



# The Marcos and Adina Katz YUTORAH IN PRINT

## Vayikra 5781

### Sweet, Sour, Or Salty: A Recipe for Religion

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm z"l (Originally delivered March 25, 1966)

Judaism counsels moderation, and rejects extremism. This teaching of moderation in character is raised by Maimonides to a fundamental of the Halakhah, and is elaborately described by him in the first part of his immortal Code of Jewish Law, the Mishnah Torah.

Furthermore, this “Golden Mean” of abjuring the extremes and choosing the middle of the road in conduct, is identified by Maimonides as nothing less than the דרך ה', “the way of the Lord.” This is what the Torah means, according to Maimonides, when before the destruction of Sodom the Lord says: *כי ידעתיו למען אשר יצוה את בניו* ‘לעשות צדקה ומשפט, ואת ביתו אחריו ושמרו דרך ה’ I shall tell Abraham what I am doing, “for I know him that he will command his children and his household after him that they shall observe the דרך ה', the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice.” While Sodom veered to the extremes, Abraham walked in the “way of the Lord,” doing justice and righteousness, following the Golden Mean. This is what is meant by the “heritage of Abraham,” the priceless possession of our people.

According to this “way of the Lord,” a man should develop the kind of character that is distinguished neither by anger and temperamental tantrums nor apathy and indifference; he should be neither spendthrift who squanders every dollar, nor a miser who cannot bring himself to spend a cent; he must be neither giddy nor gloomy, neither in a state of manic joy nor in a state of somber depression. One must always try to keep his mood and his quality of conduct moderate, stable and thoughtful. Of course, there are exceptions, and Maimonides describes them in detail. But the general principle remains; keep away from all extremes in conduct.

This fundamental of Jewish ethics was discovered by a renowned Rabbi in, of all places, today's Sidra on the laws of the sacrifices. Rabbi Joseph Saul Nathanson, the eminent halakhic

decisor who was Rabbi of Lvov, thus interprets symbolically the commandment concerning the מנחה, the meal-offering on the altar: *כל שאור וכל דבש לא תקטירו ממנו אשה לה*; *you may offer up on the altar, as part of a gift-offering, neither leaven nor honey.* Rabbi Joseph Saul points out that leaven, or sour-sough, and honey represent two extremes of taste: sour and sweet. Neither is permissible on the divine altar. The two extremes of sour and sweet symbolize the extremes of human character, all of which should be rejected. If life is conceived of as מנחה לה', as a gift offered to God; and if life is to be lived as קטרת, as incense, as harmonious and pleasant; then it must be neither שאור nor דבש, neither sour-dough nor sweet honey. The laws of sacrifices thus offer us a symbolic hint of the Golden Mean.

Yet there is a danger that people will overstate the theory of moderation and reduce it to an absurdity. They might conclude that one must always choose the middle of the road. Hence, if you are faced with the extremes of, on the one hand, Kashruth, and, on the other, those who are non-kosher, then one might interpret the Golden Mean to recommend being only half-kosher, or to have a kosher home but to be non-kosher outside the home. One might reduce it to the ridiculous conclusion that if some feast on Yom Kippur and some fast, then one should simply eat lightly or just skip breakfast, in an effort to be moderate. It might mean that if some are Orthodox and some are Reform, then the teaching of moderation urges that everyone be Conservative; or that between the extremes of truth and falsehood, one should always tell a half-truth!

In this, indeed, the דרך ה', “the way of the Lord?” Obviously not! In fact, it is Maimonides who, in the introduction to his Guide for the Perplexed, tells us that if he has a very difficult passage to teach, and he can teach it to one wise man only at the risk of displeasing ten thousand fools, then he prefers to address his remarks

to the one wise man and take no note whatever of the multitude of fools. Surely this is not the seeking of a mathematical average as an application of the principle of moderation!

What then does it mean to be moderate, and what are its limits? I believe the answer is this: in matters of character and personality, in developing the traits wherewith one reacts to the world, in teaching oneself personal habits, there must be only the Golden Mean and one must keep a healthy distance away from extremes. But when it comes to principle, to ideals and philosophy and commitments, to a code rather than a mode of conduct--then only the vision of truth may guide us. And truth is radical; sometimes it will lead us to a middle position, more often to one extreme or the other. Let us remember that, as one Rabbi pointed out, the Hebrew word for "truth" is אמת, and the first of these three letters is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet; the second letter of אמת is the middle letter of the alphabet; and the last of the three letters is the last of the Hebrew alphabet. In other words, truth may be found at either extreme or right in the middle--there is no predicting in advance where it will lead us. In his expression of these principles, however, he ought to be moderate. But the principles themselves are beyond any rule of moderation. Whosoever tries to live his life and work out his destiny merely by finding the middle point equidistant from the extremes, and squatting there--surrenders his critical judgment and yields to a disgraceful, dull, deadly, depressing conformism, which can only kill one's character. Here, only truth must be our guide. To travel automatically in the middle of the road is to exercise neither intelligence nor humanity. The renowned Kotzker Rebbe, reflecting the traffic condition of his society, said that only behemos, animals, walk in the middle of the road--not human beings. We, reflecting the traffic conditions of our own society, might say that the middle of the road is the most dangerous place of all; one can be hit from both sides.

Certainly, if you find yourself in a society of extremes, where some are promiscuous and some highly moral, some honest and some deceitful, some believe in God and some are virulent atheists--Judaism's teaching of the Golden Mean does not mean to say to you: be half moral, tell half a truth, believe in half a God. You must, of course, be utterly moral, totally truthful, completely devout--even if that condemns you as an extremist and marks you as off-beat. Therefore, in question of Halakhah, a decision may sometimes be extreme; that does not matter, for our only

guide is: אמת, truth.

Does this mean, however, that in dealing with principles, such as Halakhah, that since I may go to an extreme, therefore my expression of it may be uncivil and even reckless? Certainly not! Here is where character is required. For even people with extreme views must express them moderately. In articulating the truth, in living by it, I must always consider others: their conditions and their sensitivities. My opinion may be unpopular, but my presentation of it ought to be non-repulsive.

Perhaps this is the essence of what was meant by the great prophet Malachi, who, in describing the ideal man, the perfect Kohen, uttered the immortal phrases תורת אמת היתה בפיהו ועולה לא נמצא בשפתיו. "The law of truth was in his mouth, and no unrighteousness was found on his lips." What the prophet meant to say about the ideal priest was that in his mouth, internally, in his own vision of his ultimate commitments, there was only the "Torah of truth"--no other consideration may be entertained. But when it came to expressing this truth to his fellow man, to bringing forth his vision from his mouth, within, to the words that appeared on his lips, without, then while he never changed this vision, he did not allow it to be expressed with unrighteousness, with ugliness, with contempt for others. The greatness of the Kohen described by the prophet is that his ideals are uncompromising, and yet the character of his expression is so very attractive.

Perhaps this is what the Torah meant, when, in prohibition שאור and דבש, sour-dough and honey, symbols of the extremes in conduct, it added affirmatively: על כל קרבן תקריב מלח, that to every sacrifice that is offered up on the altar, we must add a pinch of salt. What does this mean? In character there must be no extremes, neither sweet nor sour. Ideals must always follow the vision of אמת, of truth. But even then, even when we follow truth without compromise, we must keep it flavored, we must season it with a bit of salt. We must see to it that the truth we serve up is neither bland nor harsh. Salt, unlike sweet or sour additives, is not essentially a flavor added from without; rather, it enhances the flavor inherent in the food itself, it brings out the best within it. So the salt of the sacrifice, symbol of the attitude we must bring to Torah: it reveals the inner beauty of Torah itself.

Permit me to give you some examples. The Halakhah, as the Torah of truth, may sometimes decide "forbidden," and sometimes "permitted." This is the אמת, the truth,

and should be acknowledged as such. Nevertheless, the decision of Halakhah must always be applied with a pinch of salt. For instance, even when the Torah says “forbidden,” and we are required to communicate this prohibition to our fellow Jews--*הוכח תוכיח את עמיתך*, we must rebuke our friend who does wrong--nevertheless, there remain limiting principles, such as *מוטב שיהיו שוגגים ואל יהיו מזידיים*, that where we know that our rebuke will not be accepted, it is better not to offer it in the first place, so that the fellow Jew who violates the commandments will do so unwittingly and out of ignorance, rather than out of spite and willfulness. Similarly, the Halakhah may sometimes say: yes, such and such is permitted; nevertheless, do not put this permission into practice! Often the Halakhah will urge a man to refrain from a technical permission on the grounds that *קדש את עצמך במותר לך*, one ought to sanctify himself by accepting self-restraint even where the Halakhah is essentially permissive.

At other times we are told not to practice what is permissible in front of others who are *בו איסור*, who do not regard this particular act as being permissible. Such conduct is dictated by the “salt” in our religious diet. The correct recipe for religion, therefore, is: “neither sweet nor sour, but salty.”

These thoughts are of utmost significance especially this Sabbath when, from the pulpit of this synagogue, as well

## Salt of the Earth

*Rabbi Joshua (The Hoffer) Hoffman z”l*

There is a general requirement, in regard to *korbonos* - sacrifices brought in the *mishkan* and *mikdash* - to apply salt to them. This requirement is spelled out in a verse in this week’s parsha: “... on all your offerings you shall offer salt” (*Vayikra* 2:14). Interestingly, although this requirement applies to all *korbonos*, whether animal or meal, it is mentioned in the midst of the Torah’s discussion of voluntary sacrifices, and specifically in regard to the *korbon mincha*, the meal offering. Although one could say that the Torah waited to mention this requirement until after it described both types of sacrifices, I would like to demonstrate that this requirement has special relevance in regard to the *korbon mincha*.

In describing the process of bringing the *korbon mincha*, the Torah says, “When a soul (*nefesh*) will bring a meal offering to God, his offering shall be of flour...” (*Vayikra*

as several neighboring synagogues, we shall read to you a special announcement concerning the construction of an Eruv in Manhattan. This Eruv permits carrying in the Island of Manhattan under certain conditions and with certain restrictions. Within those limits, it is an unqualified halakhic decision, very long in the making. Without question, one may henceforth carry in Manhattan with the exception, as noted, of such times as are considered *Muktzah*.

Nevertheless, in actual practice, we urgently recommend “salt.” Although the *אמת*, the truth is that carrying is permitted, yet *על כל קרבן תקריב מלח*, we ought to add some sacrificial salt by practicing some self-sacrifice in exercising common sense, discretion, and good taste. Do not overuse the Eruv. Make only minimum use of it. Do not exploit it. Please refrain from all obvious and open violations of what others may, in good conscience, still regard as wrong.

The recipe for religion requires, in this case, as in every other case, that tasteful discretion and proper understanding that will contribute both to the holiness of the Sabbath and the enjoyment of the Sabbath.

May God grant that our actions be acceptable before Almighty God as both *מנחה* and *קטרת*, as a gift of our spiritual endeavors, and, as a pleasant and harmonious contribution to the welfare of all Israel.

*Read more at [www.yu.edu/about/lamm-heritage](http://www.yu.edu/about/lamm-heritage).*

2:1). Rashi notes the use of the word *nefesh*, rather than the usual word ‘*ish*’ - man - in describing the one who brings the offering. He comments that *nefesh* was not used in reference to any of the other voluntary offerings, rather just for the *mincha*, because it is usually a poor man who brings a meal offering rather than an animal one. Therefore, God says, ‘I consider it on his behalf as if he had offered his soul.’ The simple meaning of Rashi’s words is that even the offering of some flour as a sacrifice to God is a monetary strain on the poor person, and it is therefore considered as giving one’s soul. Rabbi Eliyohu Meir Bloch, in his *Peninei Da’as*, notes that there is a deeper insight in Rashi’s words. A rich man, says Rabbi Bloch, will likely have a feeling of satisfaction when he brings his animal sacrifice, while a poor person will not have such a feeling, being aware of the relative modest cost of what he has brought. As a result, the

poor person is more likely to have the proper attitude in bringing the offering, and is thus more likely to be actually offering his soul to God.

In the beginning of our parsha, the Torah says, “when a person from among you will bring an offering to God (Vayikra 1:2). The Sefas Emes writes that the word for ‘from among you’ - ‘mikem’ - also means ‘from within you’ - implying that when a person brings an offering to God, he must actually bring something of himself, of his inner essence, along with the physical offering. According to Rabbi Bloch, a poor person is more likely to have this attitude when he brings his offering, and therefore the Torah describes his bringing it as a process of bringing his soul. Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, in the recently published work, *BeShem Omram* (p. 96), discusses the function of the mitzvah of semicha, of leaning one’s hands on an animal korbán before it is slaughtered in the mishkan. He notes that semicha must be done with both hands and with all of one’s strength. The idea being conveyed here is that when the rich man, who can afford an animal korbán, offers his sacrifice, he must keep in mind that the strength he has and the wealth he has acquired are due to God’s help, and not his own efforts. By performing semicha on his korbán, he indicates that he recognizes his dependence on God, and dedicates himself to His service. The performance of semicha, of course, does not apply to the korbán mincha. Although, on a simple level, this is because semicha cannot be realized on a meal offering, following Rabbi Bloch’s expansion of Rashi’s comments, we can understand that there is no need for this practice when one brings such an offering.

There is, however, a different pitfall that confronts the poor person when he brings a korbán mincha. He may consider himself unworthy of bringing an offering, since what he is able to bring is of such a modest quality. This attitude may actually reflect an inner attitude of low self-esteem due to his low economic status. Rabbi Yosef Bechor Shor, in his commentary to parshas Vayikra, says that the korbán mincha is always *kodshei kodoshim* - holy of holies - unlike animal sacrifices, which are sometimes *kodoshim kalim* - a lower level of sanctity - because God wants to demonstrate His love for the poor person by show him the importance of his offering. Perhaps this can be seen as a means of assuring him of his self-worth. Interestingly, whereas in the animal versions of the voluntary olah sacrifice, the entire korbán is burned on the altar, in the case of the korbán mincha, a small portion - the *kometz*,

or fistful - is removed and given to the kohanim to eat. The Baal HaTurim explains that this is a command to the kohein not to view the poor person in a contemptuous way. By eating part of his sacrifice, he is showing that it has great significance. Perhaps there is also an added reason for this feature of the korbán mincha, namely, to raise the spirit of the poor person and reassure him of his self-worth.

In light of the emphasis on the inner nature of the korbán mincha, we can better understand why the Torah, in discussing that korbán, forbids adding honey or any manner of leaven to a korbán mincha (Vayikra 2:11). Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim of Lunshitz, in his commentary *Keli Yakar*, writes that honey is symbolic of the sweet, pleasant things in life, and leaven is a symbol of haughtiness. The prohibition of placing these elements in one’s korbán, then, carries the message that a person who wishes to serve God properly should not over-indulge in luxuries, and must approach Him with humility. Perhaps we can understand this prohibition in the context of the poor person’s korbán as being a warning to him not to overcompensate for his possible feelings of inadequacy by becoming addicted to those pleasures that he can afford, or by becoming arrogant. Rabbi Mordechai Gifter, in his *Pirkei Torah*, explains the prohibition differently. He says that honey is an additive, a sweetener unrelated to the food it is added to, while leaven transforms the food it is added to. In both cases, the food being treated is changed through the addition of an outside factor. Our service of God, however, must be genuine, not artificial. In light of this, he continues, we can understand the symbolism behind placing salt on all sacrifices. Salt, explains Rabbi Gifter, brings out the natural flavor of a substance. So, too, in bringing a korbán, one must bring out his true inner essence, and dedicate it to the service of God. Following this explanation, we can understand why it is specifically in connection with the korbán mincha, usually brought by a poor person, that the requirement of placing salt on all sacrifices is mentioned (see *Netivot to parshas Vayikra, 5759*, available at [Torahheights.com](http://Torahheights.com), for a different development of Rabbi Gifter’s explanation). Salting the korbán represents bringing out one’s inner self when bringing the offering. The poor person, on the one hand, is more likely to have this orientation in bringing his korbán, but, on the other hand, is prone to various pitfalls that may lead him to distort his self-image. Therefore, it is specifically in regard to his korbán that we are reminded, symbolically, of what the true purpose of the korbán is.

## True Sacrifice

Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh (Transcribed and adapted by a talmid from a shiur given in the Gruss Kollel on March 30, 2017)

In the beginning of this week's Parsha Hashem commands Bnei Yisroel to bring korbanos: "*Adam ki yakriv mikem korban la-Hashem*" (Vayikra 1:2). Rashi points out that this is not the usual way that the Torah formulates its mitzvos. He explains: Just like Adam ha-Rishon did not bring any korbanos from gezeila because there was no one from whom to steal, so too, we should be careful to avoid *mitzva-habo-ba-aveira* because it says, "*soneh gezel ba-olah*." We need to bring all korbanos from the money we honestly earned and not from gezel.

The Kli Yakar quotes an additional pshat. He likes this idea of learning from Adam ha-Rishon and explains that we can gain another insight here. The pasuk says, "*ki yakriv mikem korban la-Hashem*"—when he brings "from you." Why does it need to say, "from you?" Obviously, it could have just said "*ki yakriv korban la-Hashem*"—when he brings korban to Hashem. There are a plethora of different explanations for this. The Klei Yakar suggests a pshat in addition to those offered by the earlier meforshim. "*Adam ki yakriv mikem*," he proposes, means to bring it from your self—from how you feel on the inside. He says that people often act because of peer pressure or because they want to impress others—caring only about what people think. He says that it is better to do the right thing because of peer pressure than to do the wrong thing. However, the ultimate purpose of the korban is not because Hashem needs your animal. Hashem owns the whole world—He already has everything. The point of the korban is for you to feel inside that you are dedicating yourself to Hashem. Ramban discusses how, when you see your korban die after you do an aveira, you will feel the chumra of the chet.

## A Reason to Gloat

Rabbi Ari Zucker

We praise matzah because as "humble" bread—in stark contrast to its chametz counterpart—matzah doesn't rise. Rather, it embodies the aphorism, "What you see is what you get." But a look at a profile of Moshe Rabbeinu illustrates an added element of Matzah's greatness.

The Gemara (Nedarim 38b) lists four traits necessary

You will identify with this korban dying, being cut up, and burnt for your chet. And when you see how serious it is, it will help your teshuva process. And Rav Hirsch explains how the Olah, burned for Hashem in its entirety, is there to help you feel how you would want to give yourself entirely to Hashem and how you would sacrifice everything you have—including yourself—to Hashem. The whole point of korbanos is for you to feel closer to Hashem inside yourself, unlike other mitzvos that accomplish something in the world around you. And therefore, he says that if you are just bringing korbanos to impress other people, that's not a real avodah. The real avodah is done "*mikem*"—from inside of yourself. He makes a clever diyuk—That's why the pasuk mentions Adam ha-Rishon. When Adam ha-Rishon brought a korban, he didn't do it to impress anyone else. He didn't do it because anyone else told him to. He was the only person around. He did it because he felt that it's something that he wanted to do. He wanted to give to Hashem. He yearned to come closer to Hashem. He desired this experience of *ruchnius*. Therefore, the pasuk says "Adam" to teach you to be more like Adam ha-Rishon, and "*yakriv mikem*" to exhort you to do your avodah from the inside.

Often, we are used to doing things just because that's what's done or because that's how we were brought up or because that's what everyone does. And we have to remember that "*Rachmana liba bo'i*" and that we bring the real korbanos in the Mishkan of our heart—"*be-levavi Mishkan evneh*." And that we have to internalize Torah and Mitzvos and do them because we feel them deep in our hearts.

for Hashem to rest His Presence on someone (i.e. give prophecy): gibor (strong), chacham (wise), ashir (wealthy) and anav (humble), and the Gemara adds that all of these apply to Moshe Rabbeinu. It doesn't take a scholar to see the problem. Why does Hashem care if someone is rich! Does Hashem (G-d forbid) only like big donors?!

Rav Baruch Simon cites the Ktav Sofer in the beginning

of our parsha who sharpens the problem. Hashem doesn't care for wealth, nor does He care for strength or wisdom! The essential prerequisite to prophecy is only humility. And he proves it from Sanhedrin 43b: "Greater is a lowly spirit in Hashem's eyes than all the offerings." If that is the case, then why does the Gemara in Nedarim outline three traits that aren't actually on Hashem's "list"?

The Ktav Sofer explains that humility in someone without cause for ego doesn't mean much. If someone is not wise, not strong, or not wealthy, then their lowly affect isn't caused by genuine humility but a debilitating life circumstance! On the other hand, those who have everything going for them and still humble themselves

around others—their humility is complete and Hashem gives them prophecy.

So great was Moshe Rabbeinu, and so great is the Matzah we'll consume in just over a week. Matzah's greatness doesn't lie in its cracker-like form, but in the potential of the dough and water to be so much more. If allowed to rise, the very same dough could inflate with hot air and embody the ego that we associate with chametz. And yet, the Matzah elects to jump in the oven immediately with no time to rise. The "choice" of the Matzah to be flat and unimpressive is laudable precisely because of its potential to be "haughty".

## Korbanos and Our Personal Avodas Hashem

Mrs. Michal Horowitz

**W**ith the completion of the Mishkan at the end of Sefer Shemos, where G-d's Presence rested, symbolized by a Cloud by day and Fire by night (Shemos 40:38), in this week's parsha, Parshas Vayikra, we move into the mitzvos regarding korbanos with full force.

Now almost two thousand years removed from the Beis Ha'Mikdash, and exiled from our Land, the ritual of korbanos may be difficult for us to relate to. And yet, they were a most integral part of our avodas Hashem in Temple Times (think Korban Pesach!), and a way of coming closer (קרבו, קרבו) to Hashem. Though we no longer offer korbanos today - and we daven that one day soon the Beis Ha'Mikdash will be rebuilt where once again the Kohanim and Leviim will officiate - there are still many relevant lessons to be learned from this topic, as obscure as it may seem. As the Torah is Toras chaim - a living Torah - and its eternal truths contain lessons and messages for every Jew in every generation, it behooves us to explore and examine what we can learn from Korbanos as they relate to our lives.

The beginning pasukim of Sefer Vayikra tell us: וַיִּקְרָא אֵל וַיִּקְרָא אֵל - *And He (G-d) called to Moses, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying:* דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אָדָם כִּי יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם קֶרֶבָן: - *Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: When a man from [among] you brings a sacrifice to Hashem; from animals, from cattle or from the flock you shall bring your sacrifice ... יִקְרִיב יִקְרִיב - he shall offer it of his own will (Vayikra 1:1-3).*

Rashi teaches: אָדָם. לָמָּה נֶאֱמַר? מָה אָדָם הָרְאוּשׁוֹן לֹא הִקְרִיב - *Why does the Torah use the word "adam", as opposed to the more common "ish", when describing one who offers a korban? Just as Adam ha'Rishon (the first man) did not offer anything to G-d from that which was stolen, for all belonged to him, so too, you, do not bring an offering from anything that has been stolen.*

What lesson can we learn from this teaching, in our day and age; what relevance does 'when a man from (among) you brings an offering to Hashem' hold for us?

Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski zt'l derives foundational elements for our own Avodas Hashem (Divine service) from this passage. "Korban, drawing closer to G-d, requires sincerity and a surrender to G-d of one's will. Rashi says that the Torah uses the word 'adam' for person rather than the more frequently used word 'ish', and explains its use as meaning that just as Adam didn't serve G-d with anything acquired dishonestly, because everything in the world belonged to him, so must a person who brings an offering make certain that the offering was acquired honestly.

"There is also another similarity to Adam which is essential for a korban, and that is that one must be sincere in one's service of G-d and not try to impress others with his piety. The Talmud uses the expression genevas da'as, which is essentially 'stealing' another person's judgement. Deceiving others in any way is depriving them of an accurate judgement of reality and is seen as a form of theft.

Adam did not try to impress anyone with his piety. There was no one to impress! This quality of sincerity must accompany a korban, because otherwise it is brought and offered through dishonesty.

“The Torah further specifies that bringing an offering should not be a mere ritual. Rather, יִקְרִיב אֹתוֹ לְרִצּוֹנוֹ - he shall offer it of his own will. It is not the animal that one must sacrifice, but rather one’s own animal nature. There is that part of us that craves gratification of our animalistic desires. That is the will of the body rather than that of the neshama (soul). The Sages say, ‘Make His will your will’ and ‘Set aside your will before His’ (Ethics of the Fathers 2:4). Man’s animalistic drives stand as a barrier between man and G-d, and it is subjugating these drives that one allows for the supremacy of the neshama. Therefore, the essence of the korban is the ‘offering of his will’ to G-d.

“Thus from the opening verses and teachings of Vayikra, we have all the elements necessary for a relationship with G-d: humility, an awareness of one’s Divine neshama, sincerity, and a subjugation of one’s personal drives before the will of G-d” (Twerski on Chumash, p.194-195).

While the Beis Ha’Mikdash stands no longer, and today the practice and concept of animal sacrifices is far removed from our way of life, we learn from Korbanos how we too must serve Hashem. The necessary ingredients for coming close (קרבו, קרב) to G-d are: humility and piety in how we live our lives, an appreciation of the pure Divine soul that lies within each and every one of us, and bowing our

will before G-d’s will. When we strive for, and embrace, these traits and way of life, we will (metaphysically) offer our very selves to G-d, as we come closer to Him, and His children, our fellow Jews.

About his grandfather, the Gaon Rav Chaim Brisker zt”l, Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik zt”l relates, “Gedolei Yisroel (the leaders of Israel) represented spirituality, refinement in conduct, sensitivity, sympathy, compassion. As far as chessed is concerned, there was no greater ba’al chesed than Rav Chaim Brisker. As a matter of fact, on R’ Chaim’s tombstone, in accordance with his tzava’ah, his testament, (he) said that no attributes and no to’arim should be engraved. But my father (Rav Moshe) and my uncle (the Griz), zichronam li’vracha, insisted that one to’ar, one attributed be mentioned, not ga’on or Rash Ke’bahag (rosh kol b’nei ha’gola - the leader of the exiled), no, only ‘Rav Chessed.’ R’ Chaim ben R’ Yosef Dov Ha’Levi, Rav Chessed. In my opinion, in his chesed personality, he towered above his intellectual personality, no matter how great he was intellectually” (The Rav Thinking Aloud on the Parsha, Shemos, p.173-174).

As we begin our journey through the book of Vayikra and we learn of rituals and services that seem so far removed from our lives, let us remember that every letter, word and topic in Torah is of eternal relevance. For even in our day and time, korbanos teach us the secrets of coming close to G-d, so that we may live a meaningful, connected and fulfilling life as ovdei Hashem.

## Attaining the Fullness of Torah Learning by Learning with Children

*Rabbi Dr. David Shabtai*

In a somewhat forgotten yet prevalent piece of educational guidance, the Midrash Tanchuma exhorts parents and teachers that a child’s Torah education should begin with Sefer Va-Yikra. Even while it deals with the somewhat esoteric concepts of korbanot and rules of tum’ah and taharah, it’s precisely for those reasons that they are appropriate for children’s study. “Let the pure ones [children, who are still free from sin] delve into topics of purity and sacrifices.” Indeed, there is a strong focus in Hazal on the purity of the Torah learned by children, taking it so far as arguing that it’s the sole reason for the continued existence of the world.

The connection between children and Torah learning, particularly as it relates to Sefer Va-Yikra runs deeper. The

running theme of Sefer Va-Yikra—including the elements of korbanot, the rules of Kohanim, and details of tum’ah and taharah—is ideas and elements that revolve around the Mishkan. The central focus of the Mishkan, that which everything is built around and dependent on, is the Aron that housed the luhot and the Torah. And it’s specifically the Aron to which children are specifically connected.

In describing the structure of the Aron, the Torah describes that there were two golden keruvim to be fashioned atop its cover. While the Torah describes them as having wings that were spread upward, it doesn’t really give much other detail about how they looked. Rashi, based on the Gemara, explains that the two keruvim had faces of children and they faced each other.

The symbolism couldn't be stronger. The very symbol of Hashem's Torah in this world, the Aron, was to have the image of two children permanently affixed to it. Hashem is trying to teach us that the essence of Torah is children's learning. In fact, the Torah itself describes that when Hashem called to Moshe to teach him Torah (at the very opening of Sefer Va-Yikra), His voice resonated specifically from between these two keruvim. For the Torah to even exist in this world, it's only complete when children are dedicated to its study. This explains the tremendously significant emphasis that Jewish law and Jewish history have always placed on Jewish education.

The symbolism runs even a little deeper. The keruvim's wings were to ascend upward, perhaps symbolically representative of the Zohar's description of true Torah learning as capable of ascending Heavenward. Torah learning isn't just something that people do, but creates a spiritual energy that transcends this world and rises to Hashem's throne of glory. But this can only happen when it's performed in its ideal and most pristine form.

In codifying the mitzvah of Talmud Torah, Rambam includes two different aspects: learning Torah and teaching one's children Torah. In fact, the individual mitzvah of

learning Torah is derived from the mitzvah to teach our children — ושננתם לבניך. Meaning, that the ideal and most pristine form of Torah learning is when we learn together with our children. In doing so, we most accurately reflect what the keruvim intend to teach us—not only the strong connection between children and Torah learning, but the means through which it can ascend on most high.

Perhaps this is also the reason that each morning, in the course of birkot ha-Torah (the blessings on the Torah), we include a prayer on behalf of our children's learning. These berakhot are simply intended to function as an introduction to the mitzvah, much like we recite berakhot before performing most other mitzvot. And strangely, these include a prayerful request that our children merit being able to learn Torah. But once we recognize that the ultimate form of Torah learning is guaranteeing the Torah learning of our children, it makes a lot more sense.

Pesach and particularly Seder Night is a time where we focus on transmitting our glorious Tradition to the next generation. Whether we are able to spend that time with our families this year, it's a time to reflect on what we can do to ensure the continuation of our Torah and our mesorah.

## The Lesson of the Mincha Offering: Giving with a Full Heart

Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

**T**his Shabbat, we begin to read the book of Leviticus, Vayikra, the third book of the Torah. The first parasha of Leviticus, parashat Vayikra, deals with the various offerings that were brought in ancient times in the Temple.

In Leviticus 2:1 we read a series of verses concerning the bringing of the מִנְחָה—*Mincha*, the meal offering. This offering was generally brought of fine white flour, mixed with oil and wine, and topped off with incense. The parasha tells us that there were actually five different types of Minachot. The first is composed of simply the uncooked ingredients. The four other Minachot may be prepared in an oven, a griddle, a pan or a deep pan, depending upon what the donor chooses to bring. Incense was placed on top of the offering just before it was brought to the altar.

Whenever a burnt offering (עֹלָה—*oh'lah*) or peace offering (שְׁלָמִים—*sh'lamim*) was brought, it was accompanied by the Mincha, a meal offering. However, the Mincha offering may also be brought as a separate offering.

This happened when a person wished to bring a tribute to G-d, but could not afford to bring an expensive animal sacrifice. The Torah therefore allows an alternative to be brought, in the form of a less-costly meal offering.

The Mincha is unique, as the only offering concerning which the Torah uses the term נֶפֶשׁ—*nefesh*, soul, to describe the donor. Leviticus 2:1 reads: וְנִפְּשׁוֹ, כִּי תִקְרִיב קֶרֶבֶן, מִנְחָה לַיהוָה, *When a person (literally "soul") presents a meal offering to the L-rd, his offering shall be of choice flour.* He shall pour oil on it and lay frankincense thereon. From here, we learn that a voluntary Mincha, meal offering, was most likely to be the gift of a poor person who could not afford anything else. From the use of the term *nefesh*, soul, the Torah teaches us that we must place all the more value on the poor person's gift since the poor person is offering it up with his entire soul. The Midrash Rabbah, Leviticus 3:5, records that a priest once expressed disdain for the small quantity of flour that a woman brought to the Temple. G-d rebuked the priest in a dream saying: "She offered her very

soul!”

The Mincha offering teaches us many profound lessons. It declares that Judaism is not the religion of the wealthy. In fact, Judaism provides venues of expression and worship for all the people of Israel, rich and poor alike, young and old, male and female. The Mincha specifically teaches that we must give from the heart. As the Talmudic dictum proclaims (Berachot 5b), אָחַד הַמְרִבָּה וְאָחַד הַמִּמְעִיט, וּבְלֵבָד , whether one gives more or gives less, what is essential is that one give with a full heart. It is intention, kavanah, that makes a difference to G-d, the awareness that one has at the time that the offering is made. So it was when Cain brought an offering “of the fruit of the land” (Genesis 4:3), yet G-d did not heed his offering. But, when Abel brought “of the firstlings of the flocks and of their fat,” Abel indicated that he was giving with a full heart. G-d says to Cain, (Genesis 4:6-7), “Why are you upset [that your offering has not been accepted]? You can repent. All you need to do is to offer it with a full heart.” That is what Cain was lacking.

The Al-mighty does not judge people by their good looks. Nor does He value them for their educational degrees or financial success. G-d does not assess us by how articulate we are. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 106b) states definitively: רַחֲמֵנָא לְבָא בְּעֵי , *G-d wants our hearts*—and when we give with a full heart, the Al-mighty responds in kind.

May our offerings be bounteous, and may the Heavenly response to our offerings be full and complete.