



# B'NAI DAVID-JUDEA

## *Shabbat Shorts*

While it is true that the Mussaf Amidah is the only Amidah in which we are explicitly intending to offer a substitute for a sacrificial offering (to "compensate for cows with our lips"), it would be wrong to think that Mussaf is essentially a goat in verbal form. There is more to the story of Mussaf's core identity and purpose, as revealed in the following Mishnaic dispute.

Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah believed that Mussaf is exclusively a *communal* prayer. Meaning that it is to be recited in shul only, and that those who aren't in shul on Shabbat simply omit it. Rabbi Elazar's opinion is not hard to understand (as surprising to us as it might initially sound). The Temple Mussaf *offering* was very specifically a communal - not an individual - offering, and it was obvious to him that this should translate into the Mussaf *prayer*. And his opinion does happen to be consistent with all the halachot that we saw in the previous "Shabbat Short".

But the Sages disagreed with him, and it is of course their opinion that is reflected in our own practice. For the Sages held that while it's true that we are making the effort here to in some way fulfill the Mitzvah to offer Korban Mussaf, in the final analysis prayer and sacrifice are fundamentally different modes of worship, and the Mussaf prayer is a *prayer*. *Prayer* is the opening of the human heart to God, a religious act that is profoundly individual. Even an Amidah that desires to be accepted *in place of* an act of communal worship does not shuffle off its fundamental nature. Thus, the Sages ruled,

there cannot be such a thing as an Amidah that is unavailable to individuals.

It is this dual nature which lends Mussaf a unique texture - a texture that is particularly accentuated when we recite it with community, in shul. It is the only Amidah in which we both bring our personal concerns to bear, and at the same time consciously and deliberately *extend our personal concerns and prayers to the larger body of the community*. As an Amidah, it is still and always about the contents of our own hearts - the gratitude we feel for the daily miracles, the Divine support we need when we are in danger of falling, our urgent desire that God purify our hearts so that we can serve with sincerity. And simultaneously, as an Amidah that is holding the space of communal worship ritual, we are also expressing gratitude for the daily miracles bestowed upon the people in the row in front of us, and are praying that God give strength and support to the person standing to our right or our left. And are articulating our aspiration that *our community* attain purity of heart, a condition which generates mutual trust, and which enables us to have only "disagreements for the sake of heaven". Mussaf is, in this sublime way, unique.

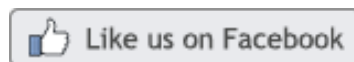
And worth gathering our thoughts for.

So go ahead, if you are so moved, and print out the above paragraph, and re-read it just before we begin Mussaf this Shabbat. Because a Mussaf is a terrible thing to waste.

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