



Ohr Somayach Light Lines

Published by OHR SOMAYACH INTERNATIONAL • Jerusalem, Israel

3 Nissan 5759 • March 20, 1999 • Parshat Vayikra • No. 32

Light Insight

Closeness

“When a man from among you will bring a ‘korban’...” (Leviticus 1:2)

Closeness and distance are not necessarily measured in meters or miles, for people can be close even when they are on different sides of the world, and they can be distant even though they may be sitting next to each other on a bus, or living in the same house. Closeness is spiritual.

We have no word in the English language to use to properly describe the *korbanos*, the animals which were brought on the altar in the Holy Temple.

The word “sacrifice” implies

giving up something of value so that another person will benefit. Obviously, G-d cannot benefit from “sacrifices,” for He lacks nothing. The word “sacrifice” also implies having to do without something of value. In point of fact, what we gain from the “sacrifice” is infinitely more valuable than the “sacrifice” itself.

The word “offering” is also inaccurate: The idea of an offering is that it appeases the one to whom it is brought. It’s like buying someone off. A kind of bribery. We don’t bribe the Creator of the Universe, He who knows the thoughts of men.

The reason that we have a problem translating the word *korban* into English is that our ideas of “sacrifices” and “offer-

ings” derive from pagan cultures. Indeed, in those cultures the word “sacrifice” and “offering” were apt and accurate.

The root of the word *korban* is the same as the word “closeness.” It is used exclusively in relation to Man’s relationship with G-d. When a person brought a *korban*, he wanted to bring himself close to G-d, which is the only real good that exists. All other “goods” are pale imitations, worthless forgeries compared to the real good of being close to G-d.

Today when we no longer have the closeness to G-d that *korbanos* gave us, we still have its substitute — prayer. When we pour out our hearts in prayer, when we offer ourselves up to G-d, we bring close both ourselves and the world with us to our G-d.

LOVE of the LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel

Afula

Afula is an important development town which serves as the market center of the Jezreel Valley. It was

founded in 1925 on what is presumed to be the site of the tower (“Ophel”) mentioned in the Biblical account of an Aramean General’s visit to the Prophet Elisha.

The tower persisted as a symbol of the city for visitors, who can see among the ruins of the

ancient settlement the remains of an Arab tower which serves as an historical landmark, at this important crossroads of the Jezreel Valley.

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The Other SIDE of the Story

GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

While studying in a yeshiva in Israel, I made a shocking discovery four days before I was to come back home for Passover: my laptop computer, which I had brought for e-mail purposes (but I incidentally used to play card games during lunch), was gone! An intensive search throughout the dorm revealed nothing. No one knew

what had happened to it.

I knew that besides myself there were only two people who had the password to it; otherwise it was useless.

The two people were my roommates, Simon and Chaim. I couldn't find either one of them, but both of them had cellular phones. I tried calling Simon first, but there was no answer. I then tried Chaim, who picked up. I said my name, and asked him, "Where's my computer?" in a tone perhaps a bit more accusative than I had intended. I then heard a dial tone — he had hung up! Calling back yielded no

answer.

This absolutely convinced me that Chaim had taken it, either as a prank or to use it for himself. I simmered with anger for a while, then decided to try to reach Simon again as a last-ditch attempt at finding out exactly what had happened. Imagine my surprise when he told me he had used it the night before, stashed it under his bed, and completely forgotten to tell me about it! Feeling very ashamed, I called back Chaim to apologize. I asked him if he had hung up because he was angry at me for accusing him. He explained that one of his friends had aggressively borrowed his phone in mid-call, cutting him off!

Response Line

Susan Lowenstein wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,
Shalom! Can you please give me some information on the origins and history of Sephardic Jews?*

Dear Susan,

After the Destruction of the First Temple, around 450 BCE, the Jews were exiled to Babylon (modern day Iraq). After the 70-year exile many returned.

However, the majority of the Jews did not return, preferring Babylon instead. The Jews in Israel were again exiled in 70 CE, this time by the Romans. The Roman exile cre-

ated communities in Europe and North Africa. The European communities were mainly in France, Spain and Rome, with some in Germany as well. The Jews in France and Germany became known as Ashkenazim (Hebrew for "Germans") and the Jews in Spain became known as Sephardim (Hebrew for "Spaniards"). The Jews in Spain, which for hundreds of years was under Arab rule, had connection and communication with the Jews of North Africa and the Middle East, and hence all the Jews of these lands became known as Sephardim. Differences in custom developed over many years; some had their origin in halachic disputes among the Rabbis of the various communities,

and some in outside cultural influences.

Daniel Haruni wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,
What is the meaning of "baruch" in the prayers? If it is to bless, then what does it mean when we mere mortals say "Baruch ata Hashem? — Blessed are You G-d." How can we bestow blessings on Him who is the source of all blessings?*

Dear Daniel,

The Rashba, Rabbi Solomon ben Abraham Aderet (Barcelona, Spain, 1235-1310), was asked this question. He explained that "baruch" means "He is the Source of all blessing."