

BURNT-OFFERINGS BUILDING YERUSHALAYIM

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Aaron and Rona Lerner

in memory of their fathers

Avraham ben Yaakov Hakohen a"h and

Yaakov Yonah ben Yisrael a"h

Martin and Michelle Swartz

on the yahrzeit of

Martin's grandmother

Eva (née Kalikow) Lichman a"h (17 Nissan)

Our parashah opens: "Command Aharon and his sons, saying, 'This is the law of the olah / burnt-offering--it is the burnt-offering [that stays] on the flame, on the Altar, all night until the morning, and the fire of the Altar should be kept aflame on it.'" The Midrash Tanchuma comments: Regarding this it is written (Tehilim 51:20), "Do good with Your favor on Zion; build the walls of Yerushalayim." After this it is written (in the next verse), "Then you will desire the offerings of righteousness, burnt-offering, and a whole offering; then will bulls go up on Your Altar." This means to say, says the midrash, that if Yisrael does not offer burnt-offerings, Yerushalayim will not be built, for it is only built in the merit of the olah. [The midrash is reading the verses: "Do good with Your favor on Zion; build the walls of Yerushalayim. . . Then you will have desired the offerings of righteousness, burnt-offering, and a whole offering," i.e., the second verse precedes the first verse chronologically.] Why is the rebuilding of Yerushalayim dependent upon olot (plural of "olah") more than on other offerings? Because olot are called, "the offerings of righteousness." [Until here from the midrash]

How can the building of Yerushalayim be dependent upon the bringing of offerings, which cannot be brought, according to many halachic authorities, until the Temple in Yerushalayim has been rebuilt? R' Avraham Meir Rosen z"l (Warsaw; 19th century) explains that the midrash is not speaking of actually offering sacrifices. Rather, as our Sages teach, studying the laws of the sacrificial service is equivalent to offering a sacrifice. In this light we can better understand how this midrash relates to

our verse: "This is the law of the olah--it is the olah . . ." Studying the law of the olah will enable you to have the opportunity to offer an actual olah. (Beur Ha'amarim)

"If he shall offer it for a todah / thanksgiving-offering . . ." (7:12)

Four individuals are obligated to bring a todah or, in the absence of the Bet Hamikdash, to recite the blessing known as birkat ha'gomel: one who crosses a sea, one who crosses a desert, one who is cured from an illness, and one who is released from prison. The question is asked: Why do we thank Hashem for saving us from dangerous situations, yet we do not thank Him when He does not place us in dangerous situations in the first place?

R' Yekutiel Yehuda Halberstam z"l (1905-1994; the Klausenberger Rebbe) writes in the name of several authorities that being placed in danger is a sign that one is being judged for his sins. Thus, one thanks Hashem for saving him from danger despite his sins. (Shefa Chaim No. 222)

Another answer is that a person should be more grateful when he is placed in danger and saved than if he never is in danger. The reason, according to Sefer Hayashar, is that a person who experiences danger is undergoing cleansing of his sins. In contrast, a person who never suffers either is a perfect tzaddik -- which is extremely unlikely -- or is being ignored by G-d. That is the worst possible fate. (Heard from Rabbi Kalman Winter z"l)

"The fire on the Altar shall be kept burning on it, it shall not be extinguished; and the Kohen shall kindle wood upon it every morning; he shall prepare the olah-offering upon it and shall cause the fats of the shelamim-offerings to go up in smoke upon it. A permanent fire shall remain aflame on the Altar; it shall not be extinguished." (6:5-6)

R' Ben-Zion Yadler z"l (1871-1962; Maggid / preacher of Yerushalayim) writes: The Torah is hinting to us that, if a person wants the fire of love and awe of Hashem to burn within him, it is not enough that he doesn't actively extinguish the flame. Rather, he must add fuel to the fire every day.

R' Yadler continues: R' Yosef Karo z"l (Spain, Greece and Eretz Yisrael; 1488-1575) opens the Shulchan Aruch with the instruction, "One should be strong like a lion to arise in the morning to serve his Creator." R' Moshe Isserles z"l (Krakow, Poland; 1520-1572) adds in a gloss, "Likewise, when one lies down to sleep, he should know before Whom he is sleeping." R' Yadler comments: In order to arise like a lion in the morning to serve Hashem, one must go to sleep with an awareness of before Whom he is sleeping.

It goes with saying, R' Yadler concludes, that this requires sustained study of mussar works. (B'tuv Yerushalayim p.147)

Shabbat Ha'gadol

R' Avraham z"l (an otherwise unknown sage in 12th or 13th century France) teaches: The people are accustomed to call the Shabbat before Pesach: "Shabbat Ha'gadol" / "The Great Shabbat." But, they don't know why. After all, it is no greater than any other Shabbat!

He explains: The reason for this name is that the Exodus from Egypt took place on a Thursday, as stated in Midrash Seder Olam. Therefore, the 10th of Nissan, when Bnei Yisrael set aside lambs for the Korban Pesach, was Shabbat. When Bnei Yisrael were given this commandment, they asked, "If we slaughter the deity of Egypt in their sight, will they not stone us?" Hashem answered, "You will see the wonder that I will do!" Sure enough, when the Egyptians saw Bnei Yisrael gathering sheep that they planned to slaughter on the 14th of Nissan, their insides boiled with anger, but they were helpless to harm the Jewish People. Because of the miracle that happened on that Shabbat, we call it "Shabbat Ha'gadol." (Siddur Rashi, paragraph 352)

Why did the Torah command that the Korban Pesach [in Egypt] be set aside four days before it was slaughtered? Rabbi Matia ben Charash used to say: The verse says (Yechezkel 16:8), "I passed by you, and saw you, and behold the time was a time of love." The time had come for Hashem to fulfill His oath to Avraham to redeem his children, but they had no merit in which to be redeemed, as it is written (ibid. verse 7), "You were naked and bare" -- i.e., naked of Mitzvot. Therefore, Hashem gave them two Mitzvot--the blood of the Korban Pesach [to spread on their doorposts] and the blood of Brit Milah [which had been neglected during the years in Egypt], as it is written (ibid. verse 6), "Then I passed you and saw you wallowing in your blood, and I said to you, 'In your blood you shall live'; I said to you, 'In your blood you shall live'." That is why Hashem commanded that they set aside the animal for the offering four days in advance. (Midrash Mechilta D'Rabbi Yishmael: Parashat Bo)

R' Eliezer Ashkenazi z"l (1513-1585; rabbi in Egypt, Italy and Poland) asks: Why four days--not three or five? And, why do we commemorate the day of the week when this miracle occurred (Shabbat), rather than its date (10 Nissan)?

He explains: The entire purpose of Bnei Yisrael's exile and of the Exodus, with all of the associated miracles, was to reveal that Hashem is the Creator. Only the One who created all of nature can manipulate it at will to the extent that Hashem did in the course of the Plagues! Paralleling this, Hashem wanted the lamb for the Korban Pesach to be set aside four days beforehand--not because there is anything special about the number four, but because that day was Shabbat, the day that testifies to Creation. This explains, as well, why we remember that miracle on Shabbat, not on the calendar date when it occurred. (Ma'asei Mitzrayim ch.15)

Pesach

"He and his neighbor who is close to his house shall take. . ." (Shmot 12:4)

The Tosefta (Pesachim 8:6) teaches: There are a number of differences between the way the Korban Pesach was offered in Egypt and the way it was brought in later generations. One of those differences was this requirement that the Pesach in Egypt be eaten with a neighbor [if one's only family was too small to eat an entire lamb]. In Eretz Yisrael, there was no requirement that the lamb be shared specifically with a neighbor. However, the sage Rabbi Shimon says, "I maintain that this requirement applies in all generations, so that a person not abandon his neighbor in favor of a distant friend. This is in accordance with the verse (Mishlei 27:10), "A close-by neighbor is better than a distant brother."

R' Chaim Zaichyk z"l (1906-1989; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Bet Yosef-Novardok in Buchach, Poland; later in Israel) writes: This teaches us that even if one would enjoy the holiday more somewhere else, he must forego that pleasure in order not to risk offending his neighbor. [Ed. note: Although Rabbi Shimon's opinion is not the Halachah, that does not detract from the validity of the ethical lesson he is teaching, in accordance with the principle (Eruvin 13b), "These and these are both the word of the Living Elokim." (See Maharal z"l, Be'er Ha'golah I p.20)]

R' Zaichyk continues: We read (Bereishit 13:3), "He proceeded on his journeys from the south to Bet El--to the place where his tent had been at first." Rashi z"l quotes our Sages' view about the importance of returning to the same hotel where one stayed previously. The Gemara (Arachin 16b) teaches that this obligation goes so far that a person should return to the same inn unless the innkeeper hits him or throws his belongings into the street. Sometimes, R' Zaichyk observes, a person may be more comfortable in a different hotel than the one he stayed in before. Nevertheless, one's personal comfort must be secondary to the feelings of one's former host. (Haggadah Shel Pesach R' Chaim Zaichyk)