

## Finding the *Shalom* in the *Shelamim* (*Vayikra*)

Among the various sacrifices listed in *Parshat Vayikra* is the '*shelamim*' (*Vayikra* 3:1-17) which is an offering brought by an individual to express thanks to God.

In general, '*shelamim*' is translated as 'peace offering' because, as Rashi explains (*Vayikra* 3:1) while quoting the *Torat Kohanim*, 'the [*shelamim*] bring peace into the world', or alternatively, because 'there is peace in [the *shelamim*] for the altar, the kohanim and the owner' – meaning that the sacrifice is divided by three, expressing a fair and peaceful distribution.

Interestingly, the *Zohar* (*Vayikra* 11:1) understands the *shelamim* differently, noting that it represents peace 'both for the upper and lower realms.' In fact, the *Zohar* goes so far as to say that the unique expression of peace of the *shelamim* is so special that, 'of all the offerings, none are so beloved to the Holy One, Blessed is He, as the *shelamim*.' This itself may be why both *Targum Onkelos* and *Targum Yonatan* refer to the *shelamim* as 'offerings of holiness'.

However, as Rav Zalman Sorotzkin explains (in his *Oznayim LaTorah*, *Vayikra* 3:1), while the *shelamim* is a special and holy sacrifice, 'the *shelamim* is of lesser holiness' (*kodshim kalim*). This is because, 'it may be eaten even outside the Temple Courtyard' and anywhere in the city of Jerusalem by any person (see Mishna *Zevachim* 5:7). Given this, why, asks Rabbi Sorotzkin, should the *shelamim*, which is of lesser sanctity, be so beloved to God?

In answering this question, Rav Sorotzkin explains that among the various categories of *shelamim* is the thanks-offering brought by those who have been spared from a life-threatening situation. 'Generally, when an individual feels that God has performed wonders for them, they are moved to bring a peace-offering of thanks... and they then invite a large gathering of people and joyfully recount and share with them the many wondrous deeds which God performed for them. Our Sages often spoke about the special value of thanks, pointing out that the other offerings are brought because of sins: the sin-offering, the guilt-offering, and even the elevation-offering... As the *Midrash* explains, "Therefore the Holy One, Blessed is He, says: "It is more beloved to Me than all other offerings". King David exclaims, "He who brings a thanks-offering will honour Me" (*Tebillim* 50:23) – both in this world and the next' (*Midrash Tanchuma*, *Tzav* 7).

What this teaches us is that the *shelamim* helps bring us closer to God and to each other. Yes, the *shelamim* may be less 'holy' as it can be eaten anywhere in the holy city. However, the reason for this is to ensure that as many people as possible can partake in the *shelamim*. So though it technically has lesser sanctity as a sacrifice, it is also more beloved by God.

Having mentioned *Parshat Vayikra* and the *shelamim* offering, it seems fitting to reference the extra *Maftir* which we will be reading this Shabbat, *Parshat Zachor*, which reminds us that while we value life and pursue goodness in this world, there are others who venerate death and who wish to bring destruction to the world.

As *Parshat Zachor* makes clear, we don't forget those who have sought to harm us, and we won't forgive those who have caused us harm. At the same time, what we learn from the *shelamim* is the value of doing what we can to see good in the world, to thank God for the blessings we have been bestowed, and to pursue peace wherever possible.

*Shabbat Shalom & Purim Sameach!*