

Dvar Torah by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

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VAYIKRa

The Torah is introducing us to the different levels of Korbanot, as well as the different meanings behind each offering. These messages gives us insight how to get closer to Hashem even in our predicament of today. One of the offerings mentioned in Parshat Vayikra (2:14) -

"When you bring a meal-offering of the first grain..."

Rashi (Sh'mot 20:22) lists three instances in the Torah where the word IM – literally "if", is used not as a condition but rather as a command. One of the three is this pasuk which discusses the offering of the Omer. The second time mentioned is in Sh'mot 20:22, which commands us to lend money to the poor. In our pasuk, the wording can be explained that there is an inherent need for a person to bring a sacrifice **WILLINGLY** and not merely because it is obligated. Commentators understand this reasoning to make sense of the conditional wording (if), as if one had a choice in the matter. Similarly, any type of seeking out Hashem, like Daily Prayer, should not be considered as being a burden upon oneself, which must be recited as an obliga-

tion. Rather, one must pray out of love for Hashem. The same idea would apply to the second reference of lending money and matters of "between the Jew and his fellow", which once again, needs to be performed willingly and in good spirit. Rabbi Ovadya from Bartenura (Italian commentator on Mishna, 1445- 1515) writes in his explanation of Pirkei Avot 1:15 that if a person helps someone with "his face pressed to the ground" (very descriptive language he uses) - it is as though he did not give at all. Although he is sure of getting a reward for doing something good, he has not performed the mitzva the way Hashem wishes, i.e. willingly and lovingly. The same applies to the mitzva of Bikurim or the Omer (first grain). The owner, who invested his time and effort to see his first grain grow, surely anticipates harvesting and having them more than anyone else. They are special to him. Why then would the Torah command that they be given to the Kohen? The answer is deep-rooted and influences us to our core. The fact that the owner gives away the fruits of his labor and toil and that which he looked forward to harvesting is the **GREATEST** sign that he is performing this mitzva willingly and lovingly. Therefore, one must give the Bikurim, the first and the best, to Hashem, even though to Hashem they mean very little. The Message is

that they mean a great deal to the one offering them. For that reason, Hashem instructs us "if", in the context of Bikurim and Omer to teach that one should give his best, internalizing that I am doing it with my free will and choice. I am doing a mitzva with eagerness because I "want" to do it.

We should deepen our conviction in the mitzvot we do. 🕯️

