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DAF KESHER

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DVAR TORAH SERACH BAT ASHER: RISING ABOVE DEATH

As He counts the People of Israel and lists the families of each tribe, Hashem singles out Serach, the daughter of Asher. The verse “וּשְׁם בַת אֲשֵׁר שֵׁרַח - The name of the daughter of Asher was Serach” (Bamidbar 26:46) caught the attention of the commentators:

Rashi says she was mentioned here simply because she was still alive. Asher's daughter, Serach, was also listed among the seventy who came to Egypt (Bereishit 46:17). Since she lived through the entire Egyptian exile and an extra forty years in the desert, she must have been extremely old. Serach was very likely the oldest woman in the Camp of Israel.

One of the Tosafot's commentaries on the Chumash (Baalei Hatosafot al Hatorah on our verse) suggests that the verse is worded “**The name** of the daughter ...” to indicate that she was well-known for her piety and good deeds; she had a great name.

Perhaps, based on a number of aggadic passages, we can enrich our understanding of how Serach's old age and righteousness gave her a special position among the People of Israel and Jewish history. Through Chazal's eyes, we see Serach crop up in a number of important places, even where she is not mentioned by name:

1) One of the Targumim on our verse (Bamidbar 26:46) says: “While still alive, Serach was taken up to the Garden of Eden by 60,000 angels as a reward for telling Yaakov that Yosef was still alive.” In the ancient collection of midrashim, Sefer Hayashar, the following amplification appears: When Yosef's brothers returned from Egypt, they wanted to inform Yaakov that Yosef was alive, and do it in a way that he would truly believe and not be shocked to death. Serach was a special, talented, and wise girl, who knew how to play the kinor (a string instrument). The brothers asked her to sit before her grandfather Yaakov, and play the kinor while singing to him, “My uncle Yosef is still alive; he rules over Egypt; and he didn't die.” She sang this several times, and Yaakov enjoyed the words and music. Through his joy, Yaakov's Ruach Hakodesh returned and Hashem revealed to him that Yosef was truly alive. Yaakov blessed Serach: “Death should not take hold of you, for you brought back life to me.”

2) The People of Israel had a secret tradition for identifying the true redeemer from the Egyptian exile: He would be the one bearing a message that Hashem remembered His Nation – using the expression פִּקְדוֹ ה'. Yaakov passed on this secret to Yosef, Yosef to his brothers (including Asher), and Asher to his daughter Serach. When Moshe came, it was the elderly Serach who remembered this and was able to identify him as the true redeemer (Shemot Rabbah 5:13).

3) On the day of the Exodus, Moshe searched for Yosef's coffin so he could fulfill the People of Israel's promise to bury Yosef in the Land of Israel; but Moshe couldn't find it. Serach was the only one who remembered where Yosef was buried (sunk in a metal casket in the Nile) and told Moshe (Mechilta on Beshalach, Introduction).

4) General Yoav was searching for Sheva son of Bichri, who had rebelled against King David. Sheva hid out in a city named Avel, and Yoav besieged the city (II Shmuel 20:15). Serach, says the Midrash, was the “wise woman” who convinced Yoav that they should spare the city. “I heard from Moshe Rabbeinu himself that before you besiege a city you should first try to make peace with them,” she said. “Why do you want to destroy an entire city in Israel?” Through speaking with Yoav it came out that he and his army were really only interested in Sheva, who deserved the death penalty anyways. The people of Avel handed over Sheva and the city was saved (Bereishit Rabbah 94:9).

There are threads connecting these different Midrashim, these different appearances of Serach bat Asher at key points in Jewish history. The song Serach had sung to her grandfather not only brought her his blessing that she should transcend death, it also typified her life. She lived with a “Yosef is still alive” consciousness. She held on to the **פקד פקד יפקד** tradition because she believed that a redeemer would come to Israel and she would have to identify him. And she knew that the same redeemer who bore the message that G-d remembered His People would also bring Yosef’s coffin back to the Land of Israel – and the coffin’s location was etched in her mind. Through her, Yosef reunited with his father, and through her Yosef could, like Yaakov, be buried in his beloved Land of Israel. During the siege of Avel she passes on the following message to David’s general: “**אנכי שלמי אמוני** – [simply translated as] I am of the peaceful and trustful ones of Israel” (II Shmuel 20:19). Rashi quotes Bereishit Rabbah: I brought together trustworthy ones together. I connected Moshe with Yosef, and I told Yaakov that Yosef is alive.” Serach teaches us about the eternal life of the Jewish People: “Yosef is still alive.”

SOURCE GUIDE: SHABBAT'S SIMPLE MUSAF BY RABBI AVRAHAM FISCHER

Shabbat is such an auspicious day – it is central to Judaism, is highlighted many times in Tanach, and its halachot are treated with severity and seriousness – yet its Musaf sacrifice is extremely modest. Why is the Musaf sacrifice of Shabbat a mere two lambs? This source guide builds on answers offered by the Abravanel and the Baalei Hatosafot in their commentaries on the Chumash.

A. Shabbat and Its Musaf Offering

While the Israelites are encamped in the plains of Moav east of the Jordan, we learn about those sacrifices that would be offered only after they would cross over into the Land of Israel. These are the additional sacrifices (**מוספים**) of all the special occasions of the year, the first of which is Shabbat:

<p>1. Bamidbar 28:9-10 (9) And on the Shabbat day, [offer] two lambs_of the first year without blemish, and two tenths of fine flour as a meal offering mingled with oil, and its libation. (10) This is the burnt offering of each Shabbat, in addition to the continual burnt offering and its libation.</p>	<p>במדבר כח:ט-י (ט) וּבַיּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת שְׁנֵי כֶבֶשִׂים בְּגִי שָׁנָה תְּמִימִם וּשְׁנֵי עֶשְׂרִינָיִם סֹלֶת מִנְחָה בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן וְנִסְכּוֹ. (י) עֹלֶת שַׁבָּת בְּשַׁבְתּוֹ עַל עֹלֶת הַתְּמִיד וְנִסְכָּהּ.</p>
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Few themes are as central to the Torah as Shabbat. And few are as ubiquitous. It is found in every book of the Torah:

- Bereshit – 2:1-3
- Shemot – 16:22-30, 20:8-11, 23:12, 31:12-17, 34:21, 35:1-3
- Vayikra – 19:1-3, 23:3, 24:1-9, 26:2
- Bamidbar – 15:32-36, 28:9-10
- Devarim – 5:12-15.

The prophets and sages too exhort the people about the sanctity of Shabbat:

- Yeshaya – 56:1-7, 58:13-14, 66:23
- Yirmiyahu – 17:19-27
- Yechezkel – 20:10-13, 46:1-5
- Nechemia – 9:13-14, 10:29-34, 13:16-23.

At least 6 of the 613 commandments are directly related to Shabbat:
See Sefer HaMitzvot of the Rambam, Positive Commandments 41, 154, 155 and Negative Commandments 320, 321, 322. Violation of Shabbat can even carry the death penalty.

In view of all this, it is surprising how modest is the Shabbat Musaf offering: **two lambs of the first year without blemish, and two tenths of fine flour as a meal offering mingled with oil, and its libation.** Why isn't the Shabbat sacrifice more elaborate?

B. Shabbat and The Number Two - Abravanel

Perhaps, rather than thinking of the sacrifice as meager, we should focus on the significance of the number two. After all, there are two dynamically interdependent dimensions of Shabbat. There is the enhancement of Shabbat through positive acts such as Kiddush, candle lighting and Havdalah, which are all included in the verse in the first version of the Decalogue:

<p>2. Shemot 20:8 Remember (זכור) the Shabbat day to sanctify it.</p>	<p>שמות כ:ח זְכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ.</p>
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Then there is the protection of the sanctity of Shabbat through refraining from melachah, exemplified by the parallel verse in the second version of the Decalogue:

<p>2. Devarim 5:12 Observe (שמור) the Shabbat day to sanctify it</p>	<p>דברים ה:יב שְׁמוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ ...</p>
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Both elements of Shabbat, זכור and שמור, are crucial, as reflected in the paired elements in the Shabbat Musaf. Abravanel (Harav Don Yitzchak Abravanel, זצ"ל, 1437-1508), attributing the above explanation to unnamed "recent commentaries," nevertheless rejects it. This is because, as the Sages taught (Shavuot 20b), Hashem uttered זכור and שמור at Sinai simultaneously, so these pronouncements cannot reflect the dual nature of Shabbat.

Instead, says Abravanel, Shabbat's duality is found in the two pivotal events that it recalls:

<p>2. Abravanel's Commentary on Bamidbar 28:9-10 One, that it is a reminder of the Creation of the universe and its generation, as it says in the commandment, "For in six days Hashem made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed" (Shemot 31:17). And the second, that it is a reminder of the Exodus from Egypt, as it says, "And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Hashem your G-d took you out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore Hashem you G-d has commanded you to celebrate the Shabbat day" (Devarim 5:15).</p>	<p>פירוש אברבנאל על במדבר כח:ט-י הא' להיותו זכר לבריאת העולם וחדושו כמ"ש במצותו, "כי ששת ימים עשה ה' את השמים ואת הארץ וביום ה' שבת וינפש" (שמות לא:יז). והב' שהוא לזכר יציאת מצרים כמ"ש, "וזכרת כי עבד היית בארץ מצרים ויוציאך ה' אלקיך משם ביד חזקה ובזרוע נטויה ע"כ צוך ה' אלקיך לעשות את יום השבת" (דברים ה:טו).</p>
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The origin of this idea is in Rambam's Guide of the Perplexed (III 31). Abravanel adds that the two lambs (כבשים) of Shabbat symbolize Hashem's two instances of subjugation (כבש):

<p>2. Abravanel's Commentary on Bamidbar 28:9-10 One corresponds to the Creation, when the Holy One, blessed be He, subdued the world and bounded it by His Creation. And the second lamb corresponds to the Exodus from Egypt when He conquered Pharaoh and Egypt "with trials, signs and wonders" (Devarim 4:34).</p>	<p>פירוש אברבנאל על במדבר כח:ט-י הא' כנגד הבריאה הראשונה שהק"בה כבש את העולם והגבילו בבריאתו. והכבש השני כנגד יציאת מצרים שכבש את פרעה ואת מצרים "במסות באותות ובמופתים" (דברים ד:לד).</p>
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Abravanel suggests an additional "conceptual and scientific" approach, based on Rambam's Guide (I 71):
"That Hashem in His arranging the universe is both the active Cause and the preserving and perpetuating Cause,

since it is He Who created and generated it out of absolute nothingness, and it is He Who preserves and perpetuates it.” Thus the twofold offering of Shabbat demonstrates that Hashem not only created the universe, but also maintains it.

C. Shabbat and The Number Two – Ba’alei Hatosafot

An experiential perspective is found in Da’at Zekenim Miba’alei Hatosafot (a collection of Torah commentaries taken from the Tosafists, disciples of Rashi from the 12th-14th centuries). Quoting the Midrash Shochar Tov, Da’at Zekenim says that the double sacrifice is perfectly suited to Shabbat:

<p>2. Rosh Hashanah 18a ... The Shabbat complained before Holy One, Blessed be He, regarding this. Said the Holy One, Blessed be He, to her, ‘Behold, this is the Musaf that is appropriate to you. Everything associated with you is twofold. You have a twofold song: “A psalm, a song for the Shabbat day” (Tehillim 92). You have twofold delight, as it says “And you shall call the Shabbat a delight, and to the holy one of Hashem honored” (Yeshaya 58:13). Your punishment is twofold: “Whoever profanes it, dying he shall be put to death” (Shemot 31:14). Your bread (lechem mishneh) is twofold. Therefore, it is fitting that your sacrifice be twofold.</p>	<p>דעת זקנים מבעלי התוספות במדבר כח:ט ... קראה שבת תגר לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא אמר לה הקב"ה: "הנה שזהו קרבן מוסף הראוי לך, לפי שכל מעשיך כפולים – שיר כפול, שנא' 'מזמור שיר ליום השבת' (תהילים צב), עונג כפול, שנאמר 'וקראת לשבת עונג ולקדוש ה' מכובד' (ישעיה נח:יג), עונשו כפול, שנא' 'מחלליה מות יומת' (שמות לא:יד), לחם כפול, לחם משנה. לפיכך ראוי קרבן שלך להיות כפול.</p>
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The midrash continues with an allegory:

<p>2. Rosh Hashanah 18a A king told his servants, “Prepare a meal for my sons.” They prepared two types of food for them. After they dined, the king commanded that they prepare him his meal. His servants said to him, “What shall we prepare for you?” and he asked them, “What did you serve my sons?” When they told him, he said, “The same for me. Do not prepare for me any more than you did for my sons.”</p>	<p>דעת זקנים מבעלי התוספות במדבר כח:ט משל למלך שאמר לעבדיו, "הכינו סעודה לבני". הכינו להם שני מיני מאכלים. לאחר שסעדו צוה המלך להכין לו סעודתו. אמרו לו עבדיו, "מה נכין לך?" אמר להם, "ולבני מה הכינותם?" אמרו לו, "כך וכך". אמר להם, "ולי כמו כן; אל תכינו יותר מבני."</p>
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According to this, the offering to Hashem on Shabbat consists of **two** lambs... and **two** tenths of fine flour as a reflection of the redoubled distinctiveness of the day, and because Hashem, as it were, celebrates Shabbat together with His people.

The simplicity of the Shabbat offerings is the key to its beauty, holiness and joy. We are truly privileged to have been given this gift.

שבת שלום ומבורך

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The following digital Torah resources have been extremely helpful in researching and preparing the Shapell's Daf Keshet:
 DBS – Hataklitor Hatorani, Otzar Hachochmah, the Bar Ilan Responsa Project, and Hebrewbooks.org.

We pray for a refuah shleimah, a complete healing, for all those wounded in the attacks against our People.