

Parshat HaShavua
Yeshivat Har Etzion

PARASHAT HASHAVUA

PARASHAT PINCHAS

The Mussaf Sacrifices

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The latter part of Parashat Pinchas presents the lengthy list of sacrifices to be offered on Shabbat and the festivals. Generally, this somewhat monotonous and cumbersome listing exhausts both reader and listener, who anxiously await the end of the tedious enumeration of the sheep, rams and cows offered on various occasions.

However, a closer examination of this technical roster of sacrifices reveals that behind the detail lies a fundamental perspective as to the essence of the festivals. In this shiur, we attempt to look behind the surface and uncover the messages latent in the mussaf sacrifices of the various holidays on our calendar.

The term "mussaf" means ADDITION, that which has been added to the normal state of affairs. The mussaf sacrifice is entitled such as it comes in addition to the standard, daily sacrifices. Each day, one sheep is offered in the morning (the "tamid shel shachar") and one in the late afternoon (the "tamid shel bein ha'arbayim"). No sacrifices were offered prior to the morning tamid, nor was any offering brought upon the altar after the afternoon tamid (with the exception of the korban pesach). Thus, in effect, the two tamid offerings opened and closed the daily service in the Temple.

In Parashat Teruma, the Torah introduces the commandment regarding the tamid as part of its discussion of the altar (Shemot 29). This association suggests that the this korban constitutes part of the basic definition of the altar, or at least of the service conducted on the altar.

As stated earlier, special korbanot are offered on Shabbat and festivals in addition to the daily tamid offerings, and they must be brought only AFTER the morning tamid. (For this reason, the musaf prayer that we recite on Shabbat and Yom Tov, which commemorates the mussaf sacrifice, is always recited after the shacharit service, which commemorates the morning tamid).

A closer look at the various mussaf sacrifices shows a variety of systems of the mussaf sacrifice, which may point to a corresponding variety of types of festivals. In other words, the mussaf sacrifices may enhance our understanding of the Jewish calendar with its various holidays. The following chart lists the sacrifices to be offered at their respective times, grouped by the numbers of animals:

Shabbat: two sheep

Rosh Chodesh: seven sheep; two bulls; one ram.

Chag HaMatzot: seven sheep; two bulls; one ram.

Shavuot: seven sheep; two bulls; one ram.

Rosh Hashanah: seven sheep; one bull; one ram.

Yom Kippur: seven sheep; one bull; one ram.

Shemini Atzeret: seven sheep; one bull; one ram.

Sukkot: fourteen sheep; 13-7 bulls (in descending order from the first day); two rams.

Thus, three distinct types of festivals emerge.

On Shabbat, only two sheep are offered. In other words, the basic daily sacrifice (the "tamid"), which consists of one sheep, is merely doubled. No rams or bulls are offered as is the case on the festivals. Although Shabbat assumes its place among the sacred days of the calendar, it remains separate from the other holidays. (This duality with regard to the nature of Shabbat is manifest in the presentation of the Shabbat and festivals in Parashat Emor - Vayikra 23 - as well).

The other festivals may thus be classified into two distinct groups, according to the number of bulls sacrificed thereupon. The common denominator uniting all the festivals regards the number of sheep - seven - and the number of rams - one. [Later, we will examine the mussaf of Sukkot, the obvious exception.] The point of difference, then, is with regard to the number of bulls.

Thus, the festivals may be grouped as follows:

Rosh Chodesh, Chag HaMatzot, Shavuot : two bulls

Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Shemini Atzeret: one bull

In order to properly understand the underlying significance of this classification, we must first try to identify the beginning of the Jewish year. The Torah states in Parashat Bo (Shemot 12:2), "This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you." Here, the month of Nissan seems to mark the beginning of the calendar year. However, as we all know, "Rosh Hashanah," the New Year, is observed six months later, on the first of Tishrei. (See the first mishna in Masekhet Rosh Hashana.) This calendar arrangement, with Tishrei marking the new year, emerges from a different verse in Sefer Shemot (23:16): "...and the Feast of Ingathering [Sukkot] at the end of the year, when you gather in the results of your work from the field." Sukkot is presented here as occurring towards the end of the year. (See also the parallel verse - Shemot 34:22: "...and the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year".)

Evidently, the Jewish calendar features two different new years - one in Nissan and the other in Tishrei. I would like to suggest that the two systems of korbanot - i.e. the two

types of festivals - that we have encountered directly relate to this duality within the Jewish calendar. The first system relates to the festivals of Nissan, i.e. the festivals of the Exodus from Egypt. The institution of Rosh Chodesh was established simultaneous to God's instructions to Moshe and Aharon with respect to the Exodus (Shemot 12:1); Chag Ha-Matzot commemorates the Exodus; and Shavuot, which was never given a calendar date and is observed always fifty days after Chag Ha-Matzot, comprises a continuation of this process of recalling the Exodus from Egypt.

Correspondingly, the second system of festivals involves exclusively the month of Tishrei. It consists of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Shemini Atzeret, all of which occur during this month. This distinction is expressed by the different sacrifices offered on the holidays of each respective group.

Now we must turn our attention to the more complex mussaf sacrifice of Sukkot. At least with regard to the rams and sheep, the mussaf offering of Sukkot is simply double that of the other festivals. It requires fourteen sheep as opposed to the seven of the other holidays, and its two rams double the single ram of the other mussaf sacrifices. We must therefore view Sukkot as a "double" festival, one which incorporates two "smaller" festivals therein. It would seem that this double nature evolves from the two distinct systems outlined above. In other words, Sukkot is observed both in the "Tishrei-year" as well as in the "Nissan-year." The reason is clear. On the one hand, Sukkot commemorates the Exodus - "...in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths seven days" (Vayikra 23:43) - thus warranting its inclusion in the Nissan system of festivals. Concurrently, though, Sukkot obviously belongs in the Tishrei group, as it follows Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and occurs on the fifteenth of Tishrei. Thus, Sukkot features a complex system of mussaf sacrifices.

This dichotomy of Sukkot expresses itself in Parashat Emor, as well. The Torah there presents and discusses all the festivals, concluding with Sukkot. Following its treatment of Sukkot, the Torah summarizes, "These are the set times of God that you shall celebrate as sacred occasions" (23:37). After this conclusion, though, the Torah once again commands the observance of Sukkot: "Mark, on the fifteenth day of the seventh day, when you have gathered in the yield of your land, you shall observe the festival of God seven days." Thus, the Chumash presents two commandments with respect to Sukkot, corresponding to the dual nature of this particular festival. (This issue of the repeated discussion of Sukkot in Vayikra 23 is a vast topic, well beyond the scope of this shiur. The reader is referred to the analysis of Rav Mordechai Breuer in "Pirkei Moadot".

]The issue of the bull-offerings, which require thirteen through seven bulls in descendorder over the course of the festival, seems to relate to an entirely different concept. As this topic warrants independent treatment, we will simply remark that the Torah may have specifically required the offering of seven bulls on the seventh day[.

These two categories of festivals present before the Jew two fundamental experiences, expressed by and during the festivals. First, the Jew is called upon to experience his nation's history and commemorate events of the past, specifically the Exodus from Egypt and the Revelation at Sinai (= the year that begins with Nissan). Simultaneously, the individual faces the present reality, specifically his agricultural concerns, and beseeches the Almighty for success in his endeavors. This sense manifests itself most acutely in Tishrei, the beginning of the agricultural year.

Thus, the listing of the sacrifices in Parashat Pinchas expresses the nature of the various festivals and the relationships between them. We have not dealt with the specific numbers themselves, e.g. why the Torah ordained specifically seven sheep and two rams. Our goal here was to demonstrate the differences between the various festivals and how these distinctions reflect the essence of each respective category of holidays.

In effect, within both systems man confronts the reality designed by the Almighty. However, this confrontation contains two distinct but complimentary features. During the festivals of Nissan, the individual faces the events that characterized the formation of the Jewish people and expresses his gratitude to God. In contrast, the festivals of Tishrei have the Jew stand directly before the Almighty and request His assistance. Both systems are founded on the same principle - God's boundless dominion over the universe and the events that transpire therein. Whereas during the festivals of Nissan the Jewish experience focuses on the events themselves, the festivals of Tishrei feature a direct encounter with God.