

# THE ULTIMATE ELEVATED-OFFERING

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

## FRIDAY NIGHT:

*G-d told Moshe, "Tell the Children of Israel that anyone who desires to bring to Me an elevated-offering should do so." (Shemot 25:1-2)*

There are few Hebrew words that can be used to refer to a "gift", but when it comes to the procurement of the materials for the construction of the Mishkan in this week's parshah, the Torah uses the word "terumah", which means "elevated-offering". Giving to the construction of the Mishkan was not only about making a gift of it, it was about elevating the gift to a higher level of sanctity so that it can become worthy of being used for the Mishkan.

The truth is, just by designating something for Temple use is enough to change its halachic status. One moment you can be drinking from a glass cup without having to think twice, and the next moment a person can be guilty of misappropriation of Temple property if in-between sips he gifted the glass to the Temple. Same glass, different owner, and more importantly, a different level of holiness.

In fact, we could look at all of this differently. It would seem that the goal was to build a Mishkan, and that the terumot were just a means to do so. But, maybe it was the other way around. Maybe the goal was to give terumot, and the Mishkan was just the means for doing that. After all, the Mishkan was only the response to the golden calf, and as the commentators point out, had it not been for the calf, each and every Jew would have been his own Mishkan.

*"They shall make a sanctuary for Me so that I may dwell among them." (Shemot 25:8)*

Why does the posuk say, "so that I may dwell in them" and not, "so that I may dwell in it [the Mishkan]?" Rav Chaim Volozhin says that the Mishkan was a prototype for what a person should be: a temple in his own right. However, when we allowed the golden calf to come into existence, we lost the right to be our own temples, and it was transferred to an actual building, the Mishkan.

Had we become our own temples, then we would have been responsible for using our terumot for that. And, we certainly would not have had to build all the various different elements about to be described in the upcoming parshiot. Then what would have been the terumot and how would we have given them? What would we have "elevated"?

Our da'at — our perception of G-d and reality. And that translates into what we give to G-d, or what

we should be trying to give to G-d. We are told that G-d does not need sacrifices. Then why do we have to bring them? On one level it is for a tikun of the four elements of Creation that Adam's sin blemished. By using salt with the sacrifice, we rectified the mineral world. By using wood to burn the sacrifice, we rectified the world of vegetation. The animal itself was to help the animal world achieve rectification, and by consuming the sacrifice, man became rectified as well.

However, the deeper purpose of the sacrifice was to affect the da'at of the person bringing it. The actual sacrifice was a means to achieve that result, because human beings need to see things or experience them before they can truly comprehend the reality of them. The experience of bringing a sacrifice with all of its parts and details was a powerful way to snap into reality and reach a higher level of awareness, and only once that was achieved did the person actually give to G-d what He was waiting for: an elevation of da'at, the true terumah, and the real "Elevated-Offering". After all, what does G-d want from Creation? As the Arizal explains at the beginning of Otzrot Chaim, G-d made Creation so that someone would exist who would call Him "Master", or so someone would exist to whom He can be merciful or gracious to, and therefore be called "Merciful" or "Gracious". A king without a kingdom is not a king at all, so G-d made a kingdom over which He could be King.

But, explains the Arizal, not for His own good, but for our good. He doesn't need to be called "king" or "merciful", or anything else for that matter. It is our opportunity, not His, to recognize Him, and to "see" Him in life. That's all He wants us to be able to do, to see Him. That, of course, is always a function of da'at, and the more elevated one's da'at becomes, the greater a terumah it is.

### **SHABBAT DAY:**

*G-d said, "My spirit that is upon you and My words that I have placed in your mouth..."* (Yeshayahu 59:20)

What exactly is da'at?

It all depends on which level you are talking about. On the simplest level, it just means knowledge. On a more complicated level, it means perception. With regard to the simplest level, it is already there regardless of whether or not you take the time to learn it. However, perception is something that is built, based upon knowledge that comes either from learning or actual experience.

However, human beings are not computers. When computers build their "da'at", they simply accumulate and organize information. For the most part, they can only relate to facts as facts, being unable to sense nuances of ideas or deeper levels of interconnectivity. They can be programmed to relate to information on this level somewhat, but they certainly can't "feel" the truth or falsehood of an idea, as human can. On the other hand, they can't reject an idea for emotional reasons either. There is no such thing as "cognitive dissonance" when it comes to computers. Whatever I "teach", my computer faithfully accepts without scrutiny, and when I ask it to retrieve what I "taught" it, it does so faithfully without corruption. But then again, computers don't go to the World-to-Come.

Recently, I gave a many-part presentation of material that is the basis of my own perception about

the events of current history, the goal being to motivate people to see outside of their box in order to take a more active role in the redemption-process. When I do this, I am strict about not using my own personal opinion to gain leverage with my audience, and instead I try to stick only to the relevant sources and let them speak for themselves.

Granted, I get worked-up about them. Granted I present them in a way that underlines my goal in sharing them with others. However, I still believe that I leave plenty of room for those listening to evaluate the merit of the ideas on their own, in a way that they can choose to accept or reject them.

It must be true, because when the presentation was all said-and-done, one participant told me, "Though most of what you've said was new to me, I still remain skeptical about what you've said. I have cognitive dissonance," he explained. He added, to justify his c.d., "When Group A made their fantastic claim about Moshiach, what happened in the end? He died. No Moshiach..."

"True," I tried to explain to him, "but there is a fundamental difference between accepting opinions, no matter how many there are, about the greatness of another human being and his role in history, and taking the time to appreciate sources that are not only acceptable, but they are mainstream."

The debate didn't last long, because it was clear to me that he wasn't open to changing his opinion, and the only walls I try to talk to these days is the Western one in the Old City. Furthermore, when someone volunteers that he has cognitive dissonance, that is usually a banner that reads, "Don't bother trying to convince me. The store's closed." Cognitive dissonance is not a rare intellectual disease. We are all plagued by it on some level. Any time a person refuses to accept the implications of an idea, or at least pursue the veracity of an idea that appears to be true, he is in a cognitive dissonant way. This is especially true if the idea happens to be sourced somewhere in a mainstream Torah work, even if other opinions exist to the contrary.

For, every piece of intellectual information we come in contact with, especially if it comes directly from Torah, it is part of an ongoing dialogue with G-d. It is like playing chess, where one person sits around planning his next move while the other person sits there making his at the same time. Sometimes it even seems as if each person is playing his own game and the two just happen to be sharing the same board.

While we learn something new and chart the course of our lives, G-d is already planning to give us our next piece of information. Many people look at it as if it fell from the sky like debris from the space station, and have no problem shrugging it off as if there is no meaning in seeing it. In fact, it is G-d's latest move on the board, aimed at us, and aimed at intellectually vanquishing to His side of reality, for our own good, not His.

### **SEUDAT SHLISHIT:**

*The sacrifices of G-d are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O G-d, You will not despise.*  
(Tehillim 51:17)

Not only do I speak for G-d, but we ALL do. Although, listening to the way some people talk, it is hard to believe that G-d has anything to do with their mouths. However, that is precisely why they are punishable for what they say: they "force" G-d, for free-will purposes, to be involved in such profane matters.

However, when it comes to divrei Torah, then for sure G-d is behind the words, even if the person speaking them seems far from being any kind of prophet. However, if G-d can speak to us through the mouths of our enemies, He can certainly talk to us through the mouths of our friends, especially those who mean well and want to share what they have learned with others.

And, He does this because He always wants us to build up our da'at, as part of an ongoing process to enable us to better relate to Him. As the Rambam says, to know G-d is to love G-d. And, to know better His plan for Creation is to be better prepared to help out, and to become the partner with G-d man was created to become. You're either with G-d or against Him; there is no neutral ground, except that history has shown how easy it is to think that you are with Him when in fact you are tragically against Him. Hence, the ultimate "Elevated-Offering" is an elevated da'at. What seems so obvious on a Pshat-level becomes less so on the levels of Remez, Drush, and Sod. The opposite is true as well: what seems so abstract from a Pshat-level becomes increasingly clearer and logical as one moves from Remez to Drush to Sod. And, as one's mind moves from level to level, a person is given the free-will choice to move with it, resulting in the ultimate sacrifice and gift-offering man can make:

*The sacrifices of G-d are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O G-d, You will not despise.*  
(Tehillim 51:17)

What! G-d is not happy unless we walk around broken and in emotional upheaval? We were made in the image of G-d, and expected to live that way, and that is not the way G-d lives, so-to-speak. Then what can it mean, except that G-d waits for us to learn truth and then we subjugate ourselves to it? The "broken spirit" to which Dovid HaMelech refers is our ability to change our course in life when we find out that we are wrong about what G-d wants, and also go where history is in fact going. It is, in fact, our willingness to overcome cognitive dissonance and face the truth as it stands, so that we can learn to march to the beat of G-d's drum.

That is the real terumah that we can offer, and a good lead-in to next week's parshah: Parashat Zachor.

### **MELAVE MALKAH:**

Nefesh HaChaim, Ch. 21

Thus, it is with man, that if he is involved with Torah for the proper reasons, in order to protect and uphold all that is written within it, then his entire being is purified. This is as the rabbis learn: Why is "tents" juxtaposed with rivers? Just as rivers purify a person from spiritual impurity, so too do tents

elevate a person from demerit to merit. (Brochot 16a)

They expressed the same idea through a comparison of purification in a mikvah, about which it says "all your flesh in the water..." In other words, just as the entire body is purified by the water, so too is the entire body elevated through Torah. (The rabbis specified a volume of one amah by one amah by three amot in height, corresponding to the three worlds, Nefesh, Ruach, and Neshamah, or action, speech, and Torah thought.) Furthermore, just as the entire body of a man is purified through involvement in Torah and mitzvot, so too are the Worlds, which are set up like a man, as I wrote in Chapter Six. They also become refined, purified, and elevated.

A proper and true servant of G-d does not allow himself to become distracted during his service of G-d, even to elevate and purify his body and soul. Rather, he intends with a pure mind and directs his thoughts Upward to rectify and purify the holy Worlds.

This was how our Forefathers served, and the early Righteous individuals, who fulfilled the Torah before it was given, as the rabbis learn from the verse, "From a pure animal..." (Bereishit 7:8), commenting that from here we learn that Noach learned Torah. Regarding Avraham, they said, "Avraham fulfilled the entire Torah (Yoma 28b). (The same thing is found in Bereishit Rabbah, Parashah 14, and in Midrash Tanchuma, Parashat Behar, and in Midrash Tehillim, Mizmor 1.)

It wasn't that they were commanded and that they did so as a matter of obligation. For, if so, they could never have even considered violating the command of G-d, G-d forbid, even if the Root of their Neshamah saw a need to, such as in the case of Ya'akov who married two sisters, and Amram who married his aunt. Rather, they acted as a result of their pure minds which grasped the rectification that results from each mitzvah in the Worlds, the Upper and Lower Forces, and the tremendous damage and destruction that results, G-d forbid, when the mitzvot are not fulfilled. Noach specifically offered a pure animal because he saw and understood the Force and Root inherent in each animal. The ones whose Root emanated from holiness he offered; the animals whose Nefesh was from the side of impurity and the Other Side, he did not choose to offer to G-d because he knew that they would be unacceptable.

This is the meaning of the words, "And Chanoch walked with G-d" (Bereishit 5:24), and "With G-d Noach walked" (Bereishit 6:9), and, "G-d, with whom my fathers walked" (Bereishit 48:15); for, the word "Elokim" means the "Master of all Forces." In other words, they grasped the concept of the Upper and Lower Forces, the order by which the world is run, and the interconnections and joinings that result from the actions of men, and each one of them accustomed himself to act accordingly, based upon what he saw and understood according to the Root of his Neshamah, about the upper rectifications.

Therefore, when Ya'akov Avinu understood that, based upon the Root of his Neshamah, a great rectification of the Upper Worlds would occur by marrying the two sisters, Rachel and Leah, and that from the two of them the House of Yisroel would be built, he made great effort and worked hard so

that they should be married to him. This was also why Amram married Yocheved, his aunt, from whom came Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam. This is also one of the reasons why the Torah was not given to Noach and the holy Forefathers. For, had they received the Torah, then Ya'akov could not have married two sisters, nor Amram his aunt, even if they had known through the Root of their Neshamot that this would accomplish good, and that in truth, this would have built up Bait Yisroel, the "Treasured Nation," and that it would have rectified the Upper and Lower Worlds. This is also the idea behind the statement, "And if you want to say that Kayin married his sister, then, 'A world of kindness You built' (Tehillim 89:3).

Have a great Shabbat,

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