

THE BEST POLICY

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

"Adam [a man] - should he bring an offering..." Vayikra 1, 2

The book of Vayikra is filled with laws pertaining to the role of the Kohanim - the Priest - and the offerings that were brought to the Bet Hamikdash. In the opening statement to Moshe Rabenu, Hashem outlines the rules for the offering called "Olah" - a burnt offering, which was completely served up on the Alter. Rashi comments: "When a man among you brings an offering to Hashem..." - Why does the verse use the word Adam for man? To teach just as Adam did not bring from robbery because everything belonged to him - so you shall not bring from robbery". In its first mention of gifts or obligations to the Temple Hashem stressed the offering must be yours honestly. It is not enough that you bring to His house - what you bring must be legally yours - 100%.

This lesson was hinted to at the outset of the construction of the Mishkan. The sages ask: "How come the portion of Mishpatim -dealing with damages and money matters precedes the command from G-d to bring donations for the construction of His house?" The Rabbis answer: "In order to let you know that only that which is earned honestly is acceptable as charity."

How does one overcome temptations in this vital area of Torah law? One must develop true Bitahon - trust and reliance in G-d. The Gemara teaches that G-d determines how much a person will earn in a year in the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. We pray daily that that money will bring happiness but we cannot change the figure once it is sealed on the Day of Kippur. One who tries to grab extra for oneself through illegal means is demonstrating a lack of belief in the sovereignty of Hashem and a flaw in trust in that all that He decides is what is best for us.

Many feel that charity atones for all wrongs. Others assume that if they perform acts of kindness with their wealth it really does not matter how the money is earned. The use of the word "Adam" rather than "man" teaches us that these assumptions are not true. We as Jews are expected to deal with everyone in a totally honest fashion. We not only need to make sure that what we have is clean money but also must conduct ourselves in a manner far above suspicion so as to avoid desecrating the name of Hashem. We represent His name here on Earth and must be sure that we do not bring shame or embarrassment to Him.

Shabbat Shalom

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