



מִיָּסֵד עֵתוֹן הַתּוֹרָה

The Student Torah Journal of
Maimonides School

העיתון התורני של ישיבת רמב"ם

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Ari Green

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Brookline, Massachusetts

Editors' Note

It was an honor and a necessity for us to publish an edition of *Mayim Achronim. MA*, for those unaware, is the Torah journal of Maimonides School. Since its first issue in 1997, it has been an outlet for Torah that won't be on "the test". Sadly, it has not had as prominent presence in school culture in the past several years as it should. We hope that more of our fellow students will feel the urge to contribute in coming editions. Although not everybody washes with מים אחרונים after they complete their meals, we hope that all Maimonides students will read some of the thoughts in this publication. We would like to thank all who have contributed to this edition, and to thank especially Rabbi David Shapiro, Ms. Erica Schultz, and Ms. Leah Sarna '09 for their particular assistance.

The Editors,

Elliot M. Salinger and Avinoam J. Stillman

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עיתון זה, מיס אחרונים, נכתב לעילוי נשמת
גברת אילנה נוריאל ז"ל,
נפטרת יום כ"ד תשרי תש"ע.

אלי בעת תשיב הרוח

אוריד כגשם

דמעתי

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דרכיך ישעי

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לומר כמה נאה

אילן זה

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פירותיה

הקרבת שנת השמיטה

בטוב תשבע

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

Composed by David Rubinstein

**The Dark Side of the Moon:
An Astro-Metaphysics of קידוש לבנה**
Avinoam J. Stillman

“Every head is so dignified, every moon is so sanctified...”
—S. Z. Zimmerman

Although it is, of its very nature, recited monthly, the קידוש לבנה ritual is still cloudy to many of our coreligionists. In this article, an attempt will be made to illuminate one face of קידוש לבנה.

The primary source for קידוש לבנה is מס' סנהדרין מב.

א"ר אחא בר חנינא א"ר אסי א"ר יוחנן : כל המברך על החודש בזמנו כאילו מקבל פני שכינה . . . תנא דבי רבי ישמעאל : אילמלא (לא) זכו ישראל אלא להקביל פני אביהן שבשמים כל חודש וחודש דיים. אמר אביי : הלכך נימרינהו מעומד. מרימר ומר זוטרא מכתפי (אהדדן) ומברכי.

In this selection, ר' יוחנן compares the blessing of the new moon in its time to receiving the face of the שכינה, a term which for our purposes will be translated as the Divine Presence. A teaching is recounted from the Academy of ר' י' שמעאל that if Israel merits to receive the face of their Father in heaven only once a month, it is enough. אביי teaches that it is for this reason that the blessing is recited while standing.¹ Finally, it is related that מר זוטרא and מרימר would be carried outside on the shoulders of other people and would bless the Moon.

This passage emphasizes the notion of קידוש לבנה as an opportunity to “receive the face” of God. It shows how מרימר and מר זוטרא would go to the extent of being carried to perform קידוש לבנה—to “meet” the Almighty; an ecstatic mystical experience.

¹ See רש"י:

אמר אביי : הואיל ומקבל פני שכינה הוא מעומד בעי לברוכי מפני כבוד שכינה שהוא מקבל.

The Blessing found later on this דף, however, presents a somewhat different view of קידוש לבנה:

דאמר רב יהודה: ברוך וכו' אשר במאמרו ברא שחקים וברוח פיו כל צבאם; חוק וזמן נתן להם שלא ישנו את תפקידם. ששים ושמחים לעשות רצון קונם; פועלי אמת שפעולתן אמת. וללבנה אמר שתתחדש; עטרת תפארת לעמוסי בטן², שהן עתידין להתחדש כמותה ולפאר ליוצרים על שם כבוד מלכותו. ברוך אתה ה' מחדש חדשים.

This blessing is concerned primarily with an acknowledgement of God's renewal of creation, i.e., the constant orbits of the heavenly spheres and, specifically, the lunar cycle. Israel is to be renewed and redeemed, just as the moon waxes. The moon wanes, signifying our descent into exile, but, as the גמרא teaches,³ in the Messianic Age, the Moon will, as it were, be restored to its primordial quality with the Sun, and likewise, the Jewish people will be exalted and remain fully redeemed. The cyclical state of the Jewish people is alluded to beautifully through the metaphor of the Moon.

This understanding of the blessing corresponds to the commentary of רבנו מנוח on the הלכות ברכות י: טז-יז in רמב"ם where the רמב"ם records the blessing of קידוש לבנה.⁴

וצריך לברך ברכה זו מעומד וכו'. שהרי עדות והודאה היא על השם יתברך שהוא (כאן נשאר מקום חלק בכת"י), וכל עדות צריכה להיות מעומד.

Although our manuscript is incomplete, the core of this רבנו מנוח is still clear. He interprets the obligation to stand during קידוש לבנה as indication that it is an act of testimony. To what exactly it is a testimony according to רבנו מנוח is, sadly, a question we will have to ask אליהו הנביא. In the meantime, however, it seems plausible to say that testimony is to the creation of the natural order by God. רבנו מנוח thus interprets

² See ישעיהו מו: ג: רש"י.

³ See מסכת חולין ס:.

⁴ Kudos to Elliot M. Salinger for this reference.

אבי's requirement to stand as an outward observation of God's existence as Creator. This view differs from the inward encounter with the שכינה presented by "greeting the Divine Presence".

In the ceremony, the blessing is followed by, among other things, the aggadic exposition of קידוש לבנה. There is a tense transition from analytic to arcane. The active encounter with the Divine in the latter contrasts with the scientific blessing, the indirect witnessing to God's creation. This complementary duality reflects disparate strands in our religious thought.

The blessing, being the halachic manifestation of the ceremony, takes a more rationalistic, outward form. In this same legalistic vein, רבנו מנחם reads the obligation to stand as a legal act of testimony. The blessing posits that by observing our reality we can come to recognize the ultimate reality: God. This blessing loosely corresponds to the philosophical trend in Judaism. This view, which is exemplified best by the רמב"ם, the namesake of our school, is a pillar of Modern Orthodoxy. For Rav-Soloveitchik-type Jews such as us, living in the material world is integral to our connection with God. When we recite the ברכה on קידוש לבנה we see theology in astronomy.

In contrast we find the גמרא's discussion of לבנה קידוש as a vehicle for a palpable, inward, experience of God. Thus, אבי views standing as a sign of respect for our Father in Heaven, with Whom we are coming in contact through קידוש לבנה. Experiencing the Divine is a patently mystical aspect of our tradition. Instead of using קידוש לבנה only as an opportunity to remind ourselves of God's existence, לזיווג חז"ל bid us to attempt to feel the presence of God directly. Clearly this is easier said than done, but that makes it no less part and parcel of a fully realized קידוש לבנה.

Our external consideration of God in the ברכה gives way in the liturgy to קבלת פני השכינה, as we recite from the most personal of all ספרי תנ"ך, the love song of Israel and God, שיר השירים.

קול דודי הנה זה בא, מדלג על ההרים, מקפץ על הגבעות. דומה דודי לצבי או לעפר האילים, הנה זה עומד אחר כתלנו—משגיח מן החלונות, מציץ מן החרכים.⁵

Judaism is not a scientific religion, but neither is it by any means a supernatural one. Rational evaluation is of the essence, as seen in the absolute primacy of הלכה in Jewish life. This is represented by the conception of קידוש לבנה as a testimony to nature and its laws originating in God. However, a testimony to an event not experienced is inherently inadmissible! The Lakota medicine man Lame Deer wrote,⁶ “Jews who no longer think they could find God in a pillar of fire, why would they go on being Jews?” Although Lame Deer may not fully understand the meaning of the עמוד האש, he reminds us of an important notion. We shouldn’t forget that even though our הלכה is a logical, legal code, it came to us through supra-rational means. The cosmic light show of הר סיני doesn’t preclude the technicality of מסכת קינים. They are, in fact, entwined, and it is only because of revelation that we have ratiocination.

קידוש לבנה is multifaceted, and one of those facets reflects a dichotomy that permeates many aspects of our השקפה. Judaism is so expansive as to include both poetry and *pilpul*, often by the same author. To neglect either leaves an imbalance in our spiritual diets. Philosophy and mysticism share more common ground than many academics would have us believe. לקוטי מוהר"ן and the מורה נבוכים should not be mutually exclusive. In Judaism, we can only reach our greatest heights as עובדי השם with a synthesis of reason and emotion. Through the liturgy of קידוש לבנה, we see the interplay between astrophysics and metaphysics.

⁵ שיר השירים ב:ח-ט

⁶ See *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions*, Richard Erdoes, pg. 219

כח האהבה David Rubinstein

אהבה מובילה לפעולה. כתוב: "והיה בשמעו את דברי האלה הזאת והתברך בלבבו לאמר שלום יהיה לי כי בשרירות לבי אלך למען ספות הרווה את הצמאה."¹ לפי הפשט: מדובר כאן על אדם ששומע את דברי הקללה שאמר משה לעיל, ואינו פונה אליה כלל; אלא ממשיך בדרכיו הרעים. ומשמעות "והתברך בלבבו" הוא שמברך לעצמו את פעולותיו. וכן "ויאמר ה' אל לבו"² פירוש: שאמר ה' לעצמו.

וכתוב בספר "טעם ודעת" להרב משה שטרנבוך זצ"ל בשם הרב מנחם מנדל מקוצק זיע"א שפירוש מקרא זאת הוא שהאדם מתברך בלבבו, רצונו לומר: דרך לבבו; שלמרות שהולך בשרירות לבו ואינו מקיים את המצוות, מצדיק את דרכיו בעיניו—שאומר שלבבו פונה אל הקב"ה וכוונותיו לשם שמים הן, אלא שהוא לא שומר מצוות בכלל. ואדם כזה, מדגיש הרבי מקוצק, הוא "שורש פורה ראש ולענה"³ ומעיד עליו הכתוב ש"לא יאבה ה' סלח לו"⁴; וכל מיני פורעניות באות לעולם בגלל אדם כזה.

וקשה: שהרי אמרו חז"ל "הקב"ה ליבא בעי"⁵, רצונם לומר: שה' דורש את לבבינו ורוצה בכוונותינו; ואפילו לא עלתה בידינו עשיית מצוה שנתכוונו לעשות, הקב"ה ישמח על אשר לבבינו אליו. ואם כן, איזה חטא כל כך עצום יש באדם שאינו מקיים את המצוות אבל ליבו פונה אל ה'! לפי הבנת הרבי מקוצק את המלים "והתברך בלבבו"—הלא ישמח ה' גם עליו שהרי לבבו אל אלוקיו!?

ויש לתרץ על פי מה שפירש רש"י על הפסוק "ואהבת את ה' אלוקיך בכל לבבך"⁶ וז"ל: "עשה דבריו מאהבה. אינו דומה עושה מאהבה לעושה מיראה. העושה אצל רבו מיראה—כשהוא מטריח עליו, מניחו והולך לו"⁷ עכ"ל. וכאן רש"י מלמד אותנו יסוד חשוב מאד בעבודת ה': שמצווה אותנו הקב"ה לעבוד אותו יתברך מתוך אהבה, מפני שהאהבה עצמה היא המביאה לידי פעולת וקיום המצוות. והעיקר הוא להיות "עושה מאהבה", שמתוך רוב אהבתו אדם נמשך לעבוד את ה' בתמימות ושלמות.

¹ דברים כט: יח

² בראשית ח: כא

³ דברים כט: יז

⁴ שם פסוק יט

⁵ סנהדרין קו:

⁶ דברים ו: ה

⁷ רש"י שם

ולכן : אדם שמצדיק בלבבו את דרכיו הלקויות בעבודת ה' , ומתברך
לאמר "שלוש יהיה ליי" , אינו אלא טועה; ואין לבבו אל ה' כלל. שאילו
היה לבבו באמת אל ה' , מתוך זה שיש בו אהבה היה לבבו מובילו לידי
קיום המצוות (ומי שניסה ונאנס ולא הצליח לקיים מצוה , מיישבים
דעתו בזה ש"הקב"ה ליבא בעי.").

יהי רצון שנזכה להיות מאלו שעושים מאהבה; ושנזכה להיות מאלו
שאהבתם מביאם לידי עבודת ה'; ושנזכה להשפיע על אלו שעדיין
עובדים מתוך יראה לשרת את בוראנו מתוך אהבה. אמן , כן יהי רצון!

חול המועד on תפילין Wearing Eitan Kahn

The מצווה of תפילין is an essential part of Jewish life. It is one of the first מצוות that begins our day, and they are donned practically every day. After we are done with שחרית, they are carefully wrapped up to keep them safe. We are reminded of this מצווה at least twice every day during the שמע as we say: "וקשרתם אותם לאות על ירך והיו לטטפת בין עיניך".¹ And, of course, those who wear תפילין become accustomed to the red marks on their arms as a result of the pressure of the leather on the skin. Since תפילין is such an integral part of our religion, it is always most strange when we do not put on תפילין, like during שבת and יום טוב. However, there is one time during the year when donning תפילין comes under much scrutiny—חול המועד. There are many opinions regarding whether or not we put on תפילין during these days. The following will present the most widely followed opinions found in the אחרונים regarding this topic.

תפילין Refraining from wearing

רבי יוסף קארו states in the ערוך² that it is forbidden to put on תפילין on חול המועד. He holds that חול המועד is a sufficient אות to make us פטורים from תפילין³ since on פסח there is the prohibition to eat חמץ and on סוכות there is the מצווה of sitting in the סוכה. Therefore, Sephardic Jews do not wear תפילין on חול המועד. Interestingly, the גר"א⁴ agrees with רבי יוסף קארו, as does the whole Brisker tradition, including the Rav.⁵ For this reason, many students at Maimonides do not don תפילין on חול המועד even though most Ashkenazic Jews do.

¹ דברים ו: ח

² או"ח לא: ב

³ See מנחות דף לד

⁴ ביאור הגר"א: או"ח לא: ב

⁵ See, for instance, א: קיח-קכ, שיעורים לזכר אבא מרי ז"ל,

Wearing תפילין

This opinion is that of the רמ"א,⁶ who writes that this is the universally accepted practice of Ashkenazic Jewry. The widely accepted מנהג, however, is that those who do wear תפילין remove them before the recitation of הלל since it has a higher festive nature than during other parts of שחרית.

Wearing תפילין without making the ברכות

Since this מחלוקת is particularly intense, the משנה ברורה⁷, following earlier opinions, suggests making the following mental condition before donning tefillin: "If I am obligated to don תפילין, then I intend to fulfill my obligation; but if I am not obligated to don תפילין, my doing so should not be considered as fulfilling any obligation." He holds that the ברכות should, therefore, not be recited. The benefit of this שיטה is that one would avoid the serious transgressions of (1) not donning תפילין and (2) making a לבטלה ברכה.

For the Maimonides community, Rabbi Shapiro has advised that since all three opinions are valid, one should follow the tradition of his father.

⁶ רמ"א : או"ח לא: ב

⁷ לא: ח

The Proper Emotional Response to עבודת ה'

Elliot M. Salinger

As religious Jews, all our actions, thoughts, and feelings—from the moment we rise in the morning until we drift into slumber at night—are dictated by the הלכה. Ideally, every act we do should be לשם שמים, meaning that the totality of our existence is dedicated to עבודת ה'. Therefore, it behooves us to understand the correct perspective towards this awesome goal.

Let us work backwards. We shall begin with a formulation of the Rav, then go on to the רמב"ם. The Rav was of the opinion, based on many classical sources, that the emotional response to certain מצוות is a *sine qua non* for its fulfillment.¹ A summary of the Rav's philosophy on this issue can be found in the following passage, taken from his *Worship of the Heart: Essays on Jewish Prayer*, pp. 16-17:

“The Halakhah is distrustful of the genuineness and depth of our inner life, because of its vagueness, transience and volatility. Therefore, it has introduced, in the realm of the experiential norm, concrete media through which a religious feeling manifests itself in the form of a concrete act. For instance, the precept of rejoicing on a festival—simchat Yom Tov—is realized through a double activity: experiencing the redeeming, uplifting and inspiring joy, on the one hand, and conforming to the external cultic standard of bringing shelamim offerings (sacrifices in which the owners partake) and feasting, on the other. The specific physical performances are prescribed by the Halakhah as the external symbol of the exalted mood.

¹ I refer to the Rav's famous distinction between מעשה המצוה, the concrete actions involved in carrying out a מצוה, and קיום המצוה, its essential fulfillment. However, this is not the place to elaborate on the halachic ramifications of this distinction. For an excellent treatment of the subject, see Rabbi David Shapiro's *Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik on Pesach, Sefirat ha-Omer, and Shavu'ot*, ch. 3 (pp. 53-67). It can be found in the *Beit Midrash* in our school library.

“The same is true of avelut, the norm commanding one to mourn for one’s deceased relatives. A mourner who has complied scrupulously with the ritual of avelut but remained unresponsive to and unaffected by his encounter with death—if the passing of his next of kin did not fill him with gloom—has failed to fulfill the precept of mourning. At the same time, a mourner who neglects the observance of the externals is derelict in his duty, even though he lived through the horror and dismay of coming face to face with nihility.

“The outer action required by the Halakhah in this group of experiential precepts is dramatic in nature. One does not just act; he acts something out. The dominant theme of the performance is a great exciting story. The action ... tells a tale of the human mind and heart, of something wondrous or tragic that occurred in the deep recesses of the I. It is filled with eagerness on the part of the doer to unburden himself of an emotional load, pressing on his frail personality. The action is vehement and fervent, and in its rush and earnestness we see the consuming passion, a soul ... making a heroic effort to express the inexpressible.

This concept means that the emotional corollary to the concrete מצוה action is an integral aspect of the religious experience. In light of this teaching, our original question now becomes: what should our reaction be towards general religious life? What emotion should it generate? The רמב"ם has an answer to our question.

הלכות לולב ח: טו

השמחה שישמח אדם בעשיית המצוה ובאהבת הקל שצווה בהן עבודה גדולה היא. וכל המונע עצמו משמחה זו ראוי להיפרע ממנו, שנאמר: "תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב." ² וכל המגיס דעתו וחולק כבוד לעצמו ומתכבד בעיניו במקומות אלו חוטא ושוטה. ועל זה הזהיר שלמה ואמר: "אל תתהדר לפני מלך." ³ וכל המשפיל עצמו ומקל גופו במקומות אלו הוא הגדול המכובד, העובד מאהבה. וכן

² דברים כח: מז

³ משלי כה: ו

דוד מלך ישראל אמר: "ונקלותי עוד מזאת והייתי שפל בעיני." ⁴ ואין הגדולה והכבוד אלא לשמוח לפני ה', שנאמר: "והמלך דוד מפזז ומכרכר לפני ה'" ⁵ וגו'.

This רמב"ם makes abundantly clear that the appropriate emotional response we should have to performing מצוות is that of שמחה. However, now we must ask: What is the fundamental nature of this שמחה? For the answer to this question we will first look at רמב"ם regarding שמחת יום טוב, the happiness which we are commanded to experience on the holidays.

הלכות שביתת יום-טוב ו:כ

כשאדם אוכל ושותה ושמוח ברגל—לא ימשך ביין ובשחוק וקלות ראש, ויאמר שכל מי שיוסיף בזה ירבה במצות שמחה. שהשיכרות והשחוק-הרבה וקלות-הראש אינה שמחה, אלא הוללות וסכלות. ולא נצטוונו על ההוללות והסכלות אלא על השמחה שיש בה עבודת יוצר הכל; שנאמר: "תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב מרב כל." ⁶ הא למדת שהעבודה בשמחה. ואי אפשר לעבוד את השם לא מתוך שחוק ולא מתוך קלות ראש ולא מתוך שיכרות.

This רמב"ם is a little more specific than the last one regarding his definition of the correct type of שמחה we are commanded to experience (either on יום טוב or in general) in that here he specifies what this שמחה is not. It is not a gastronomic, drunken, or frivolous שמחה created by levity. Rather, it is a שמחה which stems from our joy of worshipping the Almighty.

Now we shall look at the מגיד משנה on the רמב"ם in הל' which we previously saw for a clear definition of this שמחה:

מגיד משנה על הל' שופר סוכה ולולב ח:טו

השמחה שישמח אדם בעשיית מצוה וכו'. דברי רבינו מבוארים בכמה מקומות בגמרא. וב"במה מדליקין" אמרו: "ושבחתני אני את

⁴ ש"ב ו:כב

⁵ Ibid טז

⁶ דברים כח:מו

השמחה⁷—זו שמחה של מצוה.⁸ ועיקר הדבר הוא שאין ראוי לו לאדם לעשות המצוות מצד שהן חובה עליו והוא מוכרח ואנוס בעשייתן, אלא חייב לעשותן והוא שמח בעשייתן. ויעשה הטוב מצד שהוא טוב, ויבחר באמת מצד שהוא אמת. ויקל בעיניו טרחן, ויבין כי לכך נוצר— לשמש את קונו. וכשהוא עושה מה שנברא בשבילו, ישמח ויגיל; לפי ששמחת שאר דברים תלויים בדברים בטלים שאינם קיימים. אבל השמחה בעשיית המצוות ובלמידת התורה והחכמה היא השמחה האמיתית. וזהו ששלמה בדרכי מוסרו שיבח שמחת החכמה ואמר: "בני: אם חכם לבך ישמח לבי גם אני."⁹

Along with identifying the שמחה described by the רמב"ם as "שמחה של מצוה" as found in a few places in the מגיד¹⁰ גמרא, the מגיד explains its fundamental nature and gives practical suggestions as to how one can attain it. He says that one should not obey מצוות just because one has to do so, nor should one treat them as a burden that one is desperate to cast off his or her shoulders. Rather, one must carry out the מצוות as Divine commands that are absolutely good and absolutely true since this is the purpose for which one was created. By doing this, the מגיד משנה says, we will attain this state of true שמחה based on rejoicing in performing the Divine will and not a שמחה stemming from filling fleeting physio-biological desires.

⁷ קהלת ח: טו

⁸ שבת ל:

⁹ משלי כג: טו

¹⁰ The following are the other sections of גמרא to which the מגיד משנה refers but does not quote:

שבת ל:

...ללמדך שאין שכינה שורה לא מתוך עצבות ולא מתוך עצלות ולא מתוך שחוק ולא מתוך קלות ראש ולא מתוך שיחה ולא מתוך דברים בטלים, אלא מתוך דבר שמחה של מצוה.

פסחים קיז:

...ללמדך שאין שכינה שורה לא מתוך עצבות ולא מתוך עצלות ולא מתוך שחוק ולא מתוך קלות ראש ולא מתוך שיחה ולא מתוך דברים בטלים, אלא מתוך דבר שמחה של מצוה.

ברכות לא:

ת"ר: אין עומדין להתפלל לא מתוך עצבות ולא מתוך עצלות ולא מתוך שחוק ולא מתוך שיחה ולא מתוך קלות ראש ולא מתוך דברים בטלים, אלא מתוך שמחה של מצוה.

This מגיד משנה has to be the foundation of our experience of Judaism. If one goes through a שבת without rejoicing in understanding the cosmic significance of the day, then one has not properly experienced שבת. This is also true if one is aware of the importance and meaning of the day but is not careful in the איסור מלאכה or simply spends all of שבת feasting. In practicing and experiencing Torah, we must follow the הלכה to the letter while constantly being cognizant of its spirit. By doing these two things in the manner described by the מגיד משנה, we will automatically be filled with an exalted sense of שמחה. This is not an easy goal to attain, but one for which we should all nevertheless strive.

May we all be זוכה to serve the רבונו של עולם with a perfect sense of שמחה with the arrival of בימינו במהרה צדקינו, אמן כן יהי רצון!

לשם שמים Eating Rabbi Avraham Preil

The Talmud informs us that whereas in the times of the בית המקדש the מזבח would provide atonement for us, nowadays—when there is no בית המקדש—the table upon which we eat our meals provides atonement. How are we to understand this? In what manner do our tables—or our meals—provide atonement?

A standard way of understanding this is that our tables provide atonement through our inviting poor people to dine with us. This is certainly parallel to some of the sacrifices, particularly the קרבן חטאת. The כהנים, often among the poor of Israel inasmuch as they don't have a portion in the land, eat from the קרבן חטאת in order for the בעלים to receive atonement.

However, what about all those times we eat meals and don't have guests, let alone poor ones? Furthermore, this explanation only provides a similarity to those sacrifices from which others partake; what about burnt-offerings? And if the underlying factor is צדקה, why doesn't the Talmud simply state that in the absence of the מזבח giving money to the poor offers atonement?

It would seem that the Talmud is imparting to us a much deeper lesson. A sacrifice is only valid if it's offered with the proper intention. Any sacrifice brought with the intention to eat it beyond the prescribed time limit or outside the mandated location is invalid. Similarly, the sacrifice must be offered for the sake of that particular sacrifice (לשמה). For example, a קרבן שלמים which is slaughtered עולה is not a valid sacrifice. These are universal concepts which apply to all sacrifices.

Furthermore, when one goes to the בית המקדש to offer a קרבן we can well imagine the overwhelming awe one must have felt. This is especially true when we consider the explanation of the רמב"ן that bringing a קרבן is supposed to

engender feelings of closeness to the **רבונו של עולם**.

Additionally, just as **אברהם אבינו** davened at the time he substituted a ram for **יצחק** that everything happening to the ram should be considered as if it were happening to his son, so, too, when bringing a sacrifice one is supposed to envision that he is the one being sacrificed. We're supposed to feel such strong feelings of love for **ה'** that we are willing to die, if need be, for His sake.

By extension, the Talmud's statement is teaching us that when we eat meals it must be done with the proper intention. Just as the act of offering a **קרבן** is unacceptable if devoid of correct thoughts, our eating becomes a meaningless endeavor if not done **לשם שמים**. If we eat in order to be healthy and to better enable ourselves to serve **ה'**, we can transform an otherwise mundane activity into a **מצוה**. My dear former students surely remember the emphasis we placed on the concept of **בְּלִמְעוּשׁ יְהִי לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם**, *everything* one does should be for the sake of serving **ה'**. This is a tremendous—and difficult—challenge. When we put on **תפילין** or search for **חמץ** it is patently obvious we are doing it to serve **ה'**, for we wouldn't be doing it otherwise. Even if **כוונה** is lacking when performing these **מצוות** there is nevertheless an implied intent. But when it comes to things we enjoy doing, such as eating or other pleasurable experiences, there is no such implied **כוונה**; you either have it or you don't. And since we enjoy these activities, more often than not **ה'** is, **לצערנו**, the furthest thing from our minds. Imagine how different these experiences would be, as well as our subsequent activities, if we put a little bit of thought into them and did them **לשם שמים**.

Our eating should also be accompanied with **יראת שמים** and **אהבת ה'**. The act of eating should never be one of wanton gorging and gluttony. It should be done with a sense of purpose and meaning. It should be done in a dignified manner, mindful of the fact that we are in the presence of **ה'**. The blessings we make before and after partaking of food help accomplish this:

Before eating we recognize that everything belongs to ה' and we ask His permission, as it were, to eat His food. To do otherwise, the Talmud tells us, is akin to מעילה, violating the holiness of an object which is dedicated to ה'. This helps foster a certain reverence in our encounters with the physical world. It serves as a constant humbling reminder that the world and everything contained therein—even those objects we think of as our possessions—aren't truly ours.

After eating we should be overcome with feelings of love and gratitude to ה' for providing us numerous tasty and nutritional foods with which to sustain ourselves. This should impact on how we conduct ourselves when we leave the table. If we have internalized these lessons properly then our tables surely will provide us with the necessary כפרה as we try to navigate more successfully through life.

A Surprising Lesson from פרשת וירא

Yoni Nouriel

פרשת וירא is tested numerous times in אברהם אבינו. Included among them was/were the test/s of sending away ישמעאל and הגר from the tent of אברהם, as they were detrimental to יצחק's spiritual health.

The משנה in מסכת אבות teaches that “God tested אברהם with ten tests....” The מפרשים offer their respective insights as to how the tests should be enumerated. Just as there is a tradition that there are תרייג מצוות in the Torah, but the גדולים differ as to what is considered a מצווה or not, so too, here, do we have a tradition that אברהם was tested with ten tests, but different opinions exist as to what is to be categorized as a test and what is not. We shall focus on two approaches: those of רשב”ם and רש”י.

רש”י writes that sending ישמעאל and הגר was one combined test. רשב”ם, on the other hand, is of the opinion that נסיון number eight was sending away הגר, and number nine was sending away ישמעאל; hence they are two different נסיונות. We may wonder why רש”י and רשב”ם differ in this area; why didn't רשב”ם list הגר and ישמעאל as one test, and שרה's death as the ninth—as, for example, רש”י and רבינו יונה do? What different lessons can we learn from them?

Let us attempt to answer these questions by introducing additional sources and even more questions.

The מפרשים—commenting on ט-יא—conclude from a close examination of the term “מצחק” that ישמעאל had committed the three “major sins” of idolatry, adultery and murder. Furthermore, according to חז”ל ישמעאל also argued with יצחק over the ירושה (inheritance), saying to יצחק, “I am the first born, so I should have the inheritance.” ישמעאל also went to the field to shoot arrows at יצחק with the intent to murder, and then pretended that his “bad aim” was merely an “accident”. ישמעאל also pretended to serve God, when it is

clear that he didn't (this was long before ישמעאל performed תשובה).

שרה, as presented by the language of the פסוק, “saw” the danger of allowing ישמעאל to live with יצחק, an ancestor of the “Chosen Nation,” so שרה told אברהם to send ישמעאל and הגר away. The text reads, “This matter was *greatly distressing* in the eyes of אברהם.” All the מדרשים describe dramatically how terrible ישמעאל was, and yet אברהם is not only distressed, but *greatly* distressed! How can we possibly understand this?

Fortunately, this is easily resolved. The מדרש says that ישמעאל pretended to serve God in front of אברהם. Furthermore, when he would go out into the field and intentionally aim his bow at יצחק, it was reported to אברהם that the near-death by his arrows was an *accident*. In fact, it can be easily inferred from the text itself—“ותרא שרה”—[upon seeing the terrible things ישמעאל was doing] “שרה saw”; only שרה saw ישמעאל's dangerous activities, not אברהם.

We learn a valuable lesson from this. If אברהם אבינו gave the benefit of the doubt to ישמעאל, the forefather of a dangerous enemy of בני ישראל, so too should *we* give the benefit of the doubt to everyone else!

This observation sheds light on our earlier question: why the difference between רש"י and רמב"ם? We can learn from both מפרשים how deep one's מסירות נפש (devotion to a particular goal) must reach.

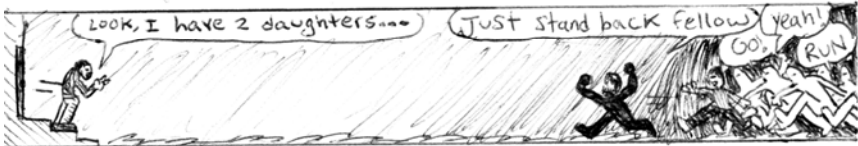
רש"י relates the overall blow of sending away loved ones. אברהם had no idea of the evil ways of ישמעאל, and therefore loved ישמעאל dearly (after all, he was his son). If God's will is for us to lose a loved one, even a son and wife, we must obey. אברהם and הגר are classified as one test because they were both cherished by אברהם, yet he had to send them both away. We see not only the extent to which one should obey the word of God, but also the benefit of doing so. As a result of אברהם following God's orders, he became the father of the Jews, the “Chosen Nation” for whom the entire universe was created.

ישמעאל introduces a new dimension. He lists אברהם and הגר as two different tests. Obviously, הגר was loved by אברהם, or else sending her away would not have been a test. But what did הגר do wrong? The מדרש says that הגר stopped her idolatrous practices when living with אברהם! For what reason, then, was הגר driven away? A possible answer may be that הגר herself had in fact not done anything to deserve being sent away from home, but she had to leave because of ישמעאל. ישמעאל wasn't mature at that time, as noted by the מדרשים and later מפרשים; so הגר had to be a mother and watch over ישמעאל. We see a direct connection between ישמעאל and his mother, as ישמעאל is called (in כ"א: ט) "the son of הגר..." It would have been easy for הגר to live with אברהם in a cool tent eating delicacies all day, but instead she had to care for her only son in the heat of the day in the middle of the desert with no food.

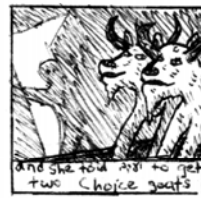
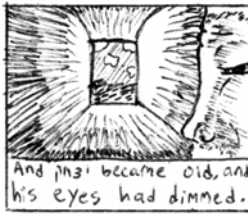
We now come to the realization of the מסירות נפש of parents, mothers in particular; they forfeit so many luxuries solely for the benefit of their children! It would be much easier for both the husband and wife to not have children, to not spend money on them, to not feed extra mouths. But they surrender all of this, running into a "desert" so that we can wake up in the morning and be happy that we are alive. Nothing that we do would be possible without the everlasting devotion of our parents and the daily sacrifices they make for us, including davening to God tearfully on our behalf as הגר did for ישמעאל.

One of the lessons, then, that emerges from וירא פרשת is the religious imperative to be מכיר טוב to our parents.

Ari Green



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