



This issue of Torat Chayim is dedicated to the soldiers of the IDF, the hostages, and the wounded.

Ramban on Our Parshah: Why Korbanot?

As Sefer Vayikra begins, the Torah shifts from the Mishkan to the korbanot brought therein, and the modern reader asks: Why would we bring gifts of animals and grain to an immortal, unhungry G-d? The question isn't new; in the 16th century, Rabbi Moshe Isserless compiled a list of no fewer than 14 different approaches to explain korbanot, employing rational, philosophical, and mystical schools of thought. [See *Torat haOlah*, Introduction to Part 2.]

The Rambam suggested that korbanot are educational, undermining the idolatry of our neighbors. Regional powers of the biblical era served sheep, goats and cattle, and therefore Hashem commanded us to bring those creatures as korbanot to Hashem. (*Moreh HaNevuchim* 3:46)

But Ramban (Vayikra 1:6) argued that non-Jews didn't worship the actual animals, but the cosmological forces they represented, and that using those animals as korbanot would actually honor those forces. We would send a stronger message by eating those animals, not sacrificing them in a sacred setting! Further, Hashem accepted the korbanot of Hevel and Noach long before there were any regional idolatries!

Rather, Ramban contended that korbanot are meant for atonement. He wrote, "One who sins should bring an offer-

ing, leaning his hands on it to represent actions, verbally confessing to represent speech, burning the innards on the fire to represent the organs of thought and desire, and [burning] the legs to represent the arms and legs which perform all of a person's work, and placing the blood on the altar to represent the blood of his life. One who does all of this will contemplate that he sinned against his G-d with his body and life, and it would be appropriate for this blood to be spilled and his own body to be burned, if not for the kindness of the Creator" who accepted the korban instead. But Ramban himself described this idea as "appealing" rather than "correct." Among its flaws: Some korbanot are about thanks and celebration, not forgiveness!

Perhaps the simplest and clearest benefit of the korban comes in another, brief comment by Ramban: "Every reference to *korban* is an expression of *kreivah* [intimacy] and unity." In other words: We give of ourselves to voice our desire to become close to Hashem.

Our neighbors of today do not worship livestock, and we have grown accustomed to atoning without a korban, but we still seek ways to feel close to Hashem. Until we again have a Beit HaMikdash, may we find other ways to give of ourselves, and thereby draw close to Hashem.

Parshah Riddles for Kids (answers on the back)

Age 4-8: How many foods do we give someone on Purim, to fulfill the mitzvah of Mishloach Manot?

Age 8-12: What is the only animal mentioned in Megillat Esther?

Age 12+: According to Rashi, why does the Torah say that Hashem called to Moshe "from the ohel moed"?

Journey Through Tanach: Yehoshua, Perek 23

We have now arrived at the end of Yehoshua's reign. Fourteen years have elapsed since Chapter 22, when the distribution of the land was completed and the eastern tribes crossed the Yarden River to their portion. The Jews have remained free of idolatry, even if they have not fulfilled their mission of eliminating Canaanite idolatry from the land. Yehoshua recognizes that he is nearing the end of his life, and he summons the Jews, the citizens as well as the leaders, to address them. He begins with a forthright statement: "I have aged." (23:1-2)

Yehoshua continues with a summons: Hashem has fulfilled His promises, you've seen it yourselves in the way Hashem has driven off your enemies. Hashem will continue to do this, but you are responsible to adhere to the Torah, not to marry among the Canaanites, and not to fall into idolatry. (23:3-10)

Yehoshua then admonishes the nation to love Hashem and follow the Torah. He forecasts his own death, and warns that their failure to live up to Divine expectations will

lead Hashem to abandon the Jews to their enemies. The ultimate result will be the loss of the land. (23:11-16)

A striking aspect of this speech is the way nearly every sentence echoes biblical text, in particular Devarim 11. To the end, Yehoshua is the student of Moshe. Here are some of the parallels:

23:1 Devarim 12:10; 25:19

23:2 Devarim 29:9

23:3 Shemot 19:4, 20:18; Devarim 29:1/Shemot 14:14; Devarim 1:30, 3:22, 20:4

23:5 Devarim 11:23

23:6 Devarim 5:28; Devarim 17:1

23:7 Shemot 23:3

23:9 Devarim 11:23-25

23:10 Devarim 32:30

23:11 Devarim 4:15

23:12 Devarim 7:3

23:13 Bamidbar 33:55; Devarim 11:17; Devarim 11:23

23:14 Melachim I 2:2; Devarim 11:13; Devarim 11:18

23:15-16 Devarim 11:17

The 613 Mitzvot: #25 - Belief in Hashem, Part 2

Rabbi Chasdai Crescas (14th century, *Or Hashem, Hatzaah*) raised a fundamental objection to the concept of a mitzvah of belief. The term "mitzvah" only includes activities one can choose to perform. Belief, on the other hand, either exists or does not exist; it is not a function of choice.

Don Isaac Abarbanel addressed this problem (15th-16th century, *Rosh Amanah*, Chapter 17), contending that belief requires preparation through philosophical analysis. The Torah's 25th mitzvah instructs us to undertake the analysis which will bring us to belief.

Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman (20th century, *Kovetz Ma'amarim v'Igrot* 1) echoed Rav Crescas' question, but came to a different conclusion. He noted the severity of the Torah's condemnation for one who denies the tenets of faith, and the fact that belief is expected not only of accomplished scholars, but of every Jewish teen who has not had the opportunity for deep analysis! But in contrast with Abarbanel's approach, Rabbi Wasserman argued that belief in Hashem's creation of the universe is natural, and that disbelief requires denying the evidence of one's senses. Quoting *Chovot HaLevavot* (*Sha'ar haYichud* 6), he declared that a world without a Creator would be random and unstructured, and that the wisdom visible in human biology is evidence that Hashem created it. Only if one is seduced by personal desires will one deny Creation. Therefore, the mitzvah is to believe in Divine Creation, and in the religious concepts which emerge from this.

Israel's Chief Rabbis: Tzedakah Destroys Amalek, Rabbi Ovadia Hedaya

Rav Ovadia Hedaya was born in Syria in 1899; in 1907 his family made aliyah to Jerusalem. His father, a Kabbalist, led the Sephardic Beit Din there, and was Rosh Yeshiva of the Kabbalistic Yeshivat Beit El in the Old City. Rav Ovadia studied Kabbalah and traditional Torah, and in 1923 he began to teach at Yeshivat Porat Yosef in the Old City. In 1925 he joined the Sephardic Beit Din of Jerusalem, and in 1939 he became Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Petah Tikva. In 1951 he returned to Jerusalem as a judge on the Chief Beit Din of Jerusalem, and eventually he became its head.

Yeshivat Beit El was closed by the Jordanians in 1948, but Rav Hedaya opened a new version in 1957. Rav Hedaya was known for both Halachah and Kabbalah, and his rulings blended the fields. Rav Hedaya passed away in 1977.

In a derashah for Shabbat Zachor and Parshat Vayikra (*Vayikach Ovadyahu* Vol. 2, #12), Rav Ovadia described how Matanot la'Evyonim lead to our ultimate redemption:

The verse 'When one brings a korban from you (Vayikra 1:2)' also hints at the future redemption, as the Chida wrote (*Ahavat Dovid*, pg. 76), 'One must increase tzedakah on Pu-

rim, because the acronym for *eesh l'rei'eihu umatanot la'evyonim* is ELUL, hinting that we should be awakened to repent and to revere Hashem, for just as Tishrei is a time of judgment and one must repent beforehand, in Elul, so too in these days of Purim, for Pesach is a time of judgment, and our Sages have said that the memory of Amalek will be erased on Erev Pesach. If so, one must be awakened to repentance on Purim, maybe we will merit that the memory of Amalek will be erased on Erev Pesach, and Mashiach will come. This is the reason to increase tzedakah on Purim; in the merit of tzedakah, our sins are forgiven and we will merit redemption quickly, in our days."

Certainly, the value of tzedakah is like a korban; both are equally good as atonement, as Daniel 4:24 said, "Redeem your sins with tzedakah." Thus it says, "When one brings a korban from you," it means if one increases tzedakah, which is from you, your money, it atones like korbanot, and then you will merit [the rest of the verse], "from the animals, from the cattle and from the sheep you shall bring your korban," Mashiach will come quickly, in our days, and our holy and splendid House will be built, and there we will bring burnt offerings and sacrifices from animals, cattle and sheep...

Upcoming Learning!

All classes are open to men and women and free of charge, unless otherwise noted

7:10 PM Shabbat March 23

Purim: The Most Enduring Yom Tov, with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, at Eitz Chayim

8:15-9:00 PM Tuesday March 26

Gemara Makkot with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, for men, at 693 Knollwood

8:00-9:30 PM Monday April 8, Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/mtorcz>

Medical Ethics: Updating the Determination of the Moment of Death

Please register at <https://torontotorah.com/cme> Accredited for CME, non-medical professionals welcome

The following weekly shiurim do not meet this coming week:

Sunday March 24, Fourteen Centuries

Monday March 25, Halachah in Healthcare Settings

Age 4-8 Two
Age 8-12 Achashverosh's horse
Age 12+ The voice did not travel outside the ohel moed; only Moshe heard it. See Rashi to Vayikra 1:1.

Answers to Parshah Riddles

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