

Maharal on the Sedra

How Torah Teaches Us the Water Libations for Succot

Bamidbar 29:18 - And their meal offering and their libations for the bulls...

Rashi - Seventy bulls were sacrificed on Succot, corresponding to the seventy nations, and their number progressively decreased each day, signifying destruction of the nations. In the days of the Holy Temple, the bulls protected the nations from punishment. The 98 lambs, fourteen each day, protected the Jewish people from the 98 curses in the admonition found in D'varim. Note that here on the second day, libations [niskehem] is in the plural, as it is on the seventh day [29:31]. On the sixth day "its libations" [nisacheha] [29:33] contrast with all the other days [nisko], its libation in the singular. The exceptional letters, MEM YUD MEM spell MAYIM [water], an allusion from the Torah to the water libation offering on Succot [Taanit 2b].

Gur Arye - Rashi is compelled to address the declining numbers of bulls each day, from thirteen down to seven, in light of the dictum "one rises in sanctity and one does not decline" [B'rachot 28a]. Rashi explains the bulls were for the nations, who are destined to decline, as opposed to the Jewish people, whose number is fixed, as is their eternal destiny.

The hint of the libation offerings on day two, six, and seven, corresponding to BET VAV ZAYIN, which spells BOZ [shame], from the verse, "Many waters [of heathen tribulation] cannot quench the fires of love [between Hashem and Israel] and rivers cannot drown it; if a man would give all the wealth of his house [to entice you away from your love] he would be shamed [BOZ] in the extreme [Shir HaShirim 8:7]. The message is the waters of the Succot

libations represent the shame of the nations who attempt to drown the love between Hashem and His people Israel. Additionally, it was on the second day of Creation, BET, when He separated the waters, that He promised the lower waters they would be brought on the altar. The lesson of VAV ZAYIN is that the water libation is brought the first seven days of Succot.

- Dr. Moshe Kuhr