

# From Person to Soul & From Communal Ritual to Individual Practice

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<p><b>Leviticus 1:1-2</b>                  1 And He called to Moses, and the Lord spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying,                  2 Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: When <b>a person</b> from [among] you brings a sacrifice to the Lord; from animals, from cattle or from the flock you shall bring your sacrifice.</p>	<p><b>ויקרא פרשת ויקרא פרק א</b>                  (א) ויקרא אל מִשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר יְקֹוֹק אֵלָיו מֵאֵהֶל מוֹעֵד לְאֹמֶר:                  (ב) דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם <b>אָדָם</b> כִּי יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם קֹרְבָן לַיְקֹוֹק מִן הַבְּהֵמָה מִן הַבְּקָר וּמִן הַצֹּאן תִּקְרִיבוּ אֶת קֹרְבָנְכֶם:</p>
<p><b>Leviticus 2:1</b>                  1 And if <b>a soul</b> brings a meal offering to the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour. He shall pour oil over it and place frankincense upon it.</p>	<p><b>ויקרא פרשת ויקרא פרק ב</b>                  (א) וּנְפֶשׁ כִּי תִקְרִיב קֹרְבָן מִנְחָה לַיְקֹוֹק סֹלֶת יִהְיֶה קֹרְבָנֹו וַיִּצַק עָלֶיהָ שֶׁמֶן וַנִּתֵּן עָלֶיהָ לְבֹנָה:</p>
<p><b>Rashi on Leviticus 2:1</b>                  And if a soul [a person] brings: [literally, “And if a soul brings.”] Regarding all the sacrifices which were donated voluntarily, the only instance where Scripture states the word נֶפֶשׁ “soul” is in the case of the meal-offering. Now, who usually donates a meal-offering? A poor man [because flour is less expensive than birds or animals]. [Hence,] the Holy One Blessed is He, says: “I account it for him as if he has sacrificed his very soul!” - [Men. 104b]</p>	<p><b>רש"י ויקרא פרשת ויקרא פרק ב</b>                  (א) ונפש כי תקריב - לא נאמר נפש בכל קרבנות נדבה אלא במנחה, מי דרכו להתנדב מנחה, עני, אמר הקב"ה מעלה אני עליו כאלו הקריב נפשו:</p>
<p><b>Chizkuni on Leviticus 2:1</b>                  And if a soul [a person] brings: Only an individual offers the voluntary meal-offering, even the anointed Priest, whereas the offering of the voluntary meal-offering is never a communal act.</p>	<p><b>חזקוני ויקרא פרשת ויקרא פרק ב</b>                  (א) ונפש כי תקריב היחיד מביא מנחת נדבה ואפילו כהן משוח ואין הצבור מביאין מנחת נדבה.</p>
<p>A subtle, yet drastic, difference is expressed between Leviticus 1 and Leviticus 2. In the first chapter, the commandment to offer a sacrifice is addressed to any person (<i>adam</i>) whereas the second chapter refers to a person as a soul (<i>nefesh</i>).</p> <p>Rashi explains that this unique term is only used in connection with the meal offering, a gift usually brought by the poor. The Holy One considers the pauper’s gift as though this person had offered their very own soul.</p> <p>Chizkuni adds his own insight by explaining that this free offering is never offered by the community (after all, it is a free offering). This offering therefore is a true expression of an individual’s desire as a unique soul to enter into relationship with the Holy One.</p> <p>The change in terms from “person” to “soul”, denoting a shift from sacrifice to self-sacrifice and from communal practice to personal piety is perhaps indicative of a spiritual move inwards. Leviticus begins with a call to everyone to draw near to God as part of a whole or a collective. In the process of drawing near however we come into greater focus (to God and to ourselves) ultimately emerging as individual souls. While our service begins as part of a community, it must eventually evolve into personal heartfelt worship.</p> <p>This shift in terms – from person to soul - is particularly resonant for me at this time of social-distancing and sheltering-in as one who can no longer join and participate in communal prayer three times a day. The change in language challenges me to question the depth of my personal practice. Sure, I relate to God daily in the mode of “<i>adam</i>” as captured in Leviticus 1. Yet now I must ask myself, how can I relate to God in my daily prayer as a “<i>nefesh</i>”, as a soul set apart from community? In other words, how do I use this time of isolation as an opportunity to deepen my experience of daily prayer as an expression of a personal, free offering of my inner-most self to God?</p> <p>In contrast, one who’s daily practice is spotty or lacking, might use this period of isolation as an opportunity to deepen their commitment to prayer in the mode of “<i>adam</i>”. Spirituality is ephemeral and fleeting. Anchoring our spiritual strivings in daily ritual, practice and prayer may be a necessary step on the path of spiritual connection and enlightenment. If you’re feeling lonely and sheltered-in, now is the time to reach out to God – daily – and call God’s presence in.</p>	