

HAVE NO REGRETS

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape # 10, Can Kohanim Visit Graves of Tzadikim Good Shabbos!

Have No Regrets When You Offer Your Thanksgiving Offering

In addition to the mitzvos of the Kehunah [Priesthood], this week's Parsha contains some of the mitzvos which pertain to Korbonos [Sacrifices]. The pasuk [verse] states "If you will bring a Thanksgiving Offering to G-d, it shall be offered willingly" [Vayikra 22:29]. Rash"i explains that according to the simple interpretation "*l'rtzonchem*" (willingly) means that it should be "*l'rtzon lachem*" (acceptable [to G-d] for you) -- i.e. it should be offered in accordance with ritual law and not with improper intentions.

We will, however, interpret this expression "al pi derech ha'drush v'hashkafa" [in a homiletic manner]. Why is it that particularly regarding the Korban Todah [Thanksgiving offering], the Torah found it necessary to stress that the offering should be brought "willingly"?

The Kesav Sofer (son of the Chasam Sofer) writes, that to understand this, we must appreciate why and when a person brings a Korban Todah. A Korban Todah is exactly what the words mean -- an offering of Thanksgiving. The Talmud tells us that even nowadays there are four categories of people who must express thanksgiving (through prayer). For example, an ill person who became well or a person who left jail to freedom has to bring Korban Todah.

Consequently, we can understand that when someone brings a Korban Todah it might not be completely "willingly". The person may feel something less than the fullest sense of thanks. The person may perhaps think, why do I have to bring a Korban Todah for having been sick and then healed, better I should have never been sick in the first place. Given the option, wouldn't one rather never have been sick, rather than have to undergo a serious but successful operation?

Therefore the Torah tells us -- no! When we bring a Korban Todah -- after having undergone the circumstances that lead to a Korban Todah -- that offering must be brought with the fullest sense of thanksgiving. A person has to realize, as difficult as it may seem at the time, that those

circumstances -- the sicknesses and ordeals that he had to live through -- in some way or another was what the Ribbono Shel Olam felt was best for him in the total picture. Because of that ordeal, he is now a stronger person, a wiser person, a more compassionate person. It will be a Kapara [forgiveness -- He will have to atone less in the world to come.] For some reason, in G-d's Grand Plan, it was best for him to be sick or be jailed and then, later, redeemed.

Therefore the Torah says that when you offer a Korban Todah to G-d - - don't think "What did I need this for?". On the contrary, offer the Korban with the greatest expressions of willingness, in order that you should come to the recognition that all that G-d does is for the person's benefit.

Kiddush and Chillul Hashem are Not at Opposite Ends of the Spectrum

A few pasukim [verses] later, [22:32], the Torah continues, "You shall not desecrate My holy Name, rather I should be sanctified among the Children of Israel, I am HASHEM, Who sanctifies you." This pasuk contains one of the most serious sins and one of the most important mitzvos in the Torah -- the prohibition of Chillul Hashem and the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem.

If one thinks about the way the pasuk is phrased and the juxtaposition of the two concepts, it seems rather strange. In the same breath, the Torah says, "Don't make a Chillul Hashem [desecration of G-d's name] and "Make a Kiddush Hashem [sanctification thereof]".

Do not Chillul Hashem and Kiddush Hashem occupy opposite ends of the spectrum? Is it not true that when one is Mikadesh Hashem, it is the furthest thing in the world from a Chillul Hashem? Isn't it true that when one, G-d forbid, is Mechallel Hashem, it is the furthest thing in the world from a Kiddush Hashem? Therefore, is it not peculiar and odd that the Torah puts them together in the same breath?

Perhaps this is not strange at all. The Torah is trying to tell us that, on the contrary, it is not true that Chillul Hashem and Kiddush Hashem are on opposite ends of the spectrum. The Torah is telling us "I want you to make a Kiddush Hashem of my name -- and while you are doing it, make sure that you do not make a Chillul Hashem!"

How many times have we seen that in the name of "Kiddush Hashem," in the name of Torah, in the name of Chessed, under the banner of the noblest of causes, people rush in and sometimes, in the act of Kiddush Hashem can create the biggest Chillul Hashem? Even when something is a mitzvah, and it is precious and beautiful, still one must remember not to get carried away with himself.

Let My Name be sanctified amidst the congregation of Israel -- but take heed that in the process of this Kiddush Hashem, don't desecrate my Holy Name!

Extremism Can Easily Change Directions

At the end of Parshas Emor we have a very, very strange incident in the Torah. The verse tells us that the son of a Jewish woman got into an argument, and he committed the crime of blasphemy. He cursed (Rachmana l'tzlan) the Name of the Ribbono Shel Olam.

This section begins with the words "And the son of a Israelite woman went out". The Medrash is bothered -- where did he go out from? The Yalkut Shimoni brings different interpretations explaining from where he went out. Rav Berachya says "He went out from the previous section in the Torah". What is so upsetting about the previous section in the Torah?

The previous section is the parsha of the Lechem HaPanim [Show Bread]. These were the twelve loaves of bread placed on the Shulchon [Table] in the Mishkan. The loaves remained on the Shulchon the entire week, from Shabbos to Shabbos. Why was this individual so upset about the Lechem HaPanim? The Medrash says that he complained that this was an inappropriate way to treat G-d. He was upset at the fact that rather than offering G-d warm -- fresh -- bread, we were offering him stale -- week old -- bread. "This is how you treat the King, King of Kings?", he protested! Because of this, he got so upset, he went out and blasphemed the name of G-d.

Not only is it difficult to understand why this person was so upset, but the resulting change in course is bizarre. What was bothering him? That we do not treat G-d correctly. And then, this same person turns around and he himself curses G-d! What is occurring with such a person?

The Yalkut Yehudah says that this is not strange. This person is an extremist (kitzoni). When a person is subject to extremism, he can easily go from side to side. One day he can be more particular about the 'Honor or Heaven' than anybody else -- than the Torah itself. Then, that same person can shift all the way, with the swing of the pendulum, that G-d forbid, he blasphemes the Name of Heaven.

The Ramba"m tells us that the behaviors of a person (with the exception of Anger and Haughtiness) have to be follow the Golden Mean (Derech hamemutzeh), the middle path. But when a person is subject to extremes, then he can be extreme for something one day and be extreme for something that is 180 degrees away on the spectrum the next day.

This describes the blasphemer in the Parsha. A person who can get so upset that he became more zealous than the Torah itself, in the end can become a Blasphemer. The Middle Road is the road of a true servant of G-d.

Glossary

Ribbono Shel Olam -- Master of the World

Chillul Hashem -- (the prohibition) of desecrating the Name of G-d

Mechallel Hashem -- the act of committing a Chillul Hashem
Kiddush Hashem -- (the mitzvah) of sanctifying the Name of G-d
Mikadesh Hashem -- the act of making a Kiddush Hashem
Rachmana L'tzlan -- The All Merciful should spare us
bochur -- unmarried young man (Yeshiva student)

Personalities & Sources:

Ramba"m -- Rav Moshe ben Maimon (1135-1204) author of Commentary to Mishneh; Yad HaChazaka (Halachic Code); and Guide to the Perplexed.
Kesav Sofer -- Rav. Avrohom Shmuel Binyomin Sofer of Pressburg (1815-1879), known by the name of his Responsa collection; son of Chasam Sofer (1762-1839), Rav Moshe Sofer.
Yalkut Shimoni -- Best known and most comprehensive Midrashic anthology, covering the entire Tanach; attributed to Rav Moshe HaDarshan of Frankfurt (13th Century)
Yalkut Yehudah -- three volume Chumash commentary published in 1993 by Rav Yehuda Leib Ginsberg emigrated from Russia to U.S.; was a Rav in Denver, Colorado.

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