

A Taste of Torah - Nourishment in the Parasha

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha

Parashat Pinchas: “Hashem’s Bread and Fire-offerings”

How Can Human Offerings Become Hashem’s Bread?

What Is the Difference Between Brain Fog and “Soul Fog”?

I have always longed to feel a deep connection with Hashem. I yearn to dedicate my every breath, every word, and every step to His service. But it is so hard. Often, I find myself reciting the words of my prayers while thinking about everything I need to take care of once I am done davening.

This leads me to search my own heart. My responsibilities include preparing classes, ensuring our teachers and students are cared for, supporting new students, organizing schedules, writing books, and maintaining our homestead in the Holy Land. All these are mitzvot that I sincerely want to do solely for the sake of serving Hashem. Yet if these responsibilities draw me away from wholeheartedly praising Him in prayer, I sometimes wonder whether I am serving Him alone or whether my own ego has quietly entered the picture.

It feels as though a block of spiritual static separates me from fully dedicating all my thoughts, speech, and actions to Hashem. We hear a great deal today about “brain fog” – a state of reduced mental clarity, making it difficult to think clearly, concentrate, remember information, or process thoughts efficiently. I would go one step further and introduce the term “soul fog,” which I coined to describe a state of spiritual dullness or disconnection that makes it difficult to sense Hashem’s presence, find inner clarity, or feel inspired and connected in one’s spiritual life. I pray that Hashem will help me pierce through this “soul fog” so that I may dedicate every part of myself to His service.

What Makes an Offering Truly “My Offering”?

When introducing the daily offerings in *Parashat Pinchas*, the Torah uses the striking expression:

סֵפֶר בַּמִּדְבָּר פָּרַקְךָ כַּח פְּסוּקֶיךָ בְּצֵאת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאִמְרַתְּ אֲלֵהֶם אֶת קִרְבְּנֵי לֶחֶמִי לְאִשֵּׁי רִיחַ נִיחֻחַ תִּשְׁמְרוּ לְהַקְרִיב לִי בְמוֹעֵדוֹ:

“Command the children of Israel and say to them: My offering, My bread for My fire-offerings, as a pleasing aroma to Me, you shall take care to offer to Me at its appointed time” (*Bamidbar* 28:2).

Since Hashem has no physical need for food, what does it mean to call the sacrifice “My bread”? The Midrash explains that the answer lies not in the offering itself, but in the spirit in which it is brought. If a person brings a korban “with willingness and goodness,” then Hashem says, “it is My offering.” But if it is brought reluctantly or under compulsion, it is reduced to being merely “a fire-offering,” lacking the inward closeness that makes it truly an offering. The essence of the sacrifice, then, is not the animal, flour, or wine, but the heart of the one who brings it. What rises before Hashem is the willingness to draw near, the desire to give, and the love invested in the act (*Midrash Vayikra Rabbah* 27:10).

This teaching transforms the meaning of korban. A korban is not a gift to satisfy a Divine need, but a way for a human being to offer his or her inner life to Hashem. The expression “My bread” emphasizes the relationship and intimacy that depend on the sincerity of the giver. Just as a meal shared in love creates a connection between people, so too the sacrifice becomes “My offering” only when it is brought with willing devotion. Without that inner offering, the external act remains incomplete.

The same is true in our daily service. In the absence of the Beit HaMikdash, our sacrifices have become the offerings of the heart, and *Parashat Pinchas* reminds us that what makes them precious is not only that we bring them, but how we bring them. There are times when I stand in prayer with a full heart, feeling truly present before Hashem, and there are other times when I force myself to say the words despite distraction,

fatigue, or inner resistance. Both prayers matter, yet they are not the same. When prayer flows from genuine longing and wholehearted presence, it more fully reflects the kind of offering that Hashem calls “My offering.”

How is Torah Like the Bread of G-d?

Midrash Tanchuma makes clear that the phrase “My offering, My bread” is not to be understood literally. Hashem does not need human food or drink. If Moshe could remain in Hashem’s presence for forty days and forty nights without bread or water, and if the angels are nourished by the radiance of the Shechinah rather than by physical sustenance, then certainly G-d – the source of all nourishment – has no need for human beings to sustain Him with bread.

The purpose of the offering, therefore, is not to feed Hashem, but for the people of Israel to draw close to Him through Divine service (*Midrash Tanchuma, Pinchas* 12).

One of the most meaningful offerings we can bring to Hashem today is our dedication to Torah, each person according to his or her own level. For one person, that may mean learning Torah for ten hours a day, while for another, burdened with the demands of work and daily responsibilities, one faithful hour of study may be the offering that he or she can bring. Torah itself can thus become a kind of offering. Just as wine, bread, and oil were all brought upon the altar, Torah is likewise compared to wine, bread, and oil. “Drink of the wine I have mixed” (*Mishlei* 9:5), “Come, partake of My bread” (*ibid.*), and “oil shall not be lacking upon your head” (*Kohelet* 9:8) all become images for the nourishment of Torah. In this light, “My bread” refers not only to the sacrificial service in the Temple, but also to the spiritual sustenance of Torah, which nourishes the soul just as bread nourishes the body.

Rabbi Yekusiel Yehudah Teitelbaum reinforces this idea through the phrase “...you shall take care to offer to Me at its appointed time” (*Bamidbar* 28:2). The seemingly extra word “to Me” teaches that the sacrifice must be brought wholly for Hashem’s sake. Yet this does not mean that Hashem demands something for His own benefit. On the contrary, while Hashem gives according to His infinite power, He asks us to give only according to our human capacity. The *korban* is precious not because Hashem needs it, but because He lovingly invites us to offer what we can, according to our strength (*Sefer Yitav Lev, Parashat Pinchas*).

Rabbi Elazar of Tarnogród adds that not every Torah offering begins in purity. A person may first study Torah for practical benefit or personal need, but if the goal is to grow toward Torah *lishmah* – for its own sake, even an imperfect beginning can rise as a pleasing offering before Hashem (*Noam Megadim, Parashat Pinchas*).

Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk deepens this idea by explaining that the truest fulfillment of “My offering, My bread for My fire-offerings” takes place when a *tzaddik* studies Torah *lishmah*. The true “food” offered to Hashem is not physical bread, but the fiery devotion invested in Torah and holy service. Just as bread sustains physical life, Torah sustains spiritual life. Through learning, prayer, and inward dedication, we can offer something far deeper than a material sacrifice, as the fire of the soul rises upward in loving attachment to its Source (*Noam Elimelech, Likutei Shoshanna*).

How Can We Draw Divine Blessings into All the Worlds?

Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heshel of Apta offers a breathtaking interpretation of “My bread.” He teaches that Hashem’s true offering is the drawing down of sustenance and life-force to all His “fires” – all those who depend upon His sustaining care for their life and nourishment. The heavenly worlds require spiritual abundance; the earthly world requires physical nourishment; and the souls of Israel require spiritual vitality according to their level. Hashem’s greatest delight is not that He receives food from human beings, but that through our devoted service, His abundance is directed to flow into all creation. “My bread” thus refers to the nourishment that comes from Hashem and is distributed to His world through the channels opened by our

service (*Ohev Yisrael, Parashat Pinchas*).

Rabbi Shmuel Bornsztain of Sochatchov deepens this idea by explaining that the korban does not rise to Hashem all at once but ascends through many spiritual levels until it brings about the indwelling of the Shechinah. Just as physical food strengthens the body and thereby enables the soul to dwell within it, so too the sacrifice becomes a vehicle through which holiness is drawn upward and Divine presence is drawn downward into the world (*Shem MiShmuel, Parashat Tzav 5672*).

Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter of Ger adds that although Hashem continually renews and sustains all creation, the devoted service of Israel draws down an added flow of blessing into the world. Through the daily offerings – and, in their place, through our prayers, blessings, and words of gratitude – we reveal that life does not unfold through impersonal nature alone, but through the constant goodness of Hashem, who renews creation each day. In this way, the korban becomes not only an offering from below to above, but also a channel through which fresh Divine abundance descends from above to below (*Sefat Emet, Parashat Vayakhel 5635*).

How Can We Break Through “Soul Fog”?

These teachings may offer an answer to the yearning I described at the beginning of this blog. I yearn to offer a “pleasing fragrance” to Hashem with my entire being, so that my life becomes an offering through which joy and harmony permeate the worlds as they are filled with Divine blessing.

When we serve Hashem with love and sincerity, we become conduits through which life, goodness, and abundance are drawn downward. In that sense, the offering is called “My bread” not because it feeds Hashem, but because it allows His nourishment to reach all His creatures. The true delight of the offering is that it transforms human service into a vessel for Divine generosity, filling the world with blessing.

Perhaps the greatest antidote to “soul fog” is to begin each day by turning to Hashem with love, joy, and gratitude. We can cultivate this by consciously setting aside time each day to focus wholeheartedly on Hashem, offering our praise, requests, and gratitude through prayer, and making that connection our highest priority. When we begin our day by reconnecting with the Source of every blessing, we do not neglect our daily responsibilities. On the contrary, our prayers open the channels through which Divine abundance flows into every part of creation, including our own lives. Then the many tasks that await us are no longer distractions from serving Hashem, but opportunities to serve Him by carrying His blessing into the world.

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