

Yom Kippur 5762 – before Mussaf

The Navi in Malachim tells of how the kings of Yehudah and Yisroel went to war against Mesha the king of Moav. When Mesha saw that the battle was going against him, he took his son and slaughtered him; following which, the verse says, *vayehi ketzef gadol al bnei yisroel*, the Ribono Shel Olam's anger was kindled against the Jews. And the Jews, in consequence, lost the battle.

The Gemara in Sanhedrin records a dispute regarding the nature of Mesha's sacrifice. In one view, he sacrificed his son to idolatry, and *Hashem's* anger was kindled because Mesha's actions were reminiscent of those of the Jews themselves, who were involved with idolatry.

However, there is another view in the Gemara. In this view, Mesha sacrificed his son to G-d. Seeing that the battle was going against him, he inquired what the Jews' great merit was. And upon being told that it lay in their forefather Avraham's having been willing to sacrifice his son Yitzchak, he expressed his readiness to do the same, and forthwith sacrificed his son. And the anger that was kindled against the Jews stemmed from the fact that Mesha had been willing to sacrifice his son for G-d – albeit his conception of G-d's will was certainly perverted – whereas the Jews were unwilling to make sacrifices for G-d, but were, on the contrary, inclining after idolatry.

We are faced today with an enemy that has shown a willingness to destroy themselves, to blow themselves up, for their concept of G-d's will. Now it is true that their idea of G-d's will is perverted, and evil, and murderous, and directed evilly against the Jews. But it should be noted that all that was true in Mesha's case, as well. Nonetheless, Mesha's willingness to sacrifice his son for a perverted conception of G-d's will created an expectation that the Jews should be at least as ready to make sacrifices for their true conception of His will.

And it follows that a tremendous responsibility lies on us today; to demonstrate in some way that we are capable of *mesiras nefesh* – not bloody minded suicide, but true *mesiras nefesh*, the overcoming of our own inclinations for the sake of *ratzon Hashem*. The nature of that *mesiras nefesh* will differ for each of us. It might be getting up for the *daf*, which we've hitherto found difficult. It might be not talking in shul. It might be setting aside a few hours a day in which we refrain from *lashon hara*. Each one of us has to make his own calculation. The times are extraordinary, and we have to rise to the level of events.

And if we do so, then – with *Hashem's* help – we will merit seeing *yeshuos v'nechamos*, Amen.