

הַדָּרֵךְ THE PATH TO FOLLOW

No 72 VAYIKRA 8 ADAR II 5765 MARCH.19.2005

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Responsible of publication Hanania Soussan

HOW FAR SHOULD SELF-SACRIFICE GO IN THE SERVICE OF G-D (by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto שליט"א)

It is written, "And He called to Moses, and the L-RD spoke to him" (Leviticus 1:1). Why does the text use two terms ("called" and "spoke"), which apparently mean the same thing? If the passage begins with "He called", why does it then use another word ("spoke")? In addition, why is the word *vayikra* ("and He called") written with a small *aleph*?

We will also try to explain what Rashi said in the name of the Sages (Yerushalmi Taanith 3:4; Torah Kohanim on this verse) concerning the fact that the word *leimor* ("saying") means that G-d told Moses to say harsh words concerning himself (Moses) to Israel, meaning that Moses was to relate to them that G-d only spoke to him for the sake of the Jewish people. (Proof of this is that during the 38 years following the incident of the spies, He no longer addressed him). Why is this teaching found here?

We will also try to understand what lies behind the fact that when we teach Torah to very young children, we begin with Parsha Vayikra (Tanhuma Tzav 14) so that they be educated in holiness and purity, just like the sacrifices in question, which are holy and pure.

The theme of Parsha Vayikra is the unconditional devotion that man should demonstrate towards G-d, as is taught by the verse that states, "When a man among you [*mikem*: lit. "of you"] brings an offering to the L-RD" (Leviticus 1:2). This verse can also be read as "When a man makes of himself an offering to the L-RD." In addition, the word *mikem* has a numerical value of 100, which alludes to the 100 blessings that one should say daily (Menachot 43b). This instruction is drawn from the verse that states, "And now, Israel, what [בְּמַה] does the L-RD your G-d require of you?" (Deuteronomy 10:12), the word בְּמַה being read as מְאֵה (100). There it also consists of a complete commitment, without which it would be difficult to say 100 blessings every day, especially when one is confronted by the needs of the public or when one has to earn a living.

Yet there exist two types of commitment. The first is the one of a man that only seeks to get closer to G-d and spiritually elevate himself day after day to reach the Eternal, a movement evoked by the verse that states, "from strength to strength" (Psalms 84:8). All the desires of such a man are aimed at giving complete satisfaction to his Creator. Even when he is tired, he takes no account of his personal state. He only aspires to spiritually improve himself and to help the Shechinah that is in exile, lifting it out of the dust where it is found (Zohar II:238a). This consists of a coming together (הִתְקַבְּרוּת). One consistently feels that one is still very far away, and one fervently desires to come closer (קָרַב) to G-d and to arrive at the fiftieth gate of holiness, without needlessly worrying about oneself.

The second type of commitment is less intense than the first. It is the commitment belonging to a man who certainly devotes himself to prayer,

the study of Torah, and charity and good deeds, but without these being exclusively for the love of Heaven. He also has in mind the honor or benefit that he could receive from his fellow. He observes the mitzvot with all his heart, but his intentions are not completely pure. He rises early to go to synagogue, but he chats during prayer or does not concentrate sufficiently. In such a case, what will all his devotion accomplish? We can describe it as rotteness (רִקְנוּב), like a piece of mildewy bread. Rearranged, the letters of רִקְנוּב are the same as those of קָרַב ("near").

This is what the Torah alludes to when it says, "When a man among you [*mikem*] brings an offering to the L-RD." Man's worship has the main goal of bringing himself (*mikem*) closer to the Eternal at every moment, by 100 blessings and the constant study of Torah. It is in order to arrive at the 50 gates of purity, for this is a true sacrifice (קָרַב), which brings him closer (הִתְקַרְּבָה). The word *korban* is in effect composed of the letters קָרַב ("near") and ך (whose numerical value is 50). It consists of bringing oneself closer to the 50 gates of holiness and distancing oneself from a commitment that could be described as "rotteness" (רִקְנוּב). The word "rotten" (רִקְנוּב) is formed from רִקְנוּב ("rotteness") and ך, for this incomplete commitment can lead a man to the 50 gates of impurity. In fact, the Sages warned us against using the Torah for personal reasons (Nedarim 62a).

To distance ourselves from this type of attitude, we must bring to mind the day of our death, particularly when faced with temptation (Berachot 5a). This is also alluded to in the word קָרַבֵּן (sacrifice), formed by the letters קָרַב (*kever*, the grave) and ך. If we keep this in mind, we will only seek to devote ourselves entirely to G-d by disregarding all impure motives.

The sacrifice also teaches us humility, that of the animals which stretched out their necks to have their throats slit in honor of the Eternal. However, one should definitely not resemble them on the animalistic and material level. The Sages have said that the animal only dominates a man when it has an impression of being in the presence of another animal (Shabbat 151b), and it is written, "You save man and beast, O L-RD" (Psalms 36:7). All while being careful not to imitate a beast on its animalistic side, we must learn humility and self-effacement from it.

We have already said that humility leads to Torah, and the Sages teach that this is one of the characteristics by which it is acquired (Perkei Avoth 6:6[5]), and that we find it among the humble (Taanith 7a). The same idea emerges from the study of the sacrifices. In the past, the Children of Israel witnessed daily miracles within the boundaries of the Temple (Perkei Avoth 5:5), and therefore it was very easy for them to conquer their evil inclination, without mentioning the fact that when the sacrifices

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were offered, they perceived the truth, and thus all their sins were forgiven and they were purified. In addition, as they realized that everything that was done to the animal should have really been done to themselves (see Ramban on Leviticus 1:9), they immediately repented and came closer to G-d. Yet in our time, how can we conquer the evil inclination? If it was difficult during the time of the Temple, when everything was clear, what can we say of ourselves, who have neither Temple nor sacrifices? How then can we get closer to G-d?

It is precisely this lack that will help us, for we still have a primary weapon: Torah and prayer. As it is written, "Let our lips substitute for bulls" (Hoshea 14:3). This means that our prayers replace the sacrifices (Berachot 26b). As for the Torah, it also represents a sacrifice, for whoever studies the subject of burnt offerings is considered as having bought one (Menachot 110a). Consequently, we possess two forms of sacrifice! If we study Torah and devote all our energy to it, we offer ourselves to G-d by, as it were, killing ourselves for it (Berachot 63b). In fact when the verse states, "A man that dies in his tent" (Numbers 19:14), this can mean that he should "kill" himself in the tent of Torah, following in this way the steps of Jacob, "a wholesome man, abiding in tents" (Genesis 25:27). It is therefore obvious that even in our time, we can merit a considerable reward, for by the strength of the Torah, by prayer, and by the 100 blessings, we have the possibility of becoming a sacrifice totally devoted to G-d, even if we no longer see what happens to an animal when it is offered. If we manage to draw out the best part from our exile, we will be able to attain a spiritual level even greater than that reached by the generations living during the time of the Temple.

Let us return to the question of why we begin the Torah education of young children by this Parsha. Yes, it speaks essentially of commitment and fervor, that is clear, for children are able to devote themselves without any thought for those things which interest them (such as sweets, for example), and they have to be taught how to channel this energy towards holiness and purity. Not only do we learn from the sacrifices how to give ourselves over completely to holiness, but we also learn from children how to arrive at a complete commitment to G-d. We do this by observing the fervor that children put into attaining their own goals.

We will also be able to answer the difficulty that we brought up concerning the fact that G-d said to Moses to say to Israel harsh words concerning himself. What connection is there between this and what the text states, and from where did Rashi draw this interpretation? Let us recall that Moses wanted to enter into the Tent of Meeting, but could not because of the Divine cloud (Exodus 40:35). At that moment, he understood that he could only speak with the Eternal through the merit of Israel (Berachot 32a). Having thus understood the greatness of the Children of Israel in G-d's eyes, he immediately humbled himself and wrote the word *vayikra* with a small *aleph*. This teaches us that when the Eternal called him, it was uniquely because of the merit of the Children of Israel (the idea of being small refers back to them by allusion, since he was the teacher and they were the students). He noticed that all his strength came but by their merit, and this is what constitutes, "called ... spoke". The word "spoke" (דָּבַר) suggests a leader, such as in the expression *dabar echad ledor* ("only one leader for a generation") Whether it be Moses' ability as a leader, or the fact that G-d had called him, both of these facets stem entirely from the merit of the Children of Israel, for by himself Moses could not enter into the Tent of Meeting.

A greatly important principle emerges from this analysis: Everything that a great Rav or scholar receives from G-d is only by the merit of his students, for it is thanks to them that he can spiritually elevate himself and continue to train other students. The Rav should learn from this how to teach his students, and also how to learn from them how to devote oneself entirely, as did Moses our teacher, who took note of the Children of Israel's devotion. In this spirit, the Sages have said, "When a student is exiled, his teacher is exiled with him" (Makot 10a), This is also why it is written, "Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aaron, and tell them" (Leviticus 21:1), a repetition whose goal is to direct the great to watch over the

small (Yebamot 114a). G-d puts the great on guard against pride, for it is but by the merit of the small that they become great. Consequently, it is proper to lower oneself before one's students and not to keep one's Torah for oneself, in the spirit of the Mishnah that states, "If you have learned much Torah, do not claim special credit for yourself" (Perkei Avot 2:8). One should not allow oneself to become weary of teaching, as we have learned from Rav Pereda, who taught his student 400 times (Eruvin 54b). One should be self-effacing before a student and teach him the meaning of devotion, all while learning it from him. In this way, one can resemble a sacrifice offered to the Eternal.

THE MORAL OF THE STORY

From the Maggid of Dubno

In a general way, when G-d in His wisdom commanded us to build the Sanctuary and the Temple, and to offer sacrifices there, it was with the intention of allowing us to purify our souls by consecrating this form of worship: "This is the thing that the L-RD has commanded you to do; then the glory of the L-RD will appear to you" (Leviticus 9:6). In this context, let us appreciate the marvelous words of the prophet: "'Why do I need your numerous sacrifices?' says the L-RD" (Isaiah 1: 11). At first glance, doesn't this seem to contradict the Torah, of which an entire book is devoted to dealing with sacrifices? In reality, the essential aspect of our religion deals with the purity of our intentions.

The Maggid of Dubno explains this to us with the following parable.

A man hired a craftsman to construct a house for him with different rooms corresponding to particular functions. They agreed on a price, and the contract stipulated that the construction had to start before a given date. After having worked out the details, they recorded the essentials on a piece of paper: The craftsman was committed to building the house according to certain criteria, and the owner would pay him a set amount of money. When the time came to begin building the house, an official contract, much more detailed than the original note, was drawn up. Thus the work began.

The craftsman took measurements, cut the wood, made the plans, and constructed all the elements. All he had to do for the house to be ready was to assemble them. This foolish craftsman, however, thought that what he had done up to that point was sufficient to fulfill his end of the contract. He therefore went to the man and said, "I've already completed everything that was written in our contract. Here are the walls, the doors, the windows, and the beams. All you have to do is assemble them, if you want." The man responded, "You scoundrel! What did you do with the tiny note that we had written at the beginning?"

When the Children of Israel were still in Egypt, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses in a general way, "When you take the people out of Egypt, you will serve G-d on this mountain" (Exodus 3:12). Then, on Mount Sinai, He explained in detail just what this service entailed. From then on, whoever observes it (be it even in its entirety), but with the intention of erring (meaning, acting only out of personal interest), does in fact carry out all the commandments given at Sinai. However, he does not carry out what was said to Moses in Egypt, namely, "For I did not speak with your forefathers, nor did I command them, on the day I took them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt- or peace-offerings. Rather, it was only this thing that I commanded them, saying, 'Hearken to My voice, that I will be your G-d and you will be My people; and you will go on the entire way that I command you [and which I will specify to you later on Mount Sinai]' " (Jeremiah 7:22-23).

IN MEMORY OF THE TSADIKIM RABBI ITZCHAK LUMBROSO

Rabbi Itshak Lumbroso was the student of Rabbi Avraham Taieb, Rabbi Tsemah Tsarfati, and Rabbi Avraham Hacoheh. His father, Rabbi Yaakov, demanded the best teachers and the greatest rabbis for his son, for he recognized his talents.

In the company of his teachers, his attitude was humble and attentive, and he nourished himself with their profound wisdom. His teachers sensed that a rare pearl had been entrusted to them, and they polished it with love and devotion.

His fame became very great, and many students crowded into the Beit Midrash. He thus had the merit of seeing his student become great scholars.

Not hesitating to give of himself and his money, he helped orphans and the downtrodden. When he saw a poor man, he brought him into his house, took care of his food and clothing as well as his spiritual needs, and his wife the Rebbetzin raised him like a mother raises her son, selflessly and lovingly.

Rabbi Itshak was still young when asked to become a Dayan in Tunis. The decisions he made greatly enlightened the Rabbis of his generation. He frequently corresponded with the sages of Livorno, Italy, and his novel interpretations were transmitted and studied with admiration. His profound knowledge of the rules of grammar and the law allowed him to enact decrees that are still in force today.

By 5498 (1738), he was already Chief Rabbi of Tunis, and despite differences of opinion among its different communities he was still accepted, loved, and honored by all. He performed all his functions as Rabbi with all the necessary integrity.

For many years, no one was as rich and prestigious as Rabbi Itshak Lumbroso. He knew both the revealed and secret aspects of the Torah equally well. Moreover, his piety and modesty were without limit, and he had the characteristics of a veritable Amora.

He was the author of the famous book *Zerah Itshak*, which he wrote with the help of Rabbi Yeshua Tanoudji. The first part of his book is devoted to novel interpretations on almost the entire Talmud, and the second part is devoted to responsum.

The immense wisdom of Rabbi Itshak Lumbroso has remained indelibly engraved in the memory of the generations, such a great light it has been for Israel's glory during the exile. He rendered his soul to his Creator in 5512 (1752), but his influence has not ceased to spread in the midst of the wonderful Tunisian community and beyond.

May his merit protect us all. Amen.

THE PATH OF THE JUST HUMILITY - PART I

The man who possesses humility as a positive character trait (humility being the opposite of arrogance) is protected from numerous problems. If he has acquired this trait, he has performed a commandment for which he will receive a reward in proportion to the degree of humility attained. Humility is the foundation of Divine worship. Our Sages say, "Whether we accomplish little or much, the essential is to have pure intentions" (Menachot 110a). On the other hand, an act born of pride is not accepted by Hashem, Who loathes this trait, as it is written, "A haughty heart is an abomination to the L-RD." Because of his arrogance, a man prays without receiving a response: "Even if you were to intensify your prayer, I will not listen" (Isaiah 1:15).

Alternatively, the virtues of humility and modesty permit a person to acquire all good things, for "He gives grace to the humble" (Proverbs 3:34). Now if a man finds favor in the eyes of Hashem, his prayers will be immediately answered, as it is written, "It will be that before they call, I will answer" (Isaiah 65:24). When a humble man carries out the commandments, these are accepted with good favor and joy, as it is written, "For G-d has already approved your deeds" (Ecclesiastes 9:7).

What do we call humility? It is the submission and modesty felt by the soul of a man who considers himself as nothing. A man should put this virtue into practice at all times by judging himself as insufficient. He should maintain a humble spirit, a sensitive heart, and a soul broken by failure.

The essential aspect of humility is to undertake a personal introspection. We should do so while we still taste of peace and tranquility, health and riches, benefits that the Creator has bestowed upon us with unmerited goodness. A man will then consider the greatness and superiority of Hashem, and he will rationalize as follows; "What am I, if not a lowly creature, living in a material and ephemeral world? All the meritorious acts that I can accomplish are but a drop in the ocean compared to my debts." He will always act in view of accomplishing the will of Hashem, and not to be approved by men or to obtain an immediate benefit. Such is the foundation of humility. A man who shows himself humble before Hashem because he has fallen sick (or has injured himself, or has lost a child or someone dear to him, or his fortune or position have been lost, or he has become old, etc.) has nevertheless not attained true modesty, although humility and contrition are always pleasing to Hashem.

THE STORY OF THE WEEK

Lashon Hara

What Did the Son of the Chofetz Chaim Fear Concerning His Brother-in-Law's Earache?

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Sachs, the son-in-law of the Chofetz Chaim, felt a sudden pain in his ear one day. When he arrived home, his brother-in-law, Rabbi Leib (the Chofetz Chaim's son) was there, and he spoke to him of the discomfort that had taken hold of him. The Chofetz Chaim was no longer in this world at the time, and Rabbi Leib himself was already at an advanced age. When he heard what Rabbi Sachs had to say, he reacted with a certain amount of fear. "What, your ear is hurting you? You should go directly to see Doctor Shabat." He was a doctor known in Vilna, whom all the prominent men of the world went to consult. Because he was an excellent physician, he demanded a very high price for each visit, ten rubbles in fact. Rabbi Menachem Mendel responded, "Why go to Doctor Shabat, whom only the rich can approach? I'll take a piece of cotton, dip it in some hot oil, and put it in my ear. Surely the pain will pass." Yet Rabbi Leib continued to insist. He believed that since it consisted of his ear, it was forbidden to try to play it smart and hope that it would pass. In his mind, he absolutely had to make it to Doctor Shabat. Rabbi Menachem Mendel was astonished; why go all the way to Vilna for his ear, a simple earache! Rabbi Leib believed that if he hesitated so much to go see Doctor Shabat, it was apparently because he didn't have enough money, and so he immediately took out 25 rubbles from his pocket and said, "Here is some money, go to Vilna!" Now he no longer had any choice. He was obliged to go.

There was a bus traveling from Radin to Vilna twice a day, once in the morning and once at night. Since he had already missed the morning bus, he still had to wait several hours until the next one. Rabbi Menachem Mendel repeated to Rabbi Leib: "Why make such a story out of this? What is it but a slight earache?" Yet he remained firm. If the ear still hurt, he had to go see Doctor Shabat; he had no right to neglect it. Rabbi Menachem Mendel had no choice, and since he had already given him the money and accompanied him to the bus, he left for Vilna. On the way he thought, "How am I going to present myself to Doctor Shabat? He's going to laugh at me. I've traveled all this way for what

– an earache?" He didn't stop thinking about it, and in the end he decided to simply recount all the facts as they were.

Arriving in Vilna, Rabbi Menachem Mendel headed immediately to the doctor's and found a long line of people waiting there. However when Doctor Shabat saw that the son-in-law of the Chofetz Chaim had come, he allowed him enter right away, without waiting, and had him sit down. When he heard that he had a pain in his ear, he reacted exactly as Rabbi Menachem had thought: "You traveled all the way from Radin to Vilna for an earache?" Hence Rabbi Menachem told him the whole story. The doctor examined his ear, and both of them raised their eyebrows in astonishment, for there was nothing there. It was completely ordinary.

On the way back, Rabbi Menachem told himself, "As soon as I arrive, I'll immediately ask Rabbi Leib what he wanted from me." In fact, as soon as he got off the bus he saw that Rabbi Leib was already waiting for him, and even before Rabbi Menachem had time to say a word, he asked him, "What did Doctor Shabat say?" Rabbi Menachem replied, "What did he say? He said what everyone else in his position would have said, that it was nothing, that I shouldn't have taken such a trip! What did you want from me? Tell me what you wanted." And he continued in this way to express his bitterness for having given himself so much trouble and having been made to look so ridiculous by this unnecessary trip.

Rabbi Leib looked at him and said, "What? What did I want? Don't you realize how frightened I was? Do you remember what happened the other night? One of the yeshiva students said something against one of the yeshiva directors, you remember, and you heard this without saying a word. Don't you remember? Now we have learned, 'The one who does not protest when he hears a Talmid Chacham being disparaged....' What is it written concerning Rabbi Elazar the son of Rabbi Shimon? That a worm came out of his ear! When I heard that your ear was hurting you, I began to tremble, for who knew what could happen? That's why I sent you to Doctor Shabat. But now, I'm happy to hear that everything is alright and that there's nothing wrong!"