

Rabbi Aharon Ziegler - Parashat VaYikra- 5781, 2021

“THE MOST PRECIOUS KORBAN BECAME THE MOST PRECIOUS PRAYER”

Father, sitting in living room reading his paper, notices his six year old daughter cutting up aluminum foil in the kitchen. Angrily, in a raised voice he shouts at her, “Don’t you know that is very expensive paper?” “But daddy” she meekly replies, ‘It’s your birthday and I’m making a gift for you”. Father, caught by surprise, apologizes and continues reading. Shortly after she enters room singing “Happy Birthday” and presents him with a small silver papered box. He smiles and gently opens it, but finding it empty, he smiles no more. Father, lifts his daughter on his lap and says, “Young lady, I’m going to teach you something. When you give someone a gift you must put something into the box”. “But daddy”, the girl is now in tears, and looking into her father’s eyes says, “I did put something into it; I blew a hundred kisses into it”. Father was now embarrassed, thanked his daughter and kissed her good-night. Six months later his daughter died suddenly from an illness. Father kept that silver covered box on his office desk for years to come, and when he felt depressed it always brought him loving memories of his daughter.

Parashat VaYikra discusses the laws of many of the animal and bird Korbanot (offerings), but with special emphasis on the Korban Mincha, a “poor man’s sacrifice”, consisting only of flour and oil. The Torah introduces the subject of Mincha offerings (2:1) with the phrase “*ve’nefesh ki takriv korban mincha la’HaShem*”, If a *soul* (a person) will bring a mincha offering to HaShem. The term *nefesh* is not mentioned in connection with any other voluntary offering. Why is this expression used here? It is to allude that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is saying, “Who commonly brings a Mincha offering? A poor person, who cannot afford an animal or a bird. And when he exerts himself to offer even the Mincha, I consider it as though he offered his very soul before Me” (Gemara Menachot 104b). To G-d it is not the monetary value that counts, it’s the heart of the giver that counts most. One who brings a Korban Mincha because he cannot afford any more is giving his *nefesh*, and his essence, which makes it the most precious gift of all.

Likewise, the shortest Tefillah of the day is not the morning Shacharit prayer, and not the evening Arvit prayer, but the afternoon Mincha prayer. Yet the Gemara Berachot (6b) states, a person should always be most careful with Tefillat Mincha, for Eliyahu HaNavi was answered on Mt Carmel (after a showdown with all the false prophets), at time of Mincha, and that is when HaShem is more likely to answer our requests. That is why on a public fast day we recite the “Aneinu” prayer in the silent Shemoneh Esrei, not by Arvit, not by Shacharit, but only by Mincha. Similarly, on Tisha B’av, we recite the paragraph of “Nachem” only once during the entire fast day, and that is, by Mincha.

At that short prayer of Mincha, which consists of only one perek Tehilim- saying “Ashrei”, Shemoneh Esrei, Tachanun and Aleinu, we sometimes have to excuse ourselves from a meeting, a lecture, a sales pitch or any other activity. It could be the most difficult time of day for us, and when we do it with heart and soul, we endear ourselves to HaShem and He considers it as the most precious tefillah of all.

Shabbat Shalom From Yerushalayim- Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

QUESTIONS:

1-What is the significance of the “small” Alef in the first word of the Parasha?

2-What does the word “Leimor” in the first pasuk add to the understanding of “Gd spoke to Moshe?”

3-“Adam” is the term used for “man, or “person” (as in 1:2).. Only by one Korban is man referred to as “Nefesh”, (a soul). Which Korban is that, and why?

4- A Korban from a non-Jew was acceptable. However, only one type of Korban was accepted. What Korban was that and who ate from it?

FUN QUESTION—Why is an actor “IN “ a movie, but when he appears on T.V. , he is “ON” t.v.????34