

# RABBI GOLDBERG'S *Parsha Perspectives* FOR TODAY

Short Divrei Torah on Parshas Vayikra for your Shabbos Table

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## DVAR TORAH FOR THE FRIDAY NIGHT MEAL

### Our Collective Responsibility

אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן לה', מן הבהמה, מן הבקר ומן הצאן תקריבו את קרבנכם – “A person among you who offers a sacrifice to God, you shall offer your sacrifice from animals, from cattle or from sheep.” (1:2)

Many commentators noted the shift in this *pasuk* from the singular form to the plural form. The *pasuk* begins by speaking of an אדם, a person who chooses to offer a sacrifice, but then concludes, תקריבו את קרבנכם, speaking of people who bring a *korban*.

The Alshich Ha'kadosh explains that when a person has failed, when somebody has made mistakes and has strayed, such that he brings a sacrifice for atonement, there is a degree of collective responsibility shared by the entire community. If we had reached out to that individual, if we had inspired him, if we had served as better role models, if we were more embracing, if we were more attuned to his needs, if we had done a better job teaching and showing him the beauty of Torah life, then perhaps he would have made different choices. Therefore, when an אדם, a lone individual, offers a sacrifice for atonement, תקריבו את קרבנכם – he does so on behalf of us all, because כל ישראל ערביין זה לזה – we are all responsible for one another, and we are thus all held accountable for each other's mistakes.

This insight by the Alshich changes our entire perspective on the outliers, on those who have

defected from the Torah way of life. We need to accept part of the blame for the failures and bad choices of our fellow Jews. This is not only about them; it's also about us. We bear a collective responsibility to create an atmosphere that encourages proper conduct and proper observance, and so when a fellow Jew acts wrongly, this is an indictment of our community as a whole. We need to look in the mirror and see where we have gone wrong, how we could have done more to guide, inspire and set a positive example for that Jew to follow, and we need to make the necessary changes going forward so that such mistakes will not recur.

## DVAR TORAH FOR THE SHABBOS DAY MEAL

### Be Normal

כי כל שאור וכל דבש לא תקטירו ממנו אשה לה' (ב:יא).

The Torah forbids, as a general rule, offering on the *mizbei'ach* food items that are *chametz*, or sweet products such as date nectar.

Rav Mordechai Tzuckerman (a disciple of the Chafetz Chaim), in *Leiv Mordechai*, suggests explaining these commands as an allusion to the principle established by the Rambam in *Hilchos Dei'os* (1:4) that one should follow the “golden mean.” The Rambam writes that we are commanded to conduct ourselves with moderation, without veering to extremes. My rebbe, Rav Herschel Schachter *shelit”a*, frequently teaches his students to “be normal.” Our *avodas Hashem* should not lead us to strange, extreme

measures. The source of this concept is the Rambam's teaching that we must follow the *מידה בינונית* – the “middle of the road,” and avoid extreme behavior. Rav Tzuckerman explains that *שאור* (yeast) and *דבש* (nectar) represent polar opposites. *שאור* is spoiled, fermented dough, whereas *דבש* is especially sweet and tasty. Neither is allowed on the *mizbei'ach* as part of a sacrifice, because *avodas Hashem* must be conducted in a measured, moderate, “normal” manner, and not lead us to abnormal, extreme behavior.

There is a specific form of OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder) known as “scrupulosity,” which refers to unhealthy obsessions in the context of one's religious obligations. This is an especially dangerous form of OCD, because it might invite praise instead of concern. People who observe their fellow reciting an especially long *Shemona Esrei*, or worrying obsessively when searching for *chametz*, might mistakenly regard such behavior as admirable expressions of religious devotion, when in truth, this conduct signals a psychological disorder that requires professional intervention. Torah life must be normal, and not extreme.

I recall when I was learning in Yeshiva University there was a *talmid* who, every night, would still be reciting *Shemona Esrei* long after *ma'ariv* in the *beis midrash* (which was not rushed at all) ended. I once asked Rav Schachter if we needed to avoid walking in front of this individual, who was still *davening* long after we all resumed night *seider*. Rav Schachter replied, “If he's still *davening* after *ma'ariv* is finished, then he has the status of a piece of furniture.”

Of course we should *daven* patiently and with *kavana*. But this does not mean that we should be strange. We are to follow the *מידה בינונית*, serving Hashem while being normal. We are not to veer to either extreme, to neither *שאור* nor *דבש*, and must instead strive to adhere to the *מידה בינונית*.

## DVAR TORAH FOR SHALOSH SEUDOS

### Living a Flavorful Torah Life

The Torah commands, על קרבנך תקריב מלח – that we are to add salt to all our sacrifices (2:13).

The *Mei Ha'shiloach* (Rav Mordechai Yosef of Izhbitz) explains this *mitzva* as an allusion to

the experience of *יראה*, awe and reverence for Hashem. *Chazal* explain that at the beginning of the process of creation, water filled the universe until God made a separation between the “upper waters” and “lower waters,” the waters that remained in the heavens, and those which formed the oceans, rivers and lakes here on earth. The “lower waters” objected, complaining that they were driven far from God. They were compensated by being promised that their salt would return to the heavens by being added to the sacrifices. The *Mei Ha'shiloach* thus explains that salt signifies *דין*, God's harsh judgment, the decisions He makes which are not to our liking, and our need to humbly and reverently accept those decisions. The Torah requires adding salt to our *korbanos* to symbolize the need to include a healthy dose of *יראה*, fear and reverence, in our *avodas Hashem*. The word *קרובן* signifies closeness (*קרבה*), our building a close, intimate relationship with the Almighty. The obligation to add salt reminds us that although we are encouraged to strive toward building a close, loving bond with Hashem, we must maintain a degree of fear, recognizing that He is the King over the universe.

The *Tiferes Uziel* adds a different insight into the meaning behind this *mitzva*. Without salt, he explains, food is bland and unappealing. The Torah commands us to add salt to *korbanos* to teach us that we must “spice up” our religious observance, injecting it with excitement and enthusiasm. *Yiddishkeit* must not be bland and unexciting; it needs to have “spice” and “flavor.” Every *mitzva* we perform, every piece of Torah we learn, and every *tefila* and *beracha* we recite, must be accompanied by energy and enthusiasm.

This is especially critical when it comes to *chinuch*. Parents and educators have an obligation to include “salt” in their efforts to educate their children and students. The Torah that they teach and show their charges must come to life, it must be full of “flavor” and zest. Only if we properly “season” our Torah life will it be appealing and draw the children's interest. על כל קרבנך תקריב מלח – every *mitzva* and every piece of Torah must be “salted” and made exciting and enjoyable.