



Ohr Somayach Light Lines

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Light Insight

You pull over as the red and blue lights of the police car flash behind you.

“What’s the problem, officer?” The policeman reaches his open black-gloved hand into the window.

“I clocked you at twenty-five miles per hour over the limit. License and registration, please.”

“Why certainly officer. I’m happy to give you whatever you need.” You respond sweetly, handing over the documents with a folded fifty dollar bill sticking clearly out from between them.

“Uh-huh. I see. Your license seems to be, er, fine. Have a nice night.”

“Thank you, officer. You too.”

Who knows, maybe such a thing actually works. I myself wouldn’t try it, but I imagine that somewhere out there there are police officers who would accept a small gift and ignore a speeding offense.

A police officer maybe. Perhaps even a judge.

One thing is for sure, though, there is no way to bribe G-d. What can you offer to He Who owns everything? Is it possible to bribe G-d with something that’s already His?

Besides, one of Maimonides Thirteen Principles of Jewish Belief says that “G-d is not physi-

cal and is not affected by physical phenomena.”

It’s like trying to give fire to a fish, *lehavdil*.

Despite its absurdity, this idea of trying to give G-d gifts to buy forgiveness for sin is the most common misconception about *korbonos*, the offerings brought on the altar in the Holy Temple. Without putting much thought into it, we assume that this is exactly how they work. Bring an offering to G-d and receive forgiveness, like a gift or a bribe, to escape punishment for something that we’ve done wrong.

In truth, *korbon*, often translated into English as offering or sacrifice, is a form of the root word *korov*, meaning close, or intimate. The real meaning of the word gives us an insight into the real meaning behind the concept. When a person brought a *korbon* to the Temple, be it an animal, a bird, or a quantity of grain flour, his intention was clear. Bringing a *korbon* was an opportunity for closeness with G-d.

Still, what does the gift of an animal have to do with closeness to G-d? It’s not a gift for Him.

Rabbeinu Bachya, a classic commentary on the Torah from the thirteenth century, explains that our inability to give G-d anything is irrelevant. It is the giving that counts.

What’s the difference between a

bribe and a fine? The most important part of a bribe is that it’s received well. The most important part of a fine is that the offender has to pay it.

A *korbon* isn’t like a bribe, but it is in some aspects like a fine. When a person transgresses G-d’s Will, be it mistakenly or otherwise, he distances himself from G-d, cutting himself off a little. When he reaches into his pocket, and spends money to pay his fine and bring his *korbon*, he thinks about what mistake he made, what it cost him, and how he can avoid making the same mistake in the future. The fine inspires him to repair his relationship with his Creator, to appreciate the gravity of distance from G-d.

Imagine having to bring your computer or your car as a *korbon* after a certain carelessness in following the Divine will. You’d think twice about it the next time.

In the exile of our great distance from G-d, we have lost the privilege of a Holy Temple and its *korbonos*. Even today, however, we have the opportunity to reach into our pocket and make an offering of closeness with our Creator, by giving the time to learn Torah, and specifically about the laws of the different *korbonos*, or by giving *tzedaka*. May the Temple be soon rebuilt, and may we again have the opportunity for closeness with G-d, the way the Torah proscribed.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY *THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY*

Giving people the benefit of the doubt

Cookie Policy

*Several long hours before her flight
a woman waited at the airport one night.
She found a book in the airport shop
and a bag of cookies, and a place to drop.
So engrossed in her book, yet she happened to see
the man sitting by her, as bold as could be,
take a cookie or two from the bag in between
(which she tried to ignore to avoid a big scene).
So she munched the cookies and watched the clock,
as the bold cookie thief diminished her stock.
She thought, more irate as the minutes ticked by,
“If I wasn’t so nice, I’d blacken his eye.”
With each cookie she took, he took one too.
There was only one left...what should she do?
With a smile on his face, and a nervous laugh,
he took the last cookie and broke it in half.*

*He offered her half as he ate the other.
She snatched it from him, and muttered,
“Oh! Brother!
This guy has some nerve! He’s totally rude!
Why doesn’t he show some gratitude!!”
She had never before in her life been so galled.
She sighed with relief when her flight was called.
She gathered her things and walked to the gate,
without looking back at the thieving ingrate.
She boarded the plane, sank into her seat,
and looked for her book, which was almost complete.
As she reached in her handbag she spied with surprise
Her own bag of cookies in front of her eyes!
“If mine are here,” she moaned in despair,
“the others were his, and he tried to share.”
Too late to apologize, she realized with grief
that she was the rude one, the ingrate, the thief.*

*How many times in our lives
have we known
that something was certain,
but found we were wrong...*

LOVEof theLAND

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

Valley of Ayalon (Emek Ayalon)

This is where Joshua and the Israelite army defeated a consortium of five Emorite armies in a battle in which two miracles took place. “G-d rained down great stones from heaven upon them... more died from these hailstones than died

from the swords of the Children of Israel.”

Then came an even greater miracle. The sun was setting as Joshua pursued his fleeing enemies, so he commanded the sun to halt. Never before or after did Heaven fulfill such a request by demonstrating that “G-d wages war for Israel”.

The Valley of Ayalon also witnessed the battles of the Maccabees, Romans, Arabs, Crusaders and the British in World War One. Nearby Latrun was the scene of heavy fighting in the 1948 War of Independence. After the war, the settlement of Mishmar Ayalon was established in a deserted Arab village, on a hill overlooking the valley.