

“And he shall scoop from there his full three fingers full of its fine flour and of its oil”

HKB”H the Supreme Heavenly Priest Takes the Best “Kometz” from Our Torah Study and Fulfillment of Mitzvos

In this week’s parsha, parshas Vayikro, we learn about the “korban-minchah”--“**קרבן מנחה לה**”. It differs from all of the other offerings which are brought from animals; the korban-minchah is brought from vegetation — from fine flour to which oil and frankincense are added, as it is written (Vayikro 2, 1):

“ונפש כי תקריב קרבן מנחה לה, סולת יהיה קרבנו ויצק עליה שמן ונתן עליה לבונה, והביאה אל בני אהרן הכהנים, וקמץ משם מלוא קמצו מסלתה ומשמנה על כל לבונתה, והקטיר הכהן את אזכרתה המזבחה אשה ריח ניחוח לה” — When a soul will bring a meal-offering (a korban-minchah) to Hashem, his offering shall be of fine flour; he shall pour oil on it and place frankincense on it. He shall bring it to the sons of Aharon, the Kohanim, and he shall scoop from there his full three fingers full, of its fine flour and of its oil, as well as all its frankincense; and the Kohen shall cause its memorial portion to go up in smoke upon the altar — a fire-offering, a satisfactory .aroma to Hashem

Rashi comments: **“ונפש כי תקריב, לא נאמר נפש בכל קרבנות נדבה אלא במנחה, מי דרכו להתנדב מנחה - עני, אמר הקב”ה מעלה אני עליו כאלו קרבו נפשו”** “soul” was not used with reference to any voluntary offerings except for the meal-offering. Whose practice is it to dedicate a meal-offering? It is a poor person’s. HKB”H said: I consider it on his behalf as if he offered his soul.

Now that the Beis HaMikdash has been destroyed — due to our countless transgressions — and neither the Kohanim, Leviim or Yisroelim are able to perform their prescribed service, we are no longer able to actually bring a korban-minchah. Nevertheless, we learn from the great author of the Bnei Yissoscher, who writes in his Derech Pikudechah (Intro. 3, 5), that any mitzvah which we are unable to actually fulfill today, we are still required to examine and study the reasons and implications associated with that mitzvah. Thus, we can ascertain how to at least fulfill the mitzvah in thought; by doing so, it will be considered as if we actually fulfilled that particular mitzvah.

In our current state, we, the holy Children of Yisroel, exist in exile as poor paupers who would ordinarily donate a korban-minchah to Hashem. Therefore, it behooves us to seek the essential lesson inherent in the offering of the korban-minchah.

In this manner, we can at least bring Hashem a korban-minchah in thought and in an alternative form--which the Blessed One will treat as if we had actually brought a real korban-minchah.

“Fine flour mixed with oil” Combining Torah-study with Good Deeds

Let us begin our journey by introducing a statement of Chazal’s in the Midrash Tanchuma (Acharei Mos 10):

“צפה הקב”ה שבית המקדש עתיד ליחרב, ואמר הקב”ה לישראל, כל זמן שבית המקדש קיים ואתם מקריבין קרבנות לתוכו מתכפר עליכם, ובזמן שאין בית המקדש קיים במה מתכפר עליכם, התעסקו בדברי תורה שהן משולין כקרבנות והן מתכפרין עליכם.”

Anticipating the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, HKB”H said to Yisroel: “When the Beis HaMikdash no longer exists, how will you achieve atonement? Occupy yourselves with words of Torah, which are analogous to sacrifices — they will atone for your sins.”

With this idea in mind, let us consider how words of Torah represent an alternative to a korban minchah. We find in the Midrash that **“סולת”**, fine flour, alludes to the Torah. For, one must labor to refine one’s learning just like one refines coarse flour. The Sifsei Kohen in parshas Pinches (Bamidbor 25, 5) provides us with a beautiful allusion. When we spell out each letter of the Hebrew word for fine flour, **סל”ת**, we get the following: **סמ”ך למ”ד תי”ו**. The numerical sum of these letters plus one equals the numerical value of the word **תורה**, 611.

Notwithstanding, to achieve the ideal state of perfection, Torah must be combined **“בשמן”**, with oil — which represents good deeds. This is explained in the Midrash (Bamidbor Rabbeh 13, 15) discussing the offerings brought by the heads of each tribe during the inauguration of the Mishkan.

We see, therefore, that even during this bitter exile, when we no longer have the Beis HaMikdash, it is imperative that we bring a korban-minchah to Hashem in an alternative form in order to fulfill, in the best way possible, the words of the possuk: **“ונפש”**

“כי תקריב קרבן מנחה לה” --when a soul will bring a meal-offering (a korban-minchah) to Hashem. As we learned from Rashi: **מי** — it is a pauper who brings a korban-minchah. This alludes to times of exile, when we are truly paupers both physically and spiritually.

Concerning periods of exile, we have learned (Beroches 8a): **“מיים שחרב בית המקדש אין לו להקב”ה בעולמו אלא ד’ אמות של הלכה בלבד** — in the aftermath of the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, the only thing remaining for HKB”H in His world is a mere four cubits of halocheh. Hence, during times of exile, we must continue to offer Hashem a form of the korban-minchah: **“סולת יהיה קרבנו”** — an offering of finely, refined flour — by toiling in our Torah-study to clarify the true meaning of each and every halocheh until it is as clear and pure as well-refined flour; **“ויצק”** — then we must combine what we have learned with good deeds, representing oil; **“ונתן עליה לבונה”** — and we must sanctify our thoughts, like pure frankincense, by devoting our Torah-study and good deeds exclusively to Hashem.

“And he shall scoop from there his full ‘kometz’”

Following this lead, let us proceed to delve into the mitzvah of “kmitzeh” — taking a scoopful of the “minchah” with a unique three finger procedure — that was an integral part of the korban minchah ritual: **“והביאה אל בני אהרן הכהנים, וקמץ משם מלוא קמצו”** מסלתה ומשמנה על כל לבונתה, והקטיר הכהן את אזכרתה המזבחה **“אשה ריח ניחוח לה”** — he shall bring it to the sons of Aharon, the Kohanim, and he shall scoop from there his full three fingers full, of its fine flour and of its oil, as well as all its frankincense; and the Kohen shall cause its memorial portion to go up in smoke upon the altar — a fire-offering, a satisfying aroma to Hashem. It is important to understand, what is the practical significance of this procedure? Why does the Kohen take a mere three-finger scoop-to offer on the altar as a satisfying present to Hashem — from the entire meal-offering brought by the pauper?

Surely, this unique ritual possesses an underlying message of great significance relevant to a Jew’s service of Hashem. Let us begin by examining a fascinating Midrash concerning the creation of man (B.R. 8, 5):

“אמר רבי סימון, בשעה שבא הקב”ה לבראות את אדם הראשון, נעשו מלאכי השרת כיתים כיתים וחבורות, מהם אומרים אל יבא ומהם אומרים יבא, הדא הוא דכתיב (תהלים פה יא) חסד ואמת נפגשו צדק ושלוש נשקו. חסד אומר יבא שהוא גומל חסדים, ואמת אומר אל יבא שכולו שקרים, צדק אומר יבא שהוא עושה צדקות, שלום אומר אל יבא דכוליה קטטא [שכולו מריבות].”

מה עשה הקב”ה, נטל אמת והשליכו לארץ, הדא הוא דכתיב (דניאל ח יב) ותשלך אמת ארצה. אמרו מלאכי השרת לפני הקב”ה,

רבון העולמים מה אתה מבזה תכסיס אלטיכסייה שלך, [רש”י: חותמו של הקב”ה אמת], תעלה אמת מן הארץ, הדא הוא דכתיב (תהלים פה יב) אמת מארץ תצמח.”

When HKB”H decided to create the first man, Odom HoRishon, the ministering agents were not all in agreement with this decision. Conflicting groups felt that man should be created, while others felt that he should not be created. Chesed, Kindness, said that he should be created because of the acts of kindness he performs. Emes, Truth, said that he should not be created — arguing that he is full of lies. Tzedek, Righteousness, argued that he should be created, because of his righteous and charitable acts; while Shalom, Peace, felt that he should not be created, because he is extremely argumentative.

In response, HKB”H took Emes and threw him down to earth, as the possuk states (Daniel 8, 12): **“ותשלך אמת ארצה”** — and Emes was thrown down to earth. The ministering agents said to HKB”H: why are you abusing Your trademark in this fashion? As Rashi explains, HKB”H’s trademark is truth.

All of the commentaries are baffled by this Midrash. Why did HKB”H choose to throw Emes down to earth. Firstly, if HKB”H wished to create man despite Emes’s objections — that man is by nature a liar — no one could prevent Him from doing so — even without tossing Emes down to earth. Secondly, if HKB”H intended to provide the angels with a response, what message did HKB”H send them by throwing Emes down to earth?

The Yefeh Toar explains that Emes represents the Torah, as indicated by the formula of the berachah: **“אשר נתן לנו תורת”** — Who gave us the Torah of truth (Emes). Now, the angels forming the group of Shalom were also against the decision to create man. They argued that he is prone to fights and disputes; his internal inclination, his yetzer, will persuade his body to battle and dispute his soul, causing him to sin. Yet, HKB”H left Shalom alone and chose to take Emes — representing the Torah — and throw her down to earth. This demonstrative act indicated that HKB”H ultimately planned to give Yisroel the Torah down on earth. By occupying themselves with Torah study, they would have the ideal remedy to combat the yetzer. As the Gemoreh (Kiddushin 30b) explains, the Torah is the antidote for the yetzer hara.

In this manner, he explains the ministering angels’ objection: **“רבון העולמים מה אתה מבזה תכסיס אלטיכסייה שלך, תעלה אמת מארץ”** — Master of the Universe, why are you abusing your trademark; bring Emes back from earth. This is very similar to the angels’ argument at the time the Torah was given (Shabbes 88b): **“מה אנוש כי תזכרנו וכן אדם כי תפקדנו”** — what is a mortal that You should remember him or the son of man that You should recall him? They claimed that it would be an insult to the Torah to remain down on earth among such lowly, physical creatures. Instead: **“תנה הודך על השמים”** — bestow Your glory upon the

ideal circumstances but is actually an essential step in the process. To achieve the truth regarding the performance of Mitzvos and service of Hashem, it is necessary to initially perform Mitzvos and serve Hashem with improper intent. It is analogous to climbing up a ladder. It is impossible to reach the upper rungs of the ladder, without first stepping on the lower rungs.

This coincides beautifully with what the Maor Einayim (Likutim parshas Nitzavim) writes regarding Chazal's statement in the Gemoreh (Berachos 34b): **“מקום שבעלי תשובה עומדין, צדיקים — גמורים אינם עומדין”** — in the place that penitents stand, the thoroughly righteous do not stand. After all, penitents, “ba’alei teshuvah,” have sunk to the depths of falsehood and darkness. In that state, they came to recognize the emptiness, meaninglessness and lies that permeate our lives. Hence, when they step out of the darkness, they are able to appreciate the enlightenment of truth more so than a person who has never sunk to those depths. This is the lesson conveyed by the wisest of all men (Koheles 2, 13): **“וראיתי אני שיש יתרון לחכמה מן הסכלות כיתרון האור מן החושך”** — and I perceived that wisdom exceeds folly as does the light exceed the darkness. One cannot fully appreciate the light until one has been stuck in the darkness. Similarly, the truth cannot be fully revealed until it is seen in relation to its opposite--falsehood and lies.

The Rectification of Falsehood Occurs when It Is Used to Reveal the Truth

Let us present the thought-provoking, yet alarming, words of the Sefas Emes (Toldos 5633). He writes that in the realm of falsehood, it is impossible to arrive at the point of truth without combating falsehood with devices of falsehood. This, in fact, is the method by which falsehood is rectified. This explains why Yaakov Avinu — who is associated with truth, as per the possuk (Michoh 7, 20): **“תתן אמת ליעקב”** — grant truth to Yaakov — employed trickery and deception in his dealings with the wicked Eisav in order to acquire the blessings. He states that it is not considered a lie if the ultimate goal is to arrive at the truth. Then the Sefas Emes adds:

ובוודאי בעולם הזה שנקרא עלמא דשיקרא, היתה כוונת הקב"ה לבוא להאמת על ידי זה דוקא, ועל ידי נקודה אמיתית שבלב אדם יוכל לעמוד נגד חבילות של שקר, כי שקר אין לו רגלים ואין לו קיום באמת, לכך נקודה אמת מבטל הרבה שקר.”

This world is referred to as “almah d’shikrah,” a world of lies. It was certainly HKB”H’s design that the truth be revealed specifically in this manner. Guided by a pure focus of truth in a man’s heart, he can overcome many elements of falsehood. As we know, a lie has no legs to stand on; therefore, a single truth can eradicate a large body of lies.

In this manner, we can comprehend the words of our sweet psalmist: **“אמת מארץ תצמח”** — truth shall sprout from the earth. Clarification of the truth by human beings on earth requires a process of growth and development. The thorns and debris--representing the forces of falsehood that embrace and envelop the truth — must be removed. The external coverings must be ground down and sifted out. Eventually, the unadulterated truth is revealed in her full glory and majesty.

Now, let us return to our sages’ enigmatic words. At the time of creation, HKB”H sought the ministering angels’ counsel, whether or not to create man. Emes, representing truth, voted against the creation of man, on the grounds that: **“אל יברא שכולו — שקרים”** — he is full of lies by nature. To supply a resounding response: **“מה עשה הקב"ה, נטל אמת והשליכו לארץ, הדא הוא — דכתיב ותשלך אמת ארצה”** — HKB”H took Emes and threw her down to earth. This divine act was meant to demonstrate that truth can only be revealed by means of an arduous process; the layers of lies surrounding it must be cleared away. As we learned from the Sefas Emes, this process serves to rectify the falsehood, as well, since it served as a means of arriving at the truth.

The other angels, observing this divine act, were perplexed. Not comprehending, they remarked: **“רבון העולמים מה אתה מבזה — תכסיס אלטיכסייה שלך, תעלה אמת מן הארץ”** — Master of the Universe, how can You abuse Your trademark in this fashion? Bring Emes back up from earth. To explain the significance of HKB”H’s response, the Midrash cites the possuk: **“אמת מארץ תצמח”** — truth shall sprout forth from the earth. In other words, the truth of Torah can only be revealed through a process of growth and development on earth. It necessitates man’s laborious efforts to remove the thorns and debris until the polished halocheh is arrived at — resembling pure, fine flour.

Let My Soul Be like Dust to All

Let us expand on the subject of why HKB”H threw Emes down to earth. The Zera Kodesh, authored by the holy Rabbi of Rophshitz, zy”a, (Ha’azinu), provides us with a wonderful interpretation of the verse that appears toward the end of Shemoneh Esreh: **“ונפשי — כעפר לכל תהיה”** — and let my soul be like dust to all. Here are his illuminating words:

“והנה אנו מתפללין, ונפשי כעפר לכל תהיה... הפירוש הוא כך, דהנה אנו רואים בארץ ועפר, שמצמיח לנו כל מיני טובות שבעולם, ועוד הפלא ופלא מצינו בארץ, שכל מה שמוסיפים עליה זבל היא מצמחת יותר, אף שהזבל הוא דבר מאוס מאד, וכן כל מה שהזבל מטונף בטינופת יותר מצמיח עוד יותר.”

והענין הוא, שהארץ מבררת אף קצת מהקצת טוב עדיין שבטינופת, ונוטלת מזה הטוב כוח הצמיחה, עד שפועלת שמזה הטינופת בא גם כן איזה דבר שבקדושה שפועל כוח הצמיחה, ואחר כך מברכים עליה

המוציא לחם מן הארץ וכל ברכת הנהנין, וזהו שאומרים ונפשי כעפר לכל תהיה, שמכל דבר אף מה שנראה לעין שאין בו טוב כלל כנ"ל, גם כן נפשי תוציא מזה ניצוצי קדושה והטוב שבו כעפר".

He remarks on the phenomenon of growth from the earth. We see that although the earth is composed of dust and dirt, all sorts of bounty and good things grow from the earth. Remarkably, the more fertilizer that is added, the more and better things grow. This occurs despite the fact that fertilizer is disgusting. In fact, the dirtier and more decomposed the better.

The secret, however, is that the earth finds the minute good that still remains within the manure. From that tiny positive, good element it extracts the potential for growth. Consequently, some element of kedusheh results from this refuse. Subsequently, we are able to recite the blessing of "He Who brought forth bread from the earth"--**המוציא לחם מן הארץ**-- and all of the other blessings that we recite over things that we derive pleasure and benefit from. This is also the message conveyed by the words **ונפשי כעפר לכל** "ונפשי כעפר לכל" -- and let my soul be like dust to all. From all things, even those things that appear to be devoid of any good, such as dust, let my soul find sparks of kedusheh to extract.

Let us embellish his sacred idea with a small idea of our own. We know that man's body was formed from the dust of the earth, as it is written (Bereishis 2, 7): **ויוצר ה' אלקים את האדם** "ויוצר ה' אלקים את האדם" -- **עפר מן האדמה** -- and Hashem G-d formed the man of dust from the earth. So, just like HKB"H created the earth with the unique power to refine sparks of kedusheh -- even from manure -- so too man, who was created from the earth, possesses this same potential. Man has the ability to refine the sparks of kedusheh wherever they may be found in this world. This is the meaning of our prayer: "ונפשי כעפר לכל תהיה" -- and let my soul be like dust to all. We are praying that we may manifest the very same potential that HKB"H implanted in the dust of the earth -- from which man was created.

For this reason, HKB"H threw Emes down to earth in response to Emes's claim that it would be preferable if man was not created. HKB"H indicated that just the opposite was true. For, the earth has the potential to reveal sparks of kedusheh even from manure and thereby to produce vegetation such as wheat. Similarly, man who was created from the earth, has the potential to clarify and reveal the truth from within the shrouds of falsehood--**אמת מארץ** "אמת מארץ" -- truth shall sprout forth from the earth.

HKB"H Chooses the Finest Scoopful

Continuing on along this exalted path, let us proceed to explain the deeper significance of the mitzvoh of "kmitzeh" associated with the korban-minchah: **והביאה אל בני אהרן הכהנים, וקמץ משם מלוא קמצו מסלתה ומשמנה על כל לבונתה, והקטיר הכהן את** "והביאה אל בני אהרן הכהנים, וקמץ משם מלוא קמצו מסלתה ומשמנה על כל לבונתה, והקטיר הכהן את" -- **אזכרתה המזבחה אשה ריח ניחוח לה** "אזכרתה המזבחה אשה ריח ניחוח לה" -- He shall bring it to the sons of Aharon, the Kohanim, and he shall scoop from there his full three fingers full, of its fine flour and of its oil, as well as all its frankincense; and the Kohen shall cause its memorial portion to go up in smoke upon the altar -- a fire-offering, a satisfactory aroma to Hashem. The Gemoreh (Yoma 19a) states: **הני כהני** "הני כהני" -- **שלוחא דרחמנא נינהו** -- the Kohanim are the agents of HKB"H.

HKB"H designed this mitzvoh to teach us a vital lesson. It is incumbent upon every Jew to bring a poor man's offering to HKB"H -- a "minchas-oni." He accomplishes this obligation by engaging and toiling in Torah study to the best of his ability -- to clarify the true meaning and purpose of each halocheh until it resembles pure, refined flour. Then, he must combine it with oil -- Mitzvos and good deeds -- and, lastly, add frankincense to the mixture -- indicating that he is acting with the purest of intentions.

Once this ritual has been completed, HKB"H, the supreme Kohen, proceeds to perform the act of "kmitzeh," as it were: **וקמץ** "וקמץ" -- **משם מלוא קמצו מסלתה ומשמנה על כל לבונתה** "משם מלוא קמצו מסלתה ומשמנה על כל לבונתה" -- and he shall scoop from there his full three fingers full, of its fine flour and of its oil, as well as all its frankincense -- from all of our Torah-study and performance of Mitzvos, HKB"H takes, as it were, the best scoopful, representing the pure frankincense. **והקטיר הכהן את** "והקטיר הכהן את" -- **אזכרתה המזבחה אשה ריח ניחוח לה** "אזכרתה המזבחה אשה ריח ניחוח לה" -- and the Kohen shall cause its memorial portion to go up in smoke upon the altar -- a fire-offering, a satisfactory aroma to Hashem. For this choice three-finger scoopful is what provides Hashem with true satisfaction.

In summary, we have learned that the purpose of our service to Hashem is to diligently study Torah and perform Mitzvos until the ultimate truth is revealed -- fulfilling the potential instilled in us of: **אמת מארץ תצמח** "אמת מארץ תצמח" -- truth shall sprout forth from the earth. Once we have fulfilled this obligation and have presented the supreme Kohen, HKB"H, with our poor man's minchah offering, we can request that He fulfill the mitzvoh of "kmitzeh" on our behalf.

לזכות ולרפואה שלימה של בניציון בן רחל ושמואל אהרן הי"ו