



## The Small Sacrifices of Life

### Transforming our Lost Objects to Become Sacrifices

After all these years, I'm still working on letting go of attachments to the material! Even now, I clearly remember and can almost still feel pain about losing a gift from my dear grandmother – a special, solid gold-brooch – 13 years ago, at my son's wedding. It was holding my shawl together, until I took it off and put it on the nearby chair, as I whirled in my wildest dances. When I collected my shawl a few hours later, the brooch was gone. Within my great simcha (happiness) of exhilarated dancing, celebrating my oldest son's wedding, there was a scratch in my joy. This was to be my sacrifice – my thanksgiving offering to Hashem for bringing our son to the marriage canopy. Since then, a great collection of smaller sacrifices has been piling up in my hectic, sometimes – I'm embarrassed to say – absentminded life. These include shawls, necklaces and earrings, especially my favorite blue sapphire earring that I looked for everywhere and didn't even find in the chicken coop, near the hammock or behind the bed. Its single widow is still dangling on my earring stand, reminding me of my loss. However, in order to transform these kinds of minor losses to become sacrifices, it is necessary to let go of the initial pain of the loss. We must truly accept, for a sacrifice must be given with a full heart. This is the first step. The next step is to contemplate how the loss is actually a kindness from Hashem to grant us atonement for our failings. Then we are ready to reach the highest level of transforming lost objects to become sacrifices: By truly rejoicing over the loss! Rebbe Nachman teaches that lost objects brings us completion, as it states, "He repays... to cause them to loose... yet He will repay..." (*Devarim* 7:10); (*Likutei Moharan*, I:8). He also teaches that lost objects are a result of תַּאֲוֹת/ta'avot – 'desires and lusts' (Ibid. II:88). Searching for lost objects – like searching for Chametz – implies searching in our innermost being to break our lusts for earthly desires. This results in finding all our lost objects. Oh well, way to go...

### The Gift of Atonement

In Temple times, people would take an animal, such as a cow or a goat that they may have raised from infancy, cared for and fed daily, perhaps even talked to and received an acknowledging bleat in reply. Then, with a full heart they would willingly see their animal go up in flames, as they confessed their sins. The feeling of atonement, rebirth and spiritual closeness, with which they would walk away, more than made up for the loss of their animal.

**סַפֵּר וִיקְרָא פֶּרֶק אֶפְסוֹקֵי דְּיָדוֹ עַל רֹאשׁ הָעֹלָה וְנִרְצָה לוֹ לְכַפֵּר עָלָיו:**

"And he shall place his hand upon the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted for him to atone for him" (Ibid. 4).

כַּפָּרָה/kaparah is an amazing gift that Hashem grants us to enable us to come close to Him. Atonement clears away all the blockages – due to negative actions, feelings or thoughts – which separate and prevent us from becoming one with Him. The word 'atonement' in English can be broken up into 'at-one-ment' – for atonement is a rebirth that facilitates us to reconnect with the light of our soul and with our inherent oneness with Hashem. If we allow ourselves to take the time to contemplate deeply on the gift of 'at-one-ment,' we can remain happy, even though our most precious crystal chandelier shatters. By accustoming ourselves in such spiritual aerobics, no distress will remove our sense of closeness to G-d. As Miriam Adahan writes, 'It's all a Gift.'

### To Sacrifice the Animal in Ourselves

The word קֹרְבָן/korban – 'sacrifice' derives from the root ק-ר-ב/k-r-v, which means to come close. The purpose of all the sacrifices is to bring us close to our Creator.

ספר ויקרא פרק א פסוק ב דבר אל בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן להשם מן הבהמה מן הבקר ומן הצאן תקריבו את קרבנכם:

“Speak to the children of Israel and say to them: When a man from [among] you brings a sacrifice to Hashem; from animals, from cattle or from the flock you shall bring your sacrifice (*Vayikra* 1:2).

The Torah states, *יקריב מכם* /*yakriv m'kem* – ‘sacrifice your sacrifice’ or “bring an offering of you” – meaning the offering must come from you. The physical animal sacrifice is not enough. Hashem wants our heart. We must bring an offering from ourselves, as Sforno explains: The sacrifice must be accompanied by “a verbal confession and submission, in the sense of, ‘So we will offer the words of our lips instead of calves’ (*Hoshea* 14:3); and as it states, ‘The sacrifices of G-d are a broken spirit’ (*Tehilim* 51:19). For G-d has no desire for fools who offer sacrifices without previous submission” (Sforno, *Vayikra* 1:2). Thus, a person’s offering is not just his animal but himself as well. Therefore, it states, *יקריב מכם* /*adam ki yakriv* – ‘a person who sacrifices’ – for the main sacrifice is to sacrifice oneself (*Zohar* 3:26b).

### Four Ways of Engaging in Sacrifices Today

How do we sacrifice ourselves? Even in Temple times, sacrifices were only a means for repentance, to be able to cleave to the light of Hashem with awe and love. According to Rabbi Avraham Dov Avritch, today, when we can’t make a physical Temple sacrifice, repentance and cleaving to Hashem can be achieved in two ways: 1. Lower teshuva- by means of fasting. 2. Higher teshuva- by means of cleaving to the light of Torah (*Sefer Bat Ayin, Parashat Shemini*).

1. **Fasting** can be understood also in a broader sense. It can include a yearly cleanse such as a juice fast and mindful eating throughout the year– eating slowly and chewing every bite carefully without our eyes and mind on the next bite. We can also practice leaving a small piece of our favorite treat on the plate, even if we still desire to eat it. This is an excellent, practical way of sacrificing that we can do today.

2. **Cleaving to the light of Torah** implies adding more Torah learning to our daily routine, whether reading Torah books, going to classes or learning with study partners. In order to free up time for this, we may need to sacrifice some of our secular pursuits: reading fashion magazines, buyer’s guides, surfing the net or engaging in social media. For a woman, sacrificing her time or standard of living, in order to enable her husband to increase his Torah learning, is one of the most meritorious offerings possible (See *Babylonian Talmud, Berachot* 17a).

3. **Engaging in acts of kindness and donating to a worthy cause** is likewise a way of giving our sacrifice in our times. In the Talmud, money is called *דמים* /*damim* – ‘blood’ (*Babylonian Talmud, Pesachim* 86b). Sharing our financial resources with others, can therefore be considered as if we sacrificed our own blood on the Temple altar. There is no better atonement for any wrongdoing than giving tzedakah.

4. We mustn’t forget about **תפילה** /*tefilah* prayer – the traditional sacrifice replacement. Prayer includes meditation and reciting the blessings slowly with intention. By meditating upon the greatness of G-d, we can sacrifice and transform the animal within. This ultimately alters the very composition of our materialistic traits, so that they too may gain an appreciation of the spiritual, and develop a love for G-d.

There are many additional ways of offering sacrifices in our time, whether voluntary or those that unwittingly grace our path. Let us work on regarding such sacrifices, big or small, as opportunities and portals for rebirth, growth and closeness with our Creator.