

With this shall Aharon come into the Sanctuary: with a young bull for a sin-offering and a ram for an elevation offering... from the assembly of Bnei Yisrael he shall take two he-goats. (16:3,5)

Chazal (Midrash Rabbah, Vayikra 21:11) state that the three *korbanos*, offerings, that were brought on Yom Kippur represented the three *Avos*, Patriarchs. The young bull that served as a *korban chatas*, sin-offering, represented Avraham *Avinu*. The ram that was used as a *korban olah*, elevation-offering, symbolized Yitzchak *Avinu*. The two he-goats denoted Yaakov *Avinu*. When the *Kohen Gadol* entered the Sanctuary, he did so *b'z'chus*, in the merit of, the three *korbanos* that he brought.

Avraham *Avinu* sacrificed himself, manifesting extreme devotion, for the purpose of bringing a pagan world closer to Hashem. His love for people and his constant acts of *chesed*, lovingkindness, distinguished him in a world that spawned paganism and immorality, a society in which people were devoted to themselves. Yitzchak *Avinu* exemplified *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, for Hashem and His honor. Yaakov *Avinu's* *korban* was different. It demonstrated that one is able to forgo and defer his personal proclivities, to overcome his sense of self, in order to fulfill Hashem's commands or that of the greater good. Yaakov was the epitome of *emes*, truth. He could not tolerate any vestige of falsehood. Yet, when his mother instructed him to act in a less than honest manner in his pursuit of Yitzchak's blessings, he listened to her. Some people would sooner throw themselves into fiery cauldrons than to carry out parental requests, than happily and lovingly accept what their parents have to say and execute what they have asked of them.

Horav Yechiel Weinberg, zl, posits that Yaakov's *korban* is critical to the atonement *Klal Yisrael* seeks on *Yom Kippur*. The first two *korbanos* represent the *middos*, attributes, evinced by Avraham and Yitzchak and are insufficient to effect atonement. To sacrifice oneself for the Creator or for people is important, but inadequate. Avraham's *middah* was *ahavah*, intense love of Hashem. Yitzchak's *middah* was *yiraah*, intense fear and awe of Hashem. Thus, what Avraham and Yitzchak did, their ability to sacrifice, was actually intrinsic to who/what they were. Avraham loved; Yitzchak feared. They acted in accordance with their *middos*, their standards of living, their values. They always were afraid, however, that when they had to live outside the box, when Hashem would demand that they exit their comfort zones, so that they were compelled to fear or love not in consonance with their natural tendencies, they would not be able to continue to serve Hashem with such devotion. Avraham and Yitzchak each acted within the parameters of his inherent character. Yaakov was called upon to act out of character.

Nonetheless, notes the *Rosh Yeshivah*, Yaakov's *korban* is third in sequence, because this is not the correct progression of service. A child is not taught to walk backwards, because he will surely stumble and fall. He must follow a sequence that prioritizes what is habitual and conventional and,

only then, focus on the iconoclastic. The *Kohen Gadol* enters the *Kodesh Hakodoshim*, Holy of Holies, facing forward. Once the chamber is filled with smoke from the *Ketores*, Incense, he backs out, never turning his face from the *Aron HaKodesh*.

Acting against deep-rooted character requires strength; the more innate the character, the greater the need for inner strength to overcome one's inveterate predilection towards acting in a specific manner. We are confronted with a situation to which we, based upon our nature, would respond in what is probably an acceptable manner. Yet, we go against our grain and act in an unexpected manner, just because "something" told us it was the right thing to do. That one decision can forever alter our approach to life and living. Yaakov *Avinu* was the essence of *emes*; yet, when it was necessary (based upon his mother's instructions), he acted out of character. He did not prevaricate. He did what had to be done, but this is not the way in which he usually acted. The following story is about a man who acted out of character. It is not an "out of this world" dynamite story, but it imparts a powerful lesson which might (should) cause us to think twice when we must make a decision to do something which we consider irregular or even idiosyncratic, but, if it makes a difference in someone's life, we will do it.

The author of the story used to drive a taxi for a living. He had a pickup at 2:30 A.M. in an area not known for its security. He pulled up to a building that was entirely dark except for one light in the window on the first floor. Under such circumstances, most cabbies would honk once and give the fare two minutes to acknowledge his presence, then drive away. This driver was different. Many of his regular fares were very poor and relied on taxis as their only means of transportation. Therefore, he always got out of the taxi and walked to the door. The passenger might be a person in need. He went to the door of the apartment, knocked, and heard, "Just a minute," expressed by someone with a frail voice. He heard something being dragged across the floor.

The cabbie waited for a few minutes until the door opened. A small woman in her mid-80's stood there, dressed in a simple print dress, wearing a pill box hat on her head with a veil over her eyes, like someone from the 1940's. She had a small, nylon suitcase by her side. Her apartment did not appear lived in, as all the furniture was covered in sheets. No clocks, pictures, mirrors or knick-knacks were on the walls. In the corner was a cardboard box filled with photos and glassware.

The woman looked up at the driver and asked, "Would you be so kind as to carry my bag out to the car?" The cabbie took the bag and returned to assist the woman. During this entire time, she kept on thanking him for assisting her. "It is nothing," he said. "I always help my passengers. I like to treat my passengers the way I would want my mother to be treated."

Once they entered the cab, she gave him the address. She then asked, "Can you drive me through downtown?" "Sure," he said, "but it is not the shortest route. I can make it much quicker if I take the regular route."

The elderly woman said, "I am not in a rush. I am on my way to a hospice." She continued

speaking. Meanwhile, the cabbie looked in the rearview mirror and noticed that her eyes were glistening. "I no longer have any family left. The doctor says I do not have much longer to live."

At that moment, the cabbie reached over, shut the meter, and asked, "What route would you like me to take?" For the next two hours, they drove all over the city as she reminisced about growing up, getting married, all the while pointing to the various neighborhoods in which she had once lived. Then she said, "I am tired. It is time. Let us go to the hospice." He pulled up at the door and two orderlies greeted her. She was expected.

"How much do I owe you?" she asked. "Nothing," he answered. "If anything, I owe you."

"You gave an old woman a moment of joy. Thank you."

Now: Had that woman been picked up by an angry driver, one who wanted to hurry and pick up another fare, it would have ended much differently for her. The driver was within his rights to pick her up, drive her to her destination via the shortest route and move on. He did not, because he overcame his natural tendency. It was probably one of the most important decisions he had ever made in his life, because he gave an old woman the opportunity to feel some comfort and joy during one of the most difficult times of her life. It is not necessary to underscore the need for each of us to mull over the story and ask what we would have done, how we would have acted. Hashem grants us challenges which are actually opportunities for improving ourselves. The next time such an opportunity arises, remember this story.