

OLAT HATAMID

by Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

I

A CONTINUAL OFFERING

Over these few weeks, we are reading about the command to construct the **Mishkan** (Sanctuary) - and the fulfillment of that command by the B'nei Yisra'el. After being commanded to build the Mishkan, all of its vessels and accouterments, the B'nei Yisra'el were adjured to sacrifice the **Olat haTamid** -the continual burnt offering. The Olat haTamid is offered up twice daily:

"The one lamb you shall offer in the morning; and the other lamb you shall offer between the evens (between noon and the end of the day)." (Sh'mot 29:39)

The Olat haTamid claims primacy not only as the first sacrifice mandated (besides the Pessach); its significance is alluded to in many Parashiot relating to the sacrificial order: **...besides the Olat haTamid and its libation** appears fourteen (14!) times in Bamidbar (chapters 28-29). Every sacrifice brought is to be offered up **...besides the Olat haTamid** i.e. after the daily "continual" sacrifice. It is from these verses that the dictum "Frequency causes precedence" is derived:

***Kol haTadir meHavero Kodem et Havero** (That [ritual] which is more frequent than another precedes that other.) (Mishna Zevachim 10:1)*

An example of the application of this concept is found in the eighth chapter of Berakhot (and its parallel Sugya in the last chapter of Pesachim) where Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel disagree about the order of the two B'rakhot recited at Friday night Kiddush. The Gemara explains Beit Hillel's position (that the blessing over the wine is recited before the blessing over the Shabbat), by applying the rule of *frequency generates precedence*. Since the recitation of the blessing over wine (**...Borei P'ri Haggafen**) is performed more frequently than the recitation of the blessing over Shabbat (**...M'kaddesh haShabbat**), the blessing over wine precedes the blessing over Shabbat.

II

DEFINITIONS OF *TAMID*

I would like to raise two questions about the Olat haTamid; one formulaic and the other fundamental. The formula used to describe the daily sacrifices: **Tamid**, is somewhat misleading here. In other usages in Tenakh, the term **Tamid** indicates unceasing presence or action. For example:

*The fire shall be **Tamid** (constantly) burning on the altar, it shall never go out." (Vayyikra 6:6 - see MT Hilkhhot T'midin uMusafin 2:1).*

The fire is always to be burning on the altar - this constitutes **Tamid**. The well-known prayer of David:

*I have set God before me **Tamid** (constantly)" (T'hillim 16:8)*

expresses David's unceasing awareness of the Divine Presence. In our case, however, the constancy of the daily offerings is much more limited, indeed occasional.

The one lamb shall you offer in the morning, and the other lamb shall you offer between the evens.

How can the Torah describe these offerings as Tamid when they are brought at two separate junctures of the day?

One might argue that the meaning here of Tamid is not the same as in the verses quoted above; that here it indicates that the practice is to be constant, i.e. day in and day out (without missing a day). This could be termed "relative constancy"- relative to the demands of the ritual, it is practiced constantly. For instance, we would describe someone who keeps Shabbat regularly as one who "always keeps Shabbat", even though there are six days out of seven when this is impossible. Relative to the Mitzvah of Sh'mirat Shabbat, however, he fulfills them regularly; this justifies the appellation "Shomer Shabbat."

One might argue that - except for R. Yose. (B.T. Menahot 99b): The **Lehem haPanim** (showbread) is to be before God **Tamid**. The old loaves were replaced each week with the new loaves. According to the first opinion in the Mishna, four Kohanim slid the old loaves off of the table as four others slid the new loaves on to the table; this in order to fulfill the requirement of Tamid. R. Yose disagreed, saying that even if one set of loaves was removed totally and the other then put in its place, this still fulfilled the requirement of Tamid. In the Gemara, a more detailed opinion of R. Yose's is quoted:

R. Yose says: Even if they removed the old set of loaves in the morning and set up the new set of loaves in the evening, this is Tamid.

R. Yose could have argued "relative constancy" and explained that as long as the bread was there every week, it is considered Tamid. R. Yose's refusal to use this argument indicates that the demand of Tamid is not relieved via relative constancy; we must redefine constancy for each case individually.

III

GENERATING PRECEDENCE

Kol haTadir meHavero Kodem et Havero (That [ritual] which is more frequent than another precedes that other.) This legal concept is derived from the law of the Olat haTamid . A fundamental question, shooting its curious arrows of inquiry beyond the formula of Tamid, begs to be answered here. Why does frequency mean precedence in Halakhah? Conventionally, occasional and unusual occurrences are more exciting, exotic and inspiring. That which is constant is mundane, humdrum and usual; the religious psyche seeks and thrives on the occasion, the festivity; that which removes us and helps us to transcend our everyday existence. How can we compare an everyday sunset to Halley's comet? Isn't the Sh'ma Yisra'el of Nei'la [at the end of Yom haKippurim] a hundredfold more inspiring than the Sh'ma Yisra'el of a midwinter's Tuesday evening?

One answer that is tempting utilizes a reversal of assumption: Precedence itself does not indicate significance; contrariwise, precedence indicates a lack of significance. That which is more common goes first - in order to build up to the less common, more exciting event or ritual. This sense of ordering practice with the intent of creating a spiritual climax is inviting; it appeals to our dramatic and suspenseful entertainment mentality. This answer, however, cannot withstand the test of the juxtaposed Halakha.

Following the formulation of the rule that "frequency generates precedence", the next Mishnah in Zevachim (10:2), asserts a comparable principle: "Sanctity generates precedence." **Kol haM'kudash meHavero Kodem et Havero** (That [ritual] which is holier than another precedes that other.) Clearly, the precedence of that which is holy is comparable to the precedence of that which is frequent. Since we would not assume that the holier ritual is practiced first in order to build up to one less holy; our theory of spiritual climax which explains the precedence of that which is frequent is apparently disproved.

We now have two problems to solve: Why does frequency generate precedence; and how can we refer to the daily offerings as **Tamid** when they are not an unceasing practice?

IV

RAMBAM'S APPROACH

"It is a **Mitzvat 'Aseh** to offer in the Sanctuary two lambs of the first year every day..." (Sefer haMitzvot, Mitzvat 'Aseh #39; Mishneh Torah: introduction to Hilkhot T'midin uMusafin, Mitzvah #1).

Rambam defines the two daily T'midin as one Mitzva. This is similar in formula to Rambam's definition of the Mitzvah of Reading the Sh'ma. (Sefer HaMitzvot, Mitzvat 'Aseh #10; Mishneh Torah: introduction to Hilkhot K'ri'at Sh'ma; see, however, Sefer haMitzvot of R. Sa'adia Ga'on where K'ri'at Sh'ma is counted as two Mitzot, morning and evening separately; see also Ramban's critique on Sefer haMitzvot, Shoresh #9). The two daily offerings (as well as the two daily readings of the Sh'ma) are not two separate Mitzvot; each pair constitutes one Mitzvah. This presentation is itself difficult; how can two separate actions, each defined separately (at the very least, each has its own time parameter. For another distinction, see B.T. Menahot 50a and Mishneh Torah: T'midin uMusafin 1:12) be considered one Mitzva?

One possible avenue of response is that of **'Ikkuva** (interdependence). We find other Mitzvot which are composed of various actions; since each one is necessary for the fulfillment of the Mitzvah, each is regarded as an Ikkuva to the performance of the Mitzvah; it therefore becomes part of the same Mitzvah. By way of example, each of the four species taken on Sukkot is an Ikkuva to the performance of the Mitzvah (Mishna Menahot 3:6; Mishneh Torah: Hilkhot Lulav 7:5). Therefore, if one lacked an Etrog, and took the Lulav, Hadas and Aravah, it would be (from an Halakhic standpoint) a meaningless action. Since all four species are an Ikkuva - a necessary component - to performing the Mitzvah, they must be considered one Mitzvah (one could, of course, define causality in the inverse direction thusly: Since all four comprise one Mitzva, each then becomes a necessary component to its fulfillment).

Applying Ikkuva to the T'midin would have to work as follows:

Since each offering (morning and afternoon) is necessary for the fulfillment of the Mitzvah, they must be defined as one Mitzvah. The same rule would have to apply to the morning and evening readings of the Sh'ma', in order to defend Rambam's grouping of these two readings into one Mitzvah. The Halakhah, however, does not bear this out. Rambam (Hilkhot T'midin uMusafin 1:12) following the Gemara in Menahot (50b), rules that if the morning Tamid was not brought, even if this neglect was intentional, the afternoon Tamid is still brought. The one exception to this rule (Rambam, BT Menahot ad loc.) is rooted in a concern extrinsic to our problem. Similarly, regarding the reading of the Sh'ma', if one neglected to read the Sh'ma' in the morning, this does not exempt him from the obligation to read the Sh'ma' in the evening, neither does neglecting the evening reading prevent the morning reading from being a complete obligation (see BT Berakhot 26a).

Clearly, Ikkuva is not Rambam's reason for considering both T'midin (and both readings of the Sh'ma') as one Mitzva. How very frustrating! Instead of answering the two questions above, we have compounded the problem by adding a third. Why does Rambam count the two daily T'midin (and, correspondingly, the two daily readings of the Sh'ma') as one Mitzva? We can answer this by

returning to the Gemara's discussion of the demand for Tamid in the fulfillment of the Mitzvah of Lehem haPanim - a section we referred to above (end of Section II).

V

THE *LEHEM HAPANIM*

The Torah states:

*You shall take choice flour, and bake twelve loaves of it; two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each loaf. You shall place them in two rows, six in a row, on the table of pure gold. You shall put pure frankincense with each row, to be a token offering for the bread, as an offering by fire to YHVH. Every sabbath day Aaron shall set them in order before YHVH **Tamid** as a commitment of the people of Israel, as a covenant forever. They shall be for Aaron and his descendants, who shall eat them in a holy place, for they are most holy portions for him from the offerings by fire to YHVH, a perpetual due. (Vayyikra 24:5-9)*

The Lehem HaPanim (showbread), which rested on the Shulhan (table) **Tamid** was replaced with the new set of loaves every Shabbat. According to the Mishnah (Menahot 11:7) , there are two opinions of how the bread was replaced while maintaining the constancy of Tamid. According to the first opinion, as the new bread was placed on the Shulhan, the old bread was slid off.

R. Yose, however, was of the opinion that such temporal proximity was unnecessary. In a Baraita (quoted in BT Menahot 99b), R. Yose is quoted as saying that even if the old bread was removed in the morning and the new bread replaced in the evening, this still constitutes Tamid.

R. Ami (ibid) derives the following rule from R. Yose's statement:

Even if one only read one chapter [of T'nakh] in the morning and one chapter in the evening, he has fulfilled 'The scroll of this Torah shall not disappear from your mouth' [and you shall study it day and night] (Yehoshua 1:8)." R. Yohanan, quoting R. Shim'on b. Yohai, states: "Even if one only read the Shema' in the morning and in the evening, he has fulfilled 'It shall not disappear' " (BT Menahot ibid)

VI

TWO DEFINITIONS OF CONSTANCY

There are two ways of defining constancy. The simplest, most common way is "constancy = continually recurring" (American Heritage Dictionary). Rambam's formula in the enumeration of the Mitzvot, counting both daily T'midin as one Mitzvah helps us (and even forces us) to reevaluate the definition of constancy. A less common, but possibly more valid definition within the oeuvre of Halakha is: "Constancy = frequent expression of an unceasing relationship."

By way of example, a happily married couple is endlessly in love. Nevertheless, the expression of their mutual affection must, perforce, be limited by the other demands and manifestations of their lives. Each member works, studies and perhaps plays separately. By delegating birthdays, anniversaries, certain holidays and the like, the frequent "romantic interlude" serves as an indication of their unending love for each other. These days function as "signposts" in the relationship; the mood and spirit of such occasions helps to define the ongoing nature of the relationship (Within the pale of the Shir haShirim model, this can serve as an analogy for the relationship between God and the Jewish people. Shabbat is a beautiful example of a "relationship signpost" which helps define the relationship during the rest of the week).

All three questions which we asked can be answered as one: The daily offering is called **Tamid**, for it is the symbol of constant devotion to God. Since the daily T'midin function as daily "poles" to the relationship (the morning Tamid is the first sacrifice of the day. Except for the Pessah, the afternoon Tamid is the last), they are one Mitzvah; a continuous Mitzvah of Olah which has its expression at the extremes of the day. So, too, is the reading of the Sh'ma; "when you lie down and when you rise up" is a way of assigning special times to that relationship-instructively, these times are, once again, at the extremes of man's day, just as the times for the Tamid are at the extremes of the Sanctuary day (there are no sacrifices offered at night; MT Ma'aseh haKorbanot 4:1).

Kol haTadir meHavero Kodem et Havero (That [ritual] which is more frequent than another precedes that other) is now understood. All Mitzvot are a symbol of the covenant between the Jewish people and God; that Mitzvah which is more frequent indicates that it represents a more significant element in that relationship (much as we remain in closer contact with close friends and family than with mere acquaintances); therefore it demands precedence. QED

Text Copyright © 1998 by Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom.

The author is Educational Coordinator of the Jewish Studies Institute of the Yeshiva of Los Angeles