

Reflections of Redemption

Essays on the Weekly Torah Reading and Moshiach,
Based on the talks of the
Lubavitcher Rebbe,
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Parshat Vayikra, 5782
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IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** עי"ה
ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
Shagalov

Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** עי"ה
Ekman

Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765

Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** עי"ה
Marenburg

Passed away on the second day
of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766

Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** עי"ה

Ekman (Santiago, Chile)

Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769

ת. נ. צ. ג. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF

Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתחי'
Shagalov

DEDICATED BY

Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y.** and **Gittel Rochel** שיחי
Shagalov

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by
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

Vayikra

WHAT WILL WE SACRIFICE?

There is an essential difference between mitzvos in general and the sacrifices: mitzvos emphasize the person fulfilling G-d's command; sacrifices emphasize the object through which G-d's Will is fulfilled. A mitzvah should be performed with hidur mitzvah, in the most beautiful manner possible. Even so, this cannot achieve atonement or a reconciliation after a transgression. Sacrifice and teshuvah, tzedekah and Redemption, go hand-in-hand.

The Book of *Leviticus* begins by defining what types of sacrifices should be brought and how they are to be offered. Since Moshiach will rebuild the Temple and restore the sacrificial service, obviously any discussion about the Temple or sacrifices deepens our understanding of what will be required of us and what life will be like in the era of Redemption. Such a discussion also helps us prepare for the coming of Moshiach. Needless to say, the sacrifices must be seen as having more than just historical or theoretical interest. Rather, the restoration of the Temple service is an imminent reality.

Still, it may be difficult to see the current relevance. Simply understanding the details and technical aspects of the sacrificial service is not sufficient. In order to recognize that, in a spiritual sense, the Temple exists even now, that we can bring actual sacrifices today, we must internalize the meaning, the inner truth of the sacrifices. This inner realization inevitably manifests itself externally: we must first see the Temple and sacrifices as real, albeit not yet revealed. In this way we work towards the full revelation, the materialization, of the Third *Beis HaMikdash*, the Third Temple.

That said, we can look at the significance of the fundamental difference between sacrifices and mitzvos. True, the various sacrifices are counted among the six hundred thirteen mitzvos. Nevertheless, the essential nature of sacrifice differs from the essential nature of mitzvos.

The difference lies in which each emphasizes. A mitzvah emphasizes the action of a person. The **person** fulfills G-d's command. The object with which the mitzvah is performed is only a tool, of no inherent interest or value. True, the thing itself may become invested with some holiness, but that is a byproduct. The person has only one intention – do what G-d asks. The “drawback” of a mitzvah, if we can speak this way, is that there is a **someone** who does the mitzvah. Although a mitzvah is an act of compliance with G-d's Will, there is still an individual, an ego performing the act.

On the other hand, by definition a sacrifice sanctifies the **object**. The sacrifice becomes holy by being offered on the altar. Sacrifices emphasize the status of the object, the material being sacrificed. Whether the sacrifice comes to fulfill a vow or some obligation, it is made holy by being given away, sacrificed to G-d. The human element is only a preparation and precondition. While the person's intention is important, a sacrifice has significance only when it is offered on the altar.

We can look at it this way: every other mitzvah, and all the accessories with which it is performed, remain the property of the person performing the mitzvah. The only mitzvah which involves something being “given away” to G-d is a sacrifice. So, in general *the focus of mitzvos is on the person, while the focus of sacrifice is on the thing itself.*

This difference in emphasis also explains an important distinction in halachah: Jewish law distinguishes between *hidur*

mitzvah and bringing a sacrifice from the best of one's possessions. The concept of *hidur mitzvah* – of beautifying the mitzvah, doing it in the most magnificent and impressive manner possible – applies to the person. By making a beautiful sukkah, for example, the person adorns himself before G-d. When the Jew presents himself before the Almighty, he appears decorated with a resplendent mitzvah. That is the concept of *hidur mitzvah*.

Naturally, this is a way of honoring G-d. Just as one appears before a human dignitary dressed in the finest, most fashionable clothes, so one should appear before G-d dressed in the finest, most dignified mitzvos. After all, mitzvos are called the 'garments of the soul.'

However, a mitzvah, even a *hidur mitzvah*, cannot bring about a reconciliation or atonement. After a transgression, a mitzvah by itself cannot appease or conciliate. For that we need a sacrifice. The precursor to Redemption is *teshuvah*. And sacrifice is the essence of *teshuvah*.

A sacrifice by definition belongs to G-d. True, the person sanctifies it, but to be a sacrifice, the object must be offered on the altar. A person may declare that such and such will be sacrificed, dedicating it for that purpose. But the object does not become a sacrifice to G-d until actually brought on the altar.

This explains why a sacrifice must be from the best of one's possessions. The most complete and perfect way to give something to G-d is to give the finest of what we own. In simpler terms, the sacrifice must not only be fit for the altar, it must be **worthy** of the altar. It must reflect an ultimate and absolute commitment to G-d, a willingness to devote ourselves – who we are and what we own – first and foremost to G-d.

Similarly, everything that can be compared to the altar must reflect the same resolve and realization. For example, when

building a synagogue, it should be nicer than one's own home. The poor should be fed with the sweetest and tastiest food from one's table. The best, the "fattest," should be sanctified and dedicated.

Specifically, matters of *tzedekah*, such as providing food and clothing for the poor, affects atonement. Sacrifice and *teshuvah*, *tzedekah* and Redemption, go hand-in-hand. The proof of our repentance is a willingness, even a desire, to sacrifice the choicest products of our fields, the first fruits of our labor. We must give away our selves, our very essence, to G-d.

By subduing our desires, our material appetites, by being generous with what we sacrifice, we make ourselves pleasing and acceptable to G-d.

Indeed, a proper sacrifice, one that reconciles and atones, may be equated with the subjugation of the *yetzer hara* – our evil inclination, our egotism and selfishness.

We derive this principle, that one should sacrifice the best of one's possessions, from the meal offering and which grade of olive oil can be used with it. Olive oil was graded according to which pressing – first, second, third, etc. – it came from. Only certain grades were used in the menorah, but all grades were permitted with the meal-offering. Nevertheless, one who wishes to subdue his *yetzer hara* and act generously will bring from the best of his possessions. One will sacrifice the clearest and purest of his "oil," his essence.

Why the meal offering, the offering of the poor? In describing the meal offering, the Torah says, literally, "when a soul wishes to draw close." That is, when a poor person, who has nothing to give but flour and water and a little oil, when such a person brings an offering, G-d accounts it as if he had offered his very soul. Such a person does not consider himself, but only the offering, the

transformation of the physical into the spiritual. The *teshuvah*, the sacrifice, of such a person is of the highest order.

Surely the relationship to our times, to the coming of Moshiach is clear: when the reason for the destruction and exile ends, automatically and immediately the consequence ceases to exist. Both the destruction of the Temple and the exile are negated, and instantly the Jewish people are redeemed through Moshiach.

We must ask ourselves: are we giving the best of our possessions? Which part of our day, which part of our energy, attention and ambition, are we dedicating to Torah, to preparing the world for Moshiach? What are we sacrificing on the altar – not yet the physical altar in the Temple, but the spiritual altar within us? *Hidur mitzvah* does not suffice. The concern must be giving the best of ourselves to *tzedekah* – to feeding those hungry for Torah, to clothe those naked of mitzvos. In that way, we make ourselves worthy of Redemption.

(Based on *Likkutei Sichos* 27:8-15)

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mrs. Chana (Carrie) bas Reb Meir ע"ה Greenberg
 Passed away on 9 Sivan, 5781
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