

LOVE OUT OF FEAR

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Today's Learning:

Megilah 1:1-2

Orach Chaim 323:9-324:1

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Nedarim 73

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Bava Kamma 30

Although Rosh Hashanah is a yom tov like Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot, it is not a "regel" / pilgrimage festival on which Jews ascended to the Bet Hamikdash. Why?

The purpose of the Shalosh Regalim / Three Pilgrimage Festivals is to appear before G-d (see Devarim 16:16). On Rosh Hashanah, however, we need not go to G-d's "house" -- the Bet Hamikdash -- because G-d comes to us. This is alluded to in the verse (Yishayah 55:6), "Seek Hashem when He can be found; call upon Him when He is near," which the gemara interprets as a reference to the Ten Days of Repentance.

The above idea is alluded to in the very name "Rosh Hashanah," whose gematria (861) equals that of "Bet Hamikdash." This idea also explains the custom that the chazzan on Rosh Hashanah stands at

his own seat when he calls out the word "Ha'melech" / "The King." Rather than immediately going to the lectern, the place where the chazan usually "meets" Hashem, the chazzan calls Hashem to come to his (the chazzan's) place.

This also is a reason why sleeping during the day on Rosh Hashanah is discouraged (see O.C. 583:2). We read in Bereishit (28:16), "Yaakov awoke from his sleep and said, 'Surely Hashem is present in this place and I did not know'." Rashi explains: "If I had known, I would not have slept here." Therefore, on Rosh Hashanah, when Hashem is present in our places, we should not sleep. (Heard from R' Shlomo Naiman shlita, 29 Elul 5754)

From the Torah reading . . .

"Please take your son, your only one, whom you love - Yitzchak - and go to the land of Moriah; bring him up there as an offering upon one of the mountains which I shall tell you." (Bereishit 22:2)

Targum Onkelos, the ancient Aramaic translation of the Torah, renders "the land of Moriah" as "the place of the ketoret / incense sacrifice." But why, asks R' Yehoshua Isaac Shapiro z"l (R' Eizel Charif; 1801-1873), would Hashem specifically mention the incense offering when instructing Avraham to bring Yitzchak as an offering?

Also, the midrash Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer states that Hashem pointed out the altar to Avraham with His "finger" and told him: "This is the altar on which Adam sacrificed, on which Kayin and Hevel sacrificed, and on which Noach and his sons sacrificed." Why, asks R' Shapiro, did Hashem have to show Avraham the altar and tell him its history?

R' Shapiro explains: Before the Bet Hamikdash was built, one was permitted to build a bamat yachid / private altar, and bring sacrifices on it. (R' Shapiro explains incidentally that this is the meaning of the last verse in the Book of Shoftim, "In those days . . . a man would do whatever seemed proper in his eyes.") However, the only type of sacrifice that was permitted to be brought on a private altar was a voluntary sacrifice. A mandatory offering, i.e., an offering that one is obligated by halachah to bring, was permitted to be brought only at the centralized public altar.

Akeidat Yitzchak / the Binding of Yitzchak must be classified as a mandatory offering. (Since the Torah prohibits human sacrifice, Avraham could not have voluntarily brought Yitzchak as an offering.) How then could Avraham sacrifice Yitzchak on an altar which he would build? Therefore Hashem told him, "Take Yitzchak to the place where the incense is destined to be brought." The incense is the only type of sacrifice - as opposed to animals, flour, wine, and wood - which may not be brought as a voluntary offering, so the place where the incense is destined to be brought must have the status of a public altar. How had that place become a public altar? It was where Adam, Kayin and Hevel, and Noach and his sons brought sacrifices.

Another midrash relates that Avraham asked Hashem, "Can a sacrifice be brought without a kohen?"

Hashem answered him, "You are a kohen." In fact, on a private altar, a sacrifice may be brought without a kohen, but once we recognize that a public altar was required for Akeidat Yitzchak, we may understand Avraham's question. (Ebay Ha'nachal: Drush 4)

"Now I know that you are a G-d-fearing man, since you have not withheld your son, your only one, from Me. (Bereishit 22:12)

R' Yehuda Loewe z"l ("Maharal"; 16th century) writes: Fear of G- d comes from love of G-d, because when you love someone, you intend to fulfill that person's desires, and you fear lest you will fail in even the smallest way. This is the type of fear that our verse describes. (Netivot Olam: Netiv Yirat Hashem Ch. 1)

From the Prayers . . .

R' Yosef Albo z"l (14th century) writes: It appears to me that the correct count of the fundamental principles of our faith is three (not thirteen, as Rambam claimed). They are: (1) That G-d exists; (2) That He watches us, and rewards and punishes us for our deeds; and (3) That the Torah is of Divine origin. All of the other beliefs which Rambam lists are included within these three. For example, the belief that G-d has always existed and will always exist is merely an aspect of our belief that He does exist; the belief that the Torah is of Divine origin requires a belief in prophecy, and so on.

An allusion to the fact that the three principles listed above are the core of our faith is that our Sages composed three special blessings to recite in musaf on Rosh Hashanah. The first of those blessings, "Malchuyot" / "Kingship," parallels our belief that G-d exists. The next blessing, "Zichronot" / "Remembrances," speaks of the fact that G-d watches us, and rewards and punishes us for our deeds. Finally, the third blessing, "Shofarot," recalls the sound of the shofar which accompanied the giving of the Torah. (Thus the third blessing opens: "In the cloud of Your Glory did You appear on Your holy mountain . . .") (Sefer Ha'ikkarim Part I, Ch. 4)

"For when the remembrance of everything that was fashioned comes before You: everyone's deed and mission, the accomplishments of man's activity, man's thoughts and schemes, and the motives behind man's deeds.

"Praiseworthy is the man who does not forget You, the human being who takes strength in You, for those who seek You will never stumble nor will those who take refuge in You ever be humiliated.

"For the remembrance of all Your works come before You and You analyze the deeds of them all."
(From the Rosh Hashanah Musaf)

R' Nosson Wachtfogel z"l (mashgiach of Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood) asks: The first and third verses above speak of the awesomeness of Hashem's Judgment, from which no being escapes. How does the second verse fit in the middle of this thought?

He explains: No man can be acquitted before Hashem's exacting standard of Justice, and we are surely obligated to tremble before Him when He judges us. Nonetheless, our trust in His kindness goes hand-in-hand with our awe of Him, and this explains the placement of the verses.

On another occasion, R' Wachtfogel answered this question slightly differently: When we are reminded of Hashem's Judgment, we are at risk of becoming depressed. However, we immediately remind ourselves that we merit to stand before the King, and we find joy in that fact. (Lekket Reshimot p. 91)

Selected Laws of Shemittah

(From Rambam's Mishneh Torah, Hil. Shemittah Ve'yovel, Ch. 1)

[Ed. Note: With this Rosh Hashanah, the shemittah year begins, and, from time-to-time, we will be presenting articles dealing with the laws and concepts of the shemittah. As with any halachic issue addressed in Hamaayan, our goal is to increase awareness of the subject, not to give practical halachic advice. For such advice, consult a competent rabbi.]

1. It is a mitzvat asei / affirmative commandment to rest in the seventh year from the work of the Land and the trees [of Eretz Yisrael], as it is written (Vayikra 25:2), "The land shall observe a Shabbat rest for Hashem," and it is written (Shmot 34:21), "You shall rest from plowing and harvesting." Anyone who does work on the land or with trees during this year has disregarded an affirmative commandment and has transgressed a negative commandment, as it is written (Vayikra 25:4), "Your field you shall not sow and your vineyard you shall not prune."
2. One does not incur the penalty of lashes according to the Torah [for any prohibited agricultural work] except for zeriah / sowing, zemirah / pruning, ketzirah / harvesting from the ground, or betzirah / harvesting from vines and trees. There is no difference [as far as these prohibitions are concerned] between grapes and other trees.
3. Zemirah is included in zeriah [because pruning plants makes them grow] and betzirah is included in ketzirah. Why then did the verse list them? To tell you that only for these two toldot / sub-categories [i.e., zemirah and betzirah] does one incur the penalty of lashes, but not for other toldot. For any other avot / major categories or toldot of agricultural labor, one does not incur lashes according to Torah law, but he incurs makkat mardut / lashes according to Rabbinic law for being rebellious.
4. How so? One who plows, digs for the benefit of the ground, removes stones, fertilizes, or similarly performs any other agricultural labor, or one who grafts, plants shoots, plants saplings, or similarly performs any other labor relating to trees incurs makkat mardut / lashes pursuant to the Rabbinic decree.

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