

MAKING SACRIFICES

by Shlomo Katz

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Vaykira: Making Sacrifices**

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Today's Learning:

Taharot 2:8-3:1

O.C. 182:1-3

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Chullin 64

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Ketubot 51

The book of Vayikra is the primary source for the laws of the korbanot / sacrificial offerings, many of which were brought to atone for various sins. Today, however, there is no Bet Hamikdash, and we do not offer sacrifices. How then can we achieve the same atonement that formerly was attained through bringing sacrifices?

R' Eliezer Papo z"l (1785-1827; author of Pele Yoetz) writes that our parashah and the next allude to four separate means of attaining atonement in the absence of the sacrificial service.

First, one must remember why a sacrifice brings atonement. It is because the person who offers the sacrifice pictures to himself that he deserves the fate that is now being meted out to his animal. Thus humbled, the sinner returns to Hashem. This is alluded to in the verse (1:2), "When a man brings an offering to Hashem from among you."

Second, the Gemara teaches that learning the laws of the sacrifices is equivalent to bring sacrifices. This is alluded to in the verse (7:37), "This is the Torah of the olah / elevation-offering, the minchah / meal-offering, the chatat / sin-offering, and the asham / guilt-offering . . ." (The Gemara learns from this and similar verses that learning the Torah of the offering is equivalent to bringing the offering itself.)

Third, we read (1:3), "He shall bring it to the entrance of the Ohel Mo'ed / Tent of Meeting, willingly, before Hashem." This alludes to the fact that when the only thing keeping a person from doing a particular mitzvah is an obstacle beyond his control, Hashem gives him credit for doing the mitzvah

as if he actually performed it. This applies to bringing sacrifices as well.

Finally, "He shall support his hand upon the head of the olah." When a person supports the poor, he achieves a higher level than one who brings a korban olah. Thus we read in Mishlei (21:3), "Doing tzedakah and justice is preferable to Hashem than an offering." (Elef Ha'maggen)

"When a man / adam among you brings an offering . . ." (1:2)

Commenting on this verse, Midrash Rabbah states: "'Adam' is an expression of love, an expression of brotherhood, an expression of friendship." What is this midrash teaching?

R' Aharon Lewin z"l (the "Reisha Rav"; killed in the Holocaust in 1941) explains: There is a dispute among the Rishonim / early commentaries as to the purpose of animal sacrifices. Rambam z"l writes that when Hashem gave the Torah, He did not attempt to wean His people entirely from the idolatrous ways with which they were familiar. Rather, He instructed Bnei Yisrael to direct to Him the service that they otherwise would have performed to idols. Many other commentaries disagree vociferously and offer other interpretations.

In particular, R' Yitzchak Arama z"l (the "Ba'al Ha'akeidah") explains that Hashem recognized man's emotional need to repay his debts. Therefore, Hashem instructed us regarding an order of sacrifices, and He acts as if man is thereby giving Him a gift.

There is a wide gulf between the explanations of Rambam and the Ba'al Ha'akeidah. According to the former, the inclusion in the Torah of a

sacrificial service indicates the lowliness of man; according to the latter, it indicates G-d's love for man.

R' Lewin continues: In light of this dispute, we can understand the above midrash. Do not think, says the midrash, that the inclusion in the Torah of a sacrificial service indicates the lowliness of man. No! "It is an expression of love, an expression of brotherhood, an expression of friendship."

(Ha'drash Ve'ha'iyun: Vaykira, No. 1)

"If one's offering is an olah from the cattle, . . . the sons of Aharon, the Kohanim, shall . . . throw the blood on the Altar . . ." (1:3,5)

An olah can be brought from four-legged animals or from fowl. Likewise, a chatat / sin offering can be brought from four-legged animals or from fowl.

The Mishnah (Kinim 1:1) teaches that the blood of a bird-chatat and an animal-olah are placed on the lower half of the altar's wall, while the blood of an animal-chatat and a bird-olah are placed on the top half of the altar. Why?

R' Amram Zvi Gruenwald z"l (dayan in Oyber-Visheve, Hungary and rabbi in the Fernwald D.P. camp) observes that a four-legged animal usually is brought by a wealthy person, while a bird usually is brought by a poor person. A chatat is brought to repent for a sin; although a poor person's repentance also is desired by Hashem, the repentance of a wealthy person who humbles himself is more beloved. Therefore, in the case of a chatat, the blood of the rich man's offering is brought to the top of the altar and the blood of the poor man's offering is placed lower down.

In contrast, an olah is a voluntary gift offering. Whose gift is more beloved by Hashem - the rich man's or the poor man's? Obviously, the poor man's, as it entails a greater sacrifice. Therefore its blood is placed at the top of the altar, and the blood of the rich man's olah is placed below.

(Zichron Amram Zvi)

From the Pesach Haggadah

"Originally our ancestors were idol worshipers, but now the Omnipresent has brought us near to His service . . ."

Many commentaries observe that this sentence fulfills our Sages' direction: "We begin with disgrace and conclude with praise." But whose praise? R' David Hanaggid z"l (1224-1300; grandson of Rambam) explains:

We begin with our own disgrace - "Originally our ancestors were idol worshipers" - and we conclude with praise of Hashem - that despite our lowly standing, He performed miracles for us and, in His kindness, took us out of Egypt.

R' David adds: There also is praise of Bnei Yisrael implied here - that despite their tribulations, they did not lose faith and did not assimilate among the Egyptians. Rather, they clung to that which their father Avraham had taught.

However, concludes R' David, this leads back to Hashem's praise, for it was He who chose Avraham from among all the other people of his generation, gave him Yitzchak, etc. (as the remainder of this paragraph in the Haggadah relates).

(Midrash R' David Hanaggid: Haggadah Shel Pesach p.55)

"Go and learn what Lavan the Aramean attempted to do to our father Yaakov! For Pharaoh decreed only against the males, while Lavan attempted to uproot everything."

R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l (1910-1995) comments: Although the Torah never mentions explicitly that Lavan wanted to kill Yaakov, our Sages testify that such was his intention. And, just as the details of Lavan's plot against Yaakov remain hidden, so it has been throughout history. We read in Hallel: "Praise Hashem, all nations . . . For His kindness has overwhelmed us . . ." Commentaries ask: Should the nations praise Hashem because His kindness has overwhelmed us? The answer that is commonly given is that only the nations can truly appreciate Hashem's kindness to us, because only they know how many times they have plotted against us and failed.

(Haggadah Shel Pesach R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach)

"This is what stood by our fathers and us."

What is "This"? R' Yitzchak Yaakov Weiss z"l (1902-1989; "Dayan Weiss" of Manchester and Yerushalayim) explains that this statement refers to Hashem's words to Avraham quoted in the previous paragraph of the Haggadah: "Know that your offspring will be aliens in a land not their own . . ." It is the fact that we have always been aliens, keeping some distance from our host nations, that has maintained us in all of our exiles.

(Haggadah Shel Pesach Minchat Yitzchak)

"Dayenu"

Perhaps one of the most perplexing parts of the Haggadah is the song known as "Dayenu," in which we say that if G-d had taken us out of Egypt but had not judged the Egyptians, that would have been enough for us. Or, if He had judged the Egyptians, but had not destroyed their idols, that, too, would have been enough for us. Or, if He had destroyed their idols, but had not killed their firstborns, that, too, would have been enough. Or . . . What does this song mean?

R' Eliyahu Hakohen Ha'itamari z"l of Izmir explains that for each of the Divine gifts or miracles listed in this song, one could make an argument that G-d should have acted otherwise. Our praise of G-d is that He considered all these arguments and acted in the way that was best for us and for the glory of His Name.

For example, one could argue that if G-d had taken us out of Egypt but had not judged the Egyptians so harshly as to practically destroy them, His name would have been magnified even more because the Egyptians would live to remember, and to tell others, how He had humbled them. On the other hand, one could argue that they would not feel humbled in that event. Rather, they would say, "He won this battle, and we will win the next battle."

That is why G-d judged the Egyptians harshly. However, one could argue that if G-d had judged the Egyptians harshly but had not destroyed their idols, those idols would have served as constant reminders of G-d's power to anyone who saw them. On the other hand, some people would say that G-

d was not strong enough to destroy the Egyptians' idols.

That is why G-d destroyed the Egyptians' idols. However, one could argue that if G-d had destroyed their idols, but had not killed their firstborns, then those firstborns would have had a special reason to tell others of G-d's greatness. It was customary at that time to devote one's firstborn to the service of the idol; with all the idols destroyed, the Egyptian firstborn, who were no longer performing that service, would be a testament to G-d's power. On the other hand, Pharaoh was a firstborn; if the firstborns had not been smitten, people would say that it was Pharaoh's merit or power which saved him and those like him.

**That is why G-d killed the firstborn. . .
(Minchat Eliyahu ch.32)**

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