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Psyched for Torah: Mistakes were Made

Rabbi Dr. Mordechai Schiffman

In their book *Mistakes Were Made (But Not by Me)*, Drs. Carol Tavis and Elliot Aronson explain the psychology behind why many of us have difficulty admitting mistakes. They describe the various tricks our brains use to defend our egos from noticing our shortcomings, including cognitive dissonance, confirmation bias, naïve-realism, and memory distortions. The basic gist behind all of these tricks is that our mind “yearns for consonance and rejects information that questions our beliefs, decisions, or preferences.” Yet, the thrust of Tavis and Aronson’s argument is that we could go a long way to compensate for these cognitive errors by just being aware that they exist and are in danger of deluding reality.

The Torah describes four different inadvertent sins that require different sacrificial atonements, depending on who sinned: the High Priest, the court, the leader, or a regular individual. While for the High Priest, the court, and the individual, the Torah frames the sacrifices based on the condition of “if” they sin (“im”), when it comes to the leader, the pasuk uses the word “asher” – “when the leader sins.” Commentators are bothered by the assumption. Why do we assume the inevitability of the leader’s sin?

Ibn Ezra circumvents the problem by arguing that the word “asher” is synonymous with the word “im” and also means “if,” not “when.” Others take the change in wording more seriously and suggest that there is a fundamental difference between a leader and the other three groups. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks quotes three different explanations including that a leader is more prone to arrogance (Sforno), is more involved in secular pursuits (Rabbi Eliyahu Munk) and can be easily strayed by popular opinion (Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk). Rabbi Sacks suggests a fourth answer which stresses the inherent difficulty and uncertainty in

making political decisions.

Rashi, quoting the midrash, takes the discussion in another direction by focusing on a different function of the word “asher,” as it also doubles as an allusion to the word “ashrei,” meaning happy, praiseworthy, or fortunate. “Fortunate is the generation,” he writes, “whose leader sets his heart to bring an atonement sacrifice even for an inadvertent sin; how much more certain is it that he will repent for his willful sins.” It isn’t easy for any of us to admit our mistakes. We have so many cognitive distortions that conceal our mistakes from our awareness. It is even more common for leaders to not see their mistakes because the stakes are higher. It is indeed worthy of pausing and celebrating such leaders who are willing to admit their mistakes and are able to model proper behavior for others.

How do we overcome all the obstacles that prevent us from seeing our mistakes? I believe the answer lies within a careful reading of Rashi’s commentary. If we pay close attention, we will notice that Rashi formulates the idea slightly differently than the sources he is quoting from. The Tosefta, the Talmud Bavli, the Sifra, and the Yalkut Shimoni all write “fortunate is the generation whose leader offers a sacrifice for his unintentional sins.” Rashi adds the words “notein lev” – “sets his heart.” “Fortunate is the generation whose leader is “notein lev” to offer a sacrifice for his unintentional sins. The path to be able to admit mistakes is to pay attention – to be “notein lev.” As Drs. Tavis and Aronson argued, the way to overcome our biases is to be aware that we have them in the first place. If we become aware of the tricks our minds play on us to protect our egos and become mindful and pay attention, we have a chance at being able to recognize and admit when we make mistakes.

Privacy 101

Mrs. Michal Horowitz

This coming Shabbos we open Sefer Vayikra. Vayikra is also known by its appellation, Toras Kohanim - the Law Book for Priests, because of the myriad laws related to priestly rituals. While on the surface, Sefer Vayikra seems to be an esoteric book with little relevance to our lives, like all of Torah, there is much to be gleaned from its holy words.

The Sefer begins: ויקרא אל משה וידבר ה' אליו מאהל מועד - לאמר - And He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying:

דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם, אָדָם כִּי-יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם קֶרְבָּן, לַיהוָה--מִן-הַבְּהֵמָה, מִן-הַבֶּקֶר וּמִן-הַצֹּאן, תִּקְרִיבוּ, אֶת-קֶרְבַּנְכֶם -

Speak to the Children of Israel, and say to them: When a man from amongst you brings an offering to Hashem, from the animals, from cattle or from the flock you shall bring your sacrifice (Lev.1:1-2).

While today we do not have the Beis HaMikdash where we can offer korbanos to Hashem, the lessons of Torah are relevant in every time, every place, and every generation.

R' Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb writes,

"There is no such thing as privacy anymore." "There are no secrets anymore." These are two complaints that are heard frequently nowadays. We live in a world of cell phones and email, blogs, Facebook, and Twitter. We have no privacy, for almost anyone can reach us wherever we are, whatever we happen to be doing, at all times of the day. And we can have no secrets, because anyone who knows anything about us can spread it to the entire world in a matter of seconds.

"How often have I sat down for a moment of private time, for study or contemplation, or just to 'chill out,' only to have the silence disrupted by some total stranger who managed to obtain my cell phone number? How many dozens of emails and blogs fill up the space of my inbox with communications that are, at best, of no interest to me and often are offensive and obnoxious? We once felt entitled to privacy and courtesy, but they no longer seem achievable...

"The right to privacy and the ability to assume confidentiality are universal human values. It is important to know that they are primary Jewish values as well. Sources for these values in our tradition include Parshas Vayikra. This might come as a surprise to you, dear reader, because you know that Parshas Vayikra is the introduction to the Leviticus, the

biblical book that focuses upon sacrifices and Temple ritual. This parsha, especially, seems limited to the comprehensive and complex details of sacrificial offerings. Where is there even a hint of these contemporary concerns, courtesy and confidentiality?

"The first two verses in the first chapter of Vayikra say it all, albeit between the lines, 'The L-rd called to Moshe and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying, Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them...'

"The rabbis of the Talmud saw in these simple and direct phrases two subtle messages. First of all, the L-rd called to Moshe first and then spoke to him. He didn't surprise Moshe. He didn't intrude on Moshe's privacy and autonomy. First, He called to him. He knocked on Moshe's door, as it were, ringing the bell first, asking to be invited in. No unwanted intrusion, even from the L-rd Almighty, to his favorite prophet!

"... On the same page in Tractate Yoma, the rabbis find another message in the deceptively simple opening verses of our parsha, 'saying: Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them.' From the redundancy here 'say,' and 'speak,' and 'say,' the rabbis derive the lesson that when someone tells you something, you are forbidden to share it with another unless you are given explicit permission to do so. Moshe was not permitted to retell even the divine message that he heard until G-d Himself told him that it was okay to 'say it over.' The medieval Rabbi Moshe of Coucy actually enumerates this admonition for utter confidentiality as one of the prohibitions comprising the 613 commandments of the Torah..."

R' Dr. Weinreb concludes, "It is difficult to combat the value system that is foisted upon us by technology that pervades the world in which we now live. Very difficult, but very necessary. If we lazily submit to the pernicious influence of modern convenience, we risk the ultimate loss of our very humanity. A culture devoid of courtesy can turn into a culture of callousness and cruelty. A world where one cannot trust his confidante is a world where authentic friendship is impossible" (The Person in the Parasha, Maggid OU Press, p.273-275).

As always, the eternality of Torah resonates strongly with us in our daily lives. From two seemingly non-impactful pasukim, Chazal derive strong lessons for our inter-personal relationships: Respect the privacy of others

by 'knocking' before we enter or approach, and being vigilant not to share, forward, or reveal secrets of others that have been entrusted to us.

While this lesson is always important to keep in mind, during the current crisis it is ever more relevant. Many of us today are at home - for days on end (and who knows when this will end!? Hashem yerachem) with other family members, whom we are not used to spending all day, every day with. Though we find ourselves in an extreme situation, where all of us are homebound may find it difficult to respect the space and privacy of others, we must remain vigilant to knock on doors, announce our presence before entering a room, and give our family members the

space, solitude and privacy they may need.

In addition, in a time when we are being bombarded with What'sApp, Emails, Text, News Updates, Breaking News, and Government Statements - as well as personal messages from friends and family who are often in distress - before we hit 'Forward', let us stop and think if the whole world really needs to see the post I'm about to send on, entrusted to me in privacy by someone else.

May Hashem hear us all calling to Him, ויקרא, from the pain in our hearts and distress in our minds, and may He answer our tefilos with yeshuos, refuos, and besuros tovos for our people, our Land, and the world.

Sweeten to Taste...

Rabbi Eliyahu Safran

There are a number of categories of things forbidden to be sacrificed on the Altar, but these are almost exclusively things that are inherently forbidden or that have an inherent deficiency. Neither Leaven nor honey are forbidden or detestable in any way. Indeed, they enhance our diets in wonderful ways. Why then, is it prohibited to bring them as an offering?

The answer rests not in what is inherent in leaven or honey but in what they may represent in us. Keli Yakar explains that honey represents all that is sweet to man. In other words, it symbolizes man's pursuit of pleasure. Leaven (chometz) represents our self-indulgence and drive for personal gain. Lest we think this is taking too much "poetic license," the Sefer HaChinuch emphasizes that chometz is the symbol of arrogance. Just as bread rises, man "puffs up", so very full of his own sense of self-worth, "because leavening lifts itself up to hint at the fact that haughtiness of the heart is an abomination to Hashem." Honey, is rejected because it represents those who constantly seek sweetness, "according to the ways of the pleasure seekers/gluttons who are drawn after everything sweet."

These dual drives – the pursuit of pleasure and of personal gain are at the heart of man's sinfulness. As we know, the insistent pursuit of pleasure rarely stops at that which is permitted, and the obsessive drive for personal gain knows no limits. Sweetness and leavening. In their

measure, pleasing. But in the experience of man, "in their measure" has no real meaning. As a result, they cannot bring Hashem pleasure on His Altar.

Any cook worth his or her mettle knows that a great recipe is the perfect alchemy of art and science. Science, because the combining of ingredients is chemistry. As such, even a little too much or too little of an ingredient can doom the resulting dish. Art, because there must be just enough of the inspired to make a meal magic.

The importance of each ingredient in its measure cannot be overstated. It is the difference between a brilliant meal and a disaster.

So too with leaven and honey. Pride enables us to achieve our daily tasks and accomplish them successfully. A house painter, no less than a brain surgeon, must take appropriate pride in his or her job in order to do it well. And we must all gain some enjoyment, sweetness, from our days lest the burden of time wear us down.

Certainly, that was God's intent when we were no longer to be inhabitants of Eden? Life was in so many ways to be hard. Our burdens are lightened by some leaven and some sweetness, some pride and some joy. The challenge is that these things exist "to taste". Too much, and we are ruined. Too little, and life is nearly unbearable.

There are times when we include leaven and honey in our Godly offerings. For example, on Shavuot, when we commemorate the Giving of Torah, we can bring leaven,

because whatever inclinations and obsessive self-indulgent urges we have are more than offset by Torah, by learning Torah, by identifying with Torah. So too, when we offer the minchat bikkurim on the sixteenth of Nisan, our pursuits of pleasures are subdued and contained. They cannot help but be. We are, after all, in the most sacred and peaceful environment of Yerushalaim and her Temple, when our thoughts and priorities cannot help but be focused somewhere other than our own selfish pleasures.

I remember a time when I was at the Kotel when a proudly secular, materialistic and self-centered man was having a difficult time ending his bond with those mighty stones. I had seen him approach the Kotel and I thought he would remain a minute or two at most; that, for him, the visit was just one more “tourist stop”. And yet, he remained, minute after long and deeply-felt minute.

When he was finally able to turn away from the Wall, I asked him what had happened, why he felt such a strong attraction.

“As I approached those sacred stones, I suddenly forgot about me. I only thought of Him.”

On Shavuot and bikkurim, honey can be offered; when we “think of Him” and not of ourselves.

Every morning prior to reciting Pesukei D’Zimra and beginning our formal tefilat Shacharit, we recite Korbanot recalling the daily sacrifices offered in the Temple. As part of that recitation we recall and recount the special daily offering of the Ketoret, the unique incense mixture. We quote the passages that teach about how the incense mixture was prepared, including the names and amounts of each of the ingredients. The last passage informs us that, “Bar Kappara taught further, Had one put a kortov [a minimal amount, a touch] of fruit-honey into it, no person could have resisted its scent. Why did they not mix fruit-honey into it? because the Torah says: ‘For any leaven or any fruit-honey, you are not to burn from them a fire offering to Hashem.’” Just a tiny bit, a touch, of honey, would have made the scent of the ketoret irresistible; overwhelming. So why not add it? Because the Torah says not to! So why ask? The Torah says, No!

What more is there to ask?

The questions assume that the honey will enhance the ketoret but like the exacting proportions of a fine recipe, what seems to enhance actually destroys.

In life, we have all sorts of rationalizations for our behaviors – they will make our life, our experience, our

homes better, more inviting, larger... but they do not. The “sweetness” is a lure that diminishes our life.

As a secular culture, we are no different. Think of the amount of sugar we consume each day, each month, each year. Sure, a “touch” of sugar sweetens but we find that, at the end of the day, the sugar is destroying our health and well-being.

Just a “bit of honey” Bar Kappara suggests in his question. As Jews, don’t we encourage creativity, uniqueness, the chidush? Just a “bit of honey”, a touch of sugar. Bar Kappara goes on to make clear just what is wrong, God says not to!

A spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down... Just a kortov of honey will make the scent irresistible... So compelling, alluring, sensible. But God says, No. And God saying “no” is not a matter for negotiation or discussion. It does not matter if you are an early 20th century German reformer or a 2018 open reformer seeking to “sweeten” the Jewish diet. Kosher-like. Kosher-ish.

The illusion of legitimacy. They claim that it’s fundamentally Jewish. It has the feel of the traditional – without the demands or responsibilities of tradition! But after all, what’s the harm? Only a sliver of sweetness, a kortov, 1/256 of a kab, barely 1/20 of a fluid ounce! What’s the harm? How could such a miniscule amount alter the recipe?

A Jew must know that the sweetness of the incense emanates only from God. We perform the will and service of God because we “live according to the truth because it is true.”

Adding a kortov to the incense cannot make it sweeter than doing the will of Hashem! The lie that it will is the reason that the Reform and Conservative Movements are losing members even as the Orthodoxy continues to grow by leaps and bounds. It matters that God says, No.

God spoke. That is sweetness enough.

As much as Torah learning, religious observance and adherence to mitzvah observance have grown in recent decades, I sense that the most difficult words to fully integrate into our lives are, Vayedaber Hashem – and God spoke.

How much easier, more pleasant, sweeter it is to hear the teaching of this rebbe or that rebbe, this rav or that rosh yeshiva, this professor or that writer! How lovely to hear this or that new insight. But we must never forget that, bottom line, the reason is because “Vayedaber Hashem”.

God spoke.

To our “modern ears” that isn’t often poetic enough. Not pithy enough to make it to the blogs. Not clever enough for a Facebook posting.

Rav Moshe Weinberger tells the story of Reb Zusha of Anapoli, who was unable to listen to a complete lesson given by his rebbi, the Maggid of Mazritch. The Maggid began each lesson by quoting the pasuk “Hashem spoke to Moshe saying...” which caused Reb Zusha to jump to his feet, “Did you hear that? Hashem Himself spoke to a human being! Gevald!”

He would carry on until he had to be removed so the lesson could continue.

Years later, Rav Baruch of Mezhibuzh spoke of this to his students and they began to snicker at Reb Zusha. Rav

Baruch admonished them, “If you knew what it meant to hear the Word of Hashem like Reb Zusha did, you would also not need to hear anything else! That would be sweet and pleasant enough for you!”

The snickers and laughter persist even as those defending Vayedaber Hashem stand up and reject the modern reformers who pretend that the kortov does not change the recipe, who argue and pretend that their purpose is not to alter orthodoxy only to sweeten it.

Not long ago, I read one such reformer said that he was, “spiritual but not religious.”

To him and those like him, Rav Baruch responds, “if you knew what it meant to hear the word of Hashem like Reb Zusha did, you would also not need to hear anything else! That would be sweet and pleasant enough for you!”

Love of Our Fellow in Torah and Mitzvot

Rabbi Adam Friedmann

The Torah commands us to love our fellow Jews as ourselves. (Vayikra 19:18) Rambam (Sefer HaMitzvot, Aseh 206), defines this mitzvah first in terms of its emotional scope. We are commanded to love each other just as we love ourselves. My compassion and love for my fellow Jew must equal my compassion and love for myself. Given our propensity and need for (healthy) self-love, the level of love demanded here is astounding. Indeed, Ramban explains that this mitzvah is formulated as hyperbole (haflagah). We cannot actually love anyone as much as ourselves. Rather, the Torah demands that we desire and seek the good for others as we desire and seek it for ourselves. We are charged with the task of seeking for others the good and dignified life we desire. (Commentary to Vayikra 19:17)

To whom does this mitzvah apply? Who is included in the Torah’s definition of “fellow”? The commentators debate this point. Rambam’s view on this question, however, seems to be internally contradictory:

In his Hilchot De’ot (Laws of Character) 6:3, Rambam writes unequivocally that there is a mitzvah incumbent upon each Jew to love each and every Jew like himself since the Torah says “Love your fellow as yourself.”

Consequently, Rambam writes that one must speak another’s praises and be careful with another’s money, just as he is careful with his own money and desires his own honour. It would seem from this source that the mitzvah of loving others applies to every Jew.

In Rambam’s Hilchot Avel (Laws of Mourning) 14:1, however, we find a different formulation. There Rambam describes a series of rabbinical mitzvot which fall under the category of loving others. He enumerates visiting the sick, comforting the bereaved, engaging in the entire process of burial including eulogizing the dead, and providing for the physical and emotional needs of a bridegroom and young couple. These, says the Rambam, are physical acts of kindness which have no limit. All of them are included in “loving your fellow as yourself.” Rambam then describes the mitzvah: Those things which you want others to do for you, do them “for one who is your brother in Torah and mitzvot.” In this context, it seems that Rambam is limiting the scope of the mitzvah to those Jews who are fellow observers of Torah and mitzvot.

How can this contradiction be resolved? Some (see Be’ur Chadash Maspikto De’ot 6:3) have suggested that Rambam’s definition in the second source is meant to

be operative in the first one as well. In other words, the mitzvah applies only to observant Jews. Others (see Likutei Sichot vol. 17, pg. 217 fn 17, subnote 1) argue that this cannot be the case. We may suggest that Rambam is describing different levels or modes of fulfilling the mitzvah, which correlate to different respective emotional attachments to other Jews.

- One way to look at another Jew is simply as a person seeking a dignified and good life. My responsibility to love that person charges me with seeking his basic welfare. This is the description in Hilchot De'ot.

- Another, more profound, way of seeing another Jew is as our “fellow in Torah and mitzvot”, a person seeking a meaningful connection with G-d, and seeking Torah knowledge. The greatness of this way of life entails a more involved love of limitless acts of visceral respect and care, which the Sages codified. At this second level of love, the more aware the lover is of the greatness of Torah and mitzvot, the greater his love for his “brothers” in those pursuits. This second mode is described in the Laws of Mourning.

Adam's Animal Accentuated

Mrs. Shira Smiles

Sefer Vayikra, often referred to as Sefer Hakohanim because of the preponderance of mitzvot and details relating to korbanot/sacrifices, actually begins with Hashem's calling to Moshe with instructions about these sacrifices. However, in these introductory verses, Hashem identifies the bearer of the sacrifice as an adam. The Torah usually calls this man ish. While both adam and ish are translated by definition as man, the connotations suggest differences between the two terms. It is the specific allusions that adam brings to mind that our commentators discuss and that will form the substance of this shiur.

Our meforshim/commentators are in agreements that Hashem is turning our attention back to that first Adam. Just as Adam did not bring an offering from anything stolen, says Rashi, so must all our offerings come from that which is honestly ours. Since Adam was the only man on earth, everything belonged to him, and therefore his offering could not be from anything stolen. However, asks Rav Moshe Goldstein in Shaarei Chaim, shouldn't the emphasis then be on the animal rather than on the man? And herein lies the crux of our discussion.

There are different kinds of offerings in addition to those mandated for Shabbat and the holidays. Until the giving of the Torah, all sacrifices were offerings of gratitude. When Adam sinned, he brought death to the world, and, since the Torah had not yet been given to man, Adam could not bring a sin offering to atone for the sin writes Rabbi Pincus z"l. Rabbi Pincus z"l cites the medrash that tells us Hashem

consulted first with Wisdom and asked what is to be done with one who sins. Wisdom answered that the sinner must suffer the consequences of his sin forever. Hashem then asked Prophecy, and Prophecy answered that the sinner must die. Finally, Hashem consulted the Torah. The Torah answered, “Let the sinner bring an offering and his sin will be forgiven.” Adam, however, had not yet received the Torah and therefore did not have this option.

But bringing the sacrifice is not meant to be an empty ritual. One is meant to envision himself upon the altar, for the animal represents him, and he feel as though he himself is being slaughtered to atone for his sin. That is the context that brings expiation.

Why does Hashem forgive us? The Sam Derech, cites the Yalkut Shimoni in explaining the love Hashem bears for Bnei Yisroel. While we may cite that Hashem regards us as His firstborn or as His special treasure, it is His considering us His dear child Ephraim whom He plays with that predisposes Hashem to forgive us as one would forgive a wayward child. But a child is different from Adam, for a child is growing and developing, thinking of future possibilities, while Adam was fully formed as an adult. We are like that child, searching for ways to grow closer to Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Because we are always changing, we are also compared to the moon which is in a constant state of renewal. But, although the moon is constantly changing, it carries its past with it into the present and into the future. So too do we,

Bnei Yisroel carry our past with us not just as history to be studied, but as part of our present-day identity: We are to see ourselves as personally being redeemed from Egyptian slavery; we are to perceive ourselves at Mount Sinai receiving the Torah. We take the past and give it new vibrancy in the present, something Adam was incapable of doing. The animal we bring as an offering has the ability to refresh us and remind us of our newness.

This is the difference between Yaakov and Esau, even from birth and by their names, writes Rabbi Roberts. Yaakov, the “heel”, always felt lowly and humble, ever striving to reach higher. Esau on the other hand, always considered himself a finished product. His name in Hebrew is connected to finished and done [osuy]. His arrogance birthed an Amalek, an arrogant nation numerically equivalent to ram/lofty/arrogant.

Rabbi Belsky z”l uses our Rashi to take us on a different path that connects Adam to the bearer of the offering. Certainly, when Adam was created, all the world belonged to him. But for most of his life, he shared the world with children and grandchildren. Therefore, the sacrifice the Torah must be alluding to must be Adam’s first sacrifice, the sacrifice of the primordial bull. And, like Adam, we must attempt to serve Hashem with our best and our finest.

What was special about this bull? All subsequent animals were born with their bodies first, and their horns grew later. The primordial bull of creation arose fully formed from the earth, its horns appearing first followed by the rest of its body. When one thinks of a bull, one realizes that every part of the bull is useful to mankind, its skin for leather, its milk, its meat after it is ritually slaughtered. Only its horns serve no human purpose, but serve the bull both as grandeur and defense. When man brings his sacrifice, he must come putting his own ego and pride on the altar, dedicating his desires and grandeur to the service of our Maker. Sharing everything we have, not just our material wealth, with others and in Hashem’s service.

Getting back to Rashi’s comment, if we use our gifts purely for selfish purposes, we are stealing from Hashem Who has given us these gifts for the performance of mitzvot, whether “religious” obligations or “social” mitzvot.

We must always behave honestly in all our dealings, for Hashem accepts the prayers only from those who come to Him in truth. Dishonesty brings destruction. Rain is withheld because of dishonesty.

But theft is not limited to money. As Rabbi Sheinerman asks in Ohel Moshe, have you ever stolen your boss’ time for personal business while on the job? Or have you used money from questionable business practices to fund your children’s yeshivah tuition? Just as you would undoubtedly never use stolen money to commission a parochet to donate to cover the aron kodesh in your shul, so should you not use dishonest profits for any purpose, certainly not for a holy purpose, adds Rabbi Pincus z”l. Doing so, writes Rabbi Druck, would be like stealing from your neighbor and then displaying it in his face. Since honesty in one’s dealings with one’s fellow man is the mainstay of society, a yeshivah begins the study of Gemmoroh with Eilu Metziot that deals with how to handle objects one finds rather than with Berachot/Blessings. We start by teaching our children the importance of money and of honesty. As Rabbi Mordechai Druck z”l writes, when our souls arrive at the heavenly court, we will not be asked whether we fed our children kosher food, but whether we educated them about kosher money.

Rabbi Mordechai Ezrachi brings an additional nuance to our allusion to Adam. It was not just that Adam did not bring a stolen animal as an offering to Hashem, but his offering raised no feelings of jealousy in other human beings. Similarly, we pray that we neither envy others nor raise envy in others through our actions or our possessions. Before you can bring a korban, writes Rabbi Moshe Goldstein in Shaarei Chaim, be a man of integrity like Adam.

The Ohr Doniel quoting the Ketav Sofer introduces a profound idea into our discussion. He posits that we are not talking about using animals or merchandise stolen from others for our sacrifice; a person would not be so brazen. But if someone offers an animal as his sacrifice without his having the proper intention, he is stealing from the animal; he is stealing the animal’s opportunity for elevation. After all, everything in creation, animal, vegetable or mineral can become spiritually elevated when it is used with proper intent for a spiritual purpose. [Think sheimos – it’s generally just paper, or, on the other extreme, the human body which housed the spiritual soul. CKS] Without the proper intent it is not proper teshuvah and does not change the dynamic of the sin. Rabbi Zvi Meir Silberberg notes that when a priest suspected that a sinner bringing the sacrifice did not have the proper mindset, he would call over the Levites to sing and arouse the emotions of the sinner to inspire him to do proper teshuvah. On this note [!], the Modzitzer Rebbe feels that the gate of song and the gate of teshuvah are in fact

one and the same gate that awakens us to come closer to Hashem's heavenly palace.

There is yet another overwhelming reason that Adam is alluded to in bringing these sacrifices, writes Rabbi Kofman z"l in Mishchat Shemen. After all, Adam, as the progenitor of all mankind, carried within his own soul the souls of all future mankind. Therefore, we all have to act in ways that will be praiseworthy to Adam. Each of our souls passes through Meorat Hamachpelah, Adam's final resting place, on our final journey and we each must answer to Adam Harishon how we have helped rectify Adam's sin. Our whole

lives must be dedicated to this rectification, adds Rabbi Dunner z"l.

We do not have a Beit Hamikdosh to bring animal sacrifices to Hashem, but we can still dedicate our lives to being humble, giving of ourselves Hashem and to others, and living a life of honesty and integrity. That is how we today bring our offerings to Hashem, striving for closeness to Him, as did Adam Harishon with his sacrifice.

The 'Sweet Smell' of the Sacrifice

Rabbi Ian Shaffer

A phrase that we are all familiar with, regarding the sacrifices, is the following: אֲשֶׁה רִיחַ-נִיחֻחַ לַיהוָה. meaning 'of a sweet savour unto the Lord'.

What does this actually mean? A beautiful explanation is found in the Ketav Vekabbala (Rabbi Yaakov (of) Mecklenburg :19th century Europe). He quotes from the sefer Ma'aseh Hashem (of R' Eliezer Harofe) who explains that this phrase does not indicate the special quality of the offering in itself. It actually indicates the status of the person who is bringing the sacrifice, and reflects his situation in the act of becoming closer to God.

The Ketav Vekabbala develops this idea in a wider context. It is well known that just by bringing a sacrifice an automatic forgiveness was not immediately achieved. The sacrifice actually becomes a 'sweet smell' of what the person is going to do in the future. The korban must become an intimation of better things to come from the person. The korban is valueless unless the person has a change of heart and improves his ways. The concept of רִיחַ-נִיחֻחַ is the sense that God has an 'inkling' from this man that things will be different in the future after the korban is brought.

Why is the metaphor of a 'sweet smell' used here to describe this future aspiration of the individual? Again Rav Mecklenburg explains that many times one may smell something and know that it is good, even before you actually see it as a physical reality. The aroma coming

forward is the intimation of what is to follow. In a similar way, when a person brings a korban with the correct intentions and sincerity, his service of God also becomes like an aroma, which is suggesting something good to be seen in the future and which can only be sensed now, like a sweet smell from a distance. The korban has to act as a 'mevasser'-a bearer of good tidings of what is yet to come.

If you would ask; where do we find that the word רִיחַ refers to future events? The answer is found in Tenach, in the Book of Job, where it says: 'Mayrachok yariach milchama'-from afar he can sense (lit:smell) war'. The word רִיחַ denotes sensing from afar, as we see it is used in our context of korbanot as well.

The message is clear. When bringing a korban, if it is accompanied with the thoughts of teshuva and personal change, then God will sense this intention in the korban and it will be pleasing to God and good for the person making the offering.

The lesson for us today without sacrifices is still very applicable. Do we expect our acts of avodat Hashem to be pleasing if they reflect an external action but do not have any deeper sense of commitment and change. This is the challenge of living in a society where everything is judged on external appearances. For the Jew, it is the feelings in the heart which should guide the external actions in his/her life and in the relationship to God.