

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

The service of offering *Korbanos*, sacrifices to Hashem, was given to *Klal Yisrael*. It is a holy service designated for a holy people. *Korbanos*, however, are not designated solely for the Jewish People. Anyone – regardless of faith – may bring a *korban*. Indeed, we read in *Parashas Emor* (*Vayikra* 22:18), “Speak to Aharon and his sons and to all of *Bnei Yisrael* and say to them: Any man of the House of *Yisrael* and of the *geirim*, proselytes among *Yisrael*, who will bring his offering for any of their vows or their free-will offerings that they will bring to Hashem for an elevation offering.” The *Talmud Menachos* 73b derives from the redundancy of the word *ish*, man (*ish ish*), which we translate as “any man,” that a gentile may also bring a *korban* to the *Bais Hamikdash*.

There is, however, a fundamental difference between the *korban* that a Jew brings and that which a gentile brings: the *korban* of a non-Jew is locked into the *Korban Olah*, Burnt-offering/Elevation-offering category. Even if the gentile articulates his clear intention to offer a *Korban Shelamim*, Peace-offering, it remains an *Olah* – a *korban* which is completely burnt. No one partakes of a *Korban Olah*. The reason for this is that we “say” the gentile’s intention was for Hashem; he wanted to contribute a sacrifice totally for Hashem. When a Jew, however, states that the *korban* is a *Shelamim*, it will become a *Shelamim*. This is problematic, since *Chazal* seem to imply that a gentile’s intention is more likely to be for Hashem than that of a Jew, whose intention might be for a *Shelamim* – which allows him to eat of the *korban*’s flesh. This is inconsistent with a number of statements which *Chazal* make in which they say that a gentile’s intention is not necessarily for Hashem. An ulterior motive seems to underlie their overt intentions *l’shem Shomayim*, for the sake of Heaven.

Horav Aryeh Leib Bakst, zl, explains the disparity and teaches us an important principle concerning Jewish dogma in contradistinction to that of other religions. Religion and spirituality can certainly be found in the non-Jewish world. In fact, it is one of the non-Jewish world’s greatest areas of commerce. A basic principle distinguishes the two: Spirituality and physicality; holy and mundane do not mix – ever! When a gentile is involved in spiritual discourse, he has no room to include anything physical/material. Like water and oil, the two do not mix together. They are opposites; hence, they must each retain their own individuality. To mix the mundane with the sacred is to profane the sacred. Likewise, when they are immersed in their physical dimension – it is all physical, all material – with no room for anything sacred to integrate. They drink for pleasure. Nothing is sacred about drinking; is it any wonder that in all areas of physicality, they can descend to the nadir of depravity to carry out their base desires?

Jewish dogma is in total contradistinction to this line of thinking. Every moment of a Jewish person’s life is devoted to Hashem. How is this? Considering our occupation with the worldly, material and physical aspects of life – how can we say that we are always engaged in *avodas Hashem*, service to the Almighty? It is because we do not believe in a dichotomy between the physical and spiritual. Our entire physical dimension is governed by *halachah*. From the moment

we arise in the morning, until we retire to bed at night, *halachah* is our spiritual/moral compass. Everything that we do must pass muster in accordance with *halachic* guidelines. Everything we do is focused on *kavod Shomayim*, enhancing the glory of Heaven.

Therefore, the concept of a *Korban Shelamim*, which might be viewed as a spiritual hybrid – with the owner partaking of its flesh, and the Sanctuary receiving its due when the *Kohanim* consume their portion – suggests that their eating effects atonement from the owner. It is all based on one's intention. With the proper *kavanah*, intention, one is able to sanctify the mundane, elevate the physical and transform it into a completely different entity. By elevating the mundane objects and activities in life to a higher spiritual purpose, we are sanctifying them.

This is the incredible power of a Jew. We can take something which is *chullin*, secular, and, through a simple declaration, make it *Terumah*, *Maaser*, a *korban* – something so holy that it is no longer permissible to be eaten by just anyone. When one ponders this awesome power, he should be invested with a feeling of great pride.

In a number of his *Maamarim*, **Horav Yitzchak Hutner, zl**, discusses the performance of multiple activities – some secular, some spiritual – and their place in a unified vision of life. The *Rosh Yeshivah* quotes a question posed to him by a student who felt that his choice of a secular career bespoke that he was living a double life. It seems from the letter that the student, having recently left the walls of the *bais hamedrash*, was having difficulty reconciling himself with his “new life.” *Rav* Hutner explains that he is against leading a double life, but asserts that a secular life does not, by definition, necessarily imply a dual life. We can consider the concept of a broad life, which is different from a double life.

One who rents a room in a hotel, yet owns a house, switching off between both domiciles, leads a double life. One who rents multiple rooms in one hotel, however, is living a broad life. Engaging in various activities does not, in and of itself, indicate a duality. As long as all of the activities are components within one unified vision, the varied elements are consistent in conforming to one direction in life, or approach to life, the person lives a broad – rather than double – life.

Rav Hutner relates that he once witnessed Dr. Wallach, the German immigrant physician who played a leading role in the establishment of Shaarei Tzedek Hospital, shortly before surgery. The doctor asked the patient for his Hebrew name and that of his mother, so that he could recite *Tehillim* on his behalf. Dr. Wallach was not leading a double life. The human effort of reciting *Tehillim* and medical intervention are not incongruous with one another. They both allude to the belief that the end result is up to Hashem. They are two varied approaches with one common vision – to achieve a successful outcome for the patient. The sacred sanctifies the secular, if they share one vision united by belief in Divine Providence. Thus, we are able to sanctify the mundane aspects of our lives.