



RABBI AARON

Editor, Torah Tidbits

GOLDSCHIEDER

# The Ripple Effect

The book of *Vayikra* is called ‘*Torat Kohanim*’ (‘The Priestly Code’) on account of the laws of the *Mishkan* and the *korbanot* contained therein. However, there may be a more profound way to understand the implication of this term. The illustrious teacher Nechama Leibowitz cites the notion that the third book of the Torah is so named because it furnishes the Jewish people with instructions as to how *they* can attain the status of “a kingdom of priests.”; “You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (*Shemot* 19:6). (‘*Studies in Vayikra*’ p.1)

The subject of sacrifices plays a central role in the Torah. At the very beginning of the book of *Bereshit* we find Kayin and Hevel, followed by Noach, building altars and offering sacrifices. Now, as we commence the book of *Vayikra*, we are introduced to its significance in Jewish life. The placement of *Korbanot* in the third book of the Torah suggests that it is a central pillar of our faith.

However, the laws and practice of the *korbanot* remain a closed book to us. This

unique form of worship is obscure. How do we find meaning in the mystery of *korbanot*?

We will endeavour to present an intriguing view offered by the Chassidic master, Rebbe Mordechai Yosef Leiner zt”l (1801-1854) in his eminent work, *Mei Hashiloach*.

The Rebbe begins his analysis by emphasizing the ramification of sin. Primarily, sin should not be viewed as being an offense against God, rather, the real damage of sin is its harmful effects on the one who has transgressed. God is impervious to sin. Sin blemishes and scars the sinner himself (*Mei Hashiloach, Vayikra*, ד”ה ויקרא אל משה).

The Rebbe then conveys a critical lesson. We must realize the ripple effect of sin: our words, our actions, even our thoughts, have an effect on others. Indeed, a seemingly insignificant word passes from one person to the next, its impact grows and can become a source of great joy and inspiration or conversely, a source of pain and anxiety. Our thoughts and actions are like stones dropped into still waters, causing ripples to spread and expand as they move outward.

With every action we set into play a chain reaction which is not confined

within the domain of man. Our actions, words, even our thoughts, affect *all* of our surroundings. One example of this is the fact that man shares an interconnectedness with the animal kingdom. The animal kingdom is the closest species to man.

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**Every word we utter, every action we perform, even our intentions, contributes to either hurting or healing the world**

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The Rebbe suggested that by offering animal sacrifice to God, one is declaring through this act, that transgression causes damage well beyond oneself or even one's inner circle. Our actions have reverberations affecting multiple dimensions.

It is here that the Rebbe offers a most beautiful insight: when offering an animal on the altar, the giver acknowledges that his actions can also uplift the world around him. An animal being placed on the altar before the Almighty is to be viewed by the giver as the potential for man to rectify himself and all his surroundings.

כי כשאדם עושה חלילה הפוך הרצון ה' יתברך  
בזה מוריד כל הברואים, ושכעושה תשובה נתעלו כל  
הברואים (מי השילוח, פרשת ויקרא ד"ה ויקרא אל  
משה)

Bringing a sacrifice is empowering. It is meant to inculcate confidence in the

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giver; it says to him, “Your actions have enormous power.”

At this juncture let us briefly cite the position of the towering medieval Torah commentator, Ramban (1194-1270) who argues that a person who offers a sacrifice undergoes a religious experience, as though he was sacrificing himself to God since, strictly speaking, this is what he should be doing, in view of his sin (*Vayikra* 1:9).

We observe a noticeable contrast between the approach of the Ramban and the Rebbe of Ishbitz. According to the Ramban the individual who offers a *karban* sees the animal as a proxy for himself. In contrast, for the Rebbe, the animal represents the manifold areas of life that are affected by one's actions.

Sin can always be rectified; the whole world can be uplifted with an act of *teshuva*. Although one may have degraded themselves to the lowly level of an animal by giving in to one's crude desires, the act of engaging in rectifying the misdeed, serves to uplift not only himself, but to elevate all that is within one's proximity.

The Rebbe cites a mystical teaching in the Zohar which portrays the throne of God adorned on four sides with four images: the face of a lion, the face of an eagle, the face of an ox, and the face of man (*Zohar, Pinchas* 3:241). Man shares an interconnectedness with the animal kingdom. When man fulfils the will of God all of creation benefits and is elevated, ‘His throne is uplifted.’ When man sins,

a chain reaction is set into play, which damages and blemishes the beautiful wholeness that can be actualized in this world.

The essential lesson to be internalized from the sacrificial laws is man's responsibility to his surroundings. It is *not* the animal that brings atonement; atonement is attained when man offers his heart; confession, prayer and one's desire to mend that which has been broken, lies at the heart of the efficacy of the sacrifices.

The opening section in *Vayikra* states: “And he shall lay his hands upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him (1:4). Typically this is understood to mean that when the worshipper brings the animal and places his hand on its head, the Creator accepts the sacrifice. However, the phrase “and it shall be accepted for him” lends itself to a number of interpretations. Nechama Leibowitz, quotes Rabbi Yaakov Zvi Mecklenberg (1785-1865). In his *Ha-Ketav Ve-hakabala* the great sage states:

*“The phrase ‘ve-nirtza lo’ implies that man will endeavor on his own part to purify himself from the stain of sin. The phrase refers to the simple desire aroused in the worshipper to do something to make amends...and thus the verse means the following: “And he shall lay his hand upon...the burnt offering and shall reconcile (or make himself acceptable ) to God...which is the chief purpose of all sacrifices.”*

Attaining ‘priest-like’ holiness depends

on our conduct, our yearnings, and our desire to return to God. Every word we utter, every action we perform, even our intentions, contributes to either hurting or healing the world. Our actions and thoughts resound; they echo well beyond what we can detect from our limited perspective.

As the result of the *korban*, man is inspired to uplift the world. Through his *korban*, he wants to be uplifted, never to slide backwards into the uninspired life he lived before. The sacrificial laws communicate the message that we are capable of continually ascending to more elevated spiritual planes and in so doing, raise all of humanity and all of creation together with us. ■

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# HANDYMENCH

**HandyMench Covid-19  
(coronavirus) update:  
(26/03/20)**

Here are the steps we are taking in order to protect our customers and our employees during the current virus outbreak.

- 1) We aren't taking service calls in homes that are under quarantine.
- 2) Our technicians have been instructed to double-check before they enter a home that no one has been traveling, has a fever, or is under quarantine.
- 3) Our technicians keep a 2-meter distance from customers.
- 4) Our technicians have been instructed to wash their hands every 15 minutes.
- 5) Our technicians will not come to work if they or one of their family members are not feeling well.
- 6) Our technicians have been instructed to wear a new set of gloves and a mask and to discard them after leaving each home. At HandyMench health is our top priority.

Wishing you and your family a healthy pre-Pesach season.

-The Handymench team

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