

When a man among you brings an offering to Hashem. (1:2)

Without a *Bais Hamikdash* where we can offer *korbanos*, offerings, we rely on our *tefillos*, prayers, to take the place of these *korbanos*. As such, our *tefillos* must be on the *madreigah*, spiritual plateau, of *korbanos*. The *Sefer HaChinuch* (*Parashas Terumah*, *mitzvah* of constructing the *Mishkan*) explains that *korbanos*, like the *Mishkan*, availed the Jew the opportunity to express himself to Hashem in a tangible manner. Thus, when a person sinned and brought a *korban* as penance, he was not getting by with a perfunctionary, *Chatasi*, "I sinned. I am sorry." Rather, he offered a *korban*, an animal which would take his place, thereby intimating that he understood that, indeed, he should be up there on the *Mizbayach*, Altar; his body should be suffering the travail that the animal was undergoing. This would bring to his mind the reality of his transgression, its gravity. Today, when we pray, we must keep all of this in mind. "I am sorry" does not suffice.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, recalls an incident concerning a well-meaning *yeshivah* student who acted out of character, and, when he sought penance, *Horav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita*, refused to allow him to achieve absolution with a simple apology. He placed a heavy demand on the young man. The story occurred following the nine days of mourning which precede *Tishah B'Av*. During this period, observant Jews do not eat meat or drink wine, except on *Shabbos* or for a *simchah*, joyous celebration, such as a *bris* or *siyum*, completion of a *Meseches*, Tractate, of *Talmud*. The Galei Sanz Hotel in Netanya is near the *Sanz yeshivah*. The *Klausenberger Rebbe* offered to send a student over every night to make a *siyum* to avail the hotel's guests the opportunity to eat meat. Afterwards, one of the students came forward and expressed his great remorse over having fooled the guests. Apparently, he had commenced the *Meseches* – and even concluded it. The problem was that he had not studied the pages between the beginning and the end. His *siyum* was a sham. The people had eaten meat during the Nine Days. He was terribly sorry, very apologetic. What more could he do to absolve himself?

Rav Chaim asked how many guests had attended the *siyum*. He was told that fifty people had attended. *Rav Chaim paskened*, rendered his decision: The young man should make fifty *siyumim* on that *Meseches*! When *Rav Zilberstein* heard this, he wondered if perhaps this might be too much. Then *Rav Chaim* added, "And one time should be with the commentary of the *Maharasha*!"

Apologies do not replace a concrete expression of regret. As the *korbanos* tangibly expressed our feelings, so should our *tefillos*. I think we may derive from the *psak* of *Rav Chaim* that every *aveirah*, sin, has consequences which reverberate, repercussions whose fallout can, and do, affect others. All of this must be taken into consideration when one attempts to do *teshuvah*, repent. Perhaps this is why *teshuvah* for *chillul Hashem*, profaning Hashem's Name, is limitless. The repercussions are quite possibly impossible to delineate, since we have no idea how many religious mindsets were altered as a result of any specific profaning of Hashem's Name, nor do we know for how long. A family's religious trajectory can be changed because a father or mother had been negatively affected by someone's actions. Do we truly understand the domino effect for generations to come? This is why *teshuvah* is a non-issue.

Having touched on the topic of *tefillah* and its status in post-*Bais Hamikdash* times, I came across a powerful insight from *Horav Yaakov Edelstein, zl*. He was asked by *Horav Shmuel HaLevi Wosner, zl*, how he merited that Hashem would always listen to his *tefillas* (on behalf of others) and *berachos* (that he gave others)? *Rav Edelstein's* response was, "Who says that Hashem listens to me?" When that response did not succeed in convincing *Rav Wosner* to withdraw his question, *Rav Edelstein* said, "Perhaps it is because many people come to me to share their problems, and I have (or make) the patience to listen to each and every one of them." He listened to each individual person, regardless of the substance of the issue, since what is a problem to one person does not necessarily define the term "problem." Each person has his own individual sensitivities and barometer for what constitutes a "problem." This might encourage Heaven to say, "As you are patient to listen to others, Heaven will be patient in listening to you."

Horav Elimelech Biderman, Shlita, offers the following (perhaps frightening) analogy. Reuven and Shimon were brothers, but this is where their commonality began and ended. Reuven was a wealthy businessman who was well-known and sought after; in contrast, his brother was relegated to living in solitude in abject poverty. One day, the situation in Shimon's house became acute. He decided he would go to his wealthy brother and ask for his assistance. Little did he imagine his brother's attitude upon seeing him. "I have no idea who you are," Reuven said quite callously. "You must have the wrong address. You are definitely not my brother. I will not give you a penny." Dejected and broken, Shimon returned home penniless and humiliated.

Sometime later, Reuven had occasion to visit their father. "Who are you?" his father asked. Fearing that his father was becoming a victim of premature dementia, he said, "What do you mean, who am I? I am Reuven, your son!"

"I do not have a Reuven who is my son. I do not have a son by the name of Reuven," the father said. "Surely, you have a son, Reuven. Indeed, you have two sons: Reuven and Shimon. I am Reuven."

The father replied, "I have no idea who you are. It is true that I have a son by the name of Shimon, but I have no son named Reuven. In fact, you told Shimon that he was not your brother. If Shimon is not your brother, then you obviously cannot be my son."

Hashem tells us (when we scream *Avinu Malkeinu*, Our Father, Our King!), "If you are brothers, I am your King. If, however, you act callously to one another, how can you be My son? In order for you to be united as one, you must act as a brother. They go hand-in-hand."