

Separated But Together

The sprinkling of the blood of the bullock and the goat in the Sanctuary on Yom Kippur, the Torah tells us (*Vayikra 16:16*), atones for voluntary and involuntary entry of a Jew in a spiritually impure state into the sacred areas of the *Beis Hamikdash*. This passage concludes "Who dwells among them within their impurity." Our Sages interpret this as an expression of the intimate relationship between Hashem and Israel; that even when Jews are impure, the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) is still with them.

A skeptical heathen once challenged Rabbi Chanina with the classic taunt that Hashem rejected the Chosen People by enabling their enemies to destroy the *Beis Hamikdash* and exile them. "Her impurity is evident in the hem of her dress" (*Eicha 1:9*) says the Prophet Yirmiyahu about the spiritual state of Israel following destruction and exile. "This is certain proof that you are now impure," he challenged Rabbi Chanina. The Sage responded by simply pointing to the above-mentioned passage that declares that the *Shechina* is with us even in our impurity.

This cryptic dialogue is thus explained by Maharsha:

The heathen saw in the words of the prophet a separation between Hashem and His people, symbolized by the separation of a husband from his wife during the period of spiritual impurity in her menstrual cycle. Rabbi Chanina did not challenge the comparison but rather expanded on it. The husband separates from his wife during her period of impurity only regarding physical contact. He continues to reside with her, however, in the same home. In like fashion, concluded the sage, we do not enjoy the same intimacy with Hashem while we are in exile, but this does not mean that He has stopped dwelling within our midst.

This is what was communicated for all generations and situations — that even in our lowest spiritual state, we enjoy the comforting closeness of Hashem "Who dwells among them within their impurity."

Yoma 57a

Twin Goats, Twin Parents

Two goats played a central role in the Yom Kippur service. One of them served as a sacrifice whose blood was sprinkled in the *kodshei kodashim* (Holy of Holies) and in the *heichal*. The other was the scapegoat that carried on it the sins of Israel as it was led to its death off a cliff in the wilderness.

Both goats, the *mishna* tells us, were preferably to be of the same appearance, size and value, and be purchased at the same time.

An interesting question is raised by Tosefos Yeshanim, based on a *gemara* in *mesechta Sanhedrin* (71a). There we find Rabbi Yehuda's ruling that the preemptive punishment of the young rebellious son applies only if both his parents are of similar voice, appearance and height. He derives this from the parents' statement before the court that "this son is rebellious and does not hearken to our voice" (*Devarim 21:20*). The singular form "voice" when referring to *both* parents indicates that their voices are so similar that what they say sounds like it is coming from one voice. If similarity is a prerequisite regarding voice, concludes Rabbi Yehuda, it follows that similarity of appearance and height also be required.

Due to this requirement of similarity, say some of the Sages, the law of the rebellious son was never actually implemented. It was written in the Torah only for the purpose of learning it to gain reward for Torah study, and to absorb its message about child-rearing. The simple understanding of this is that the law could never be applied because of the virtual impossibility of a father and mother being of the same appearance. If so, asks Tosefos Yeshanim, how could there be a mitzvah to seek animals with identical appearance, if the chances are so remote?

His solution is to differentiate between man and animal. While it is unlikely for human parents to be similar in appearance, there is the possibility of finding an almost perfect similarity in two goats.

Another solution may be suggested based on what Rabbi Yoel Sirkis (*Bach*) writes in his footnotes in *mesechta Sanhedrin*. It is not the impossibility of identical appearance that rules out the implementation of the law of the rebellious son, but the impossibility of them having identical voices. For a man and woman to have identical voices, either the man must lack masculinity or the woman femininity. In either case this would mean that one of the parents was not capable in being a partner in procreation and they could never have a son. This relationship between voice and reproductive capacity is limited to humans. Regarding appearance, this is possible even in humans, and certainly in regard to the two goats.

Yoma 62a

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

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