

## DARCHAI NOAM - דרכי נועם

### “Its ways are ways of pleasantness”

(Mishlei 3:17)

Parashat Pinchas  
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How can the Parasha help us grow this week?

### Pinchas – Lessons from the korbanot

In this week's Parsha of Pinchas, we read about the details of many of the korbanot that were offered in the Mishkan and the Bet Hamikdash on various occasions throughout the year. We have not had the privilege of offering korbanot for almost 2,000 years and it may seem difficult for us to connect with these passages on a personal level. In truth, however, there are many lessons that we can learn from the korbanot that are very relevant to us. Let's explore some of these lessons.

In his commentary to the Torah, the Ramban explains that bringing a sacrifice is similar to sacrificing one's life for Hashem.<sup>1</sup> A person bringing a sacrifice should contemplate that he has sinned to Hashem with his body and his soul and he really deserves to be killed. However, Hashem rather wants us to live and work on ourselves and become better people. Therefore, Hashem accepts a korban as a substitute in the place of the sinner. In Hashem's kindness, the life of the animal is offered in place of our life. But it is up to us to make sure that we actually do work on ourselves and improve.

We no longer have the opportunity to offer korbanot in the Bet Hamikdash. But in their place, we can offer our words of prayer. The pasuk in Hosea states:

*“...You shall forgive every transgression and accept our good and let us substitute bulls with our lips”.*  
(Hosea 14:3)

Our daily recitations of the Shemoneh Esreh replace the sacrificial service in the Bet Hamikdash. However, in addition to this, before Shacharit every morning we read passages from the Torah that describe the korbanot and related activities in the Bet Hamikdash. This is followed by passages from the Gemara and the Mishnah which summarise the various korbanot which were offered.<sup>2</sup>

In his commentary to this pasuk from Hosea, Rashi explains that ideally we should have offered sacrifices before Hashem, but instead we placate Him with the words of our lips. But can our prayers achieve the same level of atonement as a real sacrifice? In the Gates of Repentance, Rabbeinu Yonah of Gerona<sup>3</sup> discusses the pasuk from Hosea that we quoted above. He explains that our confessions and prayers will serve as a substitute for the sin offerings and will be accepted with favour on our behalf. Rabbeinu Yonah goes on to explain that the reason why the pasuk refers to bulls rather than other animals is because the bull offering was of a higher order. With the other animals, the blood was sprinkled on the outer alter. However, the blood of the bull offering was sprinkled on the inner, golden alter. This demonstrates that our prayers can replace even the highest level of sacrifices.

Amongst the other festivals, our Parasha lists the order of korbanot for the festival of Peach:

*“You shall offer a fire offering, a burnt offering to Hashem: two young bulls, one ram and seven male lambs in their first year, they shall be unblemished for you”* (Bamidbar 28:19)

Rashi explains that the animals offered remind us of some of the great actions of our holy forefathers<sup>4</sup>:

*“Bulls, corresponding to Avraham, about whom it says “Avraham ran to the cattle [to feed the three angels who visited him]”<sup>5</sup>;*

<sup>1</sup> Ramban's commentary to Parashat Vayikra 1:9.

<sup>2</sup> See pages 30-48 in the standard Artscroll Ashkenaz siddur.

<sup>3</sup> The first gate, the 15<sup>th</sup> principle, paragraph 41.

<sup>4</sup> See Rashi's commentary to Bamidbar 28:19. Rashi tells us that he is quoting Rabbi Moshe Hadarshan.

<sup>5</sup> See Parashat Lech Lecha, Breishit 18:7.

*Rams, corresponding to the ram [which was offered in place] of Yitzchak [at the Akeidah]<sup>6</sup>;*

*Lambs, corresponding to Yaakov, of whom it is says, “Yaakov separated the lambs [in his dealings with Lavan]”<sup>7</sup>*

Thus, when we offer the bulls (or these days, when we read about the offering of the bulls), we should remember the hospitality of Avraham Avinu. Rashi refers us to the famous incident that took place when Avraham was 99 years old and he was recovering from his brit milah. Hashem had made the day exceptionally hot so that Avraham wouldn't be bothered by visitors and he could recover in peace. Nevertheless, Avraham was so keen to offer hospitality to guests that he waited by the door of his tent to see if there were any passers-by that he could take care of.<sup>8</sup> When Avraham saw the three angels who appeared in the guise of men, he ran to serve them with great alacrity. If Avraham can provide such service to these strangers under such difficult circumstances, then surely we can do acts of chessed even at times when it is not so convenient.

When we read about the offering of the rams, we should remember the self-sacrifice of Yitzchak Avinu when he was offered up as a sacrifice at the Akeidah. As a strong younger man, Yitzchak could easily have overpowered his elderly father and escaped. Instead, he asked his father to tie him up well so that he shouldn't flinch during the slaughter and thereby risk becoming a blemished korban. Yitzchak was thus willing to offer his life for Hashem! What sacrifices are we asked to make for Hashem? It is true that sometimes we are called upon to make enormous sacrifices. But many times, only small sacrifices are required of us. For instance, we might just need to drag ourselves out of bed when it's cold outside to get to shul on time. Or we might need to rush through dinner and stay up late for a shiur after a long and tiring day at work.<sup>9</sup> Let's think of Yitzchak's massive sacrifice and use it to propel ourselves to make those small daily sacrifices, usually by offering our creature comforts or our ego on the altar of Hashem.

When we learn about the korbanot involving lambs, we should remember the scrupulous honesty of Yaakov Avinu. He spent 20 years working for his dishonest father-in-law Lavan who changed the terms of their arrangement one hundred times<sup>10</sup>. Yaakov could have justifiably tried to match Lavan in his dishonesty, but instead he remained completely honest, even to the extent of absorbing losses out of his own pocket when he didn't strictly need to do so.<sup>11</sup> If we are ever tempted to “massage the truth” when filling out our tax return, or to use office property for personal use without permission, we should remember Yaakov's sterling behaviour and rise to the challenge.

When we read these passages, we should try to keep in mind some of the many lessons that we can learn from the korbanot that are so relevant to us even today.

Let's try something this week:

1. Try to read the passages regarding the korbanot in the siddur before Shacharit. If one does not have enough time to complete them all, try to at least read some these passages, even in English. At a minimum, one should at least try to read the passage dealing with the daily Korban Tamid.<sup>12</sup>
2. When reading about the korbanot, have in mind some of the lessons that we discussed above, including the exemplary strengths and traits of the Avot.
3. When reading about the korbanot, remember that the korbanot were offered to atone for our sins. Try to feel a sense of remorse in order that our prayers become a form of repentance to cleanse our souls.

Shabbat Shalom, Rabbi Ledder

<sup>6</sup> See Parashat Vayera, Breishit 22:13.

<sup>7</sup> See Parashat Vayetze, Breishit 30:40.

<sup>8</sup> Rashi to Breishit 18:7.

<sup>9</sup> For those who are concerned, there is no problem at all with starting a sentence with “But”, “Or” or “And”. But one shouldn't do it too often! (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/words-to-not-begin-sentences-with>)

<sup>10</sup> See Rashi to Breishit 31:7.

<sup>11</sup> See Breishit 31:39 and Rashi's commentary to that pasuk.

<sup>12</sup> Page 32 of the standard Artscroll Ashkenaz siddur.