



## What's Good About Being Vulnerable?

### Numbers, Ch. 28

11. And on the beginning of your months, you shall offer up a burnt offering to the L-rd: two young bulls, one ram, and seven lambs in the first year, [all] unblemished.

12. Three tenths fine flour as a meal offering, mixed with oil for each bull, and two tenths fine flour as a meal offering, mixed with oil for each ram.

13. And one tenth of fine flour mixed with oil as a meal offering for each lamb. A burnt offering with a spirit of satisfaction, a fire offering to the L-rd.

15. And one young male goat for a sin offering to the L-rd; it shall be offered up in addition to the continual burnt offering and its libation.

*You shall offer up*

#### Midrash, Bamidbar Rabbah 21,7

G-d told Moses, "Emphasize to the people that I am not in need of sacrifices. The world is Mine. I created all the animals which you offer to Me. Moreover, I need neither food nor drink. I am totally divorced from the physical world and do not need earthly offerings for nourishment...Why then did I command you to offer sacrifices? I desire the satisfaction that you fulfill my commandment. By fulfilling the laws of sacrifices, you attach yourselves to Me.

*A burnt offering...two young bulls, one ram, and seven lambs*

#### Rashi (28:20)

These animals allude to the forefathers. Bulls recall Abraham who exerted himself to serve his guests veal. A ram alludes to the ram offered on the altar instead of Isaac. Lambs suggest Jacob who separated his flocks from Lavan's.

*And one young male goat for a sin offering to the L-rd*

#### Rashi

All the additional-offering goats were brought to atone for defiling the Sanctuary and its holy sacrifices. The young male goat brought on the first day of the month differs insofar as it says, "to the L-rd." This teaches you that it atones for a case where there is no awareness of the person's uncleanness either before entering the Temple or eating sacrificial food or after the sin has been committed. The only One aware of the sin is the Holy One, blessed is He...In the Aggadah, it is expounded thus: The Holy One, blessed is He, said, "Bring atonement for Me because I diminished [the size of] the moon."

#### Talmud, Chulin 60b

The moon said to G-d: "Sovereign of the Universe, can two kings share a single crown?" G-d replied: "Go and make yourself smaller." "Sovereign of the Universe," she said to him, "because I made a proper claim before You, am I to make myself smaller?" He said to her, "Go, and you will rule over both the day and the night." She said "What good is a lamp in broad daylight?" He said, "Go! Israel shall use you to count the days and the years." On seeing that the moon would not be consoled, the Holy One said, "Bring an atonement for me for making the moon smaller."

### פרק כב

יא. וּבְרֵאשֵׁי חֳדָשֵׁיכֶם תִּקְרִיבוּ  
 עֹלָה לַיהוָה פָּרִים בְּנֵי שָׁנָה שְׁבַע וְאֵיל אֶחָד  
 כִּבְשִׂים בְּנֵי שָׁנָה שְׁבַע תְּמִימִם: יב. וּשְׁלֹשָׁה  
 עֶשְׂרֵנָיִם סֵלֹת מִנְחָה בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן לַפָּר הָאֶחָד  
 וּשְׁנַיִ עֶשְׂרֵנָיִם סֵלֹת מִנְחָה בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן לְאֵיל  
 הָאֶחָד: יג. וְעֶשְׂרֹן עֶשְׂרֹן סֵלֹת מִנְחָה בְּלוּלָה  
 בְּשֶׁמֶן לְכֹבֵשׁ הָאֶחָד עֹלָה רֵיחַ נִיחַח אֲשֶׁה  
 לַיהוָה: טו. וּשְׁעִיר עֲזִים אֶחָד לְחַטָּאת לַיהוָה עַל  
 עֹלַת הַתְּמִיד יַעֲשֶׂה וְנִסְכּוֹ:

## R' Bechaya

When the moon regretted its haughty words, G-d immediately accepted its teshuvah. He thereupon bestowed favors upon it. This constitutes an eternal sign that G-d accepts the sinner's sincere repentance. Thus, the sacrifice brought on the day of the moon's renewal symbolizes the power of teshuvah.

## Rabbi Isaac of Homil, Maamar Shnei Me'orot

When the moon was first created, she was a glistening jewel. She did not merely reflect light, but rather transformed it and brought out its inner beauty. In her own way, the moon was greater than the sun -- for the sun only shines from its surface, whereas the moon shone from its inner essence. And so will be, once again, and much more so, in the time to come.

## The Lubavitcher Rebbe

For two weeks of each month, the moon faithfully fulfills the divine decree "Go, diminish yourself," steadily reducing itself to the point in which it is completely enveloped in darkness. These repeated diminutions are what yield the unique qualities of lunar time. Living with the moon, we learn how darkness can give birth to light and how absence can generate renewed presence. We learn to exploit the momentum of our descents to scale new and unprecedented heights -- heights which could never be anticipated by an unvarying "solar" path through life.

On a deeper level, the injunction "Go, diminish yourself" relates to the very essence of our humanity. Man is unique among G-d's creations in that he alone is a *mehalech*, a "goer" or journeyer through life. All other creations, including the loftiest of spiritual beings (and this includes the soul of man prior to its investiture in a physical body) are *omdim*, stationary "standers." A "stander" is not necessarily immobile; indeed, all things possess, to some degree or other, the potential for development and advancement. But all creations move in a "solar" orbit -- an orbit defined by pre-ordained limits which it cannot transcend. Only the human being is lunar, with a trajectory through life that includes both growth and decline, obliteration and rebirth. For man alone possesses the power of free choice -- a power as potent as it is lethal, as infinite as it is constricting. With free choice comes the capacity for utter self-destruction, and the capacity for utter self-transformation. "Go, diminish yourself," is the Creator's perpetual injunction to His lunar creation. For it is only by diminishing itself that the human soul can "go." Only by making itself vulnerable to the mortality and pitfalls of the physical state can the soul of man become a "doer," a being with the power to make of itself more than it is.

## SUMMARY

- When the moon could not be consoled about its diminution, G-d asked that we bring the Rosh Chodesh sacrifices as His atonement.
- Like the moon's diminution, viewed from the perspective of manifest light, the setbacks of life are points of diminished luminescence and vitality. But when one looks at the deeper significance of these descents, one recognizes them as points at which we draw closer to our Source to receive the fortitude to surmount the next challenge. Knowing this helps us find joy even in the blackest moment.
- The Jewish people are compared to the moon. After the darkness of exile, the concealment of the Divine Presence will be back in its fullness and the Jewish people will find their full expression.

