

Mishlei 21-03

Sacrificial Offerings

Key Concepts

Mishlei now touches upon the relative value of sacrificial offerings in serving Hashem. The message here is that sacrifices are not an end in themselves, but a renewal of the covenant with Hashem. They are a way of expressing devotion to Hashem and dedication to a life of righteousness and justice. But, although they are an indirect way of achieving these goals, they are not themselves a fulfillment of them.

Since they are only a means, sacrifices are secondary in importance to the spiritual values they are express. Doing righteousness and justice are more than renewing the covenant. They are living up to the terms of the covenant.

Exploring Mishlei

(ג) עֲשֵׂה צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט נְבָחַר לֵה' מִזְבֵּחַ:
 (3) *Doing what is right and just,
 is more acceptable to Hashem than sacrifices.*

This proverb reminds us to give more consideration to what Hashem really wants from us. This thought is a continuation of that in the previous segment (21-02). There we saw that people have a tendency to stick with their own preferences for religious observance and rationalize their personal choice as the will of Hashem because it suits them.

What does Hashem really want from us? Here the proverb is saying Hashem's preference is not sacrificial offerings as people think. Rather it is for behavior that is consistent with the principals of **צְדָקָה** and **מִשְׁפָּט**.

Learning Mishlei

(3) **Doing what is right and just — עֲשֵׂה צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט**
 is preferred by Hashem — **נְבָחַר לֵה'**
 over sacrifices — **מִזְבֵּחַ** .

Additional Insights

[1] People are often motivated to bring a sacrificial offering as an atonement after committing an inadvertent sin. But what Hashem really wants is that they avoid sinful behavior altogether. (חנוך לנער)

[2] The preference of Hashem for צדקה ומשפט is expressed in a Midrashic comparison between David and his son Shlomo Hamelech. Shlomo built the Bais Hamikdash which facilitated bringing sacrificial offerings. However, Hashem preferred the צדקה ומשפט of David (מוסר אביך)