

UNIFYING CREATIONS

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Parshas Vayikra

Unifying Creations

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Today's Learning:

Avot 3:6-7

O.C. 102:4-103:1

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Nedarim 85

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Yevamot 23

In this week's parashah, we begin to read of the sacrifices that were offered in the Mishkan, and later in the Bet Hamikdash. R' Moshe Chaim Luzzato z"l (Ramchal; 1707-1746; kabbalist and prolific author, best known for Mesilat Yesharim) writes about the purpose of sacrifices:

The kohen who sacrificed an offering would have in mind to honor Hashem by bringing together and offering to Him a sample of each level of creation. [R' Chaim Friedlander z"l (mashgiach ruchani in Yeshivat Netivot and the Ponovezh Yeshiva who re-popularized many of Ramchal's writings; died 1984) explains that every item in creation has a unique purpose, and the complete revelation of G-d occurs only when all creations work together. Sacrifices further this goal by including a mineral (salt), a vegetable (flour, wine and incense) and an animal (cow, sheep, goat or bird).]

Another aspect of this work of unifying the creation in the service of G-d was to be able to approach Hashem on behalf of all of the Jewish People. Kohanim had to have great wisdom in order to accomplish this task, as it required knowledge of deep concepts. The general idea, however, is to unify all creations - lower ones and higher ones - in giving honor to the One Above. [R' Friedlander explains: The degree to which the world merits to see the Shechinah revealed depends on the degree to which the world realizes that the very purpose of creation is so that we may serve Hashem. (This apparently was the knowledge that Ramchal refers to as being required of the kohanim.)] (Da'at Tevunot p.178)

"Vayikra / He called to Moshe . . ." (1:1)

Why doesn't the verse say, "Hashem called to Moshe"? R' Moshe Soloveitchik z"l (rosh yeshiva in Switzerland) answers that Hashem sometimes calls to a person without identifying Himself. Only if a person listens carefully will he understand that he is being given a message.

He adds: We read regarding Moshe and the "Burning Bush" (Shmot 3:3- 4), "Moshe thought, 'I will turn aside now and look at this great sight - why will the bush not be burned?' Hashem saw that he turned aside to see; and G-d called out to him from amid the bush and said, '*Moshe, Moshe*'. . ." Says R' Soloveitchik: This teaches us that a person has moments of great opportunity, but they are lost if he does not seize them. Only because Moshe turned to examine the bush that miraculously was not consumed did he merit that Hashem spoke to him. (Quoted in Otzrotaihem Shel Tzaddikim)

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

The Midrash Tanchuma states: "In the future, there will be no sacrifices." R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (1865-1935; first Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael) explains:

The Arizal taught that Hashem will bring about a change in nature in the future such that animals will be capable of attaining spiritual levels equivalent to what man can attain today. That being the case, R' Kook writes, it is plain to see why man will no longer bring animal sacrifices in the future.

For the present, however, writes R' Kook, man should not be concerned about so-called "animals' rights." Man himself is on too low a spiritual level to concern himself with that. Indeed, it is disgraceful and is destructive of man's own stature when he acts hastily and rashly in pressing these issues! So long as man needs meat, he not only should eat it, but should sanctify it [e.g., through sacrifices, when the Bet Hamikdash was standing, and by using it at Shabbat and Yom Tov meals]. The sacrifices were a means for man to express his gratitude to Hashem, and having the ability to express gratitude is itself a lofty spiritual level. (Afikim Ba'Negev, reprinted in Otzrot Ha'Rayah p.754)

"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 may 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)

Parashat Zachor

Our Sages tell us that the nation of Amalek demonstrated its particularly evil nature by attacking Bnei Yisrael immediately after the entire world witnessed the wondrous miracle of the splitting of the sea. However, asks R' Shlomo Brevda shlita, this seems to be contradicted by another teaching of Chazal, i.e., that only one person - Yitro - was moved to convert to Judaism as a result of the miracles that occurred. Were the nations of the world other than Amalek impressed by the miracles, or were they not impressed?

R' Brevda explains: The Gemara (Shevuot 41b) teaches that people do not notice things in which they have no interest. Yitro was already a truth-seeker before the Exodus. Thus, hearing about the Exodus moved him to take action. The other nations of the world at that time were not moved in the same way because they were not truth-seekers to begin with. Nevertheless, the miracles that occurred did make some impression on them, as the Torah relates (Shmot 15:14-15), *"Nations heard - they were agitated; terror gripped the dwellers of Philistia. Then the chieftains of Edom were confounded; trembling gripped the powers of Moav; all the dwellers of Canaan dissolved."* Amalek, however, was an exception. Amalek was so far removed from any trace of subservience to G-d that the miracles of the Exodus and the splitting of the sea made no impression on them at all. (Kiyemu V'kiblu p.18)

Forgotten Festivals

This week, we present an excerpt from Megillat Ta'anit / The Scroll of Fasts, one of the earliest written halachic works - dating from long before the Mishnah was set down in writing. Notwithstanding its name, Megillat Ta'anit is not a list of fast days, but rather of days on which fasting and/or eulogizing were prohibited because of miracles that occurred for our ancestors. The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 18 & 19) discusses whether these prohibitions remain in effect today, and concludes that, for the most part, they do not. As a result, most of the festivals mentioned in Megillat Ta'anit have long since been forgotten.

Some of the dates listed in Megillat Ta'anit are not festivals but simply significant dates. One such day falls during this coming week. We read:

The 12th day [of Adar] is the "Day of Torkan." He [Torkan] arrested the brothers Lulianus and Papus in Ludkiah. [Some say that these two brothers confessed to a murder that they did not commit in order to avert a pogrom. Others say that the brothers were commanded to participate in a pagan ritual and they refused.] He said to them, "If you are from the people of Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah, let your G-d come and save you from me as he saved Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah from Nevuchadnezzar." They replied, "Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah were tzaddikim and Nevuchadnezzar was a worthy king; thus, they were appropriate tools for G-d to use in performing a miracle. But you are evil, and it would not be fitting for you to be connected with a miracle. Furthermore, we deserve to die, and if you don't kill us, Hashem has many other agents. He has many bears, lions, snakes and scorpions with which to strike at us. On the other hand, if you do kill us, the Holy One, Blessed is He, will avenge our blood from you." Tradition records that no sooner had Torkan left that spot when two Roman officers came and killed him.

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adira'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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