what Hashem has taught us by way of His Torah." The sacrificing of a *korban* is a great declaration of faith on the part of the one who brings it. It is through this approach to Torah and *mitzvos* that a Jew earns himself a portion in the World to Come. This is what Chazal mean when they say that the entire world exists because of the service of *korbanos*.

SHARING IS CARING

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

"If his offering is a sacrifice of a peace-offering..." (3:1)

One of the *korbanos* introduced in this week's *parashah* is the *Shelamim* (derived from the word *shalom*, meaning peace). Rashi explains that this *korban* has come to be known as an offering that brings peace to the world. Further, Targum Onkelos and Targum Yonasan ben Uziel both translate the *Shelamim* as *kadosh*, holy. What is it about this generally personal sacrifice that makes it holy and helps it bring peace to the world?

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig suggests that the true definition of *kadosh* is not holy but set apart. Being holy means setting aside self-interest and focusing on interests outside our own. The *Shelamim* is the only sacrifice shared among all parties: parts are burnt on the Altar, shared with *Kohanim*, and kept by the owners. The *Shelamim* brings peace to the world because the owner sets it aside to share a selfless and holy act with others.

LEANING ON HASHEM

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"He shall lay his hand on the head of his offering and slaughter it at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting..." (3:2)

Mashal: One of the devoted followers of the Chortkover Rebbe, Rav Duvid Moshe Friedman zt'l, was the great Maharsham of Brezhan, Rav Shalom Mordechai Schwadron zt'l. Although he was one of the leading *poskim* of the generation, a *halachic* arbiter to whom thousands sent their queries, the Maharsham went out of his way to show his loyalty to the Chortkover *tzaddik* and his followers.

The epitome of unpretentiousness, he often became lost in the crowd at the rebbe's *tish*, as he squeezed in among the devoted *chassidim* straining to obtain a taste of their rebbe's *shirayim* or to find a good spot from which to hear him speak *divrei Torah*.

Once, at a Friday night *tish*, a *chassid* used the Maharsham's shoulders to climb up higher in order to see the rebbe. Humbly, the Maharsham let himself be utilized as the *chassid's* support. R' Duvid Moshe noticed this and, smiling, he pointed to the great *posek* and said, tongue in cheek, "*Kedai hu R' Shalom Mordechai lismoch alav b'sha'as hadchak* (R' Shalom Mordechai is worthy enough to be relied upon)" - a pun, since the literal meaning of *lismoch* is "to lean upon."

Nimshal: If a person can be relied upon, both in a literal and spiritual sense, how much more so can we rely on Hashem. The *mitzvah* of *semichah* - when a person would lean his hands upon the head of an animal to be sacrificed, is a reflection of our need to rely upon the goodness of the Almighty every day.

We think that we are the ones who control our destinies, when in fact, Hashem is pulling the strings. A *korban* is a means to offer ourselves up to Hashem in atonement and appeasement, and it defines our total reliance on the Holy One above.

ELEVATING PLEASURES

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"From the sacrifice of the peace-offering he shall offer as a fire-offering to Hashem; the fat that covers the innards, and all the fat that is upon the innards..." (3:3)

Offering up the blood and fats of the peace-offering on the Altar elevated the consciousness of our animal soul to its source in the spiritual realm. Therefore, when we ate the meat of the peace-offering, our animal soul shared the Divine soul's spiritual experience rather than simply experiencing the sensual pleasure of eating meat.

Similarly, whenever we engage in a physical pleasure for a holy purpose - such as eating delicacies on the Sabbath or holidays - we transform simple sensual pleasure into a G-dly means for spiritual growth and development. (Ohr HaTorah, Vayikra, vol. 4, p. 998) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

"FEEDING" HASHEM

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"The Kohen shall cause it to go up in smoke on the Mizbeach; it is the food of the fire, for Hashem." (3:11)

Throughout the Torah, G-d refers to the sacrifices repeatedly and figuratively as His "bread." Just as consuming bread - and food in general - keeps our souls connected to our bodies, the "bread" of G-d - the sacrificial service - keeps G-d, the soul and life-force of the world, bound together with the world. In this way, through the sacrificial rituals, Divine energy is drawn into the world.

The same is true of our personal "sacrificial services": Our study of the Torah, our prayers, our charitable deeds, and our ongoing refinement and elevation of the physical world in general, are G-d's "bread," connecting the world with G-d. (Sefer HaMa'amarim 5643, p. 104) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

JOINED TO HASHEM

Reb Noson of Breslov

"Speak to the Jewish people, saying, 'If someone sins unintentionally from among all the commandments of Hashem that may not be done...'" (4:2)

Mitzvah (מצוה, commandment) has the same root as *tzevet* (צות, join). *Aveirah* (עברה, sin) has the same root as *Avar* (עבר, pass through or pass over).

A *mitzvah* joins a person to G-d. A sin causes the light of G-d to pass through or pass over the person, restricting him from experiencing the light of G-d.

HEIGHTENED CAUTION

Reb Yaakov of Lissa

"If the anointed Kohen shall sin, bringing guilt on the people..." (4:3)

One who has been acknowledged as a great man or leader must be more careful than an ordinary person not to fall into the trap of sin or even of error. For the masses are only too eager to point to a leader as their example when they sin, so that any sin of the leader - even one that is committed in error - may lead them to do evil on purpose.

HEAVENLY FORGIVENESS

Reb Noson of Breslov

"He should lean his hands onto the head of the bull..." (4:4)

Before the animal was slaughtered and its blood sprinkled on the Altar, the penitent placed his hands upon the animal and confessed his sins before G-d. The main repentance, however, occurs on Rosh HaShanah, which is the first day of the Ten Days of Repentance. On that day, one can appeal directly to G-d for forgiveness.

Why is repentance accepted more easily on Rosh HaShanah? When a person's transgressions are presented before an earthly court, he cannot reverse the verdict after it is decreed. But when one repents before the Heavenly Court, recognizing that G-d created the world out of His goodness and created us to receive His gifts, his remorse has the power to overturn the verdict. (Likutey Halakhot I, 478)

EMULATING HASHEM

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"He shall do to the bull as he had done to the sin-offering bull, so shall he do it; thus shall the Kohen provide them atonement so they may be forgiven." (4:20)

The Torah does not completely describe the details of how the sin-offering brought by the community is handled, preferring instead to simply say that it should be treated the same way as the previously discussed offering. Rashi tells us that this is because G-d does not wish to dwell on the wrongdoings of His people.

The Torah enjoins us to learn from G-d's example. Our love for our fellow should permeate us so thoroughly that when we do him or her a favor, we feel that we are doing it for ourselves rather than for someone else.

Similarly, anything that happens to another person, good or bad, should affect us personally. And, following the example in this verse, we should recoil at the very prospect of saying something depreciative about someone else. - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

LESSER OF THE EVILS

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein

"When a ruler sins, and commits one from among all the commandments of Hashem that may not be done - unintentionally - and becomes guilty..." (4:22)

In the other cases of community sins, the term the Torah employs for "if" is *אם*, e.g. *אם הכהן המשיח יחטא*, "If the anointed Kohen sins" (v. 3); *ואם כל עדת ישראל ישגו*, "If the entire congregation errs" (v. 13); *ואם נפש אחת תחטא*, "If one person sins" (v. 27).

In the case of the ruler, however, the Torah writes: *אשר אשרי*. The term *אשר* alludes to the word *אשרי*, fortunate. Fortunate is the generation whose ruler gives thought to bring a sacrifice for his unintentional sins. Surely he will repent for his intentional ones as well!

Now, if it is difficult for a ruler to repent of his sins, why did the Torah command us to appoint a king?

It would seem, then, that a government without a king is worse than one with a king. By and large, a king will endeavor to govern justly, although it is always possible that he will be prey to temptation and arrogance. Although this is surely a drawback, monarchy is, nevertheless, the lesser of the two evils.

One can learn from this that if one is confronted by two alternatives, either in conduct towards others or in conduct relating to ourselves, and each option has its drawbacks, since there is no course of action without disadvantages at all, one should choose the option that has fewer disadvantages and more advantages. He should not say that since I have no alternative without a disadvantage I will not do any of them.

ANTIDOTES TO SIN

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"If an individual person from among the people of the land shall sin unintentionally, by committing one of the commandments of Hashem that may not be done, and he becomes guilty..." (4:27)

The soul is intrinsically connected with G-d, and any deviation from this connection is unnatural. In the words of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, "A Jew is by nature neither capable of sinning, nor does he desire to do so." (HaYom Yom, 25 Tamuz; Igrot Kodesh Admor Mehoraryatz, vol. 4, p. 384).

How, then, do we sin? The Talmud (Sotah 3a) states: "A person does not commit a sin unless he has been overcome by a spirit of folly," meaning that the person convinces himself that sinning will not disconnect him from G-d. This misconception allows the individual to stray.

This being the case, there are two antidotes to sin: First, thinking carefully and rationally about what we are doing, exposing the foolishness of our rationalizations. Second - if the first strategy fails - calling upon our intrinsic connection to G-d, which will empower us to resist our rationalizations no matter what. (Tanya, chapter 14 (19b); Sefer HaMa'amarim Melukat, vol. 1, pp. 29-35) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

TAKING ACTION

Sefer HaChinuch

"If the sin that he committed becomes known to him, he shall bring as his offering a she-goat, unblemished, for the sin that he committed..." (4:28)

The main tendency of the heart is determined by actions. Therefore, when an individual sins, his heart will not be properly purified through words alone, through his saying between himself and the wall, "I have sinned, and I will never do it again."

However, by undertaking a significant action on account of his sin, [for example] by taking animals from his pen and going through the trouble of bringing them to the kohen in the sacred Temple and performing all the rituals outlined regarding the sacrifices of sinners, as a result of all this immense activity, the evil of the sin will be recognized clearly in his heart, and he will avoid it on later occasions. (Mitzvah 95)

CONSTANT RENEWAL

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"If the sin that he committed becomes known to him, he shall bring as his offering..." (4:28)

If a person committed the same sin on multiple occasions, the rule is that he should offer up a sin-offering for each instance of transgression. (Mishnah Torah, Shegagot 3:3)

This demonstrates how we are constantly evolving; in a sense, we become a different person from moment to moment. Thus, the person who committed the sin the first time is not the same person who committed the sin the second time, and therefore a different process of return and atonement is required for each.

The positive side of this perspective on life is that we should never think that we have exhausted our potential for spiritual growth. Each day and each moment we become a new person, different from who we were before by virtue of the experiences that have added their lessons and imprints on us. Thus, as we are constantly recreated, a constantly new and different storehouse of spiritual power is available to us, helping us fulfill our Divine mission in life. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 32, pp. 7-12) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

ALWAYS WILLING TO FORGIVE

Reb Noson of Breslov

"He shall bring as his guilt-offering to Hashem, for his sin that he committed, a female from the flock - a sheep or a goat - for a sin-offering; and the Kohen shall provide him atonement from his sin." (5:6)

The adjustable-offering displays G-d's compassion. Even if someone is very distant from G-d and impoverished in his recognition of G-dliness, G-d still gives him the opportunity to return to Him (Likutei Halachot II, p. 212a). This is because the "adjustable"-offering allows for repentance even when a person's circumstances keep changing.

When G-d appeared to Avraham at the Covenant Between the Pieces (see Bereishis 15:9-21), He revealed to him all the sacrifices except the meal-offering (which is also part of the adjustable-offering). G-d did not elaborate on it because the meal-offering is unfathomable: at all times, in all cases, G-d will accept the person who turns to Him. (Likutei Halachot II, p. 424)

FORGIVING THE DESTITUTE

Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

"But if his means are insufficient for a sheep or goat, then he shall bring as his guilt-offering for that which he sinned: two turtledoves or two young doves to Hashem, one for a sin-offering and one for an olah-offering." (5:7)

Why does the rich man bring one offering whereas the poor person must bring two?

The Ibn Ezra (Vayikra 5:11) answers that the poor person must bring an additional offering due to the likelihood that, in his poverty-stricken state, he would have questioned Hashem's fairness and would likely bear a grudge against Him because of his poverty. Therefore, the second offering comes to atone for these feelings.

However, a separate *halacha* states that someone who is "destitute" - an even greater level of abject poverty than a "regular" poor person, need only bring one offering. In light of the above, we can ask that surely such a person will feel an even greater degree of frustration against Hashem, so where is his second offering to atone for these doubts?

The Chida answers that someone who is destitute lives in such a dire state of poverty and suffering that Hashem automatically forgives him for his criticisms and feelings of unfairness.

These were the words of the Satmar Rebbe on the first Hoshana Rabba following the Holocaust. He spoke of how there had never been a generation more "destitute" than that which emerged, broken, from the gas chambers. "Therefore," said the Satmar Rebbe, "in our generation, in regards to those who complain against Hashem, I think that He only hears their pain. He does not listen to their accusations."

THE PAUPER'S PENITENCE

Baal HaTanya

"But if his means are insufficient for two turtledoves or for two young doves..." (5:11)

We are taught that a *korban* that is brought without sincere repentance does not atone. However, this injunction does not apply to the *Korban Mincha* - Meal Offering, since this is unique from all other sacrifices. The *Mincha* (gift) of the poor, in contrast to all other offerings, atones even without *teshuvah*. All the days of his life, the poor man is the epitome of one long, never-ending *teshuvah*.

TO EACH THEIR OWN

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"But if his means are insufficient for two turtledoves or for two young doves..." (5:11)

Mashal: A rabbi once came to visit one of his community members to discuss an important matter. He arrived to find the family in the midst of a meal. The man welcomed the rabbi and invited him to join the family in the meal.

One glance at the sparse amount of food on the table, however, indicated to the rabbi that there was hardly enough for the family, and that his partaking of any dish would impinge upon their rations. Yet, he did not wish to refuse in a manner that would betray the reason for his reluctance and possibly embarrass the host.

"I'm sorry I cannot join you," the rabbi said, "but I am under strict orders from a physician not to eat."

The *shamash* who had accompanied the rabbi was surprised at this since the rabbi was not known to say an untruth. After they left, he asked the rabbi why he had lied.

"I did not lie at all," the rabbi said. "It is well known that Rabbeinu Moshe ben Maimon zt'l, the great Rambam, was an accomplished physician. The Rambam rules that one should not partake of a meal that is inadequate for the host. Hence I was under physician's orders not to eat."

Nimshal: The Torah takes pity on less fortunate Jews who cannot afford to put food on their table. Hence, the *korban* that they are required to bring for atonement is of much lesser value than that of a wealthy person's sacrifice. Likewise, a rich man cannot fulfill his obligation with the value of a poor man's sacrifice.

Today, this lesson applies to the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*; each person must give according to his station in life!

ACKNOWLEDGING OUR WRONGS

Rabbeinu Yonah

"If a person will sin and will commit one of all the commandments of Hashem that may not be done, but was unaware and became guilty, and bears his iniquity, he shall bring an unblemished ram from the flock, of the value for a guilt-offering..." (5:17-18)

The Torah demands a costlier sacrifice from an individual who is not sure if he has sinned than one who is certain. For if a person knows clearly that he has done something wrong, he will regret it. However, if he is not sure, he may still convince himself that he really did not sin and will not repent. Thus, he must bring a costlier sacrifice that will cause him to be more introspective.

[Similarly, the Kotzker Rebbe teaches: When a person knows that he has transgressed, it is already half of repentance.]

PROTECTED BY POSITIVITY

Rabbi Ari Ciment

"If one will sin, and commit a trespass against Hashem, and deal falsely with his neighbor in a matter of deposit, or of pledge, or of robbery, or deprived his neighbor." (5:21)

He who goes and does not practice, the reward of his going is in his hand. (Avos 5:14)

How is it that a person gets reward even without doing anything at shul or place of study?

The verse (Vayikra 5:21) states, "If one will sin, and commit a trespass against Hashem, and deal falsely with his neighbor in a matter of deposit, or of pledge, or of robbery, or will have oppressed his neighbor."

Why does G-d interject “and trespass against Hashem,” and not just simply state “if a man sins by dealing falsely with his friend”? What is added by the addition of “trespass against Hashem”?

The answer is derived from understanding why Betzalel, the grandson of Chur, specifically was chosen to lead the assembling of the *Mishkan*. It was Chur who understood the power of positive attitude/philosophy/encouragement as he (along with Aharon) lifted up Moshe’s hand during the war against the Amalekites. As long as the Jews saw Moshe’s hands up, they were “uplifted” and were able to make key advances. Before assembling the *Mishkan*, G-d wanted someone who would perpetuate constant positive encouragement.

During the actual completion of the *Mishkan*, the *pasuk* states: **ויקם משה את המשכן ויתן את אדניו וישם את קרשיו ויתן את בריחיו ויקם את עמודיו**.

The Gemara states that even though the *Mishkan* was brought up and down, it records only that Moshe “put it up,” again highlighting the concept of “positivity” during the very first interaction with the *Mishkan*! The concept of *מורידין* (which literally refers to going up in holiness and not down, e.g., not writing a *mezuzah* out of a *Sefer Torah* parchment, etc.) actually derives from here! Homiletically, I would add: **מעלין בקודש** - if you accord high respect for the things that are *kodesh*, then **ואין מורידין** - you can’t possibly fall!

And so perhaps one way to understand (similar to an approach by the Ohr HaChaim) the verse from Vayikra is that if one deals negatively with places of G-d, this can ultimately trickle down to how he deals with his neighbors. If one has a negative attitude toward G-d’s places, he will inevitably have negative interactions with his fellow man. This is precisely why **ומעלה מעל בה’** precedes **ובחש בעמיתו**; they are connected indeed! A Chur-like positivity-engendering approach, personified by Moshe’s first act with the *Mishkan* (**ויקם...ויקם**), directed to our holy *shuls* and schools, thus saves us from sinning with man!

In a similar vein, even without saying a single word of prayer in *shul*, I will be rewarded for going because I am demonstrating the prerequisite positive attitude directed to a house of G-d - **שכר הליכה בידו**!

Takeaway Messages: If we deal positively with our very *shuls* and schools (e.g., treat them with reverence, say nice things about them, engender good feelings, avoid speaking negatively regarding its leaders, etc.), we are actually saved from sinning with our fellow man. **ומעלה מעל בה’** precedes **ובחש בעמיתו**, perhaps to remind us that speaking negatively about our institutions leads to interpersonal issues as well. Homiletically, **מעלין בקודש**, if you accord high respect for the things that are *kodesh*, then **ואין מורידין**, you can’t possibly fall!

Reward is accorded for going to *shul*, even without praying a single word, because it is about engendering a positive outlook on your institution - **מעלין בקודש ואין מורידין**.

KEEPING WITHIN LIMITS

Reb Noson of Breslov

“...or he found a lost object and denied it – and he swore falsely about any of all the things, which man does do, to sin by them...” (5:22)

The sin of stealing or denying ownership of someone else’s property is akin to heresy.

Just as we are forbidden to take another’s property, we are also forbidden to delve into thoughts which are beyond our capacity to understand, for those questions and delving are heretical in nature. Thus, stealing is akin to heresy. (Likutey Halakhot VII, p. 132a)

FORGIVENESS AND FORBEARANCE

Reb Noson of Breslov

“So shall it be that he will sin and become guilty, he will return the robbed item that he robbed, or the proceeds of his fraud, or the pledge that was left with him, or the lost item that he found...” (5:23)

Before a person can repent, he must return what he stole. In essence, a sinner has stolen from G-d and from his fellow Jews, since sin diverts bounty from the Community of Israel to the Other Side. G-d intends His bounty to be directed towards His nation, but sin changes its destination. Therefore, repentance is difficult - first a person must regain what he has caused to be lost, and then he must return it to its Rightful Owner.

If we think about it, repentance shouldn’t help at all. According to the law, the sinner deserves punishment; shouldn’t G-d be concerned with the letter of the law and issue judgment against him? But G-d also has infinite compassion. Through His Treasury of Unearned Gifts, He grants forgiveness and issues compassionate decrees rather than exacting punishment right away. His forbearance allows the sinner to repent and strive for full forgiveness.

When a person truly seeks to return to G-d, he regains what he has caused to be lost, and returns it to its Rightful Owner. (Likutey Halakhot VIII, p. 218a)

When a person sins against G-d, his repentance is accepted with his sacrifice. But when he sins against man, he must first return the stolen object before he can bring his sacrifice.

Sacrifices can be offered only at the Temple, which rests upon the *Even Shesiyah* (Foundation Stone) from which the entire world was drawn forth. The Foundation Stone represents unity, for everything was included in it prior to the formation of the world.

When someone blemishes against another person, he creates separation. Therefore, he must first join together with the one he has harmed and strive for unity with him before he can bring his sacrifice to the Temple.

RETURNING SPIRITUAL GOODS

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“So shall it be that he will sin and become guilty, he will return the robbed item that he robbed, or the proceeds of his fraud, or the pledge that was left with him, or the lost item that he found...” (5:23)

Spiritually, “robbed articles” are anything that we, by sinning, have “robbed” from G-d and given over to the forces of evil, whether a physical object, a moment in time, or human potential.

Our task in life is to return the world’s robbed entities to their rightful owner, i.e., to reorient everything that has been given over to the cause of evil toward Divinity, beginning with whatever we ourselves have “robbed” from G-d through our misdeeds.

This is the essence of repentance: restoring the world to its natural, Divine state. Through repentance, it is further possible for us to reach even greater heights than we had attained before sinning. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 25, pp. 398, 455-457) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

SHABBOS PROTECTION

Reb Noson of Breslov

“The Kohen shall provide him atonement before Hashem, and it he shall be forgiven for any of all the things he might do to incur guilt.” (5:26)

Adam blemished on the same day (Friday) that he was created. His punishment should have begun immediately, but Shabbos protected him and allowed him to remain in *Gan Eden* until after Shabbos ended. (Zohar II, 138a)

The power of Shabbos to help a person atone for his sins finds an allusion in the phrase *L’ashmah bah* (לאשמה בה, he might be guilty of), which is an acronym for *“I’El asher shavas mikol ha’ma’asim ba’yom ha’shivi’i* (לא-ל אשר שבת), מכל המעשים ביום השביעי, the G-d Who rested from all His works on the Seventh Day” (Shabbos morning liturgy). (Likutey Halakhot VIII, p. 230b)

CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

“So shall it be that he will sin and become guilty, he will return the robbed item that he robbed, or the proceeds of his fraud, or the pledge that was left with him, or the lost item that he found...” (5:23)

The end of our *parashah* (5:23-24) details the *Asham* sacrifice, brought by “one that sins and is guilty” of robbing from others, withholding funds from others, failing to return a deposited object, and other similar acts. Atonement for any of these actions includes adding a fifth to the monies reimbursed.

First, why does the Torah use the seemingly duplicative words “sins” and “is guilty?” Don’t those terms connote the same culpability? Second, why is there a unique penalty in this case of adding a fifth to the reparations?

The Kli Yakar suggests that depriving others of money or property not only decreases their rightful assets but also deprives them of performing charitable acts with those assets. The Gemara (Kesubos 3a) concludes that one may give up to 20 percent of their assets to charity, corresponding to the 20 percent penalty introduced here in our *pasuk*.

We can use this deeper association of the effects of stealing and withholding to answer our first question: it is necessary to not only recognize when we sin but also understand that our actions have more profound repercussions.

When we realize our sins’ ramifications and what they can prevent others from doing, we are on our way to reforming our actions and transforming their ramifications.

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