

Shavuot: All Israel Are Converts

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Bemidbar 15:15	
הַקֹּהֵל חֻקָּה אֶחָת לָכֶם וְלִגֵּר הַגֵּר חֻקֵּי עוֹלָם לְדִרְתֵּיכֶם כַּכֶּם כִּגֵּר יִהְיֶה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה:	the rest of the congregation. There shall be one law for you and for the resident stranger; it shall be a law for all time throughout the ages. You and the stranger shall be alike before GOD;

1. The Ger Tzedek's Sacrifice

Bavli Keritot 8b	
תָּנוּ רַבָּנִי: גֵּר מְעוֹכֵב לֹא כוֹל בִּקְדָּשִׁים עַד שְׂבִיבָא קִינוּ, הֵבִיא פְּרִידָה אֶחָת שְׁחָרִית – אוֹכֵל בִּקְדָּשִׁים לְעֶרֶב. כָּל הַקִּינִין שְׁבִתוֹרָה – אֶחָד חֲטָאת וְאֶחָד עוֹלָה, כָּאֵן – שְׁתֵּיהֶן עוֹלוֹת.	With regard to the atonement offering of a convert, the Sages taught in a baraita: A convert is precluded from partaking of sacrificial meat until he brings his bird nest, i.e., his offering of a pair of birds, either pigeons or doves. If he brought one young bird [perida] in the morning, he may partake of sacrificial meat in the evening. Furthermore, In the Torah , where bird nests are mandated as offerings, one of the birds is brought as a sin offering and the other one as a burnt offering ; but here , in the case of the convert, both of them are burnt offerings.

Bavli Rosh HaShanah 31b	
וְאִידָּה, דִּתְנָא: גֵּר שְׁנִיתְגִּיר בְּזִמְן הַזֶּה, צָרִיךְ שְׂפִירִישׁ רוֹבַע לְקִינוֹ. אָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן אֱלֶעָזָר: כֶּבֶד נִמְנָה עָלֶיהָ רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן וּבִיטְלָהּ, מִפְּנֵי הַתַּקְלָה.	And the other, as it is taught in a baraita: A convert who converts nowadays is required to set aside a quarter-shekel for his nest, i.e., his pair of doves. Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar said: Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai already assembled a majority who voted and rescinded the ordinance due to a potential mishap.

Toseftah Shekalim 3:22	
קִינוֹ שֶׁל גֵּר אֵין נוֹהֶגֶת אֶלָּא בְּפְנֵי הַבַּיִת, וְצָרִיךְ לְהֵבִיא מַעֲכָשׁוֹ, רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן אוֹמֵר אֵין צָרִיךְ לְהֵבִיא מַעֲכָשׁוֹ, מִפְּנֵי תַקְלָה.	The bird sacrifice of a proselyte applies only in the time of the temple. But also in the present time, he must bring it. R. Shimon says: He does not need to bring it in the present time because of the temptation to sin.

¹ All translations are from Sefaria, unless otherwise noted,.

Sifrei Zuta, Bemidbar 15:15	
<p>וְלִגְרָם הַגֵּר, מִכָּאֵן הִיָּה ר' אֱלִיעֶזֶר אוֹמֵר גֵּר שֶׁנִּתְגַּיֵּר צָרִיךְ רִבְעֵת הֶקֶל ר' יְהוֹשֻעַ אוֹמֵר אֵינוֹ צָרִיךְ שֶׁהִיא תִקְלָה לוֹ. גֵּר אֵלּוֹ הַגֵּרִים, הַגֵּר לְרִבּוֹת נָשִׁי הַגֵּרִים:</p>	<p>"And for the stranger who sojourns" — from here, Rabbi Eliezer would say: A convert who converts must bring a quarter-dinar offering of a bird nest sacrifice. Rabbi Joshua says: He does not need to bring it, because it would create a stumbling block for him.</p>

2. All Israel Are Converts

Bavli Keritot 9a	
<p>רַבִּי אוֹמֵר: "כָּכֶם" – כְּאֲבוֹתֵיכֶם, מָה אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם לֹא נִכְנְסוּ לְבְרִית אֶלָּא בְּמִילָה וּטְבִילָה וְהִרְצָאת דָּם – אִף הֵם לֹא יִכְנְסוּ לְבְרִית אֶלָּא בְּמִילָה וּטְבִילָה וְהִרְצָאת דָּמִים.</p>	<p>The <i>baraita</i> continues: Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi says: "As you are, so shall the stranger be" (Numbers 15:15), which means as your ancestors were: Just as your ancestors entered the covenant only through circumcision and immersion in a ritual bath and the sprinkling of blood on the altar, so too they may enter the covenant only through circumcision and immersion and the sprinkling of some blood.</p>

Rashi on Bavli Rosh HaShanah 31b	
<p>צָרִיךְ שֶׁיִּפְרִישׁ רִבְעֵת לְקֻנּוֹ: בְּמַסַּכְת כְּרִיתוֹת בְּרֹאשׁ פָּרָק אֲרֻבָּעָה מַחֲסֵרִי כִפְרָה (שָׁם) מְסִיק מִלְתָּא דְסָגִי לָהּ בְּעוֹלֵת הָעוֹף הִלְכָּהּ יִפְרִישׁ רִבְעֵת לְקֻנּוֹ שְׁמָא יִבְנֶה בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ בְּיָמֵינוּ וְיִקְרִיבֵנוּ:</p>	<p>"He must set aside a quarter for his bird-offering": In Tractate Keritot, at the beginning of the chapter "Four Who Lack Atonement," the conclusion is reached that a bird burnt-offering alone suffices for him. Therefore, he should set aside a quarter for his bird-offering, lest the Temple in Jerusalem be rebuilt in our days, and he will then offer it.</p>

Selichot Nusah Ashkenaz Lita, Tzom Gedaliah 9	
<p>אִם אָפֶס רִבְעֵת הֶקֶל. אֶהְיֶה שֶׁכֵּן אִם־רֶקֶן. אֶל־נֹאבְדָה עַל־כֵּן. יֵשׁ לָנוּ אָב זָקֵן:</p>	<p>Though the pigeon offerings have ceased, though the tent of His dwelling is now empty, we need not lose hope, for we have the merit of our old father.</p>

Rabbi Binyamin Lau, <i>The Sages: Character, Context, & Creativity</i> , Volume II, 14-16	
<p>The motivation for Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai's rabbinic decree was very pragmatic. At a time when God's presence was no longer manifest, when there was no way to maintain the conversion process as it was practiced during the Temple period, the rabbis searched for alternatives to the sacrificial requirement. The <i>baraita</i> above teaches that converts who joined the nation of Israel after the Temple's destruction would set aside a fourth of a Dinar coin, which was designated for a sacrifice "when the Temple would be rebuilt." Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai ostensibly worried that this ceremonial gesture would result in the misappropriation of sacred funds, and so he did away with it. But this explanation is not entirely satisfying, since there were other instances in which money was set aside for holy purposes, and yet those cases were not called into question...Why, then, was the convert's long-term deposit of funds for a sacrifice considered more problematic than that of a Jew who tithed his fruit and redeemed the tithe with cash designated for "when the Temple would be rebuilt"?</p>	
<p>It seems that Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai's real fears concerned a different obstacle: not the accidental misappropriation of funds, but rather the "iron wall" that separated God from His people. The destruction of the Temple and the end of sacrificial offerings threatened to make conversion henceforth impossible. Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai sought to overcome this obstacle by forfeiting the requirement to donate a fourth of a Dinar. He thus paved the way for newcomers to join the Jewish world even without Temple offerings.</p>	