



פרשת צנחם

"SELFLESS PRAYER"

12 TAMMUZ, 5744-1984

*Free Translation**

In the Torah portion corresponding to Thursday, we read of "the burnt offering":

We are enjoined to bring a daily sacrifice in the Temple, twice every day: "The one lamb in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at dusk." It must be offered as an Olah, a burnt offering.

What do we do nowadays, when we don't have the Temple?

Now, not only are we not obligated to bring these sacrifices, we are not even allowed to bring them. Torah tells us, however, that "prayers were established in place of the daily offerings."

Since the Destruction of the Temple, in place of the daily offerings, Torah established daily prayers. Which prayer? The prayers that correspond to those offerings: The morning service and the evening service. These prayers must be offered as a burnt offering.

What does an offering mean? What is the definition of a *korban*?

The commentaries explain that *korban* means *kiruv*, closeness. What is the connection between the two?

The purpose of an offering is that through it, the Jew who brings the sacrifice becomes closer to whom it was offered. The same is therefore true of prayer as well.

What is the idea of prayer?

True, we ask "You graciously bestow knowledge upon man" —that God should grant us intelligence. We beseech God as "Healer of the sick," "Who blesses the years," etc. However, the main purpose of all these prayers is that through them we should become closer to God, closer even than we were as a result of the previous days' prayers, or this morning's recital of Modeh Ani.

The ultimate closeness is achieved when we offer our prayers, which "were established in place of the daily offerings."

*) Taken from the Subtitles that appear on the screen



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One may think that this is a personal choice. If you choose to be a complete person, then you will behave in the manner required by Torah, and bring the offering in the morning and another in the evening.

But you may argue that since you are “an independent person,” you may even agree, Heaven forbid, to be punished, but you don’t want to pray! You don’t want to offer a sacrifice.

Why should anybody tell you what to do? It makes no difference to anybody else, so why shouldn’t you be allowed to harm yourself?!

Torah tells us that a person may not harm himself. It is a directive in the Torah of Life, that if one causes harm to himself he is found guilty in the Heavenly Court! True, other people can’t do anything to him; but they can admonish him and make sure that he realizes that he will be found guilty in the Heavenly Court.

Furthermore: We see in civil law —and, indeed, in basic human behavior— that any normal person who sees someone standing on the Brooklyn Bridge screaming: “I’m my own boss! I want to jump off this bridge, into the river below. Sure, I might be hurt, but nobody has the right to tell me what to do!”

All responsible people, all normal people, and the entire police force is directed to do everything possible—to negotiate, and mobilize equipment—to stop him from hurting himself.

Another point about prayer, it must be like a burnt offering: If you truly want to become close to God, it can’t be with the intent of receiving a reward. True, even if you do a Mitzvah in hope of being rewarded, you have still fulfilled the Mitzvah.

But a true closeness is not possible in that way. Just like the closeness between two people. If he’s becoming close in order to earn money, it’s not a true intimacy!

If he became close to achieve more honor or greater pleasure, it is not a true closeness. He is thinking only of himself. He’s just using the other person for his own gain! He doesn’t become any closer to him; he’s just using him a stepping-stone to achieve his own goals.

True prayer, lasting prayer, is when it is a “burnt offering”: it is solely for God! That is able to create true closeness.

Now on a human level:

When is there a true closeness between father and son?



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Not when the father does things to gain the son's respect, or so that when he is 119 years old and can no longer earn a living, his son or daughter will be willing to support him.

True closeness and love of a father to a child is when he loves him because he is his child. So he loves him as much as he loves himself, without any ulterior motive for a return, immediate or long-term. It must be specifically like a burnt offering!

