

JewishTimes

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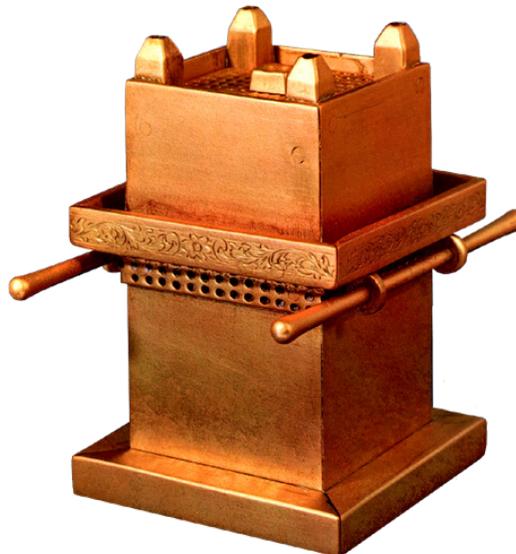
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VAYIKRA: SACRIFICES & MORAL PERFECTION

The lesson embodied in the story of Cain and Abel: God told Cain that His acceptance of the offering was contingent on the moral level of the offeror. That is why the Book of Vayikra incorporates the themes of moral perfection and sacrifices. They are inextricably intertwined.

RABBI REUVEN MANN

LETTERS

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Measure for Measure

READER: When we look at evil people, we see different shades of evil: some murder one person, others murder thousands, and others even millions. Now, when we consider the concept of “measure-for-measure,” is it a fact that the greatest “punishment” for such an evil person is their soul being destroyed? If that is so, are we to assume all the murderers get equal treatment?

For all of them, their souls are [equally] destroyed, so it doesn't seem like there are “levels” to this soul destruction. Meaning, if all murderers—despite their varying severity—are equally removed from existence...where is the “measure-for-measure” for each respective evildoer according to his own level of evil?

—*Omphile Tshipa*

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RABBI: It could, be that measure-for-measure is a method through which God helps the sinner identify the area of his flaw...to improve. Thus, those beyond improvement do not receive such a kindness. But Maimonides does write that punishment can be all in this world, all in the next world, or partially in both. Thus, God decides how to measure a fitting punishment. Maimonides writes (Hilchos Teshuva 6:1):

There is a category of sin for which justice demands that punishment should be visited upon the sinner in this world, on his body, or his property, or on his infant children, for the little children of man, who have not yet reached the age of intelligence nor attained the age when they are included among those who are obliged to observe the precepts, are considered man's own acquisition, even as it is written: "Every man shall be put to death for his own sin" (Deut. 24.16)—he suffers for his own sins when he reaches the age of man. There is a category of sin for which justice demands that punishment should be visited upon the transgressors only in the World to Come, and the sinner suffers no harm whatever in this world; and there is still another category of sin for which punishment is inflicted upon the sinner both in this world and the World to Come. ■

Serving Ourselves

READER: I once listened to a shiur you gave in which you quoted Rabbi Chait as saying something along the lines that service of God is service of the self. Can you explain what you meant?

—Alex Kahgan

RABBI: Following God's Torah does not benefit Him; it is solely for our own perfection:

"And even if man is righteous, what does he give God? What does He receive from your hand?" (Job 35:7)

God has no needs. He created Torah for man's benefit alone. ■

JEWES

No better than anyone else

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Jews priding themselves on possessing "superior Jewish souls" are baseless, arrogant and sinful.

Baseless: Nowhere in Torah is there found any mention of a "Jewish soul," let alone a Jewish "superior" soul. The opposite is true: all mankind descend from the same couple, and many times Torah says, "One Torah for the convert and the born Jew." Those are God's words. Thus, Jew and gentile possess the "identical" capacity.

Logic dictates that before anyone's existence commenced, he was not around to earn greater benefit than others. "Earning" is the only basis for pride. But one cannot take pride in his beautiful blue eyes, as he did not yet exist when his pre-conception genetics were determining his eye color. He did nothing to inherit his blue eyes. Similarly one cannot be proud of being born to Jewish parents, as prior to conception, one is nonexistent, and cannot "cause himself" to be born to Jewish parents. Nor does being born to Jewish parents render one superior.

Arrogant: Taking pride in a false claim is generated from the source of false pride: arrogance.

Sinful: Claiming one possesses a "superior Jewish soul" teaches others fallacy, and fooling others is sinful. It also denigrates non-Jews, which opposes the love, care and equality God mandates all mankind show to each other.

Abraham's merit was while he was gentile, which he always was. For until Moses' generation, all mankind were sons of Noah; Jews did not yet exist. Abraham's excellent "gentile" mind arrived at monotheism, despite his idolatrous upbringing. Ruth too sought Judaism while still a Moabite. Her merit too was while she was a gentile. Thus, gentiles can attain the highest levels of perfection...no less than Jews.

Also true, Maimonides teaches that a born Jew can lose his status as a Jew by not accepting 1 of the 13 fundamentals. It is then clear: "Better is the day of death than the day of birth" (Koheles 7:1) as Ibn Ezra writes, "For at birth we know not if this person will be righteous or a sinner. But at death, we know his fame, that he was a good man." Ibn Ezra does not say a Jew at birth has some advantage over a gentile. He says free choice determines one's status as good or evil, but in no way does one's birth to Jewish parents guarantee anything. Yes, one is fortunate to be born to Jewish parents who will hopefully follow Torah and train him in it. But this fortunate matter concerns practicality, not that a person born to Jewish parents has a "super soul." Such an idea is alien to all Torah texts.

Our Aleinu prayer states, "And all sons of flesh will call Your name." Thus, we pray that gentiles will eventually recognize the truth, as Torah teaches. And this can only occur if gentiles possess the same capacity as the Jew.

To suggest that God creates gentiles with lesser souls contradicts all the above, and also renders God evil, by crippling certain people as inferior creations, without fair cause.

We must reject this belief in a "super" soul, like all other false beliefs that are commonplace in religious Jewish circles, but have no basis in Torah. Yes, books exist that support such foolishness, but as Maimonides said, it's a disease to believe a notion simply because it is printed in a book. For books exist about idolatry too. But no text authored by God endorses such racism.

Being a "Jew" is not a genetic matter, but a choice. One born to Jewish parents loses his Jewish status if he sins too far. And a gentile who accepts Torah is a 100% Jew. It is therefore absurd to suggest that a Jew is superior, since being Jewish is a choice, not genetic design. ■

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RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

The notion of bashert, “meant-to-be,” is extremely popular. How did it win so many fans? It did so in part, as it is pleasing to our egos to be exonerated from our faults, as when one deludes himself that all is pre-ordained including his errors. Maimonides corrects this error:

Permit not your thought to dwell upon that which is spoken by foolish gentiles and a majority of boorish Jews, that the Holy One, blessed is He decrees at the very embryonic state of every man whether he should be just or wicked. (Hilchos Teshuva 6:1)

When an individual or a people of a state do sin, the sinner transgressed consciously and of his own free will. (Hilchos Teshuva 5:2)

And, not solely because of having accepted the religion do we know that there is no predestination, but even by clear evidence of the words of wisdom. Because thereof it is said in prophecy that man is judged for his actions according to his actions, whether they be good or evil, and this is the very foundation upon which all the words of prophecy depend. (Hilchos Teshuva 5:5)

Upon making a bad business decision, or marrying a poor spouse, others comfort us with “It’s for a reason,” which cripples one from introspecting and abandoning poor values so as not to repeat the mistake. We then continue making poor decisions.

Bashert is not based on evidence. In fact, regarding our faults, the opposite is true: most evils in life are self-inflicted as Maimonides teaches (Guide, book iii, chap. xii). Our difficulties, most times, are caused by poor judgement. One loses a job or gets divorced due to poor character. One becomes poverty-stricken because he didn’t follow intelligence to prepare for an

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Bashert

Truth or Fairy Tale?

“Serendipity” — A 2001 film about a relationship that based on destiny

Bashert

Truth or Fairy Tale?



interview, or he sought jobs for which he was unqualified. Another person demands too high a wage and he too is rejected. And those who avoid all pain seeking pleasure alone, cannot stomach difficulties at work and leave their jobs, instead of accepting some hardship so as to pay rent and eat. Others yet speak viciously, and the offended person retaliates, causing grave harm at times. And many divorces occur due to selfishness. All the above problems could have been avoided through intelligence. None of these problems are pre-ordained or bashert.

Bashert raises many questions, such as the need for prayer. For if all is preordained, why pray to improve your perfectly-planned life? Why argue with someone who wronged you, as that too was God's will! But most problematic: it contradicts God's system of Reward and

Punishment. Free will is a fundamental truth, and the choices we make are not controlled by anything but ourselves. Maimonides writes (Hilchos Teshuva 5:1):

Behold, this species, man, stands alone in the world, and there is no other kind like him, as regards this subject of being able of his own accord, by his reason and thought, to know the good and the evil, and to do whatever his inclination dictates him with none to stay his hand from either doing good or evil...

Therefore we will earn punishment for our sins, and reward for our merits. All is not bashert, preordained. Otherwise, we are not the cause and cannot be rewarded or punished. Maimonides discusses this (Guide, book III, chap. xviii):

The relation of Divine Providence is therefore not the same to all men; the greater the human perfection a person has attained, the greater the benefit he derives from Divine Providence. This benefit is very great in the case of prophets, and varies according to the degree of their prophetic faculty; as it varies in the case of pious and good men according to their piety and uprightness. For it is the intensity of the Divine intellectual influence that has inspired the prophets, guided the good in their actions, and perfected the wisdom of the pious. In the same proportion as ignorant and disobedient persons are deficient in that Divine influence, their condition is inferior, and their rank equal to that of irrational beings; and they are "like unto the beasts" (with no providence whatsoever, as beasts have no free will and therefore merit through which God might favor one over another).

"He Will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness: for by strength shall no man prevail" (1 Sam. ii. 9). When we see that some men escape plagues and mishaps, whilst others perish by them, we must not attribute this to a difference in the properties of their bodies, or in their physical constitution, "for by strength shall no man prevail," but it must be attributed to their different degrees of perfection, some approaching God, whilst others moving away from Him. Those who approach Him are best protected, and "He will keep the feet of his saints." But those who keep far away from Him are left exposed to what may befall them; there is nothing that could protect them from what might happen; they are like those who walk in darkness, and are certain to stumble. The protection of the pious by Providence is also expressed in the following passages: "He keepeth all his bones" etc. (Ps. xxxiv. 21); "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous" (ibid. ver. 16); "He shall call upon me and I shall answer him" (ibid. xci. 15). There are in Scripture many more passages expressing the principle that men enjoy Divine protection in proportion to their perfection and piety. The philosophers have likewise discussed this subject.

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Marrying a good wife is a mitzvah, and God does not decree one to perform a mitzvah. Marrying a bad wife is a sin, and God does not decree one to perform a sin.

MAIMONIDES



Maimonides is clear: At one extreme, God fully protects the righteous. And at the other extreme, God is unrelated to sinners, and there are varying degrees in between. But bashert is not true, that all people at all times receive God's providence.

How then did Joseph tell his brothers (Gen. 45:5) that they did not sell him, but that it was God's plan? Here, it was in fact God's plan, as Joseph realized after witnessing Pharaoh's prophetic dreams, and Joseph "ended up" close to Pharaoh to provide dream interpretation and save all from famine. Joseph witnessed divine providence. But Joseph could not deny his brothers' free will sin of not showing him mercy. Here, Joseph expressed his amazing perfection, that he valued God's plan over his brothers' imperfection. By telling his brothers fearing Joseph's revenge, "it was to save life that God sent me ahead of you," Joseph told his brothers that he does not follow petty emotions, but sees the greater picture, and he values that alone. He told them he will not retaliate because in the end, it was a good thing that he was in Egypt. His brothers sinned, but he would not take revenge. But most cases are not like this; God is not guiding events. Even here, God did not interfere with the brothers' free choices.

Another perfection is how the righteous relate to misfortunes, as did King David, when he said, "God told him [Shimi ben Gera] to curse me" (II Sam. 16:10). As King David cannot know God's thoughts, this means King David used that event for his perfection "as if" God willed it (Radak).

Meaning, as God decreed all men to have free will, and at times some men will use it to curse others, King David operated based on that reality, and appreciated God's decree of free will—not that he felt God coerced Shimi curse him. King David always saw God behind the scenes of all events. His attachment to this ultimate reality (God) allowed him to care less about uncomfortable events. King David said, "Perhaps God will look upon my punishment [Shimi's curse] and recompense me for the abuse he has uttered today." Meaning, King David felt that being humbled by the curse enabled him an opportunity to perfect himself...not that God is providing some reward. Perhaps King David had some area of his personality that verbal abuse could awaken some self-reflection, and ultimately, improvement. This is the recompense to which King David refers. He recompenses himself through refining his character.

In summary, bashert is a false human fantasy. Torah and our sages do not endorse bashert. Events occur due to either human free choice, chance/nature, and for righteous people, God's intervention. But to say all is bashert is without evidence, and is generated from our emotions, not our reason. We must also unravel lessons regarding Joseph, King David and others...Torah is not a simple read. But when we arrive at Torah's true underlying lessons, they are perfectly reasonable and "pleasant in all their ways" (Prov. 3:17). ■



The copper altar of animal sacrifice

VAYIKRA

The Book of Holiness & Moral Perfection

Rabbi Reuven Mann

Part 1: Sacrifice and Holiness

The third Book of the Torah, Vayikra, deals with two major topics. The first few portions deal extensively with the system of sacrifices that was arranged in the Holy Temple. This includes the special service that was performed on Yom Kippur by the High Priest to obtain kapara (atonement) for the entire Jewish People.

The other subject taken up in the Book of Vayikra is that of personal purity and holiness. This theme incorporates many commandments that regulate foods that one can consume and those that are prohibited. It also lists the forbidden as well as the permitted sexual relationships one may engage in.

The category of holiness, is not restricted to behaviors that are exclusively between man and God, "between man and God." It also encompasses one's responsibilities toward others, such as the Mitzvah to honor parents and to give charity to the needy. It further demands, that we refrain from inflicting bodily or monetary or even psychological damage on any human being. What emerges is, that a holy person is one who is moderate in satisfying his physical desires, and just and compassionate in his dealings with others.

At first glance, the relationship between sacrifices and personal sanctity is not apparent. They seem to be two separate and disparate matters. Yet, the fact that the Torah has incorporated both of them into one Book, indicates that there is a significant connection between them. What is the relationship between korbanot (sacrifices) and personal holiness?

There is another tantalizing question that needs to be raised. Many prophets arose after Moses, and their pronouncements are incorporated in the section of Scripture known as Navi (Prophets). According to Torah law, no prophet may introduce a new mitzvah (commandment) which Moses did not legislate. Nor may he modify an existing commandment, by either addition or subtraction.

Thus, if he claims, for example, that Hashem sent him to add a new mitzvah or to subtract one, or even if he only seeks to add a feature to an existing mitzvah, such as a requirement to eat Matzah on the last night of Passover or to limit the obligation to dwell in the Sukkah to just the first day of the festival, he is regarded as a false prophet and executed.

The purpose of the prophets who came after Moses was not to legislate statutes, but to reinforce the Jews in the observance of mitzvot (commandments). Additionally, they provided criticism when the people strayed from God's laws and indulged in behaviors that were oppressive and corrupt. But it was manifestly not their mission to take the Jews to task for the actual performance of mitzvot! And definitely not to degrade any religious practices which the people were conscientiously fulfilling!

Thus, it is baffling to understand some of the harsh things the Prophets said about korbanot. In fact, they voiced strong criticism of the Jews and the Temple service, going so far as to imply that Hashem has no use for it, and even, doesn't desire it.

How are we to understand the seeming disdain of the prophets for the Jewish people's bringing of korbanot, which is the major theme of the Book of Vayikra?

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Part II: Cain and Abel

The institution of Sacrifices goes back to the beginning of time. The Rabbis say that Adam brought a sacrifice, and the Torah attests that Cain, Abel and Noah, not to mention the Patriarchs, did likewise. In fact, the Ramban (Nachmanides) cites these cases to challenge the Rambam's (Maimonides') view, which is that the Torah only ordained sacrifices as a concession to the religious sensibilities of "ordinary" people, who could not conceive of a religion which didn't enjoin man to bring offerings to God. Why then, asks the Ramban, would people on the level of the Patriarchs, whose perception of Hashem was on the highest level, feel compelled to bring sacrifices to Him?

The Biblical account of the confrontation between Cain and Abel reveals a great deal about the Torah's outlook on the matter of korbanot. Both brothers brought offerings to Hashem. One, from his choicest, fattest sheep and the other, from the "fruits of the earth" (Genesis 4:3).

The outcome of their endeavors could not have been more dramatically different. "Hashem turned to Abel and his offering, but did not turn to Cain and his offering" (Genesis 4:4-5). God's refusal to accept his gift caused Cain much grief.

(It should be noted that the worthiness of the korban [sacrifice] for God's acceptance should be a primary concern of the offeror. This idea is incorporated into our Shemona Esrei prayer, which was instituted by our Rabbis as a substitute for sacrifices. In the blessing of Retzei we beseech Hashem to "find favor with Israel and their prayers...." [Shemona Esrei prayer, seventeenth blessing]. We are under no illusion, that simply because we offer them, that our prayers are desired by Hashem.)

The lesson of the story of Cain and Abel is expressed in the fact that Hashem favored Abel and his mincha offering, but rejected Cain and his mincha. Cain was dejected because he sensed that Hashem's refusal to "turn" to his offering signified His disdain for him, that he was unworthy in the sight of God.

Cain, while not perfect, sincerely desired a relationship with Hashem, but now felt totally cast away. Hashem did not leave Cain in the lurch. He "responded" to Cain's dilemma, for nothing can be more painful than the experience of rejection, especially when it comes from the Creator of the universe. Hashem "Reached Out" to him to explain things from the Divine Perspective.

Hashem assured Cain that He did not "play favorites", and that His relationship with people was based purely on their merit. Those individuals who raised themselves to a higher level of existence were the ones with whom He found favor.

This principle, is a fundamental doctrine of the Torah. Hashem Himself Explains, that He Made special promises to Abraham "Because Abraham listened to My voice and observed My safeguards, My commandments, My statutes and My instructions" (Genesis 26:5). It was only the high degree of perfection attained by Abraham, that caused Hashem to be close to him.

Hashem therefore Advised Cain, "Surely, if you improve yourself, you will be uplifted. But if you do not improve yourself, sin crouches at the door. Its desire is toward you, but you can conquer it" (Genesis 4:6-7).

The element which was lacking in the Sacrifice of Cain, was that of self-elevation. Sacrifice, unrelated to any inner process of spiritual improvement, does not achieve its purpose. Hashem does not Turn to it.

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Part III: The Dark Side of Sacrifices

Moreover, the very institution of Sacrifice can become a negative, even dangerous, phenomenon. The corruption of this system was a major cause of the destruction of both Temples. The Rabbis say, that in arranging for the utter obliteration of the Beit Hamikdash (Holy Temple), Hashem “vented His anger on wood and stone” (Rashi on Psalms 79:1). God’s anger was primarily directed at the Jews because of the many sins they had committed, but instead of destroying them, He eliminated the source of their sinfulness, the Temple.

In other words, the Sanctuary had become a means of enabling the Jews to continue in their wrongful path rather than motivating them to look within and do teshuva (repentance). The Jews related to korbanot as some sort of magical charm which (they believed) automatically provided atonement, regardless of the moral level of the individual.

When a person believes that there is some kind of religious mechanism that always protects him from the consequences of his deeds, he will be less inclined to control himself. Indeed, some of the most egregious criminals who committed the most horrible atrocities were, in fact, deeply religious (though not pious) men.

How can wicked conduct be reconciled with religious faith?

This is possible, because some people have completely severed the connection between moral behavior and the judgment of Heaven. For them, religion is limited to a series of mystical rituals which, if performed, secures guaranteed salvation. Thus, they can engage in all manners of criminal activities with impunity, and without any pangs of conscience.

When people departed from the teachings about teshuva and spiritual holiness and began to view the sacrifices as a religious panacea which automatically wiped away transgression, their bad behavior got worse. It reached the point where they felt secure in exploiting their brothers and committing other atrocities, as long as they could go to the Temple and bring the requisite sacrifices.

This is what the prophet Amos was referring to when he said in the name of God: “If you offer Me burnt offerings—or your meal offerings—I will not accept them; I will pay no heed to your gifts of fatlings. But let justice well up like water, righteousness like a never-ending stream” (Amos 5:22,24).

Hosea said, “For I desire goodness, not sacrifice; knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings” (Hosea 6:6). And Isaiah depicted Hashem as saying,

“What need have I for the multitude of your sacrifices?” says the Lord. “I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no desire for the blood of bulls and lambs and billygoats. When you come to appear before Me; who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Do not continue to bring meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to Me...” (Isaiah 1:11-13).

The ultimate goal of Judaism is the perfection of man, which comes through the pursuit of wisdom and the practice of good deeds. Every particular commandment and religious activity must be in consonance with this objective. At a certain point in Jewish history, however, the system of korbanot was no longer conducive to man’s ethical advancement. When it became convenient for people to obtain a quick kapara, without any need to introspect and improve their ways, the institution of Sacrifices posed a serious threat to the moral well-being of the Jewish People.

We can now understand the relationship between the themes of

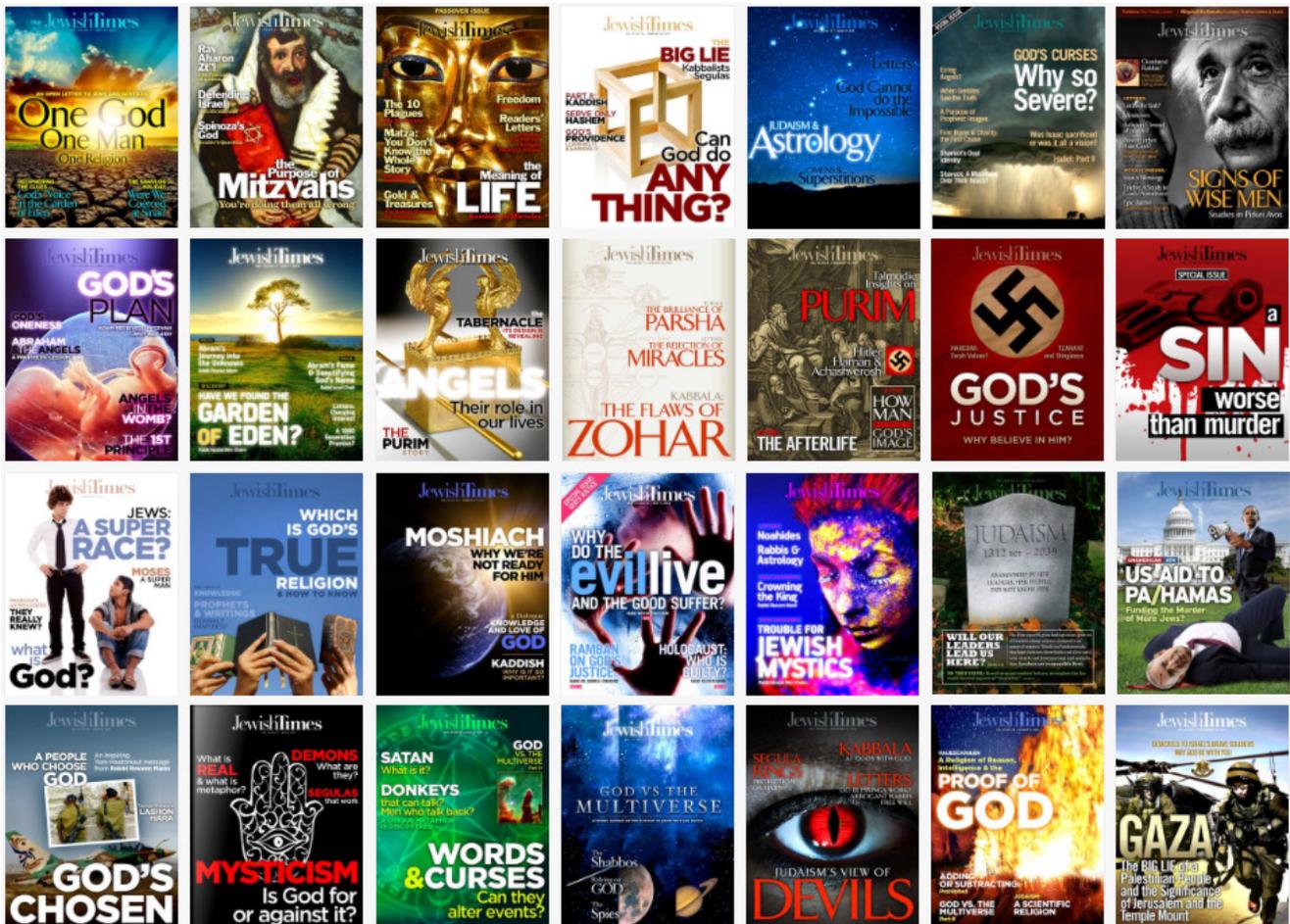
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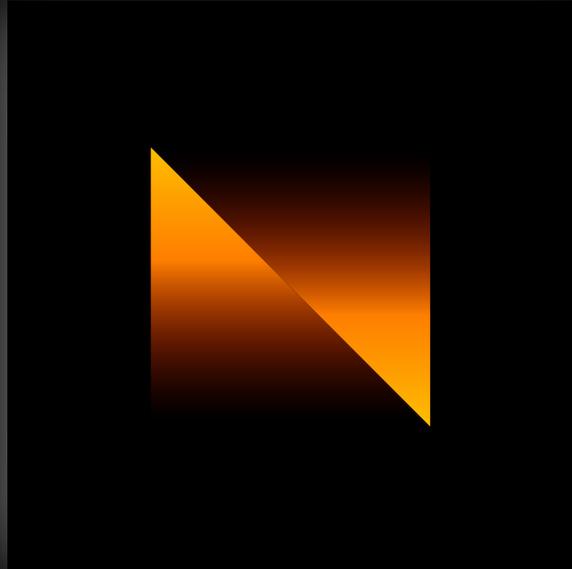
The gold incense altar

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personal holiness and korbanot. The former modifies the latter. The goal we should strive for is that of sanctity, and all it implies, in terms of personal conduct and relations with others. Every mitzvah contributes to our spiritual improvement in some way. Indeed, sacrifices, if done properly, can have a profound impact on the spiritual perfection of the individual.

But we must face the fact that they contain the potential for great harm. When they become the crutch which enables people to avoid facing the consequences of sin, and to believe that their misdeeds can be forgiven without the need to do teshuva, they constitute a clear and present danger.

Part IV: The Purpose of Sacrifices

The question arises: if the real goal of the Torah is to elevate man through knowledge and good deeds, what is the purpose of korbanot altogether? I would point to the idea (which many commentators, especially Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, have emphasized) that it provides an opportunity for the individual to have an “encounter” with Hashem, and acknowledge that He is the Source and Master of all that exists.

This encounter takes place when one enters the Temple in which the Divine Presence Resides, and comes face-to-face with the reality of Hashem’s Existence and Control over the universe. Visiting the Beit Hamikdash, is regarded as being in “the presence of Hashem.” By offering an animal, he is acknowledging in a concrete manner, that everything which man enjoys comes from Hashem; and must be used for the purpose which He Intended.

It is essential to clarify what is meant by the term “sacrifice.” The Rambam explains, that Hashem Is the Ultimate Existence, Who Is the Source of everything that exists besides Him. The Rambam says,

If you could imagine that He does not exist—nothing else could possibly exist. And if you could imagine that everything besides Him did not exist—He Alone Would Exist, and He Would not be detracted because of their absence; for all things that are in existence, are dependent on, and need Him, but He, blessed is He, does not need them or any one of them” (Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Foundations of the Torah, 1:2-3).

If that is the case, how is it possible for man to “give” anything to God? Hashem has no need of man’s gifts, so what is the point of the offering? In my opinion, the act of offering is to demonstrate man’s conviction that everything in the world “belongs” to Hashem and is a gift from Him; which therefore must be used in the appropriate manner.

The concrete expression of these ideas in the Holy Temple service, the place Hashem has designated for His earthly “Abode,” has a profound impact on the soul of the offeror, which can be spiritually transformative.

Additionally, the experience of being in the presence of Hashem, reminds us that we have been created in the “Image of God”; and this

produces a new sense of respect for the dignity of man. This can induce a sense of reverence for one’s own life and that of all the people one encounters.

It is because of these and other reasons that the Prophets, notwithstanding their strenuous critique of the Temple service, also express great praise for it and speak yearningly of its restoration. Thus, Jeremiah said in regard to the Messianic era, “And they shall come from the towns of Judah and from the environs of Jerusalem... and bringers of burnt offerings of thanksgiving to the House of the Lord” (Jeremiah 17:26).

And Isaiah proclaimed, “And I will bring them, to my sacred mount and let them rejoice in My House of Prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices shall be welcome on My altar; for My house shall be called a House of Prayer for all Peoples” (Isaiah 56:7).

We have noted the Rambam’s position that sacrifices were not a religious ideal, but only a concession to the emotional needs of people. This understanding has been challenged by the fact that the greatest people, such as Noah and Abraham, erected altars and brought offerings to Hashem. Additionally, critics of the Rambam’s theory have asked, why do the Prophets assure us that sacrifices will be restored in Messianic times, when mankind will be on a much higher level?

I believe that the ambivalence displayed by the Prophets regarding korbanot lies in the dual nature of that institution. It is, in fact, a double-edged sword. In the hands of the wrong people, it can deteriorate into a perfunctory ritual which affords “guaranteed absolution” for heinous sins. This can produce the most egregious behaviors, as the fear of sin recedes before a sense of confidence that all transgressions can be easily whitewashed.

However, there is another dimension to the institution of korbanot. If approached in the proper manner, with a pure heart and genuine desire to “get closer” to Hashem, it can elevate a person to an exalted spiritual level in terms of personal sanctity and righteous treatment of others.

That is the lesson embodied in the story of Cain and Abel, in which Hashem told Cain that His acceptance of the offering was contingent on the moral level of the offeror. That is why the Book of Vayikra incorporates the theme of Kedusha (Holiness) and personal purity with that of Sacrifices. They are inextricably intertwined. The sacrifice of the unrepentant sinner is an abomination. The true objective of this service is to enable the individual to come before Hashem and acknowledge Him as the source of all existence.

Judaism maintains that it is only through an appropriate relationship with God that man can elevate himself spiritually and display justice in dealing with his fellow man. In the Messianic era, “...the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God; as waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14). This will be the underlying cause of the fact that “...nation will not lift sword against nation, neither will they learn war, anymore” (Isaiah 2:4).

In that atmosphere of increased knowledge and great interpersonal harmony and understanding, the entire system of Mitzvot, including the full Temple service, will be restored. May it happen speedily and in our time.

Shabbat Shalom. ■



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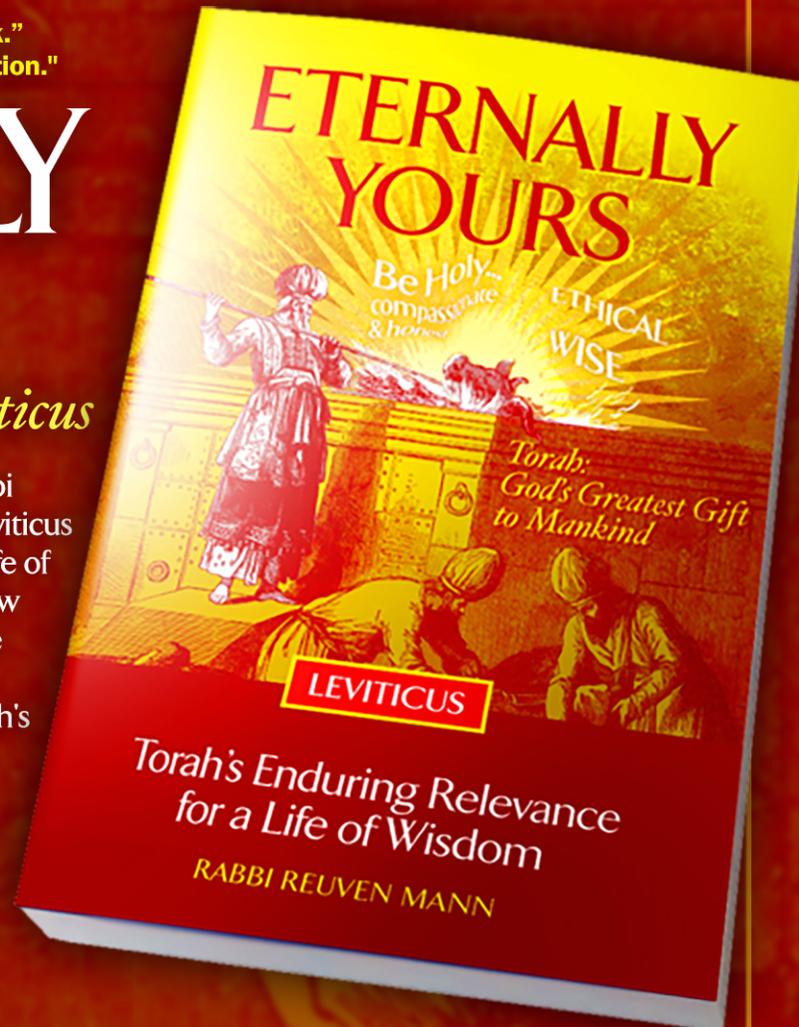
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God promises Israel to Isaac:

"Reside in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; I will assign all these lands to you and to your heirs, fulfilling the oath that I swore to your father Abraham." (Gen. 26:3)

God promises Israel to Jacob:

"I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the ground on

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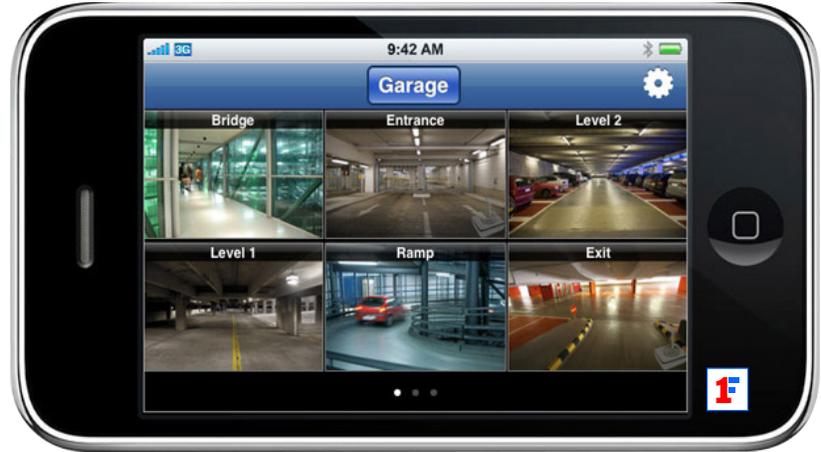


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