

When you slaughter a feast peace-offering to Hashem, you shall slaughter it to find favor for yourselves. (19:5)

Ramban explains that when one offers a *korban*, sacrifice, to Hashem, the intention behind and accompanying it “shall be to find favor for oneself... like a servant ingratiating himself to his master... without any service for the purpose of receiving reward, but only to carry out the *ratzon*, will, of Hashem, for it is His simple will that constitutes what is appropriate and obligatory.” In other words, the *kavanah*, intention, of the individual who is slaughtering the animal is not for the *shechitah*, ritual, but simply to serve Hashem by carrying out His will. This is how a Jew should live his life – to fulfill the *ratzon Hashem*.

Horav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, zl, would quote *Horav Avraham Tzvi Kamai, zl*, who related in the name of his father, *Horav Eliyahu Baruch Kamai, zl*, that: *Ich darf nisht haben di baalei kisharon; ich zuch dem guteh freint*, “For my *shiur*, Talmudic lecture, I do not require (nor do I seek out) those who are brilliant. I look for a ‘good friend’ (one who cares), who is interested in listening to what I have to say and wants to understand it.” A good student is one who is interested in what his *rebbe* has to say, not in showcasing what he personally knows. It is all about wanting to fulfill the *ratzon*, will, of the *rebbe*.

Horav Dov Berish Weidenfeld, zl, the *Tchebiner Rav*, related that a Torah scholar once commented to *Horav Yehoshua, zl, m’Kutna* (author of *Yeshuos Malko*) that he was proficient in all of *Seder Nezikin* (the order of *Talmud* that deals extensively with laws of damages, Jewish criminal and civil law and the Jewish court system). *Rav Yehoshua* sought to temper his inflated ego by explaining to him that the barometer for success was not erudition (which this scholar claimed he had mastered), but rather *hismasrus l’Torah*, complete devotion/attachment to Torah. He asked the scholar, “Do you know the meaning of *shibuda d’Oraisa*?” (*Chazal* record a dispute concerning a lien rendered verbally without the support of a *shtar*, written document, whether it is scripturally binding, i.e. maybe the lender will collect his money either from the borrower or his heirs.) The young man replied, “Of course!” (This is one of the basics in Torah law.) *Rav Yehoshua* countered, “This is not to what I was alluding. My intention with this question was concerning *Targum Onkelos*’s translation of the *pasuk*, *V’es ha’nefesh asher asu b’Charan*, “And the souls they made in Charan” (*Bereishis* 12:5). (A reference to the pagans converted by Avraham *Avinu* and Sarah *Imeinu*.) *Onkelos* explains it as, *V’es nafshasa di shabidu l’Oraisa*, “And the souls which they committed to Torah.” (The only commitment of substance, the only obligation that has value and endurance, is a commitment to Torah.) “That is another form of *shibuda d’Oraisa* which you must remember.”

Horav Baruch Shimon Schneerson, zl, *Rosh Yeshivas Tchebin* (son-in-law of the *Tchebiner Rav*) explains the concept of *shibud*/commitment/obligation. When one holds a lien on a parcel of land; this land is considered *me’shibud*, obligated to him. It may be sold numerous times, but, ultimately, the land remains *meshubad* to him. In other instances, one may own/have land rights to a piece of

land, but said land is mortgaged to others. Owning land that is mortgaged to others does not constitute true ownership, since he is beholden to them. A similar concept applies to Torah study. One who is committed to Torah may, at times, be called away to address mundane issues which have nothing whatsoever to do with Torah. He is, however, essentially committed to Torah. What arises are simply diversions with which he must contend, but his primary *shibud*, commitment, remains to Torah. He also has a counterpart, whose “address” is the *bais hamedrash* where he is (supposedly) learning all day. At every possible juncture which calls him away from learning, however, he is the first one to be involved. Such a person may be ensconced in the *bais hamedrash*, but it is not where he has his *shibud*.

Horav Aharon Rokeach, zl, the *Belzer Rebbe*, was an unusual *tzaddik*, righteous person. His life was, indeed, a lesson in living to fulfill the *ratzon Hashem*. Throughout his life, he was sickly and physically frail. As a young man, he was so weak that one winter the doctor forbade him from immersing in the frigid *mikvah* waters. (The *mikvaos* had little to no heat. Poland winters are notoriously cold.) To reinforce the doctor’s orders, *Horav Yissachar Dov*, his father, the *Belzer Rebbe*, enjoined him to follow the doctor’s orders and prohibited him from immersing himself in the *mikvah*.

One frigid night at 3:00 a.m., the snow was falling, the cold wind was howling; it was not a night for even a healthy man to leave the comfort of his home – let alone one as physically delicate as the young *Rav Aharon*. It was quiet throughout the Belzer community, except for *Rav Aharon* who was on his way to the *mikvah*. A family member was up learning, saw this and, concerned for *Rav Aharon*’s health, decided to follow him covertly. At first, he did not believe that *Rav Aharon* would take such a chance and disobey both the doctor and his father, but he appeared bent on going to the *mikvah*. *Rav Aharon* quietly entered the *mikvah*. He did not turn on the lamps; rather, he maneuvered himself in the freezing room. He removed his clothes and descended the steps to the frigid water. When he reached the last step, he paused and, with a voice laden with emotion, he cried out, “*Ribono Shel Olam!* I hereby prepare myself to fulfill the *mitzvas asei*, positive commandment, of *V’nishmartam me’od l’nafshoseichem*, ‘And you shall carefully guard your physical wellbeing,’ as well as the *mitzvah* of *Kibbud av*, honoring my father, who told me not to immerse in the *mikvah*.” *Rav Aharon* then ascended the steps, dressed and returned home.

When his father heard what had taken place in the *mikvah*, he wept tears of joy, and, with profound gratitude, he thanked the Almighty for granting him a son who had achieved *shleimus*, perfection, in his service to Hashem. He had fulfilled both the will of Hashem to be purified and the directives of his father and the doctor.