



Give The Best Part Of Your Life

The afternoon prayer has an interesting name, Mincha. What does the name mean, and how is it relevant to a businessman?

The Poor's Offering

Every day in synagogues all over the world the morning services end with an announcement from the Gabbai, "Mincha will be at ____ (fill in the blank)!"

There are three daily prayers we Jews pray. The first is Shacharit. Stemming from the word shachar, morning, it is obviously the morning prayer. Then there is Arvit, from the word erev or evening. This is the nighttime prayer. The third is called Mincha and it is prayed in the afternoon. The question is, however, where did it get its name from? The others are named for the time of day in which they are prayed, but Mincha has no connection with any Hebrew words for afternoon.

One of the leading commentaries on the prayer book explains that Mincha comes from the word menucha, rest, for it is prayed when the day is being put to rest, as the day is beginning to fade away.

However, we might find another explanation in our Parsha. This week we read about the various types of offerings a Jew might bring to the Temple to be sacrificed for G-d on the great altar.

The first is the bullock. This is the highest level sacrifice and would obviously be a gift from the wealthier Jews. If a Jew is unable to afford

an actual cow, a nice goat or sheep would suffice.

If, however, one cannot even afford a sheep or goat, he may bring the second level offering, the bird. About both the animal and the bird offering Torah says, "It is a satisfying aroma for Hashem." and Rashi points out that whether you're offering an animal or a bird, if your heart is in it, it is satisfying to G-d.

Then there is the poor man's offering. When I say poor, I mean nothing but a bag of wheat to put on his table, poor. Still, if such a person wishes to bring a sacrifice to G-d he may bring an offering of fine flour, some oil and a smattering of frankincense. Torah calls this offering Mincha, meaning a gift. G-d cherishes this offering even more than the rich man's bullock.

When Torah introduces the first two types of offerings it says, "When a man offers..." but here Torah says, "When a soul sacrifices a gift to G-d..." and again Rashi is quick to point out, "G-d considers the poor man's offering as if he had offered his very soul!"

The Midrash illustrates this point: A woman once came to the Temple holding barely a handful of flour as an offering to G-d. The Kohen laughed at her. "Look what the people are offering," he said. "There's nothing here to eat, there's nothing here to offer." That night he had a dream. "Don't scoff," he was told, "G-d considers it as though she offered Him her very soul!"

The meaning is plain to see. A wealthy person doesn't lose much by giving an expensive donation; he has enough to get by without it. But when a poor person gives even a small offering, it represents their very life-sustenance. They have literally given their lives as a sacrifice to G-d.

The Afternoon Rush

The same applies to the daily prayers. The morning prayers, long as it

may be, doesn't entail any real sacrifice. The phone hasn't started ringing yet, there's no one in the office and the children are still asleep. It's a fine time to spend in devoted worship of one's Creator.

The nighttime service is also not so bad. The day is over. You can take a drink and relax a little before you have to turn your attention again to your Creator.

But Mincha comes right in the middle of the day, while you're working, meeting, important phone calls, the pressure is still on and you have to step back and, for a moment, show G-d that you know that everything comes from His hand. This takes great devotion and great sacrifice. It is a short prayer but, like the poor man's offering, G-d cherishes this prayer more than any other, for in it is real soul.

The Rebbe once repeated a story about Rabbi Moshe Feller, who was, at the time, the new Shliach to Minnesota. One afternoon, he found himself sitting in the office of Dr. Green. It had taken months to get the Jewish professor to meet with him, and now he had been granted exactly five minutes of the professor's time. The professor seemed determined to spend most of that time on the phone. Rabbi Feller checked his watch. His five minutes were almost up. But worse still, it would soon be nightfall and he had not yet prayed Mincha. There was only one option. Rabbi Feller rose, put on his gartel and turning to the wall he began to pray.

When he finished Mincha he turned and came face to face with a livid Dr. Green.

"Do you intend to make my office a synagogue?!" screamed the professor. Rabbi Feller shortly found himself outside, never having been given a chance to present his case to the professor.

Soon after the professor called Rabbi Feller to say that the stoic pride of the young Rabbi had touched him so deeply, that he was on his way

“back”. Dr. Green made a complete turnaround; he embraced Judaism and Rabbi Feller, and raised a wonderful Jewish family. Dr. Green’s son is now himself a Shliach in Minnesota.

This all holds true for our lives as well. When a child who has not a care in the world spends time studying Torah or when a retired old man who has left the pressures of the “real world” behind him takes an hour out of his day to pray and worship G-d, these are nice offerings, surely they are rich in quality as well as quantity. Yet there is no real sacrifice.

It is specifically the thirty or forty year old men and women who at the peak of their lives, with the business finally blossoming and a family to build and nurture, who show real soul when they take a moment to reflect on G-d’s hand in their lives. A Jew who pauses in the middle of prime time of his life to pray or to get involved in some community affairs, has offered a true Mincha, a real gift to G-d. It is even fair to say that “he has offered his soul”.

Give When Its Difficult

Recently I read an article about a young Chassid who was starting to make some real money. At the end of the year his wife told him that it was time to tithe his earnings but he said he would only tithe what he had spent; everything else he would pour back into the business. Then he would be exempt from donating the traditional ten percent of that money. They decided to get advice on how to be rich from the famous philanthropist Lev Leviev.

Mr. Leviev shared a very important rule with this young man. He said, “One who doesn’t give charity when he doesn’t have the means will also not give when does have the means.” One who doesn’t bring the Mincha offering, will surely never bring the animal offering.

G-d wants a Jew to give of himself when times are hard or when the

pressure is on. A Jew who can give when times are hard will be blessed by G-d to give when times are good.