

Parshat VaYikra 5772
by Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

We begin the Sefer of Korbanot. Although the Korbanot of VaYikra are not applicable today, our Tefillot have replaced some of the concepts that they were intended to achieve. Through these Korbanot, we can gain a better understanding of our Tefillot.

Some concepts must be clarified. Regarding a personal Korban, HaShem never commanded to bring Korbanot for sins that were done purposely. The Chatat and Asham sacrifices are for sins committed by forgetfulness and oversight, not for intentional sin. Regarding intentional sin, one does not receive Kapara [atonement] and is not even permitted to volunteer such a Korban.

In addition to individual Korbanot, there are also established Korbanot Tzibbur [public sacrifices], including those that do atone for sins. A Korban Tzibbur must be purchased from the funds of Machatzit HaShekel which were contributed by every Jew. The Tzibbur was like an autonomous corporate body; each one of us belonged to it, but no individual was able to claim title to it. If a wealthy Jew wanted to donate a Korban Tzibbur exclusively by himself- it was not acceptable.

It is most likely and most probable that within the entire community there was someone who has sinned. Now, when an entire community sins, even if it was ostensibly done intentionally but along with that, with a lack of full knowledge and/or understanding, the Torah treats the matter as an unintentional sin. This is hinted in the pasuk that we recite three times in the Tefillah of Yom Kippur after Kol Nidrei “*Venislach le-chol adat Bnei Yisrael, ve-legeir Ha-gar betocham, ki lechol ha-am bish’gaga*” “*And it will be forgiven for the whole congregation of Bnei Yisrael and the stranger who lives in their midst, because **for the entire nation, it is unintentional***” [Bamidbar 15:26]. We see very clearly that although HaShem will not forgive an individual who commits an Aveira, but He will overlook the sins of the Tzibbur, even the intentional ones.

It is therefore incumbent upon each and every one of us to connect and be involved with the Tzibbur, “*Al Tifrosh min HaTzibbur*” [Avot 2:4]. It is equally incumbent upon us to pray for the welfare of the Tzibbur; which encompasses our shul, our community and the community of the entire global Jewish population.

The murder of Rabbi Yonatan Sandler, a Rebbi in the Otzar HaTorah School in Toulouse, France, this week, together with his two young sons, Aryeh and Gavriel, aged 3 and 6, is a personal tragedy for each of us, wherever we are, because we are one Tzibbur.

That is what Rav Soloveitchik suggested is the meaning of Chazarat HaShatz. By right we should stand Shemoneh Esrei twice, once for our personal Tefillah and once for the Tzibbur. However, Chazal didn't want to burden us, so the second Shemoneh Esrei is recited by a Shaliach Tzibbur, who is saying it for us, on our behalf, and all we have to do is listen attentively, preferably standing with feet together, and respond with Amen after each Beracha. Just as the Korban HaTzibbur, so too the Tefillat HaTzibbur.