

MIXED INTENTIONS

by Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein

Any man from the Bnei Yisrael who will slaughter an ox, a sheep, or a goat in the camp, or who will slaughter it outside the camp, and he has not brought it to the entrance of the Ohel Moed to bring it as an offering to Hashem before the Mishkan Hashem...

Be'er Mayim Chaim - In a well-known attempt to resolve the a contradiction between passages, Tosafos² develop a three-tiered system in regard to intention in the performance of mitzvos. When a person serves Hashem with the sole intent of pleasing His Creator, he is considered as a child to his Parent.³ Should he study Torah and perform mitzvos not for the sake of His Creator, he is regarded not as a child, but as a servant.

Although his service is far from perfect, he can still be regarded at least as a servant. In performing for the ulterior motive of gaining Divine reward and escaping the punishment of Heaven, he seems to be not serving Hashem at all. Seeking reward - and escaping punishment - is really an exercise in self-service! His point of reference is not G-d, but his own well-being and comfort. Nonetheless, Hashem does not take such a jaundiced view of this person's Torah and mitzvos. Although self-serving, what animates him is the firm belief that Hashem exists, makes demands upon us, and reliably rewards those who act according to His dictates. This emunah is significant. It sufficed to win freedom for our ancestors from Egyptian slavery,⁴ and suffices for us to win freedom from our own yetzer hora. It is a wonderful beginning, and can propel a person to the next level up, in which he serves Hashem entirely for His sake. It is enough for a person to be considered at least a servant, even if not a loving child.

On the other hand, a person can outwardly serve Hashem without any positive intent at all. One who learns and serves to gain public acclaim or project his self-importance does not really serve Hashem at all. He believes that his success is not a matter of Divine approval or disapproval, so much as a function of his own efforts. He thus lacks the positive aspects of even the person who serves Hashem for the purpose of receiving reward from the outstretched Hand from Above. He is far less than a servant.

All of this is alluded to in our pesukim. "Any man from the Bnei Yisrael who will slaughter an ox, a sheep, or a goat in the camp... and he has not brought it ... before the Mishkan Hashem..." The Torah speaks of a person who involves himself in Torah and mitzvos but fails to take them to the innermost

place close to Hashem, i.e. he does not perform them on the highest level, which is to act for the sake of Heaven, and for no other reason. Such a person conceivably acts for one of two reasons: "Who will slaughter ... in the camp, or who will slaughter it outside the camp." On the one hand, he might act in expectation of some Divine reward. This is far from perfect, and in a sense enhances the power of evil, since it operates for a cause that is removed from Hashem's plan. Nonetheless, he should still be seen as acting within the camp, rather than outside of it, for two reasons. Firstly, he is correct in his conviction that Hashem is the Master of all good phenomena, and holds the future of all things in His hands. Asserting the truth of this is important and meritorious.

Secondly, the very fact that his frame of reference is HKBH - even if focusing on His ability to offer rich rewards - means that he operates within the same "camp" as Hashem. Therefore, from the not lishmah will ultimately grow the lishmah.

On the other hand, the protagonist of our parshah might act in a way that should be labeled as outside the camp. He might act merely to enhance his pride or his image. Worse yet, he might act just to be able to be disputatious with others. All of these place him outside the general frame of reference of Hashem's Will. He is considered outside the camp of kedushah.

The Torah continues with references to both of these contingencies. "To bring it as an offering to Hashem before the mishkan Hashem." In other words, he may be within range of Hashem, but fail to make his actions the perfect offering to Him, which can only be done when acting completely for the sake of pleasing Him. Or, he may fail to bring it to the mishkan Hashem altogether, by substituting the cause of his own ego over any connection to G-dliness.

What is the fate of the person who fails to act with the proper motivation? Not only is his offering not a genuine offering, but at times he shares in the responsibility for some much greater evil. "He has shed blood, and that man shall be cut off from the midst of his people."⁵ Other people are attracted, in a perverse manner, to his imperfection. Those people sometimes go further in their failings, and commit serious transgressions, standing to a certain extent on his shoulders.

He can therefore bears some responsibility - at times, for crimes as serious as bloodshed.

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1. Based on Be'er Mayim Chaim, Vayikra 17:3-4
 2. Taanis 7A
 3. Bava Basra 10A
 4. Yalkut Shimoni 240
 5. End of Vayikra 17:4
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