

Parashat Tzav – the Torah of drawing close

Vayikra 6:2

צו את אהרן ואת בניו לאמר זאת תורת העלה הוא העלה על מוקדה על המזבח כל הלילה עד הבקר ואש המזבח תוקד בו:

Command Aaron and his sons thus: This is the ritual of the burnt offering: The burnt offering itself shall remain where it is burned upon the altar all night until morning, while the fire on the altar is kept going on it.

Rav A.Y. Kook, On Sacrifice, from To the Perplexed of the Generation ch.10 p.72

So long as human morality sees it necessary, or at least right, to take animal life for its physical needs, it is fitting that the more essential purpose of existence, which is to teach inner awareness of the obligation to acknowledge the good God, come through the offering of animals. This practice will continue during this time, and morality will rise to the point of revulsion with the flesh of any life. In truth, it is proper that we be awakened to the aspect of judgement and the reality cruelty in the world for a certain period in order that the human spirit not be degraded through the moral failings and stumbling blocks which exist in society. "...the sinner who is one hundred years old shall be cursed." (Isaiah 65:20) Therefore the awakening which the offerings cause, at least in those involved in them, will be to the need for judgement in the world. When the moral state of humanity is lifted up to that point where there will no longer be any need for guarding it, then the Great Court which sits in the place which God will choose (see Deuteronomy 12:5), will delve deep into the Torah over the question of whether it is permissible at that point to sacrifice any animal to God when we have reached the point that no one could will this at all because of their moral consciousness, as it says "...you shall slaughter it so that it should be acceptable for you." (Leviticus 22:29)

Sforno on Vayikra 6:2

צו את אהרן זאת תורת העולה. אחר שהגיד מעשה הקרבנות אמר התורה הראויה לכל אחד ואחד, אשר בה רמז חלק עיוני בהם. ואין ספק כי יש הבדל רב בין בני אל חי בפעולותיהם וכוונותיהם, דומה להבדל אשר בין מיני הקרבנות...

After the Torah had informed us about most of the sacrifices and how they were to be offered, the Torah now refers to the specific "Torah" pertaining to each of these voluntary burnt offerings. We pointed out already that different people who feel the need to offer this sacrifice are motivated by quite different considerations. The variety of sacrificial offerings provided for by the Torah corresponds roughly to the variety of human personalities and the considerations motivating their actions...

Jeremiah 7:21-23

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲלוֹתֵיכֶם סִפּוּ עַל־זִבְחֵיכֶם וְאָכְלוּ בָשָׂר: כִּי לֹא־דִבַּרְתִּי אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם וְלֹא צִוִּיתִים בְּיָוֶם הַזֶּה [הוֹצִיא] אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם עַל־דַּבְּרֵי עוֹלָה וְזָבַח: כִּי אִם־אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה צִוִּיתִי אוֹתָם לֵאמֹר שְׁמַעוּ בְּקוֹלִי וְהִנֵּיתִי לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים וְאַתֶּם תְּהִיוּ־לִי לְעַם וְהִלַּכְתֶּם בְּכָל־הַדְרֹךְ אֲשֶׁר אֶצְוֶה אֶתְכֶם לַמַּעַן יֵיטֵב לָכֶם:

Thus said the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel: Add your burnt offerings to your other sacrifices and eat the meat! For when I freed your fathers from the land of Egypt, I did not speak with them or command them concerning burnt offerings or sacrifice. But this is what I commanded them: Do My bidding, that I may be your God and you may be My people; walk only in the way that I enjoin upon you, that it may go well with you.

Malachi 3:1-4

הִנְנִי שֹׁלֵחַ מַלְאָכַי וּפְנֹה־דַרְדָּר לְפָנַי וּפְתָאֵם יָבֹוא אֶל־הֵיכָלוֹ הָאֵדוֹן | אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם מְבַקְשִׁים וּמִלֵּאדָּה הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם תִּפְצִיֵם הַגִּה־בָּא אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת: וְמִי מְכַלְכֵּל אֶת־יָוֶם בּוֹאוֹ וְמִי הֵעֲמִיד בְּהַרְאוֹתָו כִּי־הוּא פָּאֵשׁ מְצַרֵּף וּכְבָרִית מְכַבְּסִים: וְיִשָּׁב מְצַרֵּף וּמַטְהַר כִּסּוּף וְטָהַר אֶת־בְּגָדֵי־לוֹ וְנִזְקַק אֹתָם בַּזָּהָב וּכְפָסָף וְהָיוּ לִיהוָה מַגִּישֵׁי מִנְחָה בְּצִדְקָה: וְעָרְבָה לִיהוָה מִנְחַת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַם כִּימֵי עוֹלָם וּכְשָׁנַיִם קַדְמֹנִיּוֹת:

Behold, I am sending My messenger to clear the way before Me, and the Lord whom you seek shall come to His Temple suddenly. As for the angel of the covenant that you desire, he is already coming. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can hold out when he appears? For he is like a smelter's fire and like fuller's lye. He shall act like a smelter and purger of silver; and he shall purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they shall present offerings in righteousness. Then the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem shall be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of yore and in the years of old.

Vayikra 8:2-3

קַח אֶת־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶת־בָּנָיו אִתּוֹ וְאֶת הַבְּגָדִים וְאֶת שֵׁמוֹן הַמִּשְׁחָה וְאֶת | פֶּר הַסִּטָּאת וְאֶת שְׁנֵי הָאֵילִים וְאֶת כָּל הַמִּצֵּוֹת: וְאֶת כָּל־הַעֲדָה הַקְהֵל אֶל־פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד:

Take Aaron along with his sons, and the vestments, the anointing oil, the bull of sin offering, the two rams, and the basket of unleavened bread; and assemble the whole community at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.

Vayikra Rabba 10:9

וְאֶת כָּל הָעֵדָה הַקְהֵל [אל] פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד, אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂשִׁים רְבֹוא וְאֶת אֹמֵר אֶל פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד, אֲלֵא זֶה אָחַד מִן הַמִּקְוֹמוֹת שֶׁהִחֲזִיק מוֹעֵט אֶת הַמִּרְבֵּה, (דְּכֹנֶתָה) בְּרַאשִׁית א, ט: (יְקוּוּ הַמִּים מִתַּחַת הַשְּׂמִים אֶל מְקוֹם אָחַד, בְּנֹהֵג שֶׁבְעוֹלָם אָדָם מִפְּנֵה כָּלִי מֵלֵא לְתוֹךְ כָּלִי רִיקוֹן, אוֹ שְׂמָא כָּלִי מֵלֵא לְתוֹךְ כָּלִי מֵלֵא, הַעוֹלָם כָּלוּ מִים בְּמִים וְאֶת אֹמֵר יְקוּוּ הַמִּים, אֲלֵא זֶה אָחַד מִן הַמִּקְוֹמוֹת שֶׁהִחֲזִיק מֵעַט הַמִּרְבֵּה.

“...and assemble the whole community at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.” R’ Elazar said: there were 600,000 men who made up Israel, and you say that they all gathered at the entrance to the tent of meeting?! Rather, this is one of the places where something small contained something very large. In a similar fashion it says “Let the water below the sky be gathered into one area, that the dry land may appear.” (Bereshot 1:9) The custom of the world is that one pours a full vessel into an empty one, is it possible to pour a full vessel into one which is already full?! The whole world was covered with water and it says ‘let the water be gathered...’ This is one of the places where something small contained something very large.

BONUS SOURCE

Rav A.Y. Kook, from Olat Reiyah

“Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to God as in days of old and former years.” An animal offered on the altar finds its ideal expression through being elevated as a sacrifice to God. Since it lacks consciousness, it can only arrive at this elevation through an act which is done to it – the offering of its blood and fat, which are the prime residence of the soul, on the altar. Not so a human being, who with a discerning heart can conceptualize the act of sacrifice and draw near to God through consciousness. But in the time to come, the outpouring of consciousness will be so profuse that it will penetrate even to the animals, “They shall neither do evil nor destroy on all My holy mountain, for the land shall be full of knowledge of the Lord as water covers the sea.⁴⁵ Then the meal offering, made from the vegetable world, will be pleasing to God as in days of old and former years.

וערבה לד' מנחת יהודה וירושלים כימי עולם וכשנים קדמוניות. בעלי החיים, הקרבים למזבח, חל בהם עצמם התקון ע"י התעלותם להיות זבח לד', שכיון שאין בהם דעת אינם מגיעים להתעלות זו כי-אם במעשה הנעשה בהם בהעלות לד' דם וחלבם, שהם עיקר מכון הנפש. משא"כ האדם, אשר בלבו המבין ישכיל את מעשה הקרבן ויתקרב אל ד' בדעתו. אבל לעתיד לבא שפע הדעת יתפשט ויחדר אפילו בבעלי-החיים, "לא ירעו ולא ישחיתו בכל הר קדשי, כי מלאה הארץ דעה את ד'", וההקרבה שתהיה אז של מנחה, מהצומח, תערב לד' כימי עולם וכשנים קדמוניות .