

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

Korbanos are a medium for bringing one closer to Hashem. Hence, (we use) the term *korban*, which is connected to *karov*, near. The various *korbanos* comprised one aspect of the person's atonement process. Once he recognizes and acknowledges his sin, states it and acts remorseful, he is now able to commence the journey toward penance and forgiveness. As part of the *teshuvah* process, he offers a *korban* which is sacrificed on the *Mizbayach*, Altar, with the understanding that, what takes place concerning the animal, really should have happened to him. The realization of the chasm created by his lapse in behavior will catalyze a sense of regret and acceptance for the future that such behavior will no longer be a part of his life. Today *korbanos* are no longer extant. As a result, *tefillah*, prayer, is our service to Hashem. Everything else, acknowledgement and remorse, followed by acceptance for the future, however, remain the same. These are part and parcel of the *teshuvah* process.

The following story, which I wrote a few years ago, is worth repeating. It is about a girl who, when up against the wall, decided to bring her own innovative *korban*.

A few years ago, a terrorist packed his car with 100 kilos of explosives and parked it near a supporting pillar at the Cinemall in Haifa. It did not explode. Had his intentions achieved fruition, the tragedy would have been cataclysmic. Not only would it have destroyed the pillar, but it would have also caused a conflagration when the other cars in the lot would have ignited. This is one of the most popular malls in the area, and it was full at the time. We cannot even begin to contemplate the extent of the tragedy had that bomb gone off. An alert passerby noticed smoke coming from the car and summoned the police, who brought in the bomb squad and diffused the bomb. Everyone – even Ehud Olmert, then Prime Minister – recognized that they were spared by Hashem. This was clearly a miracle.

Now, for the rest of the story. Several weeks prior to this occurrence, a teenage girl in Haifa who had been complaining of stomach pains went to the doctor, and, after a battery of tests, was diagnosed with a malignant tumor that had metastasized. The doctors gave the grim verdict: They could do nothing other than give her pain meds to make her comfortable. She had mere weeks to live.

The girl did not give up; her parents did not give up. They might not have been observant Jews, but hope is a value that is inherently Jewish. They pleaded with the doctors to try something – anything – at least to make an effort to save their daughter's life. The doctors finally agreed and scheduled surgery for the next day. Feeling that their chances for success were very low, they assigned a young, inexperienced surgeon, with the feeling that it would be good practice for him. Since he had nothing to lose, the surgeon really could not go wrong.

They say that there are no atheists in a foxhole. The night before the surgery, the non-observant girl began to plead with Hashem. She said, "*HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, I am not perfect, and I probably

do not deserve any favors from You. In ancient times, when we had a *Bais Hamikdash*, a sinner would confess and offer a *korban* and achieve penance. Today, we have no *Bais Hamikdash*, no *korbanos*, no *Kohanim*, but I still want to bring a *korban*.”

At that moment, she walked into her closet, removed all of her immodest clothing and carried it out to her yard. She made a pile and struck a match, creating a large pyre of burning clothing. She cried out, “Hashem, this is my *korban*!”

The next day, the girl went to the hospital in her nightgown and robe. She had no other clothing. Her entire wardrobe had been elevated to *korban* status. She had the surgery, and, lo and behold, the tumor had not metastasized. It was totally contained – and benign. She had just been the fortunate recipient of a miracle. When she shared the story behind the miracle with her friends, they, too, wanted to reap the benefits of dressing modestly. The next day, they all came together, brought out their immodest attire and made a bonfire!

The girls were now left with nothing presentable to wear. No problem – that is what malls are for. They all went together to celebrate their newly-accepted modesty – by shopping for new clothes. When that terrorist bomb was set to go off, those girls were at the mall, shopping for new, modest clothing!