

B"H

Four Sages Debate What the Most Important Idea of Judaism Is

The Torah's revolution in philosophy, sociology and psychology pale in comparison to its insistence on a daily offering of two sheep

By Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson

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In honor of the engagement of our cousin
Devorah Leah Kirschenbaum (Crown Heights, Brooklyn)
to **Isser New** (Montreal, Canada)
By **Eda** and **David Schottenstein**

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1. Class Description:

What do you feel is the one verse in the Torah which encapsulates the quintessence of Judaism? The all-encompassing verse which is the basis of everything we live for?

This very same discussion took place one day in the study hall of our Talmudic sages. Four opinions emerged. "The verse 'Love your fellow as yourself' is the basis of the Torah," was the opinion of Rabbi Akiba.

Then there was another opinion: "Shma Yisroel." Two times a day, we proclaim G-d's oneness and unity. Seemingly, the purpose of our existence is to recognize G-d's Kingship and Sovereignty over the world and everything in it. Then there was the third opinion which held that the description of a human being as crafted in the Divine image, that is the verse which defines Torah more than all.

In the midst of the debate, one of the Rabbis declared that the verse "One sheep you shall offer in the morning and the second sheep in the afternoon", which is found in this week's Torah portion of Pinchas, is the most encompassing verse of the entire Torah. Thereupon one of the sages stood up and pronounced this verse as the winner!

The result seems astonishing. The foundation of our religion is the offering of sheep? What is the meaning of this peculiar statement? In today's class we will explore the four approaches as to what is the ultimate verse of the Bible and why specifically the daily sacrifice of the sheep embodies the core of Judaism.

2. Sources:**מקורות:**

<p><u>1. Toras Kohanim</u> Vayikrah 19</p> <p>And you shall love your fellow man like yourself; Rabbi Akivah says, "This is the basis of the Torah". Ben Azai says "the verse, ' This is the book of the chronicles of man', is more inclusive!"</p> <p><u>2. Leviticus</u> Chapter 19, Verse 18</p> <p>You shall not take revenge and you shall not bear a grudge against the members of your people; You shall love your fellow man like yourself – I am Hashem.</p> <p><u>3. Genesis</u> Chapter 5, Verse 1</p> <p>This is the book of the chronicles of man; on the day that G-d created man He created him in the image of G-d.</p>	<p><u>1. תורת כהנים קדושים</u> ויקרא י"ט</p> <p>ואהבת לרעך כמוך רבי עקיבא אומר זה כלל גדול בתורה. בן עזאי אומר זה ספר תולדות אדם, זה כלל גדול מזה.</p> <p><u>2. ויקרא</u> פרק יט</p> <p>(יח) לא-תקם ולא-תטור את-בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ, וְאֶהְבֶּתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ : אֲנִי, יְהוָה.</p> <p><u>3. בראשית</u> פרק א</p> <p>(א) זֶה סֵפֶר, תּוֹלְדוֹת אָדָם : בְּיוֹם, בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אָדָם, בְּדַמוֹת אֱלֹהִים, עָשָׂה אֹתוֹ.</p>
<p><u>4. Authors Introduction to Ein Yaakov</u></p> <p>Ben Zoma said, "We find a verse which is more inclusive, namely 'Hear oh Israel etc'!"</p> <p>Ben Nanas said, "We find a verse which is even more inclusive, namely 'And you shall love your fellow man as yourself'!"</p> <p>Shimon ben Pazi said, "We find a verse which is even more inclusive, namely ' One sheep you shall offer in the morning etc'!"</p>	<p><u>4. עין יעקב בהקדמת הכותב</u></p> <p>בן זומא אומר מצינו פסוק כולל יותר והוא שמע ישראל וגו',</p> <p>בן ננס אומר מצינו פסוק כולל יותר והוא ואהבת לרעך כמוך,</p> <p>שמעון בן פזי אומר מצינו פסוק כולל יותר והוא את הכבש אחד תעשה בבקר וגו',</p>

<p>One of the rabbis stood on his feet and declared, "The verdict follows the opinion of Shimon the son of Pazi as proven from the verse 'In conformance with all that I show you, the form of the Tabernacle etc'!"</p>	<p>עמד ר' פלוני על רגליו ואמר הלכה כבן פזי דכתיב ככל אשר אני מראה אותך את תבנית המשכן וגו'.</p>
<p><u>5. Deuteronomy</u> Chapter 6, Verse 4</p> <p>Hear O Israel; the Lord is our G-d, the Lord is One.</p>	<p><u>5. דברים</u> פרק ו</p> <p>(ד) שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל: יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְהוָה אֶחָד.</p>
<p><u>6. Numbers</u> Chapter 28, Verse 4</p> <p>The one sheep you shall offer in the morning and the second sheep in the afternoon.</p>	<p><u>6. במדבר</u> פרק כח</p> <p>(ד) אֶת-הַכֶּבֶשׂ אֶחָד, תַּעֲשֶׂה בַבֶּקֶר; וְאֶת הַכֶּבֶשׂ הַשֵּׁנִי, תַּעֲשֶׂה בֵּין הָעֶרְבָיִם.</p>
<p><u>7. Exodus</u> Chapter 25, Verse 9</p> <p>In conformance with all that I show you, the form of the Tabernacle, and the form of all its vessels; And so shall you make.</p>	<p><u>7. שמות</u> פרק כה</p> <p>(ט) כָּכֹל אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מֵרָאָה אוֹתְךָ אֶת תְּבִנֹת הַמִּשְׁכָּן וְאֶת תְּבִנֹת כָּל כֵּלָיו וְכֵן תַּעֲשֶׂוּ.</p>
<p><u>8. Nesivos Olam, Maharal</u> Section of Ahavas Reiya, Chapter 1</p> <p>The explanation of Ben Pazi, who stated that the verse 'The one sheep you shall offer in the morning etc' is more of the basis of the Torah than the other verses, is as follows. The verse emphasizes that a man should serve Hashem with continuity, as a servant. Just as a servant does not veer from serving his master but rather serves him continuously, so should man serve G-d. Therefore he stated that the verse 'The one sheep you shall offer in the morning etc', which refers to the Tomid (continuous) sacrifice which was offered every morning and evening, is the basis of the Torah. For the ultimate purpose is for man to be like a servant to G-d, and the rest of the Torah is the commentary, for through performing the Mitzvos, one is able to serve his Maker to the fullest.</p>	<p><u>8. נתיבות עולם להמהר"ל</u> נתיב אהבת ריע פרק א</p> <p>ומה שאמר בן פזי את הכבש האחד תעשה בבקר הוא כלל גדול בתורה יותר, רצה לומר מה שהאדם עובד הש"י בתמידות הגמור והוא עבדו, וכמו שהעבד לא סר עבודתו מן אדון שלו רק הוא עובדו תמיד. ולכך אמר את הכבש האחד תעשה בבוקר וגו' שזה נאמר על קרבן תמיד שחר וערב, דבר זה הכלל בתורה, שתכלית המכוון שיהי' האדם עבד להקב"ה. וכל שאר התורה פירושא שע"י המצוות הוא עובד את בוראו לגמרי.</p>

מקורות להשיעור:

- א. עין יעקב בהקדמת הכותב (לרבנו יעקב בן חביב)
- ב. מהר"ל מפראג, נתיבות עולם נתיב אהבת ריע פרק א
- ג. שיחת י"ב תמוז ה'תשד"מ (לכ"ק אדמו"ר מליובאוויטש).

3. Questions and Exercises

1. What are the four approaches as to what is the quintessence of Judaism?

- a. _____.
- b. _____.
- c. _____.
- d. _____.

2. Why is Shimon ben Pazi's approach the winner? Does it really include the other three opinions? Explain:

_____.

3. Would you describe yourself as a consistent person? Do you have consistency in your life?

_____.

4. In what areas of your life do you find it hard to keep a routine schedule? Why? Are you a moody person? When you get into a "mood," do you abandon your responsibilities and inner calling? What can you do to fix that?

_____.

5. What can you do to add consistency to your life? What do you need to avoid?

_____.