

Parshat Pinchas 5775

As we are now in the period of The Three Weeks, it seems apt to focus on an aspect of the parashah that relates to the daily avodah of the Bet HaMikdash. At the end of this week's parashah, we read two chapters that describe the additional (musaf) offerings that were brought on Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh and Chagim. Since, by definition, they were to be offered as an addition to the 'tamid', the regular daily offering, the Torah first describes that basic offering.

'And you shall say to them: This is the fire offering that you are to offer to Hashem: male lambs in their first year, unblemished, two a day, as a continual elevation offering. The one lamb shall you make in the morning and the second lamb shall you make in the afternoon...' (28:3 – 4)

Rashi comments on the phrase 'two a day' ('shenayim layom') as follows: 'This may be understood according to its plain sense ('kifshuto'), ie two lambs for each day. But in the main ('ikaro') it is intended to teach that they should be slaughtered at a spot opposite the day - the morning continual offerings at the west and that of the evening at the east of the rings.'

Rashi states that the words 'shenayim layom' are to be translated literally: two lambs for each day. Why, then, does he offer another interpretation? His difficulty lies in the fact that the next pasuk goes on to say '*The one lamb shall you make in the morning and the second lamb shall you make in the afternoon...*' This would then render the earlier phrase 'two a day' as unnecessary! Another understanding must, therefore, be found and hence the word 'yom' must not be understood in its ordinary sense but rather as denoting 'the sun'. Only when the sun is out is it daytime! When Rashi speaks of slaughtering the lambs 'at a spot opposite the day', we now understand him to mean 'opposite the sun'.

We know that the daily offerings were prescribed as a means of weaning the people from sacrificing daily to idols. The Torah tells us: '*So that the Bnai Yisra'el will bring their feast offerings...to Hashem to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting to the Kohan; and they shall slaughter them as feast peace offerings to Hashem...They shall no longer slaughter their offerings to the demons after whom they stray.*' (Vayikra 17: 5 – 7) Because of its universal influence on human affairs, many nations offered sacrifices to the sun. In worshipping the sun, they faced it both in the morning when it rose and in the afternoon when it set. The 'drash' brought by Rashi informs us that the

'tamid' offering was to be sacrificed 'against the sun-god'. In the morning, when the sun is in the east, the Kohen took the animal to the west of the Bet HaMikdash. In the evening when the sun is in the west, the Kohen slaughtered the animal in the east, in the opposite direction of the sun. We now understand that in the words 'shenayim layom' is set forth the real purpose ('ikaro') of this command – to sacrifice with their backs to the sun in order to wean the people away from the popular worship of the sun-god. The rings that Rashi refers to are the twenty-four that were fixed into the pavement of the floor of the Bet HaMikdash. Six rows of four rings, near the outer Mizbe'ach, were used to shackle the animal in order to prevent it from moving suddenly while being slaughtered.

The commandment to offer the 'tamid' is already familiar to us as it had been given with the Inauguration or Consecration ('miluim') offerings of the Mishkan (Shemot 29:38 – 42). The identical question raised by Rashi in this week's parashah could have been asked when the tamid commandment first appeared in Sefer Shemot. Why did Rashi say nothing about 'shenayim layom' in the earlier text?

Ha'amek Davar notes that the earlier passage in Tetsaveh ends by emphasizing that the Ohel Mo'ed will be the place where Hashem will 'meet' with Moshe and the nation and that it will be the place where Hashem will rest His Presence. In the later passage in Pinchas, there is no mention of the Ohel. However, it does describe the tamid as '*My (ie Hashem's) food*' (28:2), a reference that does not appear in the earlier passage. Based on these differences, Ha'amek Davar comments that the tamid offering in the desert had the unique function of cementing the closeness between Hashem and the Bnai Yisra'el, whereas the tamid offerings in the Land of Israel were to bring prosperity to the nation, since 'food' is understood to be a metaphor for wealth.

The distinction made by Ha'amek Davar helps us to see why Rashi delayed his comment on 'shenayim layom'. In Parashat Pinchas, preparations are being made for entry into the Land. The Malbim explains that had Moshe entered the Land, he would have had the power to nullify the urge toward idol worship. Instead, Yehoshua was chosen to lead the nation but did not have this same power as Moshe. Hashem thus tells Moshe that because he would not enter the Land, he must therefore urge the nation to observe the daily tamid offering and to heed its message not to trade the true G-d for the sun-god.