

***This week's Parsha begins the discussion of Korbanot, sacrifices. Although these sections are not relevant to us practically, as we don't offer sacrifices nowadays, however, there are many important insights that can be gleaned from the laws of the sacrifices. One of the most meaningful and poignant messages can be found in Rashi's commentary on this week's Parsha. The Torah tells us that both when an animal is offered as a sacrifice (Leviticus 1, 9) and when a bird is offered as a sacrifice (Leviticus 1, 17) they create a reiach nichoach, a pleasing fragrance. However, Rashi finds the equality between these two sacrifices to be rather surprising, after all is there not a qualitative difference between these two sacrifices, as animal offerings are far more expensive than bird offerings. How can the Torah describe them in equal terms?***

***To answer this question, Rashi offers a fundamental insight into the very essence of our religion. He explains that "Whether one is marbeh, does a lot; or one is mamit, does a little in his service to G-D, they are equal as long as their focus is to G-D in heaven." While this is certainly a powerful and beautiful statement is quite difficult to understand. Assuming that both the one who does a lot and the one who does a little both have the right intention are they really equal? Isn't the one who does more far greater than the one who did a little? While it is understandable that a little with focus may be greater than a lot without focus, how can one claim that they are unequivocally equal even where they both have the proper intent.***

***The great Chassidic master, Rav Bunim of Peshichsa explains this statement with the following parable. There was an annual fair where all of the jewelers would travel for miles to attend and sell their precious wares. There were two jewelers who were close friends, who both planned on attending the fair. They arranged to meet up for coffee on the evening before the fair at the local Starbucks. One of the jewelers came to the Starbucks at the prearranged time; however his friend was nowhere to be found. The next evening he caught sight of his buddy and asked him what happened, why he was so late in arriving to the fair. The other merchant answered that he had encountered some unanticipated traffic and was sad that he missed having coffee together, but he was so relieved that at least he was able to make it on time to the fair itself.***

***Different people reach the same destination in various different ways and in various different time constraints. It is not important how one gets there or how long the journey takes him, as long as he eventually reaches the correct destination.***

***This is particularly true for sacrifices. The Torah describes sacrifices as achieving a reiach nichoach, a pleasant odor. The Gerrer Rebbe explains that the pleasant odor that is achieved through the sacrificial process is not a physical odor of barbecued meat; rather it is a description of the spiritual standing of a human being. Just as the scent of an item precedes its arrival and announces its presence, so too should we have a pleasant odor, our good deeds and pleasant nature should herald our presence and precede us wherever we go. It is not relevant if we sacrifice an expensive animal or a cheaper bird sacrifice as long as we are positively affected by the experience and walk away from it a changed and better person from it.***

***Prayer is today's form of sacrifice. Each time we pray we are offering our prayer up to G-D in place of an animal or bird offering. However, it is not the amount of words we say that matters most; it is the feelings and emotions that run through our hearts and our minds that determine the success of our prayer. Even if one spent the entire day engaged in prayer, yet he remains unchanged and unmoved then his prayer ultimately has failed. However, if one cannot summon the inner strength to pray the entire prayer and instead he utters only a few prayers, yet he emerges from synagogue a better, more spiritual individual, his prayer has achieved its intended goal and he has found that elusive reiach nichoach, that most pleasing and enjoyable spiritual fragrance.***

**Shabbat Shalom**

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