

PARASHAT PINCHAS

"Each and Every Month, and Each and Every Shabbat"

By Rav Amnon Bazak

A. ON SHABBAT DAY, TWO LAMBS

Chapters 28-29 of our parasha deal with the public sacrifices offered throughout the year. This section opens with a description of the daily sacrifice, continues with the special sacrifice for Shabbat, for Rosh Chodesh, and for the festivals according to their order: Pesach, Shavuot, Rosh Chodesh of the seventh month (Rosh ha-Shana), Yom Kippur, Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret. There are some interesting differences between the sacrifices of the various festivals, but I wish to focus in this shiur on the sacrifices of Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh, and to compare them to the other "additional" (mussaf) sacrifices.

The difference between the Shabbat sacrifice and that of the other special days is clear and obvious. On Shabbat there is a requirement only of "two lambs" for a burnt offering, in addition to the lambs offered as a daily sacrifice. In contrast, on the other festivals - including Rosh Chodesh - the burnt offering is much more extensive, involving seven lambs (on Sukkot - fourteen), a ram (on Sukkot - two), a bull (on Rosh ha-Shana, Yom Kippur and Shemini Atzeret) or two (on Rosh Chodesh, Pesach and Shavuot) and a male goat as a sin offering. What is the reason for this difference?

B. SHABBAT AS A "HOLY CONVOCATION"

The answer to our question is to be found in a parasha that is directly related to the parasha of the sacrifices in Sefer Bamidbar, namely, the parasha of the festivals in Vayikra 23 (parashat ha-mo'adot). This parasha lists the festivals in the same order as our parasha does: Shabbat, Pesach, Shavuot, Rosh Chodesh of the seventh month, Yom Kippur, Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret (only Rosh Chodesh is missing, and we shall discuss this below). Moreover, in the parasha of the festivals in Vayikra, the Torah mentions, in connection with each one of the festivals, the expression "You shall offer an offering by fire (isheh) to God,"[1] and in general (except for Shavu'ot) we are not told what this "offering by fire" is. Thus the Torah creates a connection between the parasha of the festivals in Vayikra and our parasha, which comes mainly to elaborate on this "offering by fire."

However, the parasha of the festivals illuminates the difference between Shabbat and the other special days. That parasha opens with the introduction:

"Speak to Bnei Yisrael and say to them, The festivals of God which you shall declare as holy convocations - these are My festivals." (23:2)

It then immediately lists Shabbat:

"Six days shall labor be performed, and on the seventh day - a Shabbat of Shabbats, a holy convocation; you shall do no manner of labor, it is a Shabbat to God in all your dwelling places."

Following this, the Torah again states:

"These are the festivals of God, holy convocations, which you shall declare at their appointed times. In the first month, on the fourteenth of the month at twilight it is Pesach to God."

Why does the Torah repeat this introduction? The Ramban answers:

"It appears to me that the words, 'God's festivals which you shall declare as holy convocations - these are My festivals' - refer to those that are then listed: 'In the first month,' etc. Therefore the Torah repeats, 'These are the festivals of God' - because it interrupted with Shabbat. The phrase, 'The festivals of God which you shall declare as holy convocations - these are My festivals,' concerns 'labor of work,' but Shabbat must be observed as a Shabbat of Shabbats regarding any type of labor whatsoever, for this warning concerning Shabbat is repeated several times. For it is not written in the second section,[2] 'God spoke to Moshe saying,' as it is concerning every other festival, since the first utterance was the command concerning the festivals, but **THE TEXT REMINDS THEM OF SHABBAT IN ORDER TO REMOVE IT FROM THE CATEGORY OF THE FESTIVALS**, not in order to clarify its commandments and teachings."

In the Ramban's view, then, Shabbat is not included in the "festivals of God," but rather is mentioned in this chapter because of the feature that is common to it and the festivals - all are "Shabbat of Shabbats." [3] Further on, Ramban brings two proofs that Shabbat is not defined as a festival:

Concerning each festival, as we have mentioned, the Torah instructs, "You shall make an offering by fire to God" - an expression that appears nowhere in connection with Shabbat. At the end of the chapter we read, "**THESE ARE GOD'S FESTIVALS** which you shall declare as holy convocations, to make an offering by fire to God; a burnt offering and a meal offering, a sacrifice and drink offerings, each day and its allocation, **ASIDE FROM GOD'S SHABBAT** and aside from their gifts" (verses 37-38). This implies that Shabbat is not counted among God's festivals.

We may add to the above that while the initial introduction reads only "The festivals of God which you shall declare as holy convocations - these are My festivals," the second appearance of the introduction adds a word: "These are the festivals of God, holy convocations, which you shall declare **AT THEIR APPOINTED TIMES** (be-mo'adam)."

Thus, Shabbat has an intermediary status in between regular days and festivals. On the one hand, both Shabbat and the festivals have the status of "Shabbat shabbaton," meaning, according to the Ramban,

"that all should be called and gathered together to sanctify it, for it is a commandment for Israel to gather in God's house on a day of convocation to sanctify the day in public, with prayer and

praise to God in festive clothes. Their custom among you should not be like the custom of regular days, but rather you shall make them a convocation of holiness, to change, through [special] food and clothing, the profane into the holy."

On the other hand, Shabbat is not one of God's festivals. The reason for this difference is understandable: the word "mo'ed" (translated here as "festival") really means "time" - an appointed time. All festivals fall at a certain time, on a certain date. This date pertains to various aspects of human life - the agricultural cycle (for the three pilgrim festivals), history (Pesach and Sukkot), or religion (Yom Kippur).[4] In the establishment of this date Bnei Yisrael play a significant role: "You shall declare them in their appointed times;" it is Bnei Yisrael who sanctify time.[5] Shabbat, in contrast, was established and has existed since the six days of Creation; it repeats itself every seven days, and it is unrelated to any specific date. Shabbat is a reminder of Creation, and it expresses God's absolute mastery and ownership of the world. "An offering by fire to God" is therefore sacrificed on the festivals, but not on Shabbat.

Now we can understand why Rosh Chodesh is not mentioned in Vayikra 23. After all, Rosh Chodesh is not included within the two definitions of the chapter. Firstly, it is not defined as a "Shabbat shabbaton," and it lacks the status of a "holy convocation." Secondly, although it is connected to the dimension of date, its date has no special significance. This being so, it is also not called a "mo'ed" (appointed time), as we see from the verse: "On the day of your joyfulness AND ON YOUR FESTIVALS AND ON YOUR NEW MOONS you shall sound the trumpets" (Bamidbar 10:10).

C. MUSSAF (ADDITIONAL) SACRIFICE FOR SHABBAT

Let us now return to our parasha. How does this difference between the character of Shabbat and the character of the festivals find expression in the various types of sacrifices? We may point to three differences between depiction of the Shabbat sacrifices and the festival sacrifices.

a. On Shabbat there is no special sacrifice beyond that which is offered every day, except for the fact that aside from the daily burnt offerings, we are also to sacrifice two more lambs. The daily sacrifice reflects the concept of Divine service in everyday routine - "One lamb you shall prepare in the mo, and the other lamb shall you prepare at twilight." This dimension - stability and routine - is a central component in our Divine service.[6] It is possibly for this precise reason that the daily sacrifice is the only one of all the sacrifices prescribed in the Torah that is called "My sacrifice," and this may also explain why the parasha describing the daily sacrifice differs from all the rest of the chapter, in that it is formulated in the singular ("ta'aseh" - "you shall prepare"), rather than in the plural. The same tone of regularity exists in the parasha dedicated to Shabbat: "The burnt offering of each Shabbat on its Shabbat." These two sacrifices therefore express Divine service that is above time: they are offered continuously every day, and every Shabbat. This is in contrast to the other festivals, which express a breakaway from routine, and therefore they entail a multiplicity of different types of sacrifices.

b. As mentioned, Shabbat was established by God and has existed since the six days of Creation, while God's festivals are related to the status of Bnei Yisrael and are even established by them. This difference finds expression in the fact that concerning the festivals mention is made of the

relationship to Bnei Yisrael: "And at the beginning of YOUR MONTHS," and "on YOUR festivals" (29:33), as well as in the expression that repeats itself so many times - "a holy convocation TO YOU" (28:25, 26; 29:1,7,12). This expression appears nowhere in connection with Shabbat or the daily sacrifices.

c. On regular days and Shabbat, only a burnt offering is specified, as opposed to the sacrifices on the festivals, which always include also a "male goat for a sin offering." The burnt offering expresses distance between God and man, insofar as man - even the kohanim - has no part of the sacrifice; it is burnt in its entirety to God. The festivals bring man into closer relation to God, and inasmuch as everyone sins, there is also a need for the sin offering.

D. THE BURNT OFFERING OF EACH MONTH

What remains is for us to discuss the special status of Rosh Chodesh. As stated, no mention is made of Rosh Chodesh in the parasha of the festivals in Vayikra 23, since it is neither a "Shabbat shabbaton" nor an "appointed time." Therefore it is surprising, to some extent, to see Rosh Chodesh appearing together with the other festivals in our parasha, with its sacrifices identical to those offered on Pesach and on Shavu'ot.

It is for this reason, it seems, that Ibn Ezra proposes a very interesting explanation for the appearance of Rosh Chodesh in our parasha:

"'And on the beginning of your months' - R. Moshe ha-Kohen ha-Sefaradi explains that this refers to [Rosh Chodesh of] the month of Nissan, for thus it is written: 'It is the first for you' (Shemot 12:2), and later on the Torah says, 'This is the burnt offering of each month at its time' (14) - that they should do thus every month, therefore the Torah adds, 'of the months of the year' (14). This interpretation is correct." [7]

In his view, then, the parasha is referring specifically to the Rosh Chodesh of the month of Nissan. This specific Rosh Chodesh is of critical significance, since it marks the beginning of the year for the entire Torah, while the other months derive their significance from it.

Even if the Ibn Ezra's interpretation seems overly innovative, we may still draw from his words the answer to our question. Indeed, Rosh Chodesh has no special significance by virtue of its date. However, Rosh Chodesh expresses the very existence of a calendrical system, whose entire structure is dependent on the existence of months, defined by when they start - at the birth of the moon.

Thus Rosh Chodesh appears in our parasha in between the regular days and Shabbat, on one hand, and the festivals, on the other. This dual aspect of Rosh Chodesh is expressed in the verses. Since it is dependent on time, it is more like the festivals, and therefore its sacrifices are the same as those offered on Pesach and Shavu'ot. However, its dimension of regularity resembles more closely the weekdays and Shabbat, and therefore the language used to describe it is reminiscent of the formulation for Shabbat: "the burnt offering of each month at its month of the months of the year" (28:14).

The point of similarity between Rosh Chodesh and Shabbat appears in various contexts in Tanakh, from which we learn that over the course of the generations Rosh Chodesh has attained a status similar to that of Shabbat from the point of view of its laws or customs.

When the "Shunamite woman" hurries off to Elisha, her husband asks: "Why are you going to him - today is not [Rosh] CHODESH, nor SHABBAT" (Melakhim II 4:23). This teaches us that on Rosh Chodesh and on Shabbat there was a popular custom to visit the prophet. And concerning the future, we read: "And it shall be EACH AND EVERY MONTH and EACH AND EVERY SHABBAT that all flesh will come to bow down before Me, says God" (Yishayahu 66:23). It should be noted that these expressions "each and every month" and "each and every Shabbat" have their source in our parasha.

The dual aspect of Rosh Chodesh finds expression in the prophecy of harsh rebuke at the beginning of Sefer Yishayahu (1:13-14): "Do not continue to bring vain offerings; they are an incense of abomination to Me. ROSH CHODESH AND SHABBAT and the calling of convocations I cannot bear sin in the midst of assembly. YOUR NEW MONTHS AND YOUR FESTIVALS My soul hates, they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them." Rosh Chodesh is joined together with Shabbat in the first verse, and with the festivals in the second. What this teaches us is that on Rosh Chodesh, too, there was a situation of "calling of a convocation," something like the "convocation of holiness," even though the Torah makes no mention of it in connection with Rosh Chodesh.[8]

In the prophecy of Amos (8:4-5), mention is made of the charlatans waiting to return to their crooked dealings at the end of Shabbat: "Hear this, those who swallow up the poor and destroy the destitute of the land, saying, When will ROSH CHODESH pass, that we may sell corn, AND SHABBAT, that we may make available the wheat, making the 'efa' small and enlarging the 'shekel' and falsifying the scales of deceit?" This verse implies that on Rosh Chodesh it was even customary to prohibit labor.[9]

A special significance attached to this issue appears in the prophecy of Yechezkel concerning the service in the Temple of the future. First the prophet notes (46:1-3) the special nature of Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh: "SO says the Lord God: The gate of the inner court facing eastwards will be closed during the six weekdays, and on SHABBAT it shall be opened, and on ROSH CHODESH it shall be opened And the people of the land will bow down at the entrance to that gate on Shabbat and on Rosh Chodesh, before God." Further on, Yechezkel describes how, in the future, the sacrifice for Rosh Chodesh will be very similar to the sacrifice offered on Shabbat: "The burnt sacrifice that the prince will offer to God on Shabbat [will consist of] six lambs without blemish and a ram without blemish And on Rosh Chodesh: a young bull without blemish and six lambs and a ram, all without blemish." Both on Shabbat and on Rosh Chodesh the prince is to offer six lambs and a ram, and the difference between the two offerings consists of a single bull. While the future offering of Shabbat represents an increase, the offering of Rosh Chodesh will be less in the future: six lambs instead of seven, and a single bull instead of two.

It seems, then, that the status of Rosh Chodesh remains as complex today as ever.

NOTES:

[1] On Pesach (verse 8), on Shavuot (verse 18) and on the first day of the seventh month (verse 25), on Yom Kippur (verse 27) and on Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret (verse 36).

[2] I.e., in the command concerning Pesach, verse 4.

[3] In Ramban's view, this point stands at the foundation of Chazal's statement in the Sifra (Emor, parasha 9): "But what has Shabbat to do with the festivals? This comes to teach us that anyone who desecrates a festival is considered as though he desecrated Shabbat, and anyone who observes the festivals properly is considered as though he observed both the festivals and Shabbat."

[4] I discuss the significance of the first day of the seventh month in an article entitled, "From a Day of Joy to a Day of Judgment," archived at:

<http://www.vbm-torah.org/roshandyk/hol1-2.htm>.

[5] See Berakhot 49a: "Israel sanctifies the festivals." Rashi explains: "These times are dependent on the court sanctifying [i.e., declaring] the new moon on the basis of eye-witness reports, but Shabbat is sanctified and exists in and of itself." See also Beitza 17a:

"A festival that falls on Shabbat Rabbi says: One concludes [the middle blessing of the Amida], 'Who sanctifies Shabbat, Israel and the appointed times.'

A sage recited in front of Ravina: 'Who sanctifies Israel and the Shabbat and the appointed times.'

He said to him: 'Do Israel sanctify the Shabbat? Is not Shabbat sanctified by itself? Rather, say: Who sanctifies Shabbat, Israel and the appointed times.'"

[6] In the Sifra, parashat Kedoshim, we read:

"'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' (Vayikra 19:18) -

Rabbi Akiva taught: This is a great principle in the Torah.

Ben Azzai taught: 'This is the book of the generations of Adam' (Bereishit 5:1) - That is an even greater principle."

Rav Amital often quotes the addendum to this Midrash, which appears at the beginning of "Ein Yaakov" (its source is not clear; see Torah Sheleima Bereishit 5:1, p. 345 note 1):

"Shimon ben Pazi taught: We find a verse that encompasses even more; it is: 'You shall prepare the one lamb in the morning.'

Another Rabbi stood up and said: The law is in accordance with Ben Pazi, as it is written, 'As all that I show you, the form of the Mishkan' (Shemot 25:9)."

This addendum teaches of the great importance of routine and regularity, and the importance of this message for our generation cannot be overstated.

[7] See in this regard also Abarbanel.

[8] We made mention above of Ramban, who maintained that part of the meaning of the expression "a convocation of holiness" included "making it different with other foods." Indeed, in the parasha "Tomorrow is the new moon" (Shemuel I 20) we find that there was a custom of holding a special festive feast on Rosh Chodesh. This custom is also codified in halakha (Shulhan Arukh OC 419:1).

[9] The prohibition of labor on Rosh Chodesh exists also in halakha: the law codified in note 8 above refers to the custom for women not to perform labor on Rosh Chodesh.

(Translated by Kaeren Fish)