**Part II. The שופר from the ram of the עקידה**

- Quotes רש"י – the שופר referred to here was taken from the ram used in place of יצחק at the עקידה

- רמב"ן finds this strange — the ram brought then was an עולה, and an עולה’s horns are also burned!

- [There are a few interesting insights here into רמב"ן’s methodology:

- Firstly, the doesn’t ignore common sense when examining a מדרש; if it doesn’t make sense, then it doesn’t make sense.

- Secondly, note how he does so with reverence, as always. Because חז"ל said this, he attributes it to a lack of understanding on his part.

- Thirdly, he assumes that the הלכה is always at play. If אברהם אבינו offered up an עולה, one should assume that it was exactly in accordance with the manner that we ourselves would post-מתן תורה.

- Fourthly, not only does this align with his general perspective towards the consistency of הלכה, it also fits with his approach towards the fact that every detail of every מצוה is intrinsically, fundamentally important (as opposed to רמב"ם) and obviously won’t change flippantly.

- (See at the very end of the פרשה, for example, in כ:כב)].

- To defend this מדרש, רמב"ן suggests that maybe ה' reconstructed the horn in order to have it be blown here

- [Continuing on:

- Fifthly, you see that he isn't willing to easily give up on the simple explanation of this מדרש, despite its obvious strangeness to him.

- Sixthly, there would obviously have to be some sort of explanation for why this would warrant an outright miracle:

- Perhaps it goes to show us the utmost significance of the עקידה, of how that seminal moment proved that the בני ישראל, as the true heirs of אברהם אבינו, were worthy of receiving the תורה].

- In conclusion, however, the רמב"ן prefers to understand this מדרש on the level of סוד; there is something deeper here than the surface meaning…

- [To conclude:

- Finally, one sees that the רמב"ן *is* willing to reinterpret the simple meaning of a מדרש if the pressure is great enough — one would be foolish to think all מדרשים are literal (see רמב"ם in his הקדמה לפרק חלק and elsewhere)].

**Part III. The explanation of the פסוק’s given reasoning about not using stones hewn by iron on the מזבח**

- What is the meaning of the פסוק’s given reasoning for the מצוה not to build the מזבח from hewn stones using iron?

- 1) חז"ל – iron represents the shortening of life, and that it the opposite of the מזבח’s purpose (to earn כפרה and lengthen one’s days)

- [Therefore, iron could not be used in the building of the מזבח]

- 2) ראב"ע – the chips of the hewn stones would be thrown in the trash (which would be disrespectful)

- [Therefore, hewn stones could not be used in the building of the מזבח]

- 3) ראב"ע – the chips of the hewn stones might be taken by עובדי ע"ז to be used in their alters, perhaps enabling their actions to succeed

- [Therefore, hewn stones could not be used in the building of the מזבח]

- 4) רמב"ם (in מורה נבוכים) – this was a way of preventing them from etching symbols in the stones, as was the practice of עובדי ע"ז

- [Therefore, iron could not be used in the building of the מזבח]

- 5) רמב"ן himself – iron represents the forces of destruction in general, and ה' gave it to עשו as his inheritance, and it should serve no part in the service of ה'

- [רמב"ן is building off of חז"ל’s explanation, but expanding it more broadly. That’s why the דוד and שלמה examples are relevant].

- רמב"ן’s proof destroys ראב"ע’s explanations (it was absolutely מותר to use hewn stones, just not ones hewn from iron), and also knocks away the רמב"ם’s as well (it was מותר to etch designs into the מזבח, just not using iron)