

And if he will slaughter a peace-offering. (3:1)

Targum Onkeles defines the word zevach as “a holy slaughtering.” Indeed, the essence of a Korban Shelamim, Peace-offering, is fundamentally different from that of other korbanos. The average korban serves as a medium to serve Hashem. As part of this objective, the animal must be slaughtered, but the slaughtering is not the primary act of hakravah, offering. Unlike other korbanos, the act of shechitah, slaughtering, within the context of a shelamim, has greater significance. A Korban Shelamim is brought by a person who wants to eat mundane food. He wants elevated, consecrated food. When one partakes of a Korban Shelamim, he is eating the flesh of an animal that was slaughtered in the Bais Hamikdash, with the intention of it being offered to Hashem. By the time the animal’s flesh is brought to the owner’s dining table, it has already been sanctified and elevated. Thus, as explained by Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl, the ultimate intent in slaughtering a shelamim is to facilitate consumption of the animal. Therefore, the Torah refers to it as a zevach, holy slaughtering.

The Korban Todah, Thanksgiving-offering, is considered a shelamim. One who has survived a life-threatening crisis brings a Korban Todah. Chazal (Berachos 54b) explain that basically four categories of individuals exist whose experiences require them to bring a Korban Todah. One who has survived travel through a desert, a sea voyage, serious illness, or a dangerous incarceration brings a Korban Todah to express his gratitude to Hashem. The Rosh Yeshivah explains that the very realization that he was spared by Divine “intervention” behooves him to realize that all events – even those which seem mundane, every day, normal, run of the mill – are, in fact, fashioned and manipulated by Hashem. Only Hashem controls everything; every event – large and small, normal or miraculous – is all under His purview. Nature belongs to Hashem – as does everything.

This idea understandably brings with it the perception that the seemingly mundane world – its every aspect and maintenance, indeed, all physical matter – has considerable significance. Otherwise, why would Hashem involve Himself with it? If there is purpose in physicality, it must then be harnessed and elevated for the service of Hashem. Since this awareness is the consequence of his being spared from death, then what greater and more noble expression of gratitude can there be than actually taking a worldly matter and elevating it to korban level? By doing this, one fulfills this very concept. This is the essence of a Korban Shelamim. It is a sacrifice whose entire purpose is to uplift one’s act of eating by elevating mundane food and transforming it into kodoshim, consecrated food. Therefore, the Torah sees fit to classify the Todah as a form of shelamim.

Perhaps we might expand on the Rosh Yeshivah’s idea. The Klausenberger Rebbe, zl, was a unique individual. One of Europe’s youngest pre-Holocaust Rebbeim, his encyclopedic knowledge would rival that of a computer. It was his incredible emunah that was likely his greatest spiritual asset. To paraphrase Horav Lazar Brody, Shlita, “His emunah was so powerful, he saw only Hashem – nothing and no one else. He feared no one, not even the accursed SS officers who threatened so many times to kill him. He was 100% a servant of Hashem.”

The Rebbe’s resolve to uphold every mitzvah was absolute. It did not matter to him whether his situation was comfortable or whether he was facing certain death. He saw only Hashem. There was no mundane – there was only the ratzon Hashem, will of G-d, expressed through every

creation. Despite the beatings and torture, the Nazis could not break him. He composed himself with absolute resolve and devotion to Hashem. His faith was unshakable.

His absolute refusal to eat non-kosher food – even on Pesach – drove the Nazis into a frenzy. He prayed to Hashem, right in front of the Nazis, without fear. He did not see them. He saw only Hashem. He had every reason to give up, to throw in the towel. His wife and children were brutally murdered. His co-religionists were mocked by the Nazi beasts shortly before being murdered by them. The anger within him must have reached a boiling point; yet, instead of anger building up from within, there was a flame of defiance that burned brightly, that motivated him to scoff at the Nazis. The Rebbe taught us that there is a higher spiritual plateau than just being observant. We all serve Hashem, but how many can say definitively that we serve only Hashem, that we think only of Hashem; that we see Him alone, with outside pressures having no impact upon us whatsoever? While few can be expected to live and achieve the spiritual apex reached by the Klausenberger Rebbe, we now have a standard, an example of greatness, for which we might aspire.