

בס"ד

Shluchim Sermons



Vayikra

Why Sponsor a Kiddush?

How is this week's parsha reflected in modern-day Judaism?

Where do we get the idea that for every milestone we reach, be it a bar mitzvah or a regular birthday we must throw a big party, a gala banquet or at least a Kiddush in shul?

In this week's parsha we begin to read all about the korbanot, the sacrifices that the Jews used to bring in the Temple.

The Prayer

The first offering we read about is the "Olah."

The "Olah" offering was brought by anyone who felt a desire to become closer to G-d. This offering was entirely burnt upon the altar. No one would partake of its meat, for it was reserved completely for G-d. In addition to individuals who brought an Olah offering, the community would sacrifice the Tamid, a Korbon Olah twice every day, once in the morning and again in the afternoon to strengthen the bond between G-d and His people.

Today, when we have no Temple and cannot offer sacrifices, how does a Jew go about deepening his connection to G-d?

Our sages say, "In place of offerings we have prayers." When a Jew wishes to draw nearer to G-d he needs simply to pray. But, when a Jew prays his prayers must reflect the "Olah." Just as the "Olah" was entirely burnt upon the altar, one must be completely absorbed in his

prayer, and just as the owner of the sacrifice didn't partake of even the smallest amount, so too one must not think of himself or his own needs during prayer. Instead, one should concentrate only on his desire to be close to G-d and to strengthen his connection with Him.

The Kiddush

The next offering we read about is the "Shlamim."

There were different types of "Shlamim." When G-d performed a miracle for someone, for example, if someone was cured from a terminal illness or if he won the lottery or even if their softball team won the championship, that person would bring a "Todah" or "Thanksgiving offering."

Another form of "Shlamim" was the "Chagigah" or "Festival offering." This offering was obviously sacrificed on the Jewish festivals.

Unlike the "Olah," of which nobody ate anything, only small parts of the "Shlamims" were burnt on the altar, the parts that people wouldn't usually eat anyways. The rest was divided between the Cohanim and the owner who would share their portion with family, friends and the poor, to be eaten within the walls of Jerusalem. That's where the "Shlamim" gets its name from; it brings Shalom to so many people. Everyone - G-d, the owner and his family, the Cohanim and their families, the family and friends and the poor - gets to enjoy it.

Today instead of the "Todah" offerings we prepare a "Se'udat Hoda'ah" or "Thanksgiving feast." There we express our thanks to G-d for all of the kindness He has shown us.

This is essentially the source for our feasting in honor of every milestone. Had we lived in the times of the Temple we would have offered sacrifices to G-d as thanksgiving for allowing us to reach these milestones. Today we invite our friends to a Kiddush in shul to say a l'chaim and thank G-d for His kindness. Whether it's a baby naming, a

Bar mitzvah or a Golden anniversary, every occasion is celebrated by thanking G-d together with friends and family. And it's clear to see that just like the actual "Shlamim" a kiddush brings peace to the community. At a Kiddush even those that were grumpy during the services suddenly come alive with joy!

The same applies to Jewish festivals. Whereas we would have eaten the meat of "Shlamims" in the good old days, today we still have the mitzvah of eating meat and we make festive meals, rejoicing with G-d on every festival.

The Sin Offering

The next offering we read about is the "Chatat" or "Sin offering."

Those who unintentionally committed a sin brought this offering as atonement. This offering is somewhere between the "Olah" and the "Shlamim." Half of the offering was burnt upon the altar like an "Olah" but not the whole thing — because the owner is still quite far from G-d. The second half was divided among the Cohanim. As part of the atonement, the owner didn't get any, for this was not an occasion to be celebrated by feasting with friends.

Today, when we are not in our land, how do we atone for an accidental sin? The prophet says, "Redeem your sin through charity." That means that as soon as a Jew realizes that he has done something wrong he must immediately repent and give Tzedakah - for a sin is a sign of selfishness, "but I wanted to..." and therefore only by giving a part of himself to another can one truly achieve atonement. As the Alter Rebbe writes in Tanya, "Today those who feel awe of the word of G-d give a lot of charity, for what would a man not give for the sake (the atonement) of his own soul!"

They say that in the Yeshiva when the boys were taught this lesson the rabbi added, "What if someone does not have enough money to

redeem himself from his sin?" He paused for a minute and then said, "If you can't afford it don't sin!"