

### The Enlightened Sky Till Chevron

The *Mishna* in *Yoma* (3:1) describes the process of bringing the *korban Tamid* in the *Beit HaMikdash* every morning. Being that the *Tamid shel Shachar* must be brought specifically after daybreak, the *kohanim* were exceedingly careful to check that the dawn had in fact arrived. *Rebbe Matya ben Shmuel* relates that the *kohen hamemuna* (in charge of facilitating the *avodah* smoothly) would ask if the entire eastern sky was enlightened till *Chevron*. Only once a scouting *kohen* climbed to a rooftop and confirmed that this was the case could the slaughtering of the daytime *tamid* begin.

The *Mishna* is clear that the *kohanim* were diligent to make sure that the daylight was in a more advanced stage to ensure that they didn't accidentally slaughter the *Tamid* during the night. This is why they would wait until the entire eastern sky was alight. However, the phrase of "until *Chevron*" seems remarkably strange. Firstly, the sky brightens equally across the countryside of *Eretz Yisrael*. Even the lands west of Jerusalem are practically experiencing the same exact dawn and sunrise as the *kohanim* in the *Beit HaMikdash*. Additionally, *Chevron* is south of Jerusalem! Why would the *kohen* peering into the eastern be asked to think about *Chevron*?

Some *Rishonim* explain that this benchmark represented a brighter and more advanced stage of day. However, *Rashi* (*Yoma* 28b) and the *Rambam* (commentary to *Tamid perek 3*) invoke the explanation of the *Talmud Yerushalmi*. The *kohanim* deliberately would mention *Chevron* in order to invoke the merit of "those who slumber in *Chevron*", the *Avot* and *Imahot* buried in the *Maharat HaMachpeila*.

On an elementary level, it is impossible to approach *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* in the *Beit HaMikdash* without the merit of our forefathers standing behind us. The *Rashba* explains (*Teshuvot* 1:423) based off this *Gemara* that we cannot begin *tefillah* without referencing the *Avot*. Hence, our *Amidah* prayer begins by invoking the merit of *Avraham*, *Yitzchak*, and *Yaakov*. While the *Rashba* alludes to deeper implications of the *Avot's* role in establishing God's dominion in this world, his insight highlights the absurdity of trying to approach the Almighty with our paltry *zechuyot*. Only the merit of the "mighty ones" from whom we descend can allow the *avodah* to be successful.

It isn't coincidental that we traditionally read the *Parshat HaAkeida* prior to *tefillat Shacharit*, similarly invoking the merit of *Avraham* and *Yitzchak's* greatness that was established on *Har HaMoriya* prior to approaching God in prayer.

But this *Yerushalmi* also establishes a deep connection between the physical places of *Yerushalayim* and the burial place of our ancestors in *Chevron*. The *Shela HaKadosh* (*Torah Ohr, Chayei Sarah*) notes that the *makom hamizbeach* was the place from which *Adam HaRishon* was created. *Chevron* is the place where he was buried. The initial creation of man and his first paradigmatic burial link these two holy cities together, כי עפר אתה ואל עפר תשוב. As we bring *korbanot* to achieve *kaparah* and spiritual ascendance, we invoke the memory of the slumbering giants who attained spiritual *sheleimut*. The *Zohar* establishes that the entrance to *Gan Eden*, where the *neshamot* of the righteous reside until the times of *Techiyat HaMeitim*, is in the *Maharat HaMachpeila*. (This is presumably why the *Maharal* explains that *Techiyat HaMeitim* will occur in *Chevron*, where the souls of the righteous will enter their reconstituted bodies.)

Every individual Jew's existence is a microcosm of *Adam HaRishon* and the *Avot*. These two holy cities serve as bookends that remind us of our potential, our purpose, and our destiny.