

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	RENEWED
Phinehas	27 July 2019	24 Tammuz 5779	Num. 25:10-29:40	Jer. 1:1-2:3	John 2:13-22

Another aspect of understanding why Moshe went before Hashem and asked Him what he should do in the case of the daughters of Zelophahad. It is written, "Our father died in the wilderness and he was not...in the company of Korach, but he died in his own sin and he had no sons...and Moshe brought their cause before YHWH." (Bedmidbar 27:3, 5) The Torah says that "bribery blinds the eyes of the wise." (Devarim 16:19), meaning judges can lose their neutrality.

The sages answer that Moshe was able to answer their questions on his own. However, when the daughters of Zelophahad injected that their father was not among the company of Korach, he felt the tint of a bribe and therefore removed himself and turned to Hashem for His decision. The tint of a bribe here is bias toward the daughters as he was involved in making decisions that ultimately led to death of Korach and his company.

We pick up this week's Torah portion just after Yehoshua was anointed by Moshe (Bedmidbar 27:18-23). Since Moshe's prophecy and leadership was to end and Yehoshua's would not be enough, it was necessary to ensure that the offerings were all done properly. It is written, "It shall be a continual burnt-offering throughout your generations at the door of the tent of meeting before YHWH, [for] I will meet with you, to speak there to you." (Shemot 29:42) Meaning, the High Priest would get answers from the Urim and Thummim when the offerings were done in a correct manner.

Rashi said that the Levites and Yisraelites must stand around the offerings. From here they learned to set up the units of priests, Levites, and ordinary Yisraelites that accompanied each of the priestly watches. The "appointed time" (v. 2) for the regular burnt offering is "every day."

It is written, "My food for My offerings" (Bemidbar 28:2) The "food" is literally "bread" that is eaten daily, that is the flesh of animals. The "offerings" indicate both of the regular offerings, morning and evening. There is a statement, "Descend is for the purpose of ascent." Thus, the "diminishing joy" means radical descent is for the purpose of leading to a radical ascent.¹ The exile in general is descent. When the Yisraelites were in Mitzrayim, it was considered as descent. When there is a doubt, the end has come and Hashem will not detain us for the blink of an eye like the days of "I took you out of Mitzrayim."

In verse 3, "Male lambs in their first year, unblemished, two a day, as a continual elevation." The sages question, since it is talking about two lambs, why does the verse use singular "*olah tamid* (עֹלָה תָמִיד)" rather than "*olot tamid*"? When Hashem completed the first day of creation, it is written, "It was evening and it was morning, one day (*yom echad*; יוֹם אֶחָד)." It does not say the first day (*yom rishon*; יוֹם ראשון). It is to distinguish any conception that since night and day are opposite, they were created by different gods. Therefore, the Torah states "*yom echad*" to indicate that all phases of a 24-hour day were created by the One and Only Elohim. The Midrash (Bemidbar 21:21) says that a person would not sleep over in Yerushalaim without being rid of his sins: The morning continual offering forgave the sins of the night, and the afternoon continual offering forgave the sins of the day. It is to prevent by some that the forgiveness of the morning and afternoon continual offerings are by different gods and divine powers. Therefore, it is written in singular *olah tamid* that they are both a continual offering to the One and Only Elohim.

¹ Erev of Rosh Chodesh, Manachem Av, 5740 (1980)

The daily continual-offering (v. 4) is first mentioned in Shemot 29:39 as it is written, “The one lamb”, in Hebrew אֶת-הַכֶּכֶּשׂ אֶחָד (*et-hak-ke-ves ha'e-chad*). However, in verse 4 it says in Hebrew אֶת-הַכֶּכֶּשׂ אֶחָד (*et-hak-ke-ves e-chad*) without the designative “ה”. Rashi explains that in Shemot, it is a commandment to offer a daily continual-offering was given as a part of the inauguration of the altar. And in our *parashah*, it is repeated as a commandment for its daily performance.

While the offering consisted of two lambs daily, they were not dependent on one another, meaning omitting the morning one had no effect on the afternoon one. An exception to this is the continual-offering for the inauguration of the altar. The altar could be inaugurated only in the morning, and if it was not offered in time, then they had to wait until the next day. (Rambam) Therefore, by inserting “ה” in Shemot, the priests were required to bring a lamb in the morning for the inauguration of the altar. In this *parashah*, the afternoon offering can be brought even if the morning offering was not brought because the morning offering was not a prerequisite to the afternoon offering.

“It is a continual burnt-offering, which was offered in mount Sinai, for a sweet savor, an offering made by fire unto YHWH.” (v. 6) The sages ask what is the connection between the daily offering of a lamb and Mount Sinai? The Gemara² explains that once a king and queen of the Hasmonean family were discussing which meat is tastier, goat or lamb. They decided to ask the High Priest since he was offering sacrifices daily who said, “If goat is better, why isn’t it used for the daily sacrifice?”

The halacha explains the High Priest’s comment. An animal is considered fully born once the entire head emerges. If part of the head emerges, it is still considered unborn. And if it is a firstborn, it is permissible to blemish it to avoid having given it to the priest as an offering. The Gemara³ says that a goat has very long ears and as his head emerges the ears are seen first and it is permissible to blemish it before the entire head emerges. When a lamb is born, its lips are seen first. Therefore, it is permissible to blemish it. However, the ears are small and are not seen until the entire head emerges.

When Hashem offered the Torah to the Yisraelites, they said, “We will do and we will listen.” The verse is connected with the continual-offering that since the lamb’s lips emerges before its ears, it has been chosen as the daily offering to emphasize the praise of the Yisraelites who at Mount Sinai put their mouth before their ears.

Rashi asks, “Why did Hashem wants one ram for a sin-offering on Rosh Chodesh?” He explains, when the sun and the moon were created, they were equal size as the sun was to rule over day and the moon at night. The moon came to Hashem and said that two kings cannot share a same crown. Thus, Hashem diminished the moon.

Hashem could have chosen an alternative by making the sun larger. Rashi explains that Hashem decided the wicked were not worthy of enjoying the original illumination of the sun and stored it away for the righteous to enjoy. And He had no choice but to diminish the moon.

Thus, human misdeeds necessitated Hashem’s decision to diminish the moon, and humans must bring an atonement “for Hashem.”

² Pesachim 57a

³ Bechorot 35a