

THE LIGHT OF THE ETERNAL PEOPLE
Presented by Rabbi Shmuel Irons

Series IV Lecture #4

**SHIMON HATZADDIK:
THE DIVINE PRESENCE ON EARTH**

I. Shimon HaTzaddik and the Greek Exile

A.

שמעון הצדיק היה משירי כנסת הגדולה. אבות פרק א: ב

Shimon HaTzaddik (the Righteous) was one of the last of the Men of the Great Assembly. **Avos 1:2**

B.

(ויקרא כ"ו): לא מאסתים ולא געלתים לכלתם . . . במתניתא תנא: לא מאסתים - בימי כשדים, שהעמדתי להם דניאל חנניה מישאל ועזריה, ולא געלתים - בימי יוונים, שהעמדתי להם שמעון הצדיק, וחשמונאי ובניו, ומתתיה כהן גדול, לכלתם - בימי המן, שהעמדתי להם מרדכי ואסתר, להפר בריתי אתם, - בימי פרסיים, שהעמדתי להם של בית רבי וחכמי דורות, כי אני ה' א-להיהם - לעתיד לבוא, שאין כל אומה ולשון יכולה לשלוט בהם. מגילה דף יא.

I did not reject them, neither did I abhor them to destroy them utterly. (Lev. 26:44) . . . In a Baraitha, it was taught: 'I have not rejected them' — in the days of the Chaldeans, when I raised up for them Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; **'neither did I abhor them' — in the days of the Greeks, when I raised up for them Shimon HaTzaddik (the Righteous) and Hasmonai and his sons, and Mattathias the High Priest;** 'to destroy them utterly' — in the days of Haman, when I raised up for them Mordecai and Esther; 'to break my covenant with them' — in the days of the Persians, when I raised up for them the members of the house of Rabbi and the Sages of the various generations. 'For I am the L-rd their G-d' — in the time to come, when no nation or people will be able to subject them. **Megilla 11a**

C.

תניא: בעשרים וחמשה [בטבת] יום הר גרזים [הוא], דלא למספד. יום שבקשו כותיים את בית א-להינו מאלכסנדרוס מוקדון להחריבו ונתנו להם. באו והודיעו את שמעון הצדיק. מה עשה? לבש בגדי כהונה, ונתעטף בבגדי כהונה, ומיקירי ישראל עמו, ואבוקות של אור בידיהן, וכל הלילה הללו הולכים מצד זה והללו הולכים מצד זה עד שעלה עמוד השחר. כיון שעלה עמוד השחר אמר להם: מי הללו? אמרו לו: יהודים שמרדו בך. כיון שהגיע לאנטיפטרס זרחה חמה, ופגעו זה בזה. כיון שראה לשמעון הצדיק, ירד ממרכבתו והשתחוה לפניו. אמרו לו: מלך גדול כמותך ישתחוה ליהודי זה? אמר להם: דמות דיוקנו של זה מנצחת לפני בבית מלחמתי. - אמר להם: למה באתם? - אמרו: אפשר בית שמתפללים בו עליך ועל

מלכותך שלא תחרב יתעוך גויים להחריבו? – אמר להם: מי הללו? – אמרו לו: כותיים הללו שעומדים לפניך. – אמר להם: הרי הם מסורים בידיכם. מיד נקבום בעקביהם ותלאום בזנבי סוסייהם, והיו מגררין אותן על הקוצים ועל הברקנים עד שהגיעו להר גריזים. כיון שהגיעו להר גריזים חרשוהו, וזרעוהו כרשינין. כדרך שבקשו לעשות לבית א-להינו. ואותו היום עשאוהו יום טוב. יומא סט.

It was taught: The twenty-fifth of Teveth is the day of Mount Gerizim, on which no eulogies are permitted. It is the day on which the Cutheans demanded the House of our G-d from Alexander, the Macedonian, so as to destroy it, and he had given them the permission, whereupon some people came and informed Shimon HaTzaddik. What did the latter do? He put on his priestly garments, robed himself in priestly garments, some of the noblemen of Israel went with him carrying fiery torches in their hands, they walked all night, some walking on one side and others on the other side, until the dawn rose. When the dawn rose, he [Alexander] said to them: Who are these [the Samaritans]? They answered: The Jews who rebelled against you. As he reached Antipatris, the sun having shone forth, they met. When he saw Shimon HaTzaddik, he descended from his carriage and bowed down before him. They said to him: A great king like yourself should bow down before this Jew? He answered: His image it is which wins for me in all my battles. He said to them: What have you come for? They said: Is it possible that star-worshippers should mislead you to destroy the House wherein prayers are said for you and your kingdom that it be never destroyed! He said to them: Who are these? They said to him: These are Cutheans who stand before you. He said: They are delivered into your hand. At once they perforated their heels, tied them to the tails of their horses and dragged them over thorns and thistles, until they came to Mount Gerizim, which they ploughed and planted with vetch, even as they had planned to do with the House of G-d. And that day they made a festive day. **Yoma 69a**

D. Now when Alexander, king of Macedon, . . . ended his life; and as his government fell among many, Antigonos, obtained Asia, Seleucus obtained Babylon; and of the other nations which were there, Lysimachus governed the Hellespont, Cassander possessed Macedonia, as did Ptolemy, the son of Lagus, seize upon Egypt, and while these princes ambitiously strove one against another, every one for his own principality, it came to pass that there were continual wars, and those lasting wars too; and the cities were sufferers, and lost a great many of their inhabitants in these times of distress, insomuch that all Syria, by the means of Ptolemy, the son of Lagus, underwent the reverse of that denomination, of Savior (Soter) which he then had. He also seized upon Jerusalem, and for that end made use of deceit and treachery; for as he come into the city on a Sabbath day, as if he would offer sacrifices, he without trouble gained the city while the Jews did not oppose him, for they did not suspect him to be their enemy; and he gained it thus, because they were free from suspicion of him, and because on that day they were at rest and quietness; and when he had gained it, he ruled over it in a cruel manner. . . . But when Ptolemy had taken a great many captives, both from the mountainous part of Judea, and from the places about Jerusalem and Samaria, and the places near Mount Gerizim, he led them all into Egypt and settled them there. **Josephus Flavius, Antiquities of the Jews Book XII Chapter I**

E. When Onias the high priest died, his son Simon (Shimon) became his successor. He was called Simon the Just (Shimon HaTzaddik) because of both his piety towards G-d and his kind disposition to those of his own nation. **Josephus Flavius, Antiquities of the Jews Book XII Chapter II:5**

F. It was Simon, the son of Onias, the great priest, who in his lifetime repaired the House, and in his days strengthened the Sanctuary. He laid the foundation for the height of the double wall, the lofty substructure for the temple enclosure. In his days, a water cistern was hewed out, a reservoir in circumference like the sea. He took thought for his people to keep them from calamity and fortified the city against siege. **The Wisdom of Ben Sira 50: 1-4**

II. The Saint of His Generation

A. How glorious he was surrounded by the people, as he came out of the Sanctuary! Like the morning star among the clouds, like the moon when it is full; like the sun shining forth upon the sanctuary of the Most High; like the rainbow, showing itself among glorious clouds. Like roses in the days of first fruits; like lilies by a spring of water; like a sprig of frankincense on summer days. Like fire and incense in the censer; like a dish of beaten gold adorned with all kinds of precious stones. Like an olive putting forth its fruit, and like a cypress towering among the clouds. When he assumed his glorious robe, and put on glorious perfection, and when he went up to the holy altar, he made the court of the Sanctuary glorious. And when he received the portions from the hands of the priests, as he stood by the hearth of the altar, with his brothers like a wreath about him, he was like a young cedar of Lebanon, and they surrounded him like the trunks of palm trees . . . **The Wisdom of Ben Sira 50: 5-12**

B.
תנו רבנן: ארבעים שנה ששמש שמעון הצדיק היה גורל עולה בימין, מכאן ואילך – פעמים עולה בימין פעמים עולה בשמאל. והיה לשון של זהורית מלבין, מכאן ואילך פעמים מלבין פעמים אינו מלבין. והיה נר מערבי דולק, מכאן ואילך פעמים דולק פעמים כבה. והיה אש של מערכה מתגבר, ולא היו כהנים צריכין להביא עצים למערכה חוץ משני גזירי עצים, כדי לקיים מצות עצים. מכאן ואילך – פעמים מתגבר פעמים אין מתגבר, ולא היו כהנים נמנעין מלהביא עצים למערכה כל היום כולו. ונשתלחה ברכה בעומר ובשתי הלחם ובלחם הפנים, וכל כהן שמגיעו כזית יש אוכלו ושבע, ויש אוכלו ומותיר. מכאן ואילך נשתלחה מאירה בעומר ובשתי הלחם ובלחם הפנים, וכל כהן מגיעו כפול, הצנועין מושכין את ידיהן והגרגרנין נוטלין ואוכלין. יומא לט.

Our Rabbis taught: Throughout the forty years that Shimon HaTzaddik (the Righteous) ministered, the lot ['For the L-rd'] would always come up in the right hand; from that time on, it would come up now in the right hand, now in the left. And [during the same time], the crimson-coloured strap would become white. From that time on, it would at times become white, at others not. Also: Throughout those forty years, the westernmost light was shining, from that time on, it was now shining, now failing; also the fire of the pile of wood kept burning strong, so that the priests did not have to bring to the pile any

other wood besides the two logs, in order to fulfil the command about providing the wood constantly; from that time on, it would occasionally keep burning strongly, at other times not, so that the priests could not do without bringing throughout the day wood for the pile [on the altar]. [During the whole period] a blessing was bestowed upon the *Omer*, the two breads, and the shewbread, so that every priest, who obtained a piece thereof as big as an olive, ate it and became satisfied with some eating thereof and even leaving something over. From that time on, a curse was sent upon *Omer*, two breads, and shewbread, so that every priest received a piece as small as a bean; the well-bred ones withdrew their hands from it, whilst voracious folk took and devoured it. **Yoma 39a**

C.

תנו רבנן: אותה שנה שמת בה שמעון הצדיק אמר להם: בשנה זו הוא מת. אמרו לו: מניין אתה יודע? אמר להם: בכל יום הכפורים היה מזדמן לי זקן אחד לבוש לבנים ועטוף לבנים, נכנס עמי ויצא עמי. והיום נזדמן לי זקן אחד לבוש שחורים ועטוף שחורים, נכנס עמי ולא יצא עמי. אחר הרגל חלה שבעה ימים ומת, ונמנעו אחיו הכהנים מלברך בשם. יומא לט:

Our Rabbis taught: In the year in which Shimon HaTzaddik (the Righteous) died, he foretold them that he would die. They said: Whence do you know that? He replied: On every Day of Atonement an old man, dressed in white, wrapped in white, would join me, entering [the Holy of Holies] and leaving [it] with me, but today I was joined by an old man, dressed in black, wrapped in black, who entered, but did not leave with me. After the festival [of Sukkoth], he was sick for seven days and [then] died. His brethren, the priests, thereupon forbore to mention the Ineffable Name in pronouncing the [priestly] blessing. **Yoma 39b**

III. Upon What Does the World Stand?

A.

שמעון הצדיק היה משירי כנסת הגדולה הוא היה אומר על שלשה דברים העולם עומד על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים: משנה מסכת אבות פרק א משנה ב

Shimon HaTzaddik (the Righteous) was one of the last of the Men of the The Great Assembly. He used to say: The world is based upon three things: The [study of] Torah, Divine Service, and the practice of loving kindness. **Avos 1:2**

B.

תמן תנינן שמעון הצדיק היה משירי כנסת הגדולה הוא היה אומר על שלשה דברים העולם עומד על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים ושלשתן בפסוק אחד ואשים דברי בפוך זו תורה ובצל ידי כסיתך זו גמילות חסדים ללמדך שכל מי שהוא עסוק בתורה ובגמילות חסדים זכה לישוב בצילו של הקב"ה. הדא היא דכתיב מה יקר חסדך א-להים ובני אדם בצל כנפיך יחסיון לנטוע שמים וליסוד ארץ אילו הקרבנות ולאמר לציון עמי אילו ישראל אמר רבי חיינה בר פפא חיזרנו על כל המקרא ולא מצאנו שנקראו ישראל ציון אלא זה ולאמר לציון עמי אתה. תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת תענית פרק ד ה"ב

We were taught there (Avos 1:2): Shimon HaTzaddik (the Righteous) was one of the last of the Men of the Great Assembly. He used to say: The world is based upon three things: The [study of] Torah, Divine Service, and the practice of loving kindness. All three are alluded to in a single verse (Isaiah 51:16): *And I have put my words in your mouth, and I have covered you in the shadow of My hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say to Zion, You are my people. And I have put My words in your mouth,* refers to the study of Torah. *And I have covered you in the shadow of My hand,* refers to the practice of kindness. This teaches us that anyone who is engrossed in the study of Torah and the practice of kindness will merit to dwell in the shade of the Holy One, Blessed be He. This is what is meant by the verse (Psalms 36:8); *How precious is Your loving kindness, O G-d! Therefore, the children of men take refuge under the shadow of Your wings. That I may plant the heavens,* is referring to the sacrifices. *And say to Zion, you are My people,* refers to [the people of] Israel. Rabbi Chinana bar Papa said: We have researched the entire corpus of Scripture and have not found anywhere that Israel is called Zion with the exception of the verse, *And say to Zion, you are My people. Talmud Yerushalmi Taanis 4:2*

C.

שמעון הצדיק היה משירי אנשי כנסת הגדולה הוא היה אומר על שלשה דברים העולם עומד על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים: על התורה כיצד הרי הוא אומר כי חסד חפצתי ולא זבח ודעת א-להים מעולות (הושע ו:ו) מכאן לעולה שהיא חביבה מזבחים מפני שהעולה כולה כליל לאישים שנאמר והקטיר הכהן את הכל המזבחה (ויקרא א' ט') ובמקום אחר הוא אומר ויקח שמואל טלה חלב אחד ויעלה עולה כליל לד' (שמואל א' ז' ט'). ותלמוד תורה חביבה לפני המקום מעולות לפי שאם אדם למד תורה יודע דעתו של מקום שנאמר אז תבין יראת ד' ודעת אלקים תמצא (משלי ב:ה). מכאן לחכם שיושב ודורש בקהל שמעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו הקריב חלב ודם לגבי מזבח: שני תלמידי חכמים שיושבים ועוסקים בתורה ועברה לפנייהם כלה או מטה של מת אם בידן כדי צרכן אל יבטלו ממשנתן ואם לאו יעמדו וישננו ויקלסו לכלה וילוו למת: מעשה ברבי יהודה בר אלעאי שהיה יושב ושונה לתלמידיו ועברה כלה ואחז בידו כדי צרכו והיה משנין בה עד שעברה הכלה מלפניו: שוב מעשה ברבי יהודה בר אלעאי שהיה יושב ושונה לתלמידיו ועברה כלה לפניו. אמר להם מהו זה. אמרו לו כלה שעברה. אמר להם בני עמדו והתעסקו בכלה שכן מצינו בהקב"ה שנתעסק בכלה שנאמר ויבן ד' א-להים את הצלע (בראשית ב' כ"ב) הוא נתעסק בכלה אנו על אחת כמה וכמה. והיכן מצינו שהקב"ה נתעסק בכלה שנאמר ויבן ד' א-להים את הצלע (שם ב' כ"ב) שכן קורין בכרכי הים לקלעיתא בנאיתא. מכאן שתקנה הקב"ה לחוה וקשטה ככלה והביאה אצל אדם שנאמר ויביאה אל האדם (שם ב' כ"ב). פעם אחת נעשה הקב"ה שושבין לאדם מכאן ואילך אדם קונה שושבין לעצמו שנאמר עצם מעצמי ובשר מבשרי (שם ב' כ"ג). פעם אחת נטלה חוה מאדם מכאן ואילך מקדש אדם את בת חברו: על העבודה כיצד כל זמן שעבודת בית המקדש קיימת העולם מתברך על יושביו וגשמים יורדין בזמנן שנאמר לאהבה את ד' א-להיכם ולעבדו בכל לבבכם ובכל נפשכם ונתתי מטר ארצכם בעתו יורה ומלקוש ונתתי עשב בשדך לבהמתך (דברים י"א ט"ו). ובזמן שאין עבודת בית המקדש קיימת אין העולם מתברך על יושביו ואין הגשמים יורדין בזמנן שנאמר השמרו לכם פן יפתה לבבכם וגו' ועצר את השמים ולא יהיה מטר (שם י"ז) וכן הוא אומר שימו נא לבבכם מן היום הזה ומעלה מטרם שום אבן על אבן בהיכל ד' מהיותם בא אל ערמת עשרים והיתה עשרה בא אל

היקב לחשף חמשים פורה והיתה עשרים (חגי ב'ט"ו וט"ז). מפני מה לא נאמר ביקב עשרים והיו עשרה כשם שנאמר בחטים עשרים לפי שיקב סימן טוב יותר מחטים ללמדך שכל זמן שהיין לוקה סימן רע לכל השנה כולה. אמרו ישראל לפני הקב"ה רבונו של עולם מפני מה אתה עשית לנו כך. השיב רוח הקודש פנה אל הרבה והנה למעט [וגו'] יען ביתי אשר הוא חרב ואתם רצים איש לביתו (שם א' ט') ואם אתם תעסקו בעבודת בית המקדש אני אברך אתכם כבתחלה שנאמר שימו נא לבבכם [וגו'] מיום כ"ד לתשיעי למן היום אשר יוסד היכל ד' [וגו'] העוד הזרע במגורה ועד הגפן והתאינה והרמון ועץ הזית לא נשא מן היום הזה אברך (שם ב' י"ח וי"ט) הא למדת שאין עבודה שהיא חביבה לפני הקב"ה יותר מעבודת בית המקדש: על גמילות חסדים כיצד הרי הוא אומר כי חסד חפצתי ולא זבח (הושע ו' ו') העולם מתחלה לא נברא אלא בחסד שנאמר כי אמרתי עולם חסד יבנה שמים תכין אמונתך בהם (תהלים פ"ט ג'). פעם אחת היה רבן יוחנן בן זכאי יוצא מירושלים והיה ר' יהושע הולך אחריו וראה בית המקדש חרב אמר ר' יהושע אוי לנו על זה שהוא חרב מקום שמכפרים בו עונותיהם של ישראל. א"ל בני אל ירע לך יש לנו כפרה אחת שהיא כמותה ואיזה זה גמילות חסדים שנאמר כי חסד חפצתי ולא זבח (הושע ו' ו'). שכן מצינו בדניאל איש חמודות שהיה מתעסק בגמילות חסדים. [שנא' (דניאל ו:יז) עָנָה מְלָכָא וְאָמַר לְדַנְיָאֵל אֶל־לְהָךְ דִּי אֲנִתָּה פְלַח־לָהּ בְּתִדְרָא הוּא יְשִׁיבְנָךְ: וּמָה הֵן [עבודה] (גמילות חסדים) שהיה דניאל מתעסק בהם אם תאמר עלולות וזבחים מקריב בבל והלא כבר נאמר השמר לך פן תעלה עלולותיך בכל מקום אשר תראה כי אם במקום אשר יבחר ד' באחד שבטיך שם תעלה עלולותיך (דברים י"ב י"ג י"ד) אלא מה הן גמילות חסדים שהיה מתעסק בהן היה מתקן את הכלה ומשמחה ומלווה את המת ונותן פרוטה לעני ומתפלל שלשה פעמים בכל יום ותפלתו מתקבלת ברצון שנאמר ודניאל כדי ידע די רשים כתבא על לביתה וכוין פתיחן ליה בעליתה נגד ירושלים וזימנין תלתא ביומא הוא בריך על ברכוהי ומצלא ומודא קדם א-להה כל קבל דיהוא עבד מן קדמת דנא (דניאל ו' י"א): אבות דרבי נתן פרק ד

Shimon HaTzaddik (the Righteous) was one of the last of the Men of the Great Assembly. He used to say: The world is based upon three things: The [study of] Torah, Divine Service, and the practice of loving kindness. How is it based upon Torah? Behold it is stated (Hoshea 6:6): *For I desired loving kindness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of G-d more than burnt offerings.* From here we see that [although] a burnt sacrifice is the most endearing of any sacrifice, (this is because the burnt sacrifice is totally consumed by the fire, as it stated (Lev. 1:9: *And the priest shall burn all on the altar, to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor to the L-rd.* In another place it is stated (Samuel I 7:9): *And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the L-rd; and Samuel cried to the L-rd for Israel; and the L-rd heard him),* the study of Torah, however, is more endearing before the Omnipresent than burnt offerings. The reason is that when a person studies Torah he becomes acquainted with the very Mind of the Omnipresent as is stated (Prov. 2:5): *Then shall you understand the fear of the L-rd, and find the knowledge of G-d.* From here we see that when a scholar sits and expounds before the community, it is considered by Scripture as if he brought [the abdominal] fat and blood [of a sacrifice] on top of the altar.

If, at the time when two Torah scholars are sitting and are engrossed in Torah study, a bride or the bier of a dead person pass by, if there are sufficient people present in the entourage [accompanying the bride or deceased,] then they should not cease from their studies. If that is not the case, however, they should get up and [join the entourage and] speak the praises of the bride or accompany the dead body. There was an incident with Rabbi Yehuda bar Illaei, who was sitting and teaching his students when a bride passed by. He took by the hand enough [students] as were needed and spoke of the praises of the bride until the bride had passed by. He said to them: What is this? They said to him: [Just] a bride who is passing by. He said to them: My children, stand up and become involved in the [needs] of the bride, for we find that the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself, became involved in the needs of a bride as it is stated (Gen. 2:22) *And Hashem, G-d, built up (or braided the hair of) the side (or rib) of man.* If He became involved, most certainly should we! And where do we find that Hashem became involved in the needs of a bride? As it is stated in Scripture (Gen. 2:22): *And Hashem, G-d, built up (or braided the hair of) the side (or rib) of man*, and in the cities beyond the sea, they call braiding *baneesa* (the word for building). From here, we see that Hashem prepared Chava (Eve) for Adam, beautified her, and brought her before Adam, as it is stated (Gen. 2:22) *And He brought her to Adam.* Originally, the Holy One, blessed be He, became a *shushbin* (the man who looks after the wedding arrangements for a friend), from that time on, a person acquires a *shushbin* for himself, as it is stated in Scripture (Gen. 2:23): *[This time] this woman is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.* Originally, Chava was fashioned from Adam, subsequently, a man marries the daughter of his friend.

How is the world based upon Divine Service? At the time when the Temple service was still in existence, the world was a blessed place for its inhabitants and the rains fell at their appointed times, as is stated in Scripture (Deut. 11:13-15): *And it shall come to pass, if you shall give heed diligently to My commandments which I command you this day, to love the L-rd your G-d, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, that I will give you the rain of your land in its due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, and your wine, and your oil and I will send grass in your fields for your cattle, that you may eat and be full.* When the Temple service is no longer in existence, however, the world is not a blessed place for its inhabitants and the rains do not fall at their appointed times, as is stated in Scripture (Deut. 11:16-17): *Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and you turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; and then the L-rd's anger be kindled against you, and He will close the skies, that there should be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest you perish quickly from off the good land which the L-rd gives you.* Similarly, it is stated (Chagai 2:15-16) *And now, I pray you, consider from this day onward. Before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the L-rd; since they were, when one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten; when one came to the wine vat to draw out fifty measures of the press, there were but twenty.* Why didn't it state regarding wine that originally it was twenty and now ten as it had stated regarding wheat? Because wine is a greater sign of blessing than wheat. This teaches us that when the wine is affected it is a bad sign for the entire year. Israel says before the Holy One, blessed be He, "Why do you do this to us?" The Holy Spirit responds (Chagai 1:9), *"You looked for much, and, behold, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? says the L-rd of Hosts. Because of My house that lies in ruins, and*

everyone of you runs to his own house." But if you are involved in the service of the Temple I will bless you as I did before as is stated (Chagai 2:18-19): *Consider now from this day onward, from the twenty fourth day of the ninth month, from the day when the foundation of the temple of the L-rd was laid, consider it. Is the seed yet in the barn? Do the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, still not bring forth? From this day on, I will bless you.* This teaches us that there is no service that is more endearing to the Holy One, blessed be He, than the Divine Service in the Temple.

How is the world based upon the practice of loving kindness? Behold it is stated (Hoshea 6:6): *For I desired loving kindness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of G-d more than burnt offerings.* The world was only created through loving kindness as it is stated (Psalms 89:3): *For I have said, The world is built through loving kindness; Your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens.* One time, Rabban Yochanon ben Zakai was leaving Jerusalem and Rabbi Yehoshua was following behind. When he saw the ruins of the Temple, Rabbi Yehoshua said, "Woe is to us that this place is in ruins, the place where the sins of the Israel were atoned for." [Rabban Yochanon ben Zakai] said to him, "My son, don't be upset. There is another form of atonement which is just like it. What is it? This is loving kindness, as it is stated (Hoshea 6:6): *For I desired loving kindness, and not sacrifice.* Similarly, we find that Daniel, a man greatly beloved, was involved in practicing loving kindness. As is stated in Scripture (Daniel 6:17): *Now the king spoke and said to Daniel, Your G-d whom you serve continually, He will save you.* What was the service that he practiced? If you suggest that it was burnt offerings or other sacrifices that he offered in Babylon, that can't be. Behold, it is stated in Scripture (Deut. 12:13-14): *Take heed to yourself that you offer not your burnt offerings in every place that you see; But only in the place which the L-rd shall choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you.* Rather, it is referring to the practice of loving kindness with which he was involved. He would prepare a bride for her wedding and would cause her to rejoice. He would accompany the bier of the deceased and he would give a coin to the poor. And he would pray three times a day and his prayers were willfully accepted as it is stated (Daniel 6:11): *Now when Daniel learned that the writing was signed, he went into his house; his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his G-d, as he had done previously.* **Avos D'Rabbi Nassan Chapter 4**