



Your Contribution Is Superior to Theirs By Lighting the Menorah Aharon HaKohen Was Tasked with Restoring the Light of Hashem— the Neshamah —to the Body of a Sinner

This week's parsha is parshas Beha'aloscha. Hence, it is fitting to focus on the mitzvah of kindling the lamps in the Beis HaMikdash (Bamidbar 8, 1): "וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר, דבר אל אהרן ואמרת אליו בהעלותך את הנרות אל מול פני המנורה יאירו שבעת הנרות, ויעש כן אהרן אל מול פני המנורה העלה נרותיה כאשר צוה ה' את משה." Hashem spoke to Moshe saying, "Speak to Aharon and say to him: When you kindle the lamps, toward the face of the Menorah shall the seven lamps cast light. Aharon did so; toward the face of the Menorah, he kindled its lamps, as Hashem had commanded Moshe.

Rashi inquires: **Why does the Torah juxtapose the passage of the Menorah with the passage describing the contributions of the "nesiim" (the princes of the shevatim)? Because when Aharon saw the inauguration of the "nesiim," he was disheartened, since he did not participate with them in the inauguration—neither he nor his tribe. HKBH said to him: "I swear by your life! Your contribution is greater than theirs, for you will kindle and prepare the Menorah's lamps."** Rashi, however, does not explain in what way the contribution of Aharon HaKohen is superior to the contributions of the "nesiim." Nevertheless, the matter is explained in greater detail in the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 15, 6):

You find in the passage above that eleven tribes offered sacrifices, and the tribe of Ephraim sacrificed, and all of the "nesiim" sacrificed, with the exception of the "nasi" of Levi. Who was the "nasi" of Levi? It was Aharon . . . He

thought to himself: Woe is me! Perhaps, it is because of me that HKB"H is not accepting the tribe of Levi. HKB"H said to Moshe: "Go tell Aharon not to despair; you are destined for something greater." This is the significance of the statement: "Speak to Aharon and say to him: When you kindle the lamps . . ." While the Beis HaMikdash exists, the korbanos will be offered; the lamps, however, will face the center of the Menorah forever. Furthermore, all of the Berachos that I gave you to bless My children will never be annulled.

The Ramban is perplexed by the statement in the Midrash: **"While the Beis HaMikdash exists, the korbanos will be offered; the lamps, however, will face the center of the menorah forever."** After all: **It is known that when the Beis HaMikdash no longer exists, and the sacrificial service is abolished due to its destruction, even the service involving the lamps will be abolished.** So, how can the Midrash claim that the lamps will illuminate the face of the menorah forever? Therefore, the Ramban explains that HKB"H's statement refers to the Chanukah candles that HKB"H would establish in the future through the priestly Chashmonaim, the descendants of Aharon. They exist forever; for, even during times of galus, we fulfill the mitzvah of lighting the Chanukah candles. Notwithstanding, since it is the nature of Torah to be elucidated in seventy different ways, we will explain how we can continue this sacred avodah of Aharon HaKohen even today.

The Menorah Alludes to Man's Physical Body which We Must Illuminate with Hashem's Candle—Man's Neshamah

We will begin our investigation by introducing the illuminating remarks of the Chasam Sofer, zy"א, in Toras Moshe concerning the avodah of kindling the Menorah. He cites the commentary of the Shela hakadosh on this week's parsha (Derech Chaim 11):

"אל מול פני המנורה יאירו שבעת הנרות. כתיב נר ה' נשמת אדם, צריך לראות תמיד שתהא נשמתו מאירה מתורה וממצוות, וגוף האדם הוא כצורת מנורה, כי במנורה היו שלוש בליטות של קנים יוצאות, ושל מעלה קטנה משל תחתיה."

"Toward the face of the Menorah shall the seven lamps cast light": It is written (Mishlei 20, 7): "A man's neshamah is the lamp (candle) of Hashem." A person must constantly heed that his neshamah is illuminated by Torah and mitzvos. Now, man's physical body resembles the shape of the Menorah. For, the Menorah had three (lateral) extensions of branches projecting from it—with the upper ones smaller than those below them.

Let us clarify. All six branches had to be level (the same height) on top with the top of the body of the Menorah—the center of the Menorah—so that all seven lamps would be level with each other. Hence, the two upper branches projecting from the body of the Menorah, closest to its top, were necessarily shorter than the middle branches projecting outwards below them. Similarly, the two middle branches were necessarily shorter in length than the bottom set of branches below them—which by necessity were the longest of the branches of the Menorah.

Based on this understanding, the Shela hakadosh explains: **The same is true of man; he has extensions of the lower extremities** (the legs which are the lowest part of the body and are quite long corresponding to the lowest branches of the Menorah); **the extensions of the upper extremities** (the arms, which are not as long, corresponding to the middle branches); **the extensions of the ears** (corresponding to the two shortest, uppermost branches). **The body containing the heart is the body of the Menorah. The height of the Menorah was 18 tefachim** (handbreadths), **which equals three amot** (cubits, which equal 6 tefachim each)—

the height of an average man, as the Tosafos wrote in *Maseches Shabbas* (92a).

Thus, he asserts that the shape and height of the Menorah allude fantastically to the shape and height of a human being. Like the Menorah, a man must sanctify and illuminate his body. Additionally, the Chasam Sofer provides further clarification. He explains that HKB"H chose to sanctify these limbs specifically, because the arms and legs perform all actions carried out by the body, whereas the ears are the instruments of hearing. Thus, together they allude to Yisrael's famous proclamation at Matan Torah of **"na'aseh v'nishma."**

Now, let us elaborate on the words of the Shela hakadosh. HKB"H appointed Aharon HaKohen to perform the sacred avodah of kindling the seven lamps of the Menorah, which allude to the human body with its heart located centrally: **A person must constantly heed that his neshamah is illuminated by Torah and mitzvos.** Hence, this is the underlying meaning of the passuk: **"A man's neshamah is the lamp (candle) of Hashem."** In other words, when the neshamah shines with the light of Torah and mitzvos, it illuminates the physical body, which is compared to the Menorah.

The Magnificent Revelation of the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: An Animal Offering Atones for the Animalistic Act of a Sinner

With this introduction, we will now proceed to explain the words of encouragement—"chizuk"—HKB"H offered Aharon HaKohen: **"I swear by your life! Your contribution is greater than theirs, for you will kindle and prepare the Menorah's lamps."** To begin with, let us introduce a teaching from the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh in parshas Shemini (Vayikra 9, 8). He explains that HKB"H agreed to provide a sinner atonement by bringing an animal as a korban. In the process, the sinner should have in mind that everything being done to the sacrificial animal should deservedly be done to him for his sin. But why didn't HKB"H demand that the sinner himself actually be sacrificed?

The Ohr HaChaim hakadosh explains the matter as follows: While committing the sin, the person is behaving like an animal. As such, he falls from the status of an **"adam"** to the status of a **"beheimah."** But when he returns to his senses and performs teshuvah to make amends for his transgression, he

returns to the status of “**adam.**” Therefore, it is not justified for him to sacrifice himself as an atonement, since he has already returned to the status of an “**adam.**” Nevertheless, it is appropriate for him to atone by bringing a “**beheimah**” as a korban to make amends for sinning and having behaved like a “**beheimah.**”

This explains beautifully what they expounded in the Gemara (Chullin 5a) on the passuk (Vayikra 1, 2): **אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן לה, מן הבהמה - להביא בני אדם שדומים לבהמה, מכאן אמרו מקבלין קרבנות ממושעי ישראל כדי שיחזרו בהן בתשובה.** “**When a man among you brings an offering to Hashem, from the animals . . .: The passuk comes to include people who are similar in their actions to animals** among those who are eligible to bring sacrifices; **from here the sages derived that we accept offerings from the sinners of Yisrael; so that they should return to the fold by means of teshuvah.**”

In other words, the reason we accept korbanos from sinners is implicit in the passuk. Because when they committed the sin, they were behaving like an animal. Yet, when they perform teshuvah and return to the status of “**adam,**” it is appropriate to accept an animal offering from them in lieu of a human offering.

HKB”H Arranges for a Neshamah Requiring Tikun to Be Present in the Sacrificial Animal

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I would like to elaborate further on the idea presented by the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh. Seemingly, one could question the legitimacy of this incredible explanation. Albeit the sinner that returned to the status of an “adam” by performing teshuvah no longer deserves to be sacrificed for acts he performed as a “beheimah.” Nevertheless, what is the poor animal guilty of? Why should it be sacrificed in place of the sinner?

A reasonable answer to this question is provided by the Arvei Nachal (Vayikra; end of Drush 1) in the name of the Arizal in Likutei Torah (Vayikra; Ta’amei HaMitzvos). When a person brings a korban to atone for his transgression, HKB”H arranges for him to bring an animal that is actually a gilgul of a neshamah of a rasha—i.e., a person that also committed this same sin but neglected to perform teshuvah while he was still alive. Thus, when the current sinner brings the korban, confesses his wrongdoings over it, and performs teshuvah, he

also achieves a tikun for the neshamah that had reincarnated into that sacrificial animal.

Based on what we have learned, the Arvei Nachal explains the significance of what they expounded in the Gemara on the passuk cited above: **“When a man among you brings an offering to Hashem, from the animals . . .: The passuk comes to include people who are similar in their actions to animals** among those who are eligible to bring sacrifices; **from here the sages derived that we accept offerings from the sinners of Yisrael; so that they should return to the fold by means of teshuvah.**”

With their profound choice of words—**להביא בני אדם שדומים**—“**to bring people who resemble animals**”—Chazal alluded to the fact that when an animal korban was brought, **people resembling animals**, who had reincarnated into the animal, were being brought as well. Hence, they conclude their elucidation by way of explanation: **“From here they derived that we accept korbanos from the sinners of Yisrael; so that they should return to the fold by means of teshuvah.”** They emphasize that the korbanos come from animals that are gilgulim **“מושעי ישראל” - of sinners of Yisrael**—so that they can be afforded tikun by means of teshuvah.

Additionally, we find a tremendous chiddush in the Yismach Moshe (end of parshas Vayeira). There, he provides a rationale for the mitzvah of leaning on the head of the korban, as prescribed in the passuk (ibid. 4): **“וסמך ידו על ראש: העולה ונרצה לו לכפר עליו”**—**he shall lean his hands on the head of the olah-offering; and it will be considered pleasing on his behalf, to atone for him.** By means of this leaning procedure—**“semichah**”—the tainted part of the soul of the sinner enters the body of the korban. Thus, when he sacrifices the animal, he is sacrificing part of himself. Afterwards, his soul returns to him pure and unblemished.

We have now achieved a deeper understanding of the illuminating insight of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh. Let us summarize: At the time of the transgression, the sinner is categorized as a “beheimah” rather than an “adam.” After performing teshuvah, he returns to the status of “adam.” Therefore, he no longer deserves to be sacrificed as a korban; instead, he is permitted to substitute an animal as a korban. Regarding the question as to what sin did the animal commit, we refer to the words of the Arizal. Within the sacrificial

animal is the gilgul of a “rasha,” who requires tikun for the very same transgression as the person offering the korban. Furthermore, we learned from the Yismach Moshe that when he sacrifices the animal, he is actually sacrificing a part of himself, because his tainted soul actually becomes part of the korban.

The Sinner Is Categorized as a “Beheimah” because His Neshamah Abandons Him

I would now like to delve deeper into the sacred insight of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh with my esteemed, royal audience. He asserts that when a man sins, he descends from the status of “adam” to the status of “beheimah.” We will refer to the narrative related to the creation of man (Bereishis 2, 7): **”וַיִּצַר ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶת הָאָדָם עֹפֶר מִן הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפִּיו נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה—**and Hashem Elokim formed man of soil from the earth and blew into his nostrils the soul of life; and man became a living soul. The Zohar hakadosh (Noach 62a) teaches us that man’s soul/being is comprised of three parts: **“nefesh,” “ruach,” and “neshamah.”**

The most superior is the **”נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים”—the “soul of life”** that HKB”H breathed into man to help him serve Hashem. This is the message conveyed by the passuk (Iyov 32, 8): **”וַיִּנְשְׂמָת: שְׂדֵי תְבִינָם—the neshamah from G-d gives them insight.** However, when a person sins, chas v’shalom, this neshamah abandons him, and he loses the assistance from above. Here is a Hebrew translation of the passage in the Zohar:

”אמר רבי יהודה, נפש ורוח כלולות זו עם זו אבל הנשמה שורה באדם רק לפי דרכיו ומעשיו הטובים, ועד אז היא נמצאת במדור נעלם שלא ידוע מקומה. אם באדם להיטהר, מסייעים לו עם הנשמה הקדושה, ומטהרים אותו ומקדשים אותו ונקרא קדוש, לא זכה ולא בא להיטהר, נשארות אצלו רק שתי דרגות של פתחים שהן הנפש והרוח, אבל הנשמה הקדושה איננה בו.”

Rabbi Yehudah said: The “nefesh” and the “ruach” are connected to one another (in man’s body); the “neshamah,” however, dwells in man solely based on his behavior and good deeds. Until then, she is located in a hidden compartment whose location is unknown. If he comes to be purified, he is assisted with the holy neshamah; they purify him and sanctify him, and he is deemed holy. If he is not meritorious and does not come to be purified, only two lesser levels (of the soul) remain with him—namely,

the “nefesh” and the “ruach.” The holy “neshamah,” however, is not in him.

This is actually explained more clearly in the Tikunei Zohar (Tikun 31): **”נִשְׁמָה וְנֶפֶשׁ, כִּד בְּרַ נֶשׂ אִיהוּ מְחֻיָּב בְּחֻבֵּיב וּמְתַגְבְּרִין: ”**In other words, if a man is guilty of iniquities, the “nishmat chaim” leaves his body; only the “nefesh” remains. This refers to the “animal nefesh” that courses through his blood. As it is written (Devarim 12, 23): **”כִּי הַדָּם הוּא הַנֶּפֶשׁ”—for the blood is the “nefesh” (life, soul).**

Based on this idea, the Panim Yafos (Bereishis) explains the following statement in the Gemara (Sotah 3a): **”אֵין אָדָם—”a person does not commit an aveirah unless he is possessed by a whim of foolishness (insanity).** Since the neshamah in his brain—his divine portion from above—has left him, he lacks the chochmah that stems from the “godly neshamah.” This enables the whim of foolishness to take its place in the man’s brain, causing him to sin.

It pleases me greatly to introduce at this point the following teaching in the Gemara (Shabbas 151b): **”אֵין חַיָּה שׁוֹלֵטת בָּאָדָם עַד שֶׁנִּדְמָה לוֹ כְּבַהֲמָה, שְׁנֵאמַר אָדָם בִּיקָר בִּלְיָן נִמְשַׁל כְּבַהֲמוֹת נִדְמוֹ—** wild animals only prevail over man, when he resembles a “beheimah,” as it states (Tehillim 49, 21): **”Man is glorious but understands it not (his glorious potential), he (the sinner; the man who neglects his mission) is likened to animals.** The Maharsha comments in Chiddushei Aggados: **Wild beasts’ fear of mankind is on account of the “neshamah” they possess, which endows them with the image of G-d; however, once the image of G-d leaves a human being, he resembles a mere animal, over which the wild beast prevails.**

In summary, we have learned that when a man sins, chas v’shalom, the neshamah leaves him, and he forfeits the element of divine assistance. Without the neshamah, he is truly no more than a “beheimah.” As such, wild beasts no longer fear him; for they perceive him as a mere animal. This explains very nicely the contention of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh that a sinner is categorized as a “beheimah,” because he has been possessed by a whim of foolishness. Since the “godly neshamah” has left him, and only the “animal

soul” remains, he truly resembles a “beheimah.” Yet, when he makes amends via teshuvah and merits having his neshamah restored, he is elevated from the status of a “beheimah” back to the status of an “adam.”

ב'ערתו הקודש מן ה'בית Is an Acronym for בהמ"ה

At this point, it is fitting to add a pleasant tidbit to further explain the notion of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh that a sinner resembles a “beheimah.” We will refer to what the Gaon Chida, ztz”l, writes in Dvash L’Fee (2, 4). He addresses the elucidation in the Gemara (Chullin 5a): **מִן הַבְּהֵמָה, לְהַבִּיא בְּנֵי אָדָם—שְׂדוּמִים לְבַהֲמָה**—**“from the animals” comes to include people that are similar to an animal.** He explains it based on a fascinating story he read in an old, hand-written manuscript about a particular wise man. This man was forced to sell a copy of the Zohar that he owned due to financial hardship. Then, in a dream, he was tormented from above by being described as a “beheimah.” Upon arising in the morning, he went to a prominent scholar to interpret the dream for him. He was told that he was being rebuked from the heavens for relinquishing and selling his copy of the Zohar hakadosh. Therefore, they called him by the derisive term **בהמ"ה**, which is an abbreviation for (Devarim 26, 13): **בִּיעֲרַתִּי הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִן הַבַּיִת—I have eliminated the holy things from the house.** In other words, he was being disparaged for removing the kedushah of the Zohar from his house. When he heard this, he immediately went and bought back the manuscript of the Zohar, and put it back in his house.

Based on this anecdote, the Chida explains why a sinner is called a “beheimah.” As a result of the transgression, the sinner’s kedushah leaves him; this allows the forces of evil to enter in its place. Hence, it is fitting that he be described as a **בהמ"ה**, connoting the fact that he has been emptied of kedushah—**בִּיעֲרַתִּי הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִן הַבַּיִת**. According to what we have explained, we can add that he is called a “beheimah,” because he caused the holy “neshamah” to abandon him—to leave his **“bayis,”** so to speak.

The Nesiim Offered Animal Sacrifices to Aton for Those with the Status of “Beheimah”

We now have cause to rejoice, for we have been enlightened! We can better comprehend the words of “chizuk” HKB”H

offered Aharon HaKohen, who was despondent that he and his shevet did not participate in the inauguration of the Mishkan along with the other nesiim. HKB”H encouraged him as follows: **“I swear by your life! Your contribution is greater than theirs, for you will kindle and prepare the Menorah’s lamps.”** Let us consider the reason the nesiim opted to bring korbanos from animals for the inauguration of the mizbeiach. It was because that is the function of the mizbeiach; korbanos are offered on it to atone for the sinner who had the status of a “beheimah” when he sinned.

Now, we are familiar with the opinion of the Ramban (Vayikra 1, 9). He holds that korbanos provide atonement, because the sinner must have in mind that everything being done to the sacrificial animal should deservedly be done to him. Here are his sacred words: **The sinner must imagine that everything being done to the korban should have been done to him. Because he sinned against G-d with his body and soul, his blood deserved to be spilled and his body burned. It is only due to the Almighty’s kindness that a substitute was accepted in his stead. In this manner, the korban provides atonement—its blood in place of his blood, its life in place of his life.** Thus, we see that by inaugurating the mizbeiach with korbanos, the nesiim paved the way for sinners who descended from the status of an “adam” to that of a “beheimah” to receive atonement by offering a “beheimah” on the mizbeiach.

In contrast, through his sacred avodah of kindling the lamps of the Menorah, Aharon HaKohen restored the neshamos of Yisrael that had vanished when they sinned back into their bodies. As we learned from the sacred words of the Shela hakadosh, the shape of the Menorah alludes magnificently to the shape of the human body. Like the Menorah, the human body has six physical branches—two ears, two arms and two legs. Also, the central body of the Menorah from which the branches extend alludes to the human body with a heart in its center. This then is the deeper significance of the kindling of the lamps. As we learn from the passuk: **“A man’s neshamah is the lamp (candle) of Hashem”—**the lamps allude to the neshamah. Thus, the purpose of kindling the lamps is to bring the neshamah back into the body, so that it may once again illuminate the corporeal body in keeping with the passuk: **“וְנִשְׁמַת שְׂדֵי תְבִינִם—**the neshamah from G-d gives them insight.

This then is how HKB”H set Aharon’s mind at ease with the statement: **“I swear by your life! Your contribution is greater than theirs, for you will kindle and prepare the Menorah’s lamps.”** The nesim inaugurated the mizbeiach by bringing animal korbanos to pave the way for Yisrael to bring korbanos to atone for descending from the status of “adam” to the status of “beheimah.” Aharon’s avodah of kindling the Menorah did so much more; it was indeed superior. He elevated Yisrael from the status of “beheimah” to the status of “adam” by rekindling their internal lamps—their neshamos.

Following this sublime path, we will now explain the teaching in the Midrash. HKB”H said to Aharon: **“While the Beis HaMikdash exists, the korbanos will be offered; the lamps, however, will face the center of the Menorah forever. Furthermore, all of the Berachos that I gave you to bless My children will never be annulled.”** As we noted above, the Ramban questioned the validity of this statement, seeing as the mitzvah of kindling the Menorah in the Beis HaMikdash is not performed in galus.

It appears that this difficulty can be resolved based on a teaching in the Gemara (B.B. 25b): **הרוצה שיחכים ידרים ושיעשיר יצפין וסימניך שלחן בצפון ומגורה בדרום.”** **One who wants to become wise should face south** (Rashi: He should face south while praying), **while one who wants to become wealthy should face north** (he should face north while praying); **and your mnemonic is: The Shulchan stood in the north, while the Menorah stood in the south.** So, yes, it is true that during periods of galus, when we do not have a Beis HaMikdash, we lack the mitzvah of kindling the Menorah. However, HKB”H assured Aharon: **“The lamps will face the center of the Menorah forever.”** Even during times of galus, whenever a Jew faces south while davening, he will elicit the kedushah of Aharon HaKohen, who lit the seven lamps of the Menorah in the south. As we have learned, by lighting the lamps of the Menorah, whose shape resembled a human body, Aharon restored the neshamah, so that it would illuminate the entire body. Thus, a person could become wise via the chochmah of the Torah and the performance of mitzvos.



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