

THE PATH TO FOLLOW

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“THAT THEY BRING ME AN OFFERING”

(by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto שליט"א)

Commenting on the verse that states, “Speak to the Children of Israel, that they take for Me an offering” (Ex 25:2), Rashi explains that this means “for Me, for My Name” (Mechilta ibid.).

One may ask at least two questions concerning this brief explanation.

1. What does “for My Name” mean exactly?

2. Why does the Eternal ask the Children of Israel to bring Him an offering for the construction of the Sanctuary? Is it not written, “the whole world is filled with His glory” (Isa 6:3)? Since everything belongs to Him (cf. I Ch 29: 14), does He need gold or silver? Instead of counting on the generosity of the Children of Israel, He could have revealed to Moses the location of one or many treasures in the desert.

The answer is because of the fact that a person who donates a certain amount to a Torah institute generally wants, even if it's only deep down inside, to be praised for his deed. Who wouldn't rejoice in this noteworthy honor? Consequently, the Torah emphasizes the fact that the one who gives an offering should be firmly convinced that he has in fact given nothing, since everything belongs to G-d. As soon as one gives a donation, one should completely give way before G-d, the source of all our income, as it is written, “Mine is the silver and mine is the gold” (Hag 2:8).

The donations that one makes to a yeshiva (which is really a miniature Sanctuary) or to the Sages of the Torah (who themselves are sanctuaries of G-d) should be made exclusively in the Name of G-d, meaning for His honor. “The L-RD bless you and guard you” (Num 6:24) means that He bless your possessions (Bamidbar Rabba 11:13). Know, therefore, that all comes from Him and all converges to Him. Knowing this leads to self-effacement before the Creator. Blessing and the Shechinah will accompany you in all your undertakings. “Your offering helps you to know Shemi [My Name].” In the final analysis, the Terumah (offering) made for the construction of the Sanctuary and its vessels serves those who have given it. The offering contributes *leromemam* (to spiritually uplift them – a word with the same root as Terumah). The offering uplifts them in such a way that the Eternal resides in them. In fact,

the Children of Israel gave up all their silver and gold for the construction of the Sanctuary in order to find grace in the eyes of the Eternal. “The people are bringing more than enough for the labor of the work that the L-RD has commanded them” (Ex 36:5). Moses then made it known in the camp that no one, man or woman, should bring any more offerings for the Sanctuary (v.6). If Moses had not said this, the children of Israel could have offered all their goods, so great was their love for G-d.

Yeshivas don't normally need outside help, for the Shechinah resides there permanently. However G-d especially chose us to bring an offering to the place where His Holy Name is worshipped. The verse states, “in ever place where I cause My Name to be mentioned I will come to you and bless you” (Ex 20:21). This means that G-d will bless your possessions (as we wrote earlier) so that you can contribute to the building of the Sanctuary and financially help yeshivas. You will thereby reach lofty spiritual heights. The Eternal did a great favor to the Children of Israel by giving them the Torah and numerous mitzvot, as it is written, “The L-RD desired, for the sake of tzedek [His righteousness], to make the Torah great and glorious” (Isa 42:21). In other words, giving tzedakah (charity) to yeshivas is equivalent to giving for the construction of the Sanctuary, for the institutes devoted to Talmudic studies, as well as synagogues, are sanctuaries in miniature (Megillah 29a). Charity and good deeds are the same as all the mitzvot (Yerushalmi Peah 1:1). G-d wants that the Children of Israel, just as they had generously helped to build the Sanctuary, should help in strengthening the study of Torah, which in itself is a compendium of the Names of the Holy One, blessed be He (Zohar II:95a). G-d told them, “Bring your money that I personally gave you and invest it in the construction of the Sanctuary. The earth is certainly filled with My glory, but I desire that you use your silver and gold for exceedingly lofty goals. In this way you will reach unlimited spiritual levels and the Shechinah will reside in you.” It is written, “And let them make Me a Sanctuary, that I may dwell in them” (Ex 25:8); it doesn't say “in it” (the Sanctuary) but rather “in them”, which means individually, in every single person.

IN MEMORY OF THE TZADIKIM

RABBI SHALOM SHIMUNI OF GAFTSA, TUNISIA

The home of Rabbi Eliyahu in the Gaftsa district of Tunis was small and modest, but the light of Torah shined and radiated outwards, attracting the Jews of Tunis.

Grace and goodness were always found on the lips of Rabbi Eliyahu and his wife. As Dayan of the community, the Rav set aright the behavior of the faithful, smoothing out difficulties and rendering equitable judgments.

It was in this home that their son Rabbi Shalom Shimuni was born in 5543. Like his father, he became a Dayan and spiritual guide. Beginning from his early years, he would visit great rabbis such as Rabbi Yeshua Bessis and others.

Rabbi Shalom Shimuni attained exceptional depths in Torah learning and derived from there a vast number of its secrets and a great amount of its wisdom. He trained students as shochatim (ritual slaughterers) and instructed them in all their regulations. We tell the story of how, one day, a shochet (a ritual slaughterer) arrived in Tunis from a tiny village. The shochatim of Tunis began to slander him and claimed that he didn't perfectly know all the regulations pertaining to shechita (ritual slaughtering). Actually, they feared that he would compete against them for business and harm their livelihood.

The shochatim addressed themselves to Rabbi Yeshua Bessis and asked him to examine the man's shechita so as to verify his expertise.

Rabbi Yeshua Bessis summoned the shochet and asked him to present his knife. The shochet took out his knife and gave it to the Rav, who then examined it thoroughly and found it to be perfect.

The city's shochatim once again succumbed to feelings of jealousy against their colleague and took off with his knife, damaging it in numerous places. The shochet found out and sharpened the knife several times, presenting it to Rabbi Yeshua Bessis who once again found it to be perfect.

Rabbi Yeshua Bessis wanted to verify the expertise of the shochet in matters of shechita. The shochet confidently answered all the questions asked him, surprising all his listeners by the clarity and precision of his responses.

Rabbi Yeshua couldn't understand: How could a simple Jew, one who had never seriously studied

Torah, know so perfectly well all the regulations of shechita?

He therefore asked the shochet for the name of his teacher.

"Rabbi Shalom Shimuni was my teacher and Rav," replied the shochet.

And so Rabbi Yeshua Bessis was reassured.

"I knew that there was no one like him to teach others," he said.

Rabbi Shalom Shimuni rendered his soul to his Creator in 5624 at the age of 81. According to his last wishes, they buried a drum full of no-longer used Torah scrolls. Certain individuals in the surrounding area thought that the drum held all of Rabbi Shalom's gold, and so they decided to dig up his tomb in the middle of the night in order to get away with all the loot.

The next day, passers-by to the gravesite found his body uncovered, with his hand over his heart.

They rushed to the community leaders and told them of this terrible discovery. Sorrow and dismay fell upon the city. The gravediggers and their directors (the community leaders) hastened to the site to repair the grave and ask for forgiveness from Rabbi Shalom HaTzaddik.

Three days later, two Arabs from a surrounding village tremblingly presented themselves to the leaders of the community.

"Forgive us, sages and saintly men, for we admit our sin. It was we who desecrated the grave of Chacham Shalom," they said as they broke into tears.

"We thought we could find a great treasure in the tomb, but while we were digging in the middle of the night, the deceased himself terrified us. Now my legs don't function properly, my friend has become blind, and there was a third person with us and we don't know where he disappeared to," he concluded.

The leaders of the community looked at one another in shock as they listened to such an amazing story.

All the inhabitants of the village where the Arabs come from suddenly became ill and were at death's door until such time as they asked for forgiveness and began to pay for the salvation of the Tzaddik Rabbi Shalom Shimuni's soul.

His Hilloula is Adar 7.

THE MORAL OF THE STORY

JUSTICE AND GENEROSITY

A teaching from the Maguid of Dubno

Our Sages say, “Why was Parsha Terumah [Offering] given after Mishpatim [Laws]? It is because it is written, ‘I practiced justice and righteousness’ [Ps 119:21].”

Let us first see what the Midrash says on Mishpatim.

It is written, “Mighty is the King, Who loves justice” (Ps 99:4). Power belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He. He loves justice, and He bestowed it to the Children of Israel Whom He cherishes. “You founded fairness” (ibid.) means: You established equity for those that love You (thanks to the just statutes that You gave them).

The Sages want us to understand why Hashem scorned the peoples by refusing to give them laws. In fact it is written, “These are the laws that you shall place before them” (Ex 21:1), meaning them, not idolaters.

The Maggid of Dubno explains this by means of a parable.

A rich man had taken a home tutor to teach his children the basics of proper etiquette: How to eat properly, to drink properly, to walk about properly, and to sleep properly.

One day, an uncultivated young man came to see the rich man, for he wanted to understand all these rules of etiquette. At that moment the rich man’s children were being taught the etiquette of meals. The students wanted to kick the young man out, but he begged them: “How does it affect you if I come and listen to these wonderful lessons?” He implored them so well (and for so long) that they accepted, and the tutor continued to present the laws in question to them.

“Firstly, one should not go to an event when presented with an invitation sent by only a single messenger. There has to be at least two or three. Secondly, one should not seat oneself a place of honor. Thirdly, one should not be the first person to begin eating, just as one does not hold one’s plate with one’s hands.”

The students were taken aback by the concentration of the young man and began to make fun of him. “Tell us a bit about how all this is going to help you. Have you ever had a plate and cutlery put before you? Aren’t you more likely to eat the leftovers of guests? Why then are you studying all this, things that are completely foreign to you?”

The interpretation of this parable is quite simple. “He did not do so for any other nation; such judgments – they know them not. Halleluyah!” (Ps 147:20). This means that we should thank Hashem for His goodness in having differentiated us from the other peoples by giving us our heritage directly from Him, as a father to his children.

This is what the Midrash says, namely: “You founded fairness. The justice and righteousness of Jacob, You have made” (Ps 99:4). What does “You founded fairness” mean? It means, “You made it possible for those who love You to be upright, which is a heritage that You gave them directly. On the foundation of this uprightness, it is completely logical to instruct justice and generosity to them, while it would be useless to give these to another people, one that does not possess this foundation of integrity.”

EISHET CHAYIL

A FEW SHABBAT REGULATION

Concerning Women in Particular

1. When a washing machine is used before Shabbat and it completes its wash before Shabbat begins (but there’s not enough time to take the clothes out before Shabbat begins), it is forbidden to take the clothes out during Shabbat itself. One must wait until the end of Shabbat to do so.
2. Women are permitted to go out on Shabbat wearing their sunglasses.
3. It is forbidden on Shabbat to spread children’s clothing out on a radiator to dry them.
4. It is forbidden on Shabbat to arrange one’s hair with a comb. However, one is permitted to arrange one’s hair by hand or by using a soft brush.
5. One is permitted on Shabbat to wear perfume. On the other hand, it is forbidden to put perfume on a handkerchief or on clothes.
6. It is permissible to powder one’s face on Shabbat and Yom Tov. On the other hand, one cannot put on lipstick or makeup (e.g., blush, eyeliner, mascara, or others).
7. One can allow children under the age of Bar Mitzvah to play with Legos or other construction-oriented games. On the other hand, games that work with batteries are forbidden on Shabbat and Yom Tov.
8. According to Halachah, it is permissible to open food cans on Shabbat and Yom Tov.
9. It is permissible to pick up and put aside pearls from a necklace that has broken. It is forbidden to try to put them back together on Shabbat and Yom Tov.
10. It is permissible on Shabbat to use disposable diapers, and there is no ban on sticking or unsticking them together. Nevertheless, one should unstick the adhesive part carefully so as not to tear the diaper itself.
11. When a woman is breastfeeding and the baby refuses to drink, she is permitted to extract the milk that still fills her breasts and causes her discomfort. She should nevertheless extract the milk in such a way that the milk itself is lost (e.g., onto the ground or over a receptacle unfit to eat out of).
12. When a breastfeeding woman gets scared or is carried away by intense emotion (and it would therefore be dangerous for the child to drink her milk), she should extract the milk in such a way that the milk is lost.