

תורת אביגדור הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

Rav Avigdor Miller on the Parsha

Adapted from his Tapes, Seforim and Writings of Talmidim

Sefer Vayikra The Markovitz Family Edition

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פרשת ויקרא

With Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l

Animal sacrifice: a pillar of the world

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Part I. Understanding Sacrifice

GETTING HASHEM TO LIKE ME

As we read through this week's *parsha*, and actually, the whole *Seder Vayikra*, there's a theme that's constantly reiterated, and that's the subject of finding favor in Hashem's eyes. Now, if you would ask someone on the street how to get Hashem to like you, he might have some ideas. Maybe you should say the whole Tehillim a few times; or fast on Mondays and Thursdays. But our *parsha* doesn't leave the way to achieve Hashem's favor up to our imagination. And surprisingly we're told again and again that we can find the especial favor of Hashem by means of animal sacrifice. יקריב אותו לרצונו - "He shall bring it for his favor before Hashem" (Vayikra 1:3). לרצונכם תובחוו. "For your favor you shall slaughter it." לרצונך "For your favor" (see 19:5, 22:19, 22:29, 23:11).

Now you should pay good attention to these words because it's a very big thing to find favor in the eyes of Hashem; it's actually the major achievement of life. I want to quote to you from the Chovos Halevavos (Shaar Avodas Elokim, Perek 3). He tells us that צריך שיתברר, "It must become clear to a person, שהתמורה - עודפת עליו - that the effort he puts into making himself better in this world will be rewarded with a very great exchange." He'll get back much more than he puts in. If you improve yourself in this

world, says the Chovos Halevavos, you'll get much more back in return.

What will you get? What's the great thing you'll get in exchange? Listen to the words of the Chovos Halevavos: והוא רצות - הא-ל אותו - "That Hashem will like you; He'll think well of you." Now we know that אהבתי אתכם נאום השם, "I love all of you," says Hashem, but we're learning now that it's possible to find *especial* favor in the eyes of Hashem, above and beyond the intense love that Hashem has for all of the Am Yisroel. והוא רצות הא-ל, and that is that Hashem should favor you; it's the approval, the regard of your Creator. Now, we're *not* talking about reward here; we're *not* talking about Gan Eden. What is the great success of a man? Hashem is going to like you! There's nothing as important as that!

FORGET ABOUT THE REWARD!

I would like you to listen to a quote from the Sefer Hayashar, from Rabeinu Tam: הנני מפרש לך, "I want to make clear to you, he says, כי אין תועלת גדולה כאהבת הבורא לאדם, that there is no greater benefit for a man than that Hashem should love him." That Hashem should love you; that's the pinnacle of success! That you should find favor in the eyes of Hashem; there's nothing better than that. Of course, included in Hashem's love for you will be greatest of rewards *as well*, but the reward is *not* the great success. And therefore says Rabeinu Tam, אין לנו לחקור איך יהיה הגמול, the טוב, we don't have to be concerned about what and how the reward will be. Because the wise man understands that what really matters for a person is that he should find favor in the eyes of Hashem.

And so, once we understand that the *avodas hakorbanos* can elevate a man and bestow upon him such excellence that he deserves to find favor in the eyes of Hashem, we learn how important our *parsha* is. And therefore, if you have a desire that Hakodosh Boruch Hu should look down at you and say, "My child, I am happy with you; it's *you* who has found favor in My eyes," then don't go home yet because the subject of the night, *korbanos*, is for you.

WHAT'S IT ALL FOR?!

When we hear about *korbanos* today, so to many people it is really a quandary, it's a big puzzle. Some people think that in the olden days it was justified; everybody brought *korbanos*, all the pagan nations of antiquity placed a great emphasis on such things, so we did as well. But nowadays, who needs *korbanos*?! Slaughtering the neck of an animal?! "It's a *rachmanus*," we think. It's *tza'ar ba'alei chayim*! What it's all for?! For the one untrained in Torah attitudes the *Beis Hamikdash* seems to be a butcher shop; blood all over the place! And they're burning the body parts and the *cheilev*! *Gevalt*!

And so if we're going to properly study *Parshas Vayikra*, the *parsha* that introduces us to *korbanos*, then we'll be acquiring new minds; new attitudes that will give us at least some insight into why *korbanos* are the path towards finding the favor of Hashem. And so we'll go step by step and understand this as best as we can.

THE ANIMAL; YOUR SHALIACH

One of the first requirements of the one who brings a *korban* is *smichah*. When a person approached the *mizbei'ach* to offer a *korban* it says: וּסִמֵּךְ אֶת יָדוֹ עַל רֹאשׁ הָעֹלָה – "And he shall lean his hand on the head of the *olah*" (ibid. 1:4). He leans his weight on it. Now, why does the one offering the *korban* have to lean on it? And the answer is that when you put your hands on the animal you're making the *beheimah* your agent, your representative. The leaning of your hands on the *korban* signifies the appointment of the offering as a *shaliach*, a substitute, for the owner of the animal. Like when Moshe Rabeinu put his hands on the head of Yehoshua, וַיִּסְמֹךְ אֶת יָדָיו עָלָיו (Bamidbar 27:23), so from then on Yehoshua took over; he was the *shaliach* of Moshe Rabeinu, his agent to take over as the leader of the nation. And in the same sense, the man that lays his hands upon the head of his offering thereby makes it his agent, and it's as if he himself is being offered up to Hashem.

And that's why the *halachah* is that סְמִיכָה בְּכָל כָּחוֹ – "When you press down on the head of the animal you have to use *all of*

your strength" (Chagigah 16b). You can't just give a little bit of a lean, something superficial, and that's all. No, there's nothing superficial about this! You press down with all of your strength; you put "*your neshamah*" into that *smichah*. And that was like a stick of dynamite exploding in your mind; it was sinking in now that this animal was representing *you*! And so you realized that your *olah* is not merely a lamb that is being *shechted* and brought up on the fire – *it's you*!

THE SECRET OF A KORBAN

And that brings us to the secret of *korbanos*. Because what do we do? We bring a little lamb to the *mizbei'ach*. Now the poor little lamb is a live creature, and his heart is pumping blood throughout his body. And he wants to live. But what do you do? You cut its neck and the blood comes gushing out, and you put the *dam* on the *mizbei'ach*. And while you do that, you think, "That should be me! But for the mercy of Hashem, that would be *my* blood being sprinkled on the *mizbei'ach*. Really that's what I owe You Hashem for giving me life, for giving me all the delights of being alive."

We like being alive! I say "like" - we love it! I'll prove it to you. Here's a man lying in his hospital bed; he's anxious, distraught. Why? The doctors came into his room yesterday and showed him the test results. And now his days in this sweet world are numbered. Oh yes, *now* he realizes how delicious life is. "Ohhh!" he says. "If I could just get out in the street again. If I could just live, and walk around again! What a happiness it would be!" He looks down from the hospital window and he sees the heads of the people walking on the street; going to work, the regular grind of life, with all of its ups and downs. And he's jealous. He's so jealous of that. They're walking carefree, outside of the hospital. They're living, they're alive, and for him it will soon be all over. And we my friends are the people he sees walking the streets, the people this man envies. And so, how are we going to express our gratitude to Hashem? What could we do already? So we bring a *korban*, a lamb, instead of ourselves. And

we lean in on the lamb with all our strength, concentrating on the fact that this lamb is about *to take our place*.

DON'T RUN AWAY!

And that's why the Torah requires that תיכף לסמיכה שחיטה – “The *shechitah* must be done immediately after the leaning” (Brachos 42a). You symbolically transferred yourself onto that animal, and right away you cut the neck. And that leaves no time for the owner of the *beheimah* to escape the scene. Even if he's not going to do the *shechitah* – often he would do the *shechitah* himself too; *shechitah k'sheirah b'zar* (Brachos 31b) – but even if he wouldn't do it, he *saw* it. The owner of the offering was always present to witness how “he” is vicariously being slaughtered as an offering to Hashem. He can't avoid witnessing the Kohen *shecht* the *olah*.

He's watching as the neck is cut – the neck of his *beheimah* – and the *dam* gushes out. It's *dam* coming from *his* cut neck! And he looks at it and is overwhelmed. “That's me!” he thinks; it's a very powerful scene to watch.

IT LOOKS VERY MUCH LIKE HUMAN SACRIFICE!

And it didn't stop there. You know, when they brought a *korban olah*, a burnt offering, there was a *mitzvah* of *hefshet*, to skin it, to take the skin off the animal. Now why do you need this? It's an *olah* after all; you're burning the whole animal on the *mizbei'ach*. So why can't you just burn it in its entirety, together with the skin? “No,” Hashem says, “First thing, I want you to remove the hide.”

And that's because after the *shechitah*, when the animal is carried up to the *mizbei'ach*, if the hide would still be there, so it would look like a *beheimah*. The hide is a giveaway! It's a lamb, a sheep! But Hashem wants it to look like a human, not like a lamb. So the hide is peeled off and now it looks very much like a human being. If you ever saw an animal being skinned you would know that in some ways your body shares a resemblance to a skinned carcass; and that's what Hashem wants here, that it should look like *you*. That's the reason for the *hefshet*; it should look like a human being is being offered up to Hashem.

THE SECRET OF NITU'ACH

And after the *hefshet*, the next step in the *avodas hakorbanos* is the *mitzvah* of *nitu'ach*: ונתח אותה לנתחים - "And he should cut it into its pieces" (ibid. 1:6). The animal is not brought to the *mizbei'ach* as one whole unit, but it is divided into parts according to its limbs. You have to cut it up into its separate limbs; the legs separate, the hands separate, every part separate. And one *eiver* at a time is placed onto the *mizbei'ach*.

So we learn that gratitude to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, is not sufficiently fulfilled by expressing thanks for the entire body at once. Just to say, "Thank You Hashem for life, for my body," and to feel absolved of your obligation is a failing. What's life? You could live and be a plant. You could live like a mushroom. That's also life. Saying that you're grateful for "everything" is really saying nothing! We're going to lump it together and *patur* ourselves? Being indebted to Hashem begins by considering each limb separately, and by understanding that each detail of the body is a gift that stands on its own; each one is a gift from Hakodosh Boruch Hu that doesn't belong to us, and that He can take back at any moment.

THE KORBAN PARADE!

And it was all done with fanfare, with great pomp. The *kohanim* lined up in a procession, like a parade: כולן עומדין בשורה - "All of the *kohanim* were standing in a row with the limbs in their hands" (Tamid 4:3). One *kohen* was holding a head, and another *kohen* behind him holding two legs; and behind him a line of *kohanim* carrying limbs and organs. It was a scene to behold; and it was done with *machshavah*, with introspection.

And therefore, as the Kohen walked slowly up the ramp, the owner of the *korban* would watch as each separate limb was offered up. You know, once it's skinned and cut into its limbs, it doesn't look like a lamb's thigh or leg anymore. *It looks like your leg!* And the head of the lamb, skinned and separated, bears resemblance to your head. The *chazeh*, that's the chest, it looks like *your* chest. And so on. That's how it is; the skinned limbs, dissected, begin to resemble more readily the limbs of man.

Suppose you saw part of *your body* being offered up on the fire; you'd be tremendously excited! You'd faint from excitement! An *olah* going up to Hashem means *we* are going up to Hashem in gratitude. And therefore the man who wants to find favor in the eyes of Hashem would be thinking thoughts of gratitude to Hashem for that specific limb. "I'm thanking you for this limb Hashem. And that limb. And that one, and this one as well." Separately, one by one, a man recognized the gifts from Hashem, *the gifts that Hashem was letting him keep!*

YOUR HEAD IS "A CABINET FULL OF INSTRUMENTS"

They bring, let's say, the head of the *olah*. "I should be giving my head back to Hashem in gratitude. I've used it already for so many years. Fifty years already I'm using this gift that Hashem gave me and I've enjoyed it to no end. A head is very important - you realize you couldn't live without a head. Ahh! How good is my head! I say "head," like it's one thing - a head is a cabinet full of instruments. It's gifts upon gifts upon gifts that you have sitting there on your shoulders. A head is a precious thing, and it works so well, so perfectly. And so when the head of the lamb is placed onto the fire, you're a changed man forever. Because you would leave the *Beis Hamikdash* not only with your head, but with an appreciation of the gift that Hashem is continuing to give you, acknowledging that you don't have any intrinsic right to it.

And now he's carrying up the heart. The heart! We're amazed at the creation of a pump that pumps without stop day and night, day and night. So many tens of years! You have a healthy heart? You're a lucky man! Look how many people are in great trouble. They're thinking, "Sooner or later I have to make a bypass operation, *chalilah*." They're putting it off. They're scared and they're uncomfortable, they're taking pills in the meantime. They don't know what's going to be. And so when you see the heart being carried up ramp to the *mizbei'ach* you're thinking, "That's *my* heart being put onto the fires of the *mizbei'ach*, only that Hashem will let me leave here with a new 'loaner' heart, it's not mine at all."

It was a very great excitement to bring a *korban*. After experiencing such an event, you weren't the same person anymore. Actually, all *mitzvos*, all service of Hashem, are a result of the attitudes gained by animal sacrifice. Someone who brought an offering put on his *tefillin* very differently the next morning. He had a new head! Can you imagine that? Yesterday I didn't have a head, I offered it up on the *mizbei'ach*! But Hashem gave me back a new head! I am overwhelmed with gratitude! So when you put on *tefillin* it flowed directly from the attitudes you gained in the *Beis Hamikdash*. Everything you did in life was because of **מה אשיב להשם** - כל תגמולוהי עלי - How can I repay You for all that you have bestowed upon me?!"

CAN YOU DO A FAVOR FOR HASHEM?

Thus our forefathers served Hashem with the deep realization that they were actually not doing anything for Hashem at all. You know today if someone puts on *tefillin* he thinks he's a good Jew already, and if he prayed *b'tzibbur*, he thinks he deserves a medal, he did a *toivah* to Hakadosh Baruch Hu! But in the days of old when we had *korbanos*, we had the marvelous opportunity to stop and recognize all the good that Hashem does for us. We saw and felt that actually we are so indebted to Him and we can never do enough to repay Him!

The *korbanos* taught the old-time Jews that their bodies, their very lives, were not theirs at all. Suppose your friend loaned you a car, and you're riding around enjoying yourself for a couple of days, and then he says, "My friend, can you please give me back my car tomorrow, just for tomorrow?" So you'll say, "What do you mean, 'Give back the car?'" I'm enjoying it to no end. I don't want to give it back." You wouldn't say that! Only for one day? That's a bargain! You'd give it back even for two weeks! And so someone who witnessed that great spectacle in the *Beis Hamikdash*, when the *korbanos* demonstrated that his very life belongs to Hashem, willingly submitted himself to *every service of Hashem*. *Korbanos* are called *Avodah* because all service of Hashem flowed from it. When a Jew left the *Beis Hamikdash* his heart was on fire, he was ablaze in gratitude to Hashem.

NO NEED TO BENTCH

It's like the boy who asked his father: "Pa, do I have to *bentch* every day? So his father said, "No; only when you eat." For looking at bread you don't make any *brachah*. So just look and don't eat! Why do you have to put on *tefillin* on your head? Because you have a head! You don't want to put on *tefillin*, so give back the head. Everyday I'm giving you a head; and it's a very valuable gift. So when you put on *tefillin* you're doing it because of *מה אשיב להשם כל תגמולוהי עלי* - How can I repay You for all that you have bestowed on me?!"

At that moment of bringing an offering a person realized that he was living in an *oilam sh'eino shelo*, a world that doesn't belong to him - that actually nothing at all is his! And it's only when one actually feels indebted to Hakodosh Boruch Hu for the gift of life in all of its details, that He can begin to serve Hashem.

Part II. The Source of Everything

PLEASE GIVE THE PILLAR BACK!

And that's why the *avodas hakorbanos* is one of the pillars that supports the world: *על שלשה דברים העולם עומד* - "On three things the world stands" (Avos 1:2), and one of them is the *avodah*. You know, some people say that *avodah* means *korbanos* also; yes, of course, that too. They won't deny that. But the true *avodah*, they'll tell you, is *tefillah*. But that is wrong. The *avodah* that is meant here, the pillar of the world - is *korbanos*, animal sacrifice; only that today, because we have no choice, so *tefillah* stands in place of *korbanos* (Berachos 26b).

And that's why we're not satisfied today with what we have, because we want *the real* thing. We say *ברוך אתה השם שומע* - *תפלה* - "Yes, Hashem, You listen to our *tefillas*; I know that you're listening when I speak to You." And that *avodah she'bileiv* is so important. And yet, what's the next thing we say right away? *רצה* - *השם אלוקינו בעמך ישראל והשב את העבודה* - "Please return to us the *avodah* of *korbanos*." We're not satisfied with *tefillah*, with the *avodah* of the heart. We want the real thing; we're asking for the

avodas hakorbanos, for the opportunity to bring up animals onto the fire of the *mizbei'ach*. And therefore when you finish *shemonah esrei*, you feel like a person who ate a meal without anything solid, you're not full yet. And so you say יהי רצון מלפניך השם אלוקינו שיבנה - Hashem, give us back the *avodah* once more. Then we'll be serving You for real!

LEAVING MITZRAYIM TO SHECHT ANIMALS

You remember when Moshe Rabeinu came to Pharaoh to negotiate for the release of the Bnei Yisroel from Mitzrayim, so he said in the name of Hashem, שלח את עמי ויעבדוני - "Send out My people and they should *serve* Me" (Shemos 7:26). So people think that "Serve Me" means that they should maybe come together for a minyan, they should do *mitzvos*, or learn Torah. But that's not it; it's included, yes, all that and much more is included in *v'ya'avduni*, but what it means primarily is that they should serve Me *by bringing korbanos*. Animal sacrifice, that's the *avodah*! שלח את עמי - "Send out My people!" And for what? ויעבדוני - "So that they should sacrifice animals to Me."

Now for modern minds it may seem queer. It's incongruous. When we think about service of Hashem we want to talk about righteousness, *tzedek umishpat*, *ideals*, *halachos*, *chesed*, *learning Torah*, *mitzvos*. There's so much we want to talk about! And all that is true, absolutely. But what is the foundation of all of this *avodah*? שלח את עמי, I'm going to take My people out of Mitzrayim, ויעבדוני, so that they can fulfill *Parshas Vayikra*, the *parsha* of *korbanos*. Because it was the *avodas hakorbanos* that most sharply and undeniably defined for a person his place in this world, how indebted he is to Hashem.

LEAVING THE MIKDASH WITH A NEW CAREER

And so the man who walked out of the *Beis Hamikdash* with all his limbs and all of his organs still intact, that man had a new career ahead of him. Because it was by means of the *korban* in the *Beis Hamikdash*, that he acknowledged that it's all a gift from Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Life itself, and all its dissected details, his legs, his head, his heart - everything! - is on loan to him from

Hashem. And now his career could begin; because using these gifts as intended by the Giver, that's his new course in life.

Here's something we say always but I think we would all benefit from studying it a little more: כל עצמותי תאמרנה השם מי כמוך – “All my bones - not only bones, but all my limbs and all my organs, say “Hashem who is like You” (Tehillim 35:10). We say it every Shabbos. What does it mean “All my parts say”? So some people say that it means you must exert your body to participate in the act of *hoda'ah*, that you have to *shake your body* when you daven. And there was at one time some people who used to leap up and down and work their arms and legs; they didn't want any part of their body to be left out of this work of *hodaah*! But that's not the *pshat*. It's not a bad idea to move your body when you daven; you can do it if you wish, but it's not the whole *pshat* however. Because whatever you'll do - you could flail your arms and kick your legs, you could even do somersaults; but there are parts of the body that just cannot participate. Your kidneys can't participate, your liver can't participate in that way. But they must! *Kol atzmosai!* “All my parts must sing out and say, ‘Who is like You, Hashem?!’” So how *do* all our body parts sing? And we'll explain as follows.

YOUR STOMACH IS SINGING; SING ALONG!

Each body part has a message for you; each limb sings its own song of praise and gratitude to Hashem. Your head is talking, your shoulders are talking, your stomach is talking, your feet are talking. Every part of your body, every limb, every organ, is filled with so much wisdom and so much *chesed*, that it's calling out to you, singing out to you, and asking you to join in the chorus of gratitude and indebtedness to Hashem.

And how do you join the chorus? And the answer is *by means of the mind*! When you put your mind to thinking about what it means to have feet, what it means to have a heart, a liver, kidneys, eyes, fingers – like your ancestor did so many years ago when he brought a *korban* – so you would begin to sing along. You sing with your head; you sing with your eyes; you sing with your heart; with your lungs, with your stomach, with your feet, your

liver, kidneys. They're all singing. You know if you look in the books, it's remarkable. There's never any end to the discoveries that are being made. It's so complicated and all of it is so purposeful, so full of חכמה עמוקה שאין לו קץ; bottomless wisdom. The more they learn, the more they realize they don't know. And the truth is that only by studying the details for many years can you begin to appreciate the *chochma* and *chesed* in your body.

THE MISER SPENDS A FEW DOLLARS

You have to count your gifts. Like a miser who hides in his home – he pulls down his window shades when his wife goes out shopping – and he takes out his shopping bags of money that he's been saving all the years. And he starts counting them. His twenties and his hundreds. And as he counts them, his eyes glisten and his heart rejoices. That's the joy of his life. All day long he waits for that moment. He even gives his wife a few dollars to go shopping to get her out of the house so that he can have a few moments alone to enjoy the great happiness of counting his thousands.

But that's only a *mashal* for the real happiness of life. Because all of that money is not worth his being alive. If it was his last day and he could give it all away to keep living, to live as a poor man on welfare, he would do it. And not only for life itself; for lungs! He would give it all away to keep his lungs. And so there's another kind of miser, the miser who knows what it means to count the real money of life. And that's the person who counts the wealth that he gained by bringing a *korban*.

THE CHOFETZ CHAIM KNEW HOW TO "COUNT MONEY"

Like the Chofetz Chaim used to do. When no one was around he would say, "Ribono Shel Olam, I am grateful to you for keeping me alive for so many years. I lived through last year and now I'm living this year again. And the year before last, it was a blessing. And the year before that." The Chofetz Chaim was counting his "money." "My lungs are still functioning, and my knees." And this limb and that limb. And so the Chofetz Chaim hauled out his blessings and gloated over them. And as he counted his "money" his eyes glistened and his heart rejoiced.

And that's what Dovid Hamelech said, במעשי ידיך ארנן, I sing at the deeds of your hands (Tehillim 92:5). You have to be *so happy*, that you sing. Singing means that you've studied the details of the gifts and that you're actually grateful and indebted to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. But when a person does it as a duty, he praises, he thanks as a duty - of course it's a good thing and we wish all the Jews would do that, but that man is not really an *oived Hashem*. He's serving Hashem without any motivation; he doesn't feel that there's really anything to be thankful for; he doesn't understand how happy life really is and so for him, all of his service of Hashem is "him bestowing benefits on Hashem" instead of the other way around.

LEARN TO BE A MISER!

But if you want to be a success in this world, if you want your life to be *l'ratzon*, a life filled with finding favor in the eyes of Hashem, then you're going to have to practice being a "Chofetz Chaim miser" as well; you have to get busy counting your wealth. Now, you won't be able to do it all at once - and you shouldn't. One limb, one organ, at a time, the way it was cut in the *Beis Hamikdash*. But you have to start. Don't wait until it's too late and you're beset with pangs of regret about missed opportunities.

You know what it would mean to have to give back your kidneys?! Here's a man who can't even urinate. So he has to go to the hospital to be hooked up to a machine, let's say, three times a week, for three hours at a time, a kidney machine to clean his body instead of his kidneys that aren't working. If he could get his kidneys back, he would sing! So you're thanking Hashem, "You let me keep my kidneys!"

You know how much fun it is to have kidneys? If they weren't functioning you'd pay good money for new kidneys; piles and piles of money! And you don't have to - you have two perfect ones. You don't even notice they're there because they're functioning so smoothly. Now, you don't take them out for the *mizbei'ach* - let them stay right where they are. But in your mind, take them out and gloat over them. Spend one day counting the blessings of a kidney.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

You know what a *simcha* it is to come out of the *beis ha'kissei*! You accomplished “your mission” successfully. Boruch Hashem! רופא כל בשר ומפליא לעשות. It’s a miracle! You know the *meforshim* try to explain exactly what is this miracle. *Maflée la’asos* means that it’s a miracle. But the truth is that you don’t have to search for the miracle, you don’t have to look for a reason. It’s a miracle, as clear as day. Your kidneys are able to take a small amount of blood and continually cleanse it. That same blood courses through your body again and again. And your kidneys are constantly cleaning out your blood. You should think about that when you say *Asher Yatzar*. At least that you can do. To say thank you with a sincere feeling of gratitude before the One who is giving you a healthy kidney and is not asking for it back.

If you’d study the liver you would appreciate what it means to have a great chemical laboratory that’s functioning within you, and you would ‘sing along’ with your liver in gratitude to Hashem כל עצמותי תאמרנה השם מי כמוך. You never heard of liver disease? Someone who had an operation on his liver or takes pills or treatment for his liver? You don’t even know that you have a liver; it’s only “*emunah*” on your part; you were told you have a liver somewhere in there so you believe in it, you’re a *ma’amin*. You don’t feel it in there but you “accept” what they tell you.

You’re lucky that you don’t feel it. It’s quiet, it’s efficient, it’s doing its work without bothering you. Day and night it’s doing perfectly what it was created to do. And so when you hear that someone else is suffering from his liver, you have to start singing, you have to begin appreciating what it means to have a healthy liver. Because this other fellow is actually being “*makriv*” his liver on the *mizbei’ach*, while Hashem is allowing *you* to keep yours!

TIME FOR HOMEWORK!

And you’ll have opportunities for expressing gratitude all day long. Now a little homework, I’ll give you. When you come to the *Beis Haknesses* and you hear *kaddish* being said, so instead of

saying *Yehei shmei rabbah* just as a donation, “Let His great name be blessed;” and you’re thinking “Why not?” What do you care? It doesn’t cost you any money to say it: “Let other people bless His name,” that’s what it means. *L’olam ul’olmai olmaya*, forever and ever, sometime in the far off future, forever and ever, other people should get busy blessing His name.

No, *you’re* the one who should be blessing His name. And don’t wait for the future; it should be happening right now. Think of one specific thing when you say *Yehei Shmei Rabbah*; it’s a good idea to prepare. As soon as the *chazzan* starts saying *Yisgadal*, think, “What part of my body am I going to thank for this time.” Think fast! It would be better if you thought beforehand; this *kaddish* will be for my fingers, and this one for my elbows. My ears, my teeth, and then my nerves. Preparing beforehand is best, but even at the last second you can think of one thing to thank Hashem for.

TAKING PESUKEI D’ZIMRA WITH YOU

And you have many other opportunities for this as well. As you’re saying *Hodu*, *Ashrei*, or the *Hallelukahs*, you’re saying the words anyway, so think, “Today I’m singing about my lungs.” If you pay attention to the words you’re saying you’ll see that it’s all songs and praises; but if you’re not thinking then you’re wasting the precious opportunity to thank Hashem for your lungs. And that day, all day long whenever you’re walking down the street you’re singing to Hashem, “I’m counting my breath and thanking Hashem for my lungs.”

That’s how to do it. It’s a good idea to say, “Today is the ear day.” “Tomorrow is nose day.” “The next day is heart day.” Ooh, ahh, that’s a big day! And then comes lung day. And brain day. And every day you dedicate to thinking about another body part. So when you get to ‘leg day,’ so that day all your *pesukei d’zimra* are all about your legs. “Ah, what a pleasure it is to have the ability to walk!” You’re not a prisoner, stuck in a bed. Boruch Hashem you have two Rolls Royces underneath you; better than any other wheels. It’s the biggest happiness that you can walk. And it’s all *nissei nissim*. You know what the muscles are doing

when you walk? Every muscle has a reflex, one is pulling and one is shoving. And it's pulling and shoving back and forth every second, in perfect coordination. How those muscles work is one of the most wonderful arrangements that you'll find in the world.

THANK HASHEM FOR JELLY

And your thighs aren't just moving; they're moving in a socket. The thigh moves all day in this socket, moving and twisting and pressing. So why don't you feel any friction there? There's a kind of jelly there in between, the synovial fluid, and it's lubricating the joints. And the jelly is always being replenished by additional materials. So as you walk down the street, don't waste the opportunity. As your thigh swings forward in effortless motion, consider the miracle of the smoothly functioning joints; your joints bend this way and that way, and you feel no pain! You hear any moving, any scraping? No, it's beautifully quiet. And therefore we say **ברוך אתה השם המכין מצעדי גבר**, I thank You Hashem for establishing the footsteps of man. How wonderful it is to walk!

And your eyes! You're able to see? Ah, ah, ah! Oh, is this a pleasure. It says **סומא חשוב כמת**, a blind man is in a way a dead man. You lose so much of life when you cannot see. Close your eyes for a moment and imagine you have to tap your way on Kings Highway. You come to an intersection and you're at a loss what to do. You want to find the right store to enter; you don't want to bump into people. You can't see the blue sky; you can't see the foliage of the trees; you can't see people; you can't see motion; you can't see life. People who can't see, if they could have working eyes, they would go delirious with ecstasy that their eyesight was restored. They wouldn't be able to stop singing.

RAV MILLER'S BEAUTIFUL EYES

You have to rejoice in the great gift of two beautiful orbs. Once I went to an eye doctor and he looked into my eyes. Now I don't have especially beautiful eyes, but he said, "You have two beautiful orbs!" In the darkness the human eye is shining with a beautiful light. "You have two beautiful orbs," he said. You have to thank Hakodosh Boruch Hu for your eyesight; He's giving you a gift!

Seeing is one of the great delights of life. It's a pleasure to be able to open your eyes and see what's going on around you. Take a peek into the eye doctor's office and you'll see people waiting there with bandages covering their eyes. All kinds of eye ailments. This one needs this operation, and the other fellow a different operation. And you don't need any operation on your eyes! Boruch Hashem! **כל עמצי תאמרנה**, Sing along with your eyes!

KORBANOS ON OCEAN PARKWAY

So you're thinking and thanking and singing all day long. You're fulfilling the *avodas hakorbanos*, right here on Ocean Parkway. Because the *avodas hakorbanos* is teaching us that it's not enough for us to merely say 'thank you' to Hashem for life in general. A genuine attitude of gratitude will only develop from thanking Hashem for all the individual kindnesses. If you want to fulfill the *avodah* of the *korbanos* today, even when the *Beis Hamikdash* is not standing, then you must study each detail of the *chesed Hashem*, and sing a song of gratitude for that detail in particular.

And that's why Hashem took you out of *Mitzrayim*. **שלה את עמי ויעבדוני**. I'm taking you out of *Mitzrayim* so that you should offer *korbanos* to Me, and sing to Me all your life along with your *atzamos*. Because although the *korbanos* have many purposes, the first of all the intentions is the expression of gratitude, for taking us out of *Mitzrayim* to be His people, and for all the thousands and tens of thousands of kindnesses that He bestows upon us always, without taking them back. The list of gifts is endless. Boruch Hashem, you are *loaded down* with blessings. You're a lucky fellow! You're not putting your eyes on the *mizbei'ach*. You're not carrying your own leg up the ramp. Hashem says, "Keep everything. Enjoy My gifts. But remember Me. At least that. Remember Me."

KEEP YOUR HEAD TO YOURSELF

And so the *korbanos* are an expression of the highest form of gratitude to Hashem. Boruch Hashem, He gives me my life every day, and all my organs are functioning perfectly more or less. And so I express my gratitude by giving him back "my"

head, “my” leg, “my” kidneys, “my” *cheilev* - my everything! We get to keep our legs and our hearts. We get to keep our *cheilev* in ourselves. We keep our *k’layos* to ourselves. Our kidneys, our head; everything we get to keep and we use them everyday. And instead we burn all the parts of the *olah* to Hashem, and by means of that we understand our place in this world, a world where we’re being given gifts and gifts without end. And it’s for those gifts that we are forever indebted to the Giver, and we serve Him and sing to Him all the days of our lives. And by means of our overflowing gratitude to Hashem we find favor in His eyes, because we are achieving our purpose in this world.

Singing to Hashem is the purpose of life, and one who joins the choir will be rewarded with even more years to sing: “The *mizbei’ach* was made in order to lengthen a man’s life” (Middos 3:4). The secret of the *korbanos* is recognition of the *chesed Hashem* that pervades one’s life, and Hashem bestows more life upon those that who utilize their time here to recognize Him. And they thereby achieve the chief purpose of life: *יראת השם לחיים* – “Awareness of Hashem causes life” (Mishlei 19:23). And therefore, even today, when we can’t yet bring *korbanos*, we can continue to sing always to Hashem we thereby achieve the greatness of the days of the *Beis Hamikdash* and find favor in the eyes of Hashem in this world and the next.

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Q&A With Rav Avigdor Miller Ztz"l

Q:

How do I utilize drinking עד דלא ידע in order to serve Hashem?

A:

עד דלא ידע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי. I'll tell you one peirush. It means עד ולא עד בכלל. You drink up to the point of losing your da'as. You drink just enough. But not enough to lose your da'as. On Purim you have to have da'as. You have to have more da'as on Purim, not less.

Now, a little bit of da'as can be gained by drinking. A little bit. Oh yes. It's like an airplane that needs high octane gas to get up in the air. A little bit of alcohol helps your spirit go higher. Yes, a little bit of *mashkeh*. But too much alcohol will sink you. And therefore, there's no use in falling asleep in the middle of Purim like a drunken goy and then they have to call Hatzalah. On Purim you should be gaining da'as. If you utilize the day properly, it'll be a day of da'as. And you won't be gaining any da'as lying on the floor waiting for Hatzalah to come.

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