

And if a Korban Shelamim is his offering. (3:1)

The *Korban Shelamim* is defined as a Peace-offering. The word *shelamim* is derived from *shalem*, implying a state of completeness, of perfection, when used in connection with a human being. *Shalem* denotes that the person is in such a state that he does not feel a flaw in any part of his life. He feels complete. He lacks for nothing. Understandably, *shalem* is a relative concept, since it primarily describes an object in relation to all of its parts, or a person in relation to the circumstances and surroundings in which he lives.

Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl, observes that *shalem* is that state of affairs in which no component of a person or thing detracts from any of the others, but rather, in which each component is complemented in and through all of the others. *Shalom* is not merely superficial coexistence, but an organic agreement and interaction among all of the parts of the whole. Therefore, the *Korban Shelamim* is an offering that emanates from the feelings that one is in a state of peace. I think in *Yiddish* we would refer to such a person as a *tzufridener mensch*, an individual who has achieved inner joy.

In his inimitable manner, *Rav Hirsch* so beautifully explains the meaning of a *Korban Shelamim* as symbolizing an aspect of a person's quest for the nearness of Hashem. This is based on the fact that the individual who makes the offering feels completely at peace. Indeed, he feels that nothing is lacking in his life – other than the nearness of G-d. This is the crowning point in his life. The *Korban Shelamim* symbolizes the Jewish philosophy of life. The bridge to Hashem is established through joy – not grief. The highest form of service to the Divine is to enjoy one's existence on earth before the countenance of G-d. The *shelamim* is based on this premise: one seeks out Hashem for no other reason – not even to pay gratitude – just to be in His proximity.

Rav Hirsch applies this principle to explain why one who is in a state of *aninus*, during the day on which one has lost a close relative (prior to the burial), may not offer *korbanos*. The Sanctuary is off limits. This law was set forth primarily in connection to a *Shelamim*, but is applicable across the board to all other *korbanos*. This is because the *Shelamim* is to reflect a state of mind in which the person who offers them feels neither hurt nor bereft. One offers the *Shelamim* when he feels at peace with himself, not when he is in deep mourning. We are taught *Shelamim korbano*, "His offering shall be a *Shelamim*": All of the offerings that he brings, he shall bring when he is whole" (*Zevachim* 99b). One must not cross the threshold of Hashem's Sanctuary while his heart is torn in grief. Only one who is at peace and reconciled with his present lot in life can find his way to Hashem's nearness.

This idea is just one more area in which we, as adherents to the Torah, differ from other religions. The gentile world views it as their greatest triumph if they can use religion as a method for overcoming grief, if their temple of worship can soothe the sorrow, ease the pain, and give comfort to its adherents during their moment of bereavement. Judaism, however, categorically rejects this notion. We are taught that sorrow must be overcome prior to entering the Sanctuary. This is, in

fact, a precondition for the impact of the Sanctuary on the Jew. The Sanctuary is not a place where one goes to seek therapy. The purpose of the *Bais Hamikdash* is not to comfort us in our sorrow, to relieve us of the pain, but rather, to give us the strength and tenacity to serve G-d through practical action, out of a sense of calm, courage, and a willful determination to confront life's vicissitudes. It is this powerful emotion that permeates the halls of the sanctuary. Indeed, Hashem's Sanctuary is His Hall of Justice.

I would like to take advantage of my writer's license to elaborate on this subject. It has been noted by leading psychologists and grief experts that there are five stages of grief: denial – refusing to believe what has happened; anger – accusing “others” of allowing it to occur. “How dare you permit this to happen!”; bargaining – asking for a deal. Begging for a little time to get things in order, to celebrate one more milestone event; depression – experiencing feelings of listlessness, a sense of guilt, a lack of interest in living, essentially throwing in the towel; and acceptance – confronting the loss and deciding it is time to move on. Wallowing in depression will only destroy whatever is left. It is best to make closure and look forward to the future.

People grieve differently. No “one size fits all” when it comes to grief. Grieving is a complex process, and each individual makes the journey at his or her own speed. While some take “shortcuts,” one thing is for certain – everyone must reach the final stage, acceptance. No matter how one reaches this goal, one needs to accept the situation if he is once again to be a healthy person, mentally, emotionally, physically. Acceptance by no means indicates that one has forgotten the trauma or has erased it from his mind. It means that one remembers the loss, but has reconciled himself with life, and it is now time to move on.

With this in mind, we understand that the *Bais Hamikdash* represents the opposite of the first four stages. The Sanctuary is a place of hope, a place of holiness, a place of action where we serve the Almighty. We do not go there for therapy. Likewise, the *Gemora* is not the place where we drown our sorrows. We must study Torah *b'simchah*, with joy. It is not a happy pill. Those great Torah leaders who claimed that the Torah they studied had the ability to assuage their grief meant that, prior to studying Torah, they knew that they must put aside whatever issues they had – or they would not be able to learn. In other words, the learning was not their therapy, but they had to be in a proper frame of mind in order to learn.

Horav Nachman Breslover, zl, was wont to say, “Sadness is not a sin, but its effect on the person is much worse than that of any sin.” The soul was sent to this world not merely to exist, but to do, to act, to achieve. When one is overcome with sadness, the soul contracts and becomes concealed, essentially reversing the flow of life. While there are times in which sadness is appropriate, such as *Tishah B'Av*, our national day of mourning, it is a sort of “positive sadness,” active form of sadness, without which we could not truly experience joy. One who is always happy and never senses sadness has a disjointed sense of joy. It is a false joy because it lacks balance. The word used by the *Breslover* to describe sadness is *atzvus*, which is a derivative of the word *matzav*, *atzav*, standing still or mute, blank depression, having no will to live, to fight, simply not

caring what happens. This form of depression can be deadly.