

And I – behold! I have given you the safeguard of My heaven-offer was of all the sanctities of Bnei Yisrael. (18:8)

The offerings Korach controversy had concluded (veritably, it never ends; a new one will unfortunately rear its ugly head to replace the former debacle), and the Torah now lists the twenty-four various gifts, *matnos Kehunah*, that were allotted to the *Kohanim*. In *Pirkei Avos* (6:6), we are taught that the Priesthood is acquired through twenty-four procedures. *Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl*, observes that this is no coincidence. A corollary must exist between these two “twenty-fours.” He quotes the *Chovos HaLevavos*, who teaches that everything which Hashem grants us comes with an obligation for reciprocity. Hashem shows His kindness to us. We are obliged to reciprocate in kind, by adding joy and fervor to our continued service.

Rav Wolbe derives from here an important lesson for all of us. First and foremost, we must never lose sight of the fact that Hashem created us and the world that we are in. When we bear this in mind, we realize that everything is a gift from Hashem; thus, we cannot take anything for granted. We can have no entitlement. Life, health, intellect, family, and material possessions are all gifts which Hashem, in His infinite kindness, bestows upon us. At any time, He can decide to withhold a gift, and we will not function in the manner that we took for granted.

I write this in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, when the entire world has come to the stark realization that Hashem owes us nothing, and He can demonstrate this at any time. An entire world has been brought to its feet. Furthermore, not only were our material and physical activities halted; our ability to function on a spiritual plane was put to a test unlike anything ever before. No one knows the reason why Hashem does what He does. One thing is for certain: Hashem is holding the cards; He is manipulating the strings.

Hashem does not dole out gifts without a reason. Everything that He gives us has a purpose. The gifts that He gives us are to enable us to serve Him better – with wisdom, strength and material bounty. Nothing one receives from Hashem is automatic, because He owes us nothing. Additionally, everything that we are granted is for the purpose of furthering our knowledge of Hashem and enabling us to serve Him better. The *Kohanim* merited twenty-four gifts, which (in turn) obligated them to perform the twenty-four varied services in the *Bais HaMikdash*. We, too, have a *quid pro quo* to perform Hashem’s service with every gift in our inventory.