

## When a person offers a meal-offering to Hashem, his offering shall be of fine flour. (2:1)

Of all those who bring a *korban nedavah*, voluntary offering, the Torah refers only to one who brings a *Korban Minchah*, meal offering, as *nefesh*, soul (person). This *korban* is the least costly of all offerings. Thus, it was the *korban* of choice for the economically challenged, poor man. Hashem says that one who brings this offering is considered as if he had offered his soul. Let us sit back and analyze this idea. A poor man was to take his life's savings and purchase a large cow as a *korban*. It makes sense that he was giving everything/his soul, to bring a *korban*. If, however, he brings a *korban* that coincides with his poverty level – what is he doing that is so special? He is giving what he has! Furthermore, when a wealthy man brings a cow as a *korban*, he is, likewise, bringing an offering that coincides with his wealth level. Perhaps he should also be called *nefesh*. In proportion, the poor man and rich man are giving the same. Why does the Torah grant such an accolade to the poor man? We forget that, oftentimes, when the wealthy man goes to his wallet, it may come with greater difficulty than when the poor man brings his offering. The mindset should be equal, since the offering is in proportion with the donor's income (or lack thereof). Why should the poor man's contribution represent more of his "soul" than that of the rich man?

*Horav Yechiel Meir Tzucker, Shlita*, offers an insightful explanation which provides us with food for thought. When the wealthy donor takes out his donation for *tzedakah*, charitable endeavors, or for a *korban*, he observes how everyone around him is staring, some with bated breath, to see how much he will give. These "stares" are worth everything in the world to him. He feels important, because everyone is interested only in him. One has only to be present at *shul* when "bidding wars" ensue between potential buyers for an *aliyah* or other honor. It is not the money which they spend that is important to them, rather it is the attention that they crave. When the wealthy man walks down the street with the large cow that he is offering as a *korban* – everyone stops to look. This makes his day. This gives meaning to his donation.

Not so when the poor person (who was giving proportionately the same in accordance with his portfolio) came with his meager flour-offering – no one noticed, no one cared. (I know that I may be melodramatic, but sadly, it is true.) The poor man is self-conscious about what people may think, but it is what Hashem "thinks" of him that is crucial: "The wealthy man brought such an impressive *korban*. What did I bring? Some flour and oil!"

This is what the *Torah* teaches us with the use of the word *nefesh*. It is not what you give materially that matters, but how much of yourself you give. It is not the money that counts, but your sincerity of heart, your emotions, which accompany the offering. *Lev nishbar*, a broken heart, is more important than a hand filled with gold. Indeed, nothing is as whole as a broken heart.

It is easy to measure value based upon external appearances – wealth, possessions, or grand gestures. The Torah teaches that Hashem employs a different barometer for measurement –

sincerity and sacrifice. It is what we put of ourselves into our actions that determines the value of the *korban* – or whatever endeavor we undertake. The poor person may feel "small" and "insignificant." He may rest assured that Hashem's insight penetrates the heart, and the person is no longer insignificant. No one should feel inferior if they have less to offer, whether it is money, time, or effort. Hashem values not what we give, but how we give it.

The following story underscores the overarching significance of sincerity. A group of young men, none of whom was observant, served together in the Israeli army. One of the group, who was *chozer b'teshuvah*, returned to religion, invited his friends for a get-together.

He brought out cold slices of watermelon for them to munch on. Although none of them was observant, out of respect for their host, they asked what blessing is to be recited when eating watermelon. Although they were not observant, they had an awareness of some Jewish laws and rituals. One of them said that watermelon was a fruit; thus, the *berachah* should be *Borei Pri Ha'eitz*. Another countered that watermelon grows in the ground, not on trees, therefore the blessing should be, *Borei Pri Ha'adamah*. Another friend declared it should be, *Shehakol Nihiyeh Bidvaro*. "In fact," he said, "this is a powerful blessing that can perform miracles." He related his own experience of *Shehakol Nihiyeh Bidvaro* with the following story:

"During the *Yom Kippur* War (1973), I was stationed in the Sinai Desert. At one point, we had a number of tanks, and, after a grueling battle, we were left alone with one tank, surrounded by 20 Egyptian tanks. Nothing short of a miracle could save us from destruction. The captain said, 'At a time like this, it is obvious that our only chance for survival is prayer! Let's all pray to the Almighty.' The men responded, 'We do not know how to pray.' One of the soldiers piped in, 'I know what to pray. Every Friday afternoon, I visit my grandmother. She pours me a drink and says, 'Make a *Shehakol Nihiyeh Bidvaro*.'"

The men decided that they would scream out the blessing *Shehakol*. They did so as they aimed at the first tank that threatened. It was a direct hit that demolished the tank. They aimed at the next tank and simultaneously cried out *Shehakol*. They went on until they had destroyed every tank. 'Now, tell me,' said the one who related the story, 'do you now see why *Shehakol* is the most appropriate blessing to recite over the watermelon?'"

The soldier/host, who was now a *chozer b'teshuvah*, became very emotional and cried out to Hashem, "*Ribbono Shel Olam*, see how Your nation is filled with righteous Jews. This is a group of non-observant Jewish soldiers, who do not even know the meaning or purpose of *Shema Yisrael*. One person, however, tells them to say *Shehakol Nihiyeh Bidvaro*, and they listen! They did not know what they were saying, but Hashem listened to their hearts – not to the words which emanated from their lips. When one is sincere, Hashem listens."