



Parsha Perspectives RABBI AMI NEUMAN

ויקרא אל משה...

"And G-d called to Moses." (Leviticus 1:1)

If you drive by a construction site, you can't help but notice that it looks more like an advertising billboard than a work in progress. Company A is doing the actual building, while Company B is the architect. Every window proclaims that it is the product of Company C, and every beam, every fixture calls out the name of its manufacturer. While all this self-advertising may not create the most attractive view, we can certainly understand why the companies involved want to advertise their services.

Imagine, then, if a construction company is contracted to build a beautiful palace. Upon completion, the king is taken on a grand tour. He is thrilled with the magnificent architecture, the enormous rooms, the grand stairways, the impressive columns — until he looks more closely and notices that every beam, every fixture, bears the name of the individual who created that particular item. The king would be greatly disappointed that his royal palace was being used as a P.R. campaign. It would be safe to assume that he would be so angry with the builder that he would never want to see him again!

The Ksav Sofer tells us that when G-d told Moses to build the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*), He gave very specific instructions as to how to build it, down to precise dimensions and exact locations of the items therein, all to create a dwelling place for G-d's presence in this world.

Such a work of art would be the perfect way for the craftsmen to proclaim their expertise! Everyone would know that Mrs.

Seamstress sews the most even stitches in the world, and Mr. Carpenter builds the sturdiest furniture ever created. And yet, not only were there no logos adorning each piece in the Tabernacle, the Torah doesn't even tell us who made what! The building of the Tabernacle was not meant to bring glory to the builders, but to the One for Whom it was built. Every inch of wood, every yard of fabric used in the building of the Tabernacle had G-d's name stamped on it, so that every beam and nail was clearly intended towards serving G-d. In so doing, Moses taught us that to build a sanctuary for G-d, we must have Him in mind from the very beginning, and carry that through.

The Medrash teaches us that once G-d saw that Moses fulfilled his instructions to the letter, He summoned him into the Tabernacle, to join Him there in His holy place.

We build many edifices. It is clear that our synagogues must be built with G-d in mind — and so, too, should our homes! Our homes serve as our own,

small sanctuaries. When we design the service of G-d into the foundations, we invite Him to join us there and make it, too, into a holy place.

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WORD of the WEEK סמך

Many times in the weekly *parsha* we find that the person who offers a sacrifice must place his hands on its head and confess to G-d before the sacrifice is offered. The verb used for the placing of hands is סמך — *samach*. Similarly, when Moses confers authority to Joshua and places his hand on his head, the verb used is סמך. The word *samach* — to support, or to be close to — also means to deputize and to rely upon. When one places one's hands on the sacrifice, one is relying on its effectiveness to bring one close to G-d, and one is also, in a sense, deputizing the animal to stand in for the sinner. The term is also used to refer to סמיכה — rabbinic ordination, because the process of conferring authority, which began with Moses and Joshua, continues through the granting of rabbinic ordination (Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch).

Table Talk FOR DISCUSSION AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE

The end of this week's *parsha* describes various laws pertaining to someone who deceitfully withholds another person's money. One who is entrusted with a possession and denies receiving it, or has found an item and now denies having it in his possession, has sinned against G-d (Leviticus 5:21-23).

- נ) Why does the verse say that one who denies possession has sinned against G-d, rather than against *man* — specifically, the man who rightfully owns the item?
- ב) If the deceiver goes so far as to swear falsely, he must pay the full value of the item he denied plus a surcharge equivalent to one-fifth of the item's worth (Leviticus 5:24). As the loss to the rightful owner was not affected by the fact the deceiver swore falsely, why is he the beneficiary of the one-fifth penalty? How does paying a penalty to the damaged party address his compounded sin of swearing falsely?

A QUESTION FOR THE RABBIS

The Torah commands the Jews to bring salt together with every offering on the altar: "On all your offerings you shall bring salt" (Leviticus 2:13). *The Code of Jewish Law (Orach Chaim 167:5)* rules that since the table upon which we eat is in place of the altar and our food is in place of the sacrifices, we should have salt on the table at every meal. The *Mishnah Berurah* explains that when we share our food with the needy, we receive atonement as though we brought an offering in the Temple, and when we eat with the intent to strengthen ourselves to serve G-d, then our food is like a sacrifice. Since salt is a preservative, we put it on the altar as a sign that our covenant and relationship with G-d is permanent and will never "decay," and to remind us that without the "salt" of the service to G-d we will in fact "decay" (*Chinuch 119*). Later authorities were asked if one can use sugar instead if one does not have salt. Many authorities permit this, since sugar also acts as a preservative and could have been used on the altar in the absence of salt (*Responsa Halachot Ketanot 218, Responsa Divrei Chaim Yoreh Deah 1:25*).

HEY, I NEVER KNEW THAT

The book of Leviticus begins with and details the laws of the sacrifices. It opens with the statement, "A person who brings from among you, an offering" (Leviticus 1:2). The Sforno understands this to mean that every sacrifice must be preceded by the giving of oneself over to G-d, as implied by the phraseology of the verse. It should have said, "A person from among you, who brings an offering." Instead it states, "A person who brings from among you, an offering." This sounds as if the offering itself is "from among you." The Sforno explains that first one must repent one's sin and confess, in other words, offer himself to G-d, and only then may he bring an offering. He goes on to say that G-d has "no desire for fools who bring sacrifices without humbling themselves beforehand." Similarly, the Talmud (Chullin 5a) understands that when the verse states "from among you" it means to say "from among you, but not all of you," and thus excludes an apostate or an unrepentant evildoer from bringing an offering.



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