

## When you slaughter a feast Thanksgiving to Hashem, you shall slaughter to gain favor for yourselves. (22:29)

*Rashi* understands this *pasuk* as an enjoinder to one who offers a *Korban Todah*, Thanksgiving-offering, to maintain the proper *kavanah*, positive intention, that it all be eaten on that day. If one has intention to prolong the eating until the next day, he not only disqualifies the *korban*, but he also loses favor for himself in the eyes of Hashem. A *korban* achieves efficacy if the individual offering the sacrifice adheres to the prescribed Biblical rules concerning its offering. Otherwise, the *korban* is invalid. *L'retzonchem* is required in order for a *korban* to be effective.

*Horav Avraham Pam, zl* (cited by Rabbi Sholom Smith in "Messages from Rav Pam"), renders the word *l'retzonchem* homiletically, interpreting it as "according to your will." This means the *korban* is a free-will offering, the result of an individual's personal motivation to express his gratitude to Hashem for favors received. Under normal circumstances, the *Korban Todah* is brought for any of four circumstances in which a person's life had been imperiled: surviving a serious illness; crossing the desert; taking a dangerous trip; having been freed from prison. In all of these cases, the expression of gratitude is a "no brainer." One realizes that he almost died, and, if not for the grace of G-d, he would not be here. It is only right that he offer a Thanksgiving-offering.

What about the fellow who has no threats to his life, but realizes that everything that he possesses, all of his good fortune is a miraculous gift from Hashem? The novelty of this *pasuk* is that it refers to a situation in which a person offers a *korban l'retzonchem*, voluntarily – out of free will – not as a result of the above cited circumstances, but due to (unlike so many of us who simply take our good fortune for granted – and even expect it) a deep-rooted realization that whatever he has in life – children, health, livelihood, success, joy and satisfaction – are all miraculous gifts from Hashem. These gifts merit a *Korban Todah* – not one which he has to give, but one which he wants to give!

Such a person acknowledges the daily, constant miracles which he experiences and which sustain him. Although cloaked behind the veil of what we are used to calling "nature," they are miracles and wonders from Hashem. When one sees through the ambiguities and discovers that the Hand of Hashem guides and manipulates life to his betterment, when he realizes that all of his life's achievements are the result of Hashem's blessing, he will (or should) feel a sense of gratitude that inspires him to offer a *Korban Todah* to Hashem. This is the meaning of being guided by one's own will. While most of us realize that it is all from Hashem – some of us feel a sense of entitlement. After all He owes me. How sad.

One of the features of this week's *parsha* is the *tzivui*, command, to bring the *Omer* to the *Bais Hamikdash*. Beginning on the second day of *Pesach*, we count forty-nine days until *Shavuot*. The *Rambam* views the counting as similar to the anticipation one has as he waits to greet a welcomed guest. The *Sefer HaChinuch* says that by counting the days, we express our gratitude to Hashem for the harvests that we enjoy. Furthermore, when we count days, we count time, which is

Hashem's greatest gift to us. We realize that every day, every hour, every moment, is a blessing which we may not squander. As we age, this blessing catalyzes greater meaning and value. Time becomes much more important as the "sands of the hourglass" move from top to bottom. Every new day is a cause for celebration. How do we celebrate? How should a Jew celebrate the greatest gift from Hashem? He should give back by using every waking moment of that day to serve Him via: bringing fresh blessing into the world; helping his fellow Jew. No one pleases a father more than someone who helps his children. Our Heavenly Father certainly appreciates it if our expression of gratitude to Him were to include reaching out to His children.