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Parshas Vayikra

One of the more enigmatic *pesukim* in the *parsha* is the one that tells us that *korbonos* are a *reyach nichoach laHashem*, a pleasant smell to *Hashem*. What does that mean? *Hashem* obviously does not have a sense of smell in the way that people do, and why would one smell be sweeter to him than another?

The *Ramban* (*Vayikra* 1:9) explains that the word *korbon* is related to the word *korov*, close, because sacrificing a *korbon* creates a closeness and oneness with *Hashem*. He further explains that the words *reyach nichoach* relate to the word *noch*, to rest on, because sacrificing a *korbon* causes *Hashem's bracha* to rest on a person. The attachment created by the *korbon* allows *Hashem's shefa* to flow down to that person.

Rabbeinu Bachya explains further, that this is indicated by the fact that there are two fires which join together on the *mizbeyach*. *Chazal* (*Yoma* 21b) tell us that even though fire comes down onto the *mizbeyach* from heaven, nevertheless there is a *mitzva* for the *kohanim* to light a fire as well. *Rabbeinu Bachya* says that the unison of these two fires, our fire which goes up towards heaven and *Hashem's* fire that comes down from heaven, is indicative of the attachment between us and *Hashem* created by the *korbonos*.

Even though the performance of any *mitzva* creates a closeness between us and *Hashem*, there is something unique about *korbonos*. Only *korbonos* are called a *reyach nichoach*. *Korbonos* have a special ability to cause *Hashem's bracha* to come down to this world. Unfortunately, we no longer have the ability to bring *korbonos*. However, *Chazal* tell us that *tefilla* takes its place – תפלה במקום קרבן היא – (*Brachos* 26a). *Davening* is now the vehicle to create that special connection with *Hashem*.

The *Torah* exclusively refers to *korbonos* as a *reyach nichoach*. However, there is one other *mitzva* which the *meforshim* call a *reyach nichoach*, and that is *tefilla*. The *Tur* (O.C. 98) writes

"התפלה היא במקום הקרבן דכתיב (הושע יד, ג) ונשלמה פרים שפתינו ... ולכך צריך ליזהר שתהא דוגמת הקרבן בכוונה ולא יערב בה מחשבה אחרת כמו מחשבה שפוסלת בקדשים, ומעומד דומיא דעבודה דכתיב (דברים יח, ה) לעמוד לשרת ... וקביעות מקום כמו הקרבנות שכל אחד קבוע מקומו ... וראוי הוא שיהיו לו מלבושים נאים מיוחדים לתפלה כגון בגדי כהונה אלא שאין כל אדם יכול לבזבז על זה ... ואחר שיעשה דוגמת הקרבן עולה לריח ניחוח למקום שהקרבן עולה, והמלאך עושה אותו כתר לקונו".

"*Tefilla* is in the place of a *korbon*, as it says 'our lips will replace bulls' ... therefore one must make sure to have *kavana*, similar to a *korbon*. One should not mix in other thoughts, just as other thoughts can invalidate a *korbon*. One stands, just as for the *avodah*, as it says 'to stand and serve' ... in a set place, just as each of the *korbonos* had a set place ... and it is appropriate for one to have nice clothes specially for *tefilla*, similar to the *bigdei kahuna*, although not everyone can afford that ... and after one has fashioned it similar to a *korbon* it will go up as a *reyach nichoach* to the place that *korbonos* go, and a *malach* will make it into a crown for his Creator".

In fact, *Chazal* tell us that *tefilla* has an even greater capability than *korbonos*. The *Gemara* (*Brachos* 32b) states:

"גדולה תפלה יותר מן הקרבנות שנאמר (ישעיה א, יא) למה לי רב זבחיכם".

"*Tefilla* is greater than *korbonos*, as it says (*Yeshaya* 1:11) Why do I need your many sacrifices?"

This *Gemara* is telling us that, from the fact that *Hashem* was quicker to reject *Klal Yisroel's korbons* than their *tefillos*, one can deduce that *tefillos* have a greater capability to be heard by *Hashem*. But why is this so?

At the end of the *sefer Chasam Sofer al Hatorah* there are *chiddushim* from his grandson, the son of the *Ksav Sofer* and author of the *sefer Hisorerus Teshuva*. The *Hisorerus Teshuva* explains that when people bring *korbonos*, each person has to bring a *korbon* for himself. However, when a person *davens*, each person *davens* for the wellbeing of all of *Klal Yisroel*. *Hashem* is quicker to reject *korbonos* and say, "Why do I need your many sacrifices". The *possuk* calls them 'many sacrifices' because each person is sacrificing a separate *korbon* for himself. There are a multitude of individual sacrifices. However, *davening* is not like that. We are all *davening* for each other, which makes it be considered one big *tefillah*.

Unfortunately, we are currently unable to daven together with a *minyán*. These days, as we *daven* alone, it is more important than ever to remember that we are *davening* not only for ourselves but also for all of *Klal Yisroel*. Sadly, there are *frum Yidden* across America and the world who are very sick due to the coronavirus. We need to be *mispallel* with a lot of *kavana* that they should have a *refuah sheleima*. Of course, we are equally *davening* that everyone else should remain healthy and well, and not get sick. There are many *Yidden* whose *parnasah* has been severely affected by current events, and they also need much *rachmei shomayim*. As the *Hisorerus Teshuva* says, our *tefillos* should join together into one big *tefilla* for all of *Klal Yisroel*.

This brings to mind something that his father, the *Ksav Sofer*, writes. *Chazal (Baba Kama 92a)* tell us that "כל המבקש רחמים על חברו והוא צריך לאותו דבר הוא נענה תחילה".

"Anyone who *davens* for mercy for his fellow, and he needs the same thing, he will receive it first".

The *Gemara* provides two sources for this rule. One is from *Avraham* who davened that *Avimelech* and his family should be healed, and *Avraham's* own wife *Sarah* was healed first and had a child. The second source is from *Iyov*, where the *possuk* says that *Hashem* helped *Iyov* because he *davened* for his friend. The *Ksav Sofer* asks, why does the *Gemara* need to provide two sources for this rule? Wouldn't one of them be sufficient?

The *Ksav Sofer (Parshas Veyeira, dibbur hamaschil "vayerapeh")* answers as follows. One may think that this rule only applies when you are genuinely *davening* for someone else, with no thought in mind that you will be answered first. However, if you know this rule, then when you are *davening* for someone else you are doing so with the knowledge that you will be answered first. If so, maybe you are ultimately *davening* for yourself, in which case you will not be answered first. How can we be certain that you will be answered first even if you know the rule that a person who *davens* for someone else is answered first? That is why the *Gemara* feels it necessary to bring two examples, one from *Avraham* and one from *Iyov*. There are various opinions as to when *Iyov* lived (*Baba Basra 15b*), but everyone agrees that he did not live before *Avrohom*. Consequently, *Iyov* already knew this rule, as he learned it from *Avrohom*. Nevertheless, even though he was aware of the rule, he was still answered first.

The *Ksav Sofer* concludes that the *Gemara* is teaching us that a person who *davens* for someone else is answered first even if the reason he is *davening* for the other person is precisely because he is answered first. His intent doesn't matter - as long as he *davens* for someone else, he will be answered first. We should all continue to daven for the wellbeing of all of *Klal Yisroel*, and may our *tefillos* be answered for ourselves as well that we all remain healthy and well and be *zocheh* to receive *shefa bracha* from *Hashem*.