

The Poor Man's Offering

written by Yossi Katz
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One of the greatest gifts that Chassidic teachings impart to us is the ability to illuminate and make relevant all parts of Torah, even the seemingly obscure ones. The teachings of Rebbe Nachman and Reb Noson make the Torah come alive, helping us find answers and life advice in verses of the Torah that cynics claim are irrelevant and archaic. These incredible teachings reinforce our belief in the profound depth and truth of the Torah and its authentic interpreters, the Tzaddikim.

One such idea that seems to be “out of date” is the idea of animal sacrifices. The Torah states, “When a man from [among] you brings a sacrifice to God, from animals...” (Leviticus 1:2). Rebbe Nachman shines a beautiful light on one of the lessons that we can glean from the Temple sacrifices even today:

When people want to become truly religious and serve God, they seem to be overwhelmed with confusion and frustrations. They find great barriers in their path and cannot decide what to

do. The more they want to serve God, the more difficulty they encounter.

All the enthusiasm that such people have when trying to do good is very precious, even if their goal is not achieved. All their effort is counted like a sacrifice... You may wish to perfect and sanctify yourself, but find yourself unable to do so. Still, the effort and suffering involved in the frustrated attempt are not in vain. They are all an offering to God...

Therefore, always do your part, making every effort to serve God to the best of your ability... Do everything in your ability, and God will do what is good in His eyes (Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom #12).

Reb Noson elaborates on this idea by illuminating one of the laws of the *Minchah* offering. The *Minchah* offering is often brought by the poor, who cannot afford the price of an animal; they are instructed to bring an offering of flour instead. Yet when referring to the one who brings this offering, the Torah calls him a "soul" rather than a "man." Rashi explains that it is as if God is saying, "I consider it as if he has sacrificed his very soul!"

One may never assume, God forbid, that because of all his shortcomings and errors, he cannot come close to God. On the contrary! Just like the poor man who can't bring an expensive animal, he can still gather together a few pennies and offer flour. God values the sincere offering of the pauper – whether he lacks materially or spiritually.

Our Rabbis teach that today our prayers are in place of the sacrifices and Temple offerings. When someone feels his physicality and smallness before God and pours out his heart before his Father in Heaven – even if it seems he can't concentrate properly or have the right intentions – that prayer has great value on high. "He has neither despised nor abhorred the cry of the poor, neither has He hidden His face

from him; and when he cried out to Him, He heard" (Psalms 22:25).

The main thing is for us to act humbly, pouring fourth our sincerest thoughts and desires in conversation with God. Then, despite whatever personal shortcomings we have, God will turn to us wherever we are. Furthermore, these prayers that are offered from a position of distance and lowliness are most valued and potent. May we all merit to bring the poor man's offering – today!

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Tefillat Minchah 7

A Gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!