

Noach's Korbonos by Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

In Bereishis 8:20-21 we read, 'And Noach built an altar to Hashem and took of every clean animal and every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. Hashem smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart I will not continue to curse the ground again because of man because nature of man is evil from his youth and I will not smite all living as I have done.' My Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Moshe Feinstein, Zt'l, asks why specifically now, when Noach brought the korbonos, did Hashem promise not to make any more floods? Rav Moshe answers that two people can do the same mitzvah yet one can get much greater reward because he/she had much purer intentions. In the beginning of the age of korbonos Kayin and Hevel had different motivations. Kayin was actually on a high level to communicate with Hashem. His mistake, though, was that he thought that Hashem gets nothing out of korbonos so that he could bring even inferior sacrifices. While it is true that Hashem does not 'benefit' from the korbonos, nevertheless, from our end we have to show gratitude to Hashem and give our best commodities to him. Hevel understood this idea. But Hevel thought that once he gives his Korbon to Hashem, it was completely his personal possession. Noach understood that even after he gave a Korbon to Hashem, it still is Hashem's possession. This made Noach worthy of being able to prevent a future flood. Noach demonstrated this by bringing the kosher animals on the ark only to be brought as korbonos and not for any personal use.

When Am Yisroel came into being, the next level was reached. The nations of the world bring korbonos to Hashem as well. However, they only bring the korbon olah, burnt offering which is completely burnt. Eating korbonos before Hashem was exclusively for Am Yisroel. The idea of coming close to Hashem Through mundane physical acts is ours alone. For Am Yisroel, even the mundane becomes sanctified and not only become the 'purely spiritual' acts as we are told in Mishlei 3:6, 'Know him [Hashem] in all you ways.'