

“Then Yisrael journeyed forth with all that he had...and (he) offered sacrifices to the G-d of his father Yitzchak.” (46:1)

Yaakov *Avinu* arrived in Be'er Sheva, a city glorified by the memory of his fathers. There he offered *zevachim*, sacrifices. He was in the happiest frame of mind that he had attained in his entire life. It was here at this zenith in his life, with his troubles and struggles behind him, that he felt capable of offering a *Korban Shelamim*, Peace- Offering. *Horav S.R. Hirsch, z.l.*, notes that this is the first time that any of the *Avos*, Patriarchs, offered a *korban* other than a *Korban Olah*, Burnt- Offering. He explains that a *Korban Olah* expresses complete submission to Hashem. The *Korban Shelamim/Zevach* is in itself a family meal to be eaten by the *baalim*, owners. Thus, it consecrates the “family house,” making it into a sanctuary and rendering the “family table” a veritable altar. A *zevach* denotes the concept of “Hashem comes to us.” It is understood from that happy consciousness that in a place where the family unit lives in harmony and joy, with fidelity to the Almighty, sensing the Presence of Hashem in their midst, His Presence permeates that family circle.

Rav Hirsch adds that for this very reason, the *Korban Shelamim* is by its very nature a “Jewish” sacrifice. Peace-Offerings marking occasions of family life, expressing the awareness of G-d’s blessing in their circle, are quintessentially Jewish. While it is true that the idea of being absorbed in G-d and devoted to G-d is also found in non-Jewish spirituality, it does not penetrate every aspect of life, as it does in Jewish theology. The essence of Judaism is represented in the idea that one’s ordinary day-by-day lifestyle can be elevated and sanctified: that our table becomes an altar; our home a sanctuary; our children dedicated servants to Hashem; and every aspect of our daily routine a spiritual endeavor. One can either view the mundane as *bitul ha’yeish*, negatively nullifying everything that is not wholly spiritual; or he can fulfill *kiddush ha’yeish*, consecrating the mundane by transforming it in a spiritual and holy activity.

Yaakov brought a *zevach* because he finally felt joy; he felt himself complete in his family circle. The Patriarchs that preceded him, Avraham and Yitzchak, regrettably did not enjoy such “completion” in their family unit. Avraham had Yishmael; Yitzchak had Eisav. Thus, they were compelled to veer toward a complete break with this world. They could not offer a *Shelamim*. Their *korban* was an *Olah*, representing their commitment to negating *Olam Hazeh*. There was no room in their *weltenshauung* for the mundane. Yaakov was also hesitant in offering a *Shelamim*. He was not sure what would happen concerning Yosef. His travail did not allow for a *Shelamim*. As he was going down to Egypt to meet his long lost son, a son who had maintained his spiritual virtue throughout his terrible ordeal, he was able to offer the sacrifice that had eluded his forebears.