



**Warmest wishes to Rabbi Bernard Fox and to the Fox and Zimmer families on the marriage of Racheli to Aaron. Rabbi Fox, your Weekly Parsha contributions are greatly appreciated by many.**

**Below: The first page of the first printed edition of the Jerusalem Talmud, printed 1523 in Venice, by Jacob M. Lowy (Collection, National Library of Canada)**

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## Weekly Parsha

# Vayikra

RABBI BERNARD FOX

“Speak to Bnai Yisrael and say to them the following: When a person from among you offers a sacrifice to Hashem, if it is an animal sacrifice, it should be taken from the cattle or the flocks of sheep or goats.” (VaYikra 1:2)

Much of Sefer VaYikra deals with the laws regulating sacrifices. The idea

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# PRAYER & SACRIFICE

## ANALYZING THE TALMUD

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

The Talmud (Brachos 26b) records a dispute between Rabbi Yossi son of Rabbi Chanina and Rabbi Joshua. Rabbi Yossi claimed that our prayers today (Shmoneh Essray) were established based on the prayers of our three forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Rabbi Joshua claims that prayer was established based on sacrifice. Each Rabbi explained his reasoning: Rabbi Yossi cited three verses:

“Abraham established morning prayers, as it says, ‘And Abraham arose in the morning to the place where he stood’, and ‘standing’ refers only to the act of prayer. Isaac established afternoon prayers as it says, ‘And Isaac went out to converse in the field, at evening’, and ‘speaking’ refers only to prayer. Jacob established evening prayer, as it says, ‘And he reached the place, and he slept there’, and ‘reaching’ only refers to prayer.”

It was also taught in accordance with Rabbi Joshua; ‘for what reason is the morning prayer said only until midday? It is because the morning

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*Each of the patriarchs arrived at a knowledge of God and a denial of idolatry of their own study and merits.*

*sacrifice was offered only until then. For what reason is the afternoon prayer said only until evening? It is because the afternoon sacrifice was brought only until the evening. Why does the evening prayer have no limit? It is because the (sacrificial) limbs were brought throughout the entire night."*

We must understand what these two rabbis were disputing. On the surface, it appears obvious that we pray based on the identical activity performed by the forefathers. Is it not a stretch according to Rabbi Joshua, to suggest that one activity, prayer, is derived from a completely different activity, sacrifice? Our forefathers offered sacrifice in addition to praying. Is Rabbi Joshua saying that our act of prayer today, is not a repetition of our forefather's prayers? Is this truly what Rabbi Joshua holds, that were it not for sacrifice, we would not pray, as our forefathers?

There are a few other questions that occurred to me as I pondered this Talmudic section. I wish you to also have the opportunity to detect additional issues, so pause here. Think about the quotes above, or better yet, study this page in the Talmud itself. See what questions arise in your mind, and then continue. To advance in learning, simply reading what someone else writes eliminates your act of analysis, and removes another opportunity to train your mind.

I will now continue with my questions.

1) Why did Abraham not establish all three prayers? Why did he - apparently - pray just once each day, in the morning? And do we say that Jacob most certainly observed his father and grandfather, praying all three prayers...or, did Jacob pray only once, i.e., the nighttime prayer, which he instituted? In this case, why would he omit what his father and grandfather instituted?

2) What is significant about the fact that each of our forefathers established a new, succeeding prayer? May we derive anything from the opening words in our prayer, "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob"?

3) How does Rabbi Joshua claim that prayer is modeled after sacrifice, when he knew Jewish history quite well, and he knew these verses quoted above teaching of the prayer of the patriarchs?

4) Furthermore, what may we derive from each of the verses above in connection with each patriarch's blessing? Are three, distinct ideas in prayer being conveyed in each of these verses?

5) And why did the forefathers stop at three blessings a day? Why no more than three: simply because there were only three forefathers? That seems quite arbitrary.

6) Why did our forefathers both pray, and sacrifice? What does each not accomplish, in that the other is required as an additional and essential act of perfection?

### Sacrifice Defined

To commence, we must first define our terms: sacrifice and prayer. We learn that the very first sacrifice was Adam's, offered immediately upon his creation. Thereby Adam taught that our existence – Creation – demands recognition of the Creator. And this recognition is in terms of our "life". Meaning, we recognize that our very lives are due to God. We therefore sacrifice "life", so as to underline this sentiment. Such an act of kindness by God, to create us, demands not simple acknowledgement, but real action. Activity is the barometer through which man's convictions and perfection are measured. This is our nature, to act out what we are convinced of. And if one does not act, then he displays a lack of conviction in whatever the matter is which he refrains from performing. If Adam had not sacrificed, he would have displayed a disregard for his very life. If man does not recognize the good bestowed upon him by another, then he lacks a true recognition of that good, or, he has a sever character flaw where he does not show his thanks to that other person.

### Prayer Defined

What is prayer? This is the act of praising God for His works, His kindness, His marvels and wisdom, and all the good we see emanating from His will. Part of this praise is that act of *beseeching* Him alone for our needs. For as we recognize and praise Him as the sole source of everything, it follows that it is to Him alone that we make requests, and before Whom we judge ourselves and arrive at what we need.

We may then state that sacrifice is offered to recognize that our very "existence" is due to God, whereas prayer addresses what comes subsequent to our existence, i.e., our "continued life", as we approach God to praise Him, having acknowledged His magnificence. And we continue to reach out to Him for the assistance which only He can provide. Sacrifice recognized God's creation of our beings, and prayer is our initiation of a *continued* relationship subsequent to our creation.

According to Rabbi Yossi, we pray today as the forefathers had shown this act to be a perfection. Rabbi Joshua does not deny history. He too acknowledges the forefathers' prayers. But he says our prayer today also borrows from sacrifice. In truth, there is no argument: Rabbi Joshua states that our "timeframe" for prayer is derived from sacrifices in the Temple. He does not suggest that prayer is originated in sacrifice. That makes no sense. Prayer is taken from prayer, of the patriarchs. So Rabbi Joshua is not arguing on Rabbi Yossi. These two Rabbis are addressing two separate points in prayer: Rabbi Yossi says prayer is "derived" from the prayer of the forefathers, while Rabbi Joshua only addresses prayer's "timeframe" as restricted to the same parameters as were the Temple's sacrifices.

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*In prayer and sacrifice,  
man is either offering  
something “before  
God”, or man is  
“addressing God”.  
In contrast, when  
donning tefillin, one is  
not “in dialogue” with  
God, but rather,  
interacting with an  
object of mitzvah.*

### Combining Sacrifice with Prayer

We must now ask why Rabbi Joshua felt sacrifice had to be incorporated into our performance of prayer. Why must our prayers embody the timeframe of Temple sacrifice, according to Rabbi Joshua? We are forced to say that prayer and sacrifice have a common quality. Otherwise, it makes no sense to mix two separate actions. This quality is man's "approach to God." In these two actions alone, man is either offering something "before God", or man is "addressing God". A dialogue of sorts exists also in sacrifice. Prayer is not the only action possessing a "verbal" character. My friend Rabbi Howard Burstein reminded me of the verse in Hosea (14:3), "...and we shall repay sacrifices [with] our lips." This means that sacrifice is somewhat replaced by verbal prayers. There is a relationship. Perhaps the Men of the Great Assembly who made this institution desired that as Temple sacrifice was no longer, and since sacrifice is essential to man's existence, that we should have some representation of sacrifice. Thus, the timeframe of the sacrifices now guides our prayers. This translates as prayer having sacrifice as its "guide". Prayer is to be guided towards the objective of sacrifice: recognition of God as our Creator. While it is true that we have needs, and prayer addresses them, these needs serve a higher goal: to enable us the life where we may remove our attention from needs, and ponder God and His works. The greatest mitzvah – command – is Torah study. The greatest objective in our lives is to be involved in recognizing new truths. Thus, Rabbi Joshua wished that prayer be not bereft of this ultimate objective. Let us now return to our questions.

### The Patriarchs

Why did Abraham not establish all three prayers? Perhaps Abraham's perfection included his idea that prayer, as an institution, should form part of man's day. This is achieved with a single, daily prayer. Abraham made prayer the first part of his day, the morning, as it states, "And Abraham arose in the morning to the place where he stood". This verse teaches that prayer was on his mind as soon as he awoke. Perhaps, it even teaches that Abraham's purpose in awaking was to come close to God, as is expressed with prayer.

Isaac and Jacob were also unique individuals in their own rights. They did not simply follow the God of Abraham because they were taught to do so, but because they both arrived that the truth of God's existence and reign independent of Abraham. This is what the Rabbis mean with their formulation: "The God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob." The Rabbis could have simply written in our opening prayer, "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." But they did not, to display that God was the God of "each" of the patriarchs: each patriarch made God his God through their own

efforts in their study of reality, and finally realized with their own minds that God is God. And as they came to this realization independently, each one used this independent thought to arrive at new truths. Thus, Isaac saw that afternoon time deserved a prayer, and Jacob saw something about nighttime, which too deserved prayer.

I would suggest that there are in fact only three parts of the day to which man relates: its beginning, its end, and the psychological phenomenon experienced as the day ebbs away into night. Abraham instituted the morning prayer, teaching that man's first thoughts should be those about God. Jacob prayed at night, teaching that again, the last thing on our minds is God. Both Abraham and Jacob demonstrated the central focus God had in their lives, as the first and last things on our minds are representative of what matters to us most. Why did Isaac pray towards the evening? Perhaps this indicates another phenomena in our psyches. As we turn from our daily activities, we remove our thoughts from the day's sufficient accomplishments. But when we remove our thoughts from one area, to where do we redirect them: to another involvement, or to God? Perhaps Isaac's afternoon prayer teaches that whenever man removes his energies from an area, if he turns back to God, he is living properly. But if he turns from one involvement to another, this means God is not in the back of his mind throughout the day. For Isaac to have prayed in the afternoon, we learn that when he removed his energies from herding for example, his energies went right back to pondering God. There are, therefore, only three main prayers, as there are only three relationships to reality: when men reenters waking life in the morning, when he leaves it just prior to sleep, and when during waking life, man's thoughts turn from one area to another. If man is cognizant of God in all three phases of the day, then man has achieved a certain perfection.

I cannot answer why Abraham or any of the patriarchs did not pray at all three intervals. It may simply be that Abraham did not see the idea that Jacob saw, and therefore did not pray at evening. No one man sees all of God's knowledge. However, as Rabbi Reuven Mann stated, we learn from Maimonides Laws of Kings 1:1, that each succeeding patriarch added to the previous one. Therefore, Isaac prayed twice, and Jacob did in fact pray three times.

We end up with a deep appreciation for the structure of the Talmud. Through patient and an unabashed analysis, we may be fortunate to uncover new ideas in Talmudic thought, Jewish law, Scripture, and Torah philosophy. It is not a study to be sped through with the goal of amassing facts, but of realizing new truths, however few they may be. As Rava said, "The reward [objective] of study is the concepts". Rashi says on this, "One should weary, labor, think, and understand the reasons for a matter." (Talmud Brachos 6b) ■

of animal sacrifice presents a challenge for many of us. The Torah was given to us by Hashem as a revealed truth. It is designed to elevate humanity. Its mitzvot establish the highest standards for human conduct. The Torah gives us an advanced system of justice and jurisprudence. It describes standards of social responsibility and charity. The Torah derides superstition primitive religious attitudes. So, it seems quite remarkable that a system devoted to the elevation of humanity beyond paganism and primitivism endorses and requires animal sacrifice. How can we reconcile this institutionalization of animal sacrifice with the progressive attitudes of the Torah?

Generally Maimonides is acknowledged as offering the most compelling response to this issue. His response is significant not only in its treatment of this issue but also in its treatment of related issues.

Maimonides begins by stating an assumption that is fundamental to his approach to understanding sacrifices. He explains that the wisdom and intelligent design of Hashem is evident in the complexity of the universe. This same wisdom is manifest in Hashem's providence over humanity and Bnai Yisrael. This means that Hashem considers human nature in His interaction with humanity. One element of human nature that Hashem considers is that human behaviors and attitudes cannot be suddenly, radically altered.

Based on this assumption, Maimonides offers a novel approach to explaining animal sacrifice. He explains that Hashem's objective in His relationship with Bnai Yisrael was to develop the people into a nation devoted to His service. Hashem chose to not forsake sacrifice as one of the forms of service. This was because sacrifice was an established form of worship. Abandonment of sacrifice as a form of worship would have represented a radical change of attitudes and behaviors. In other words, in order to achieve the goal of forming a nation devoted to Hashem a concession was made to human nature. The traditional, accepted form of worship was preserved.

Maimonides continues with an amazing analogy. Imagine our reaction if Hashem were to tell us to abandon prayer as a form of worship. Instead, we are to serve Hashem through thought alone. We would not know how to serve Hashem without some available mode of material expression. Sacrifice played an analogous role in the minds of Bnai Yisrael. Therefore, Hashem chose to not abandon it. However, this created a dilemma. Sacrifice was associated with idolatry. Hashem had to reform sacrifice and strip it of all idolatrous elements. In order to reform sacrifice, it is highly controlled and structured. This intensive attention to detail assures that all elements of idolatry are removed and not permitted to reenter sacrificial service.[1]

In essence, it seems that Maimonides



acknowledges that animal sacrifice does not represent an ideal form of worship. In fact, he seems to accept that this form of worship is a remnant from more primitive times and cultures. Nonetheless, he argues that the Torah – in recognition of the limitations of human nature – chose to preserve this ancient form of worship.

Next, Maimonides discusses a related question. He asks why Hashem did not merely require the ultimate level of service. Certainly, He can instill within us the ability to meet this requirement! Maimonides' answer has two parts.

First, Maimonides shows that Hashem typically does not resolve human shortcomings through altering human nature. For example, when Bnai Yisrael were brought out of Egypt, Hashem did not lead them to the land of Israel by the most direct route. This was because the nation was not yet prepared to battle mighty nations. Hashem did not alter the people's nature. Instead, He accommodated it.

Second, Maimonides explains this practice of Hashem on a deeper level. Although Hashem can alter human nature, this is not his method of relating to Bnai Yisrael. Instead, He gave us the Torah and sent us prophets to guide us and help us improve ourselves.

Finally, Maimonides asserts that a carefully study of the Torah and the Prophets supports his thesis. He identifies various passages that support his explanation of sacrifices. Maimonides also points out that the offering of sacrifices is restricted. Other forms of worship are not subject to as many restrictions. For example, one can pray virtually anywhere. No Kohen is required to participate. This encourages a de-emphasis of sacrifice and a reorientation to other more meaningful forms of worship.[2]

Maimonides' explanation of sacrifices provides a compelling answer to a difficult question. The Torah – the Written Law – describes the laws governing sacrifices in great detail. The Written Law deals other important mitzvot much more

concisely. For example, nowhere does the Written Law provide a detailed or even general description of teffilin. Similarly, the Written Law does not precisely define type of activity that is prohibited on Shabbat. The Written Law provides a general statement and the details are provided by the Oral Law. This same pattern is followed in the Torah's treatment of most other mitzvot. This is not the case in regard to sacrifices. Sacrifices are described in elaborate detail in the Written Law. The only other area that receives the same meticulous treatment is design and structure of the Mishcan. Why does the Torah treat these two areas in a manner that is starkly inconsistent with its usual approach? Maimonides' thesis regarding sacrifices provides a response.

According to Maimonides, the Torah created its system of sacrifices in response to two considerations. First, it would have been impossible to develop a new religion that completely abandoned traditional, deeply rooted forms of worship. So, sacrifices were preserved within the Torah. Second, the Torah was compelled to regulate and structure sacrifices in order to "sanitize" them and strip them of any element of idolatry. But it must be added that this structuring and regulating of sacrifices did not just eliminate all elements of idolatry. These same detailed laws prevented the restoration of idolatrous practices and traditions into the Torah's system of sacrifices. The Torah's concession to human nature in allowing sacrifices is a dangerous one. It allows an institution identified with idolatry to continue to exist. It responds to the danger that this institution become corrupted and degenerate back into idolatry through careful regulation. The Torah deemed these regulations so important that it was unwilling to relegate them to the Oral Law. These regulations must be well known and their importance must be fully appreciated. This is accomplished by placing these laws in the Written Torah. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Moreh Nevuchim, volume 3, chapter 32.

[2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Moreh Nevuchim, volume 3, chapter 32.

## Letters: Reputation vs Reason



## TANYA'S HERESY IV

**Reader:** Dear Moshe Ben-Chaim,

Regarding your ban of the Sefer Tanya, and your proclamation of the "heresy" upon the Holy Rabbi Schneur Zalman, the Baal HaTanya and Shulchan Aruch HaRav, I would like to suggest that you also include the Holy Tanna, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and all his students, the RaMa"K and His commentators, Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin and his Rebbe, Rabbi Eliyahu, the Gaon of Vilna etc, as heretics as well, since many similar statements are to be found throughout their works and teachings.

For example, here is a free translation of a paragraph of Shaar 1, Chapter 5 of Sefer Nefesh HaChayim from Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin:

"Rather, the [explanation of the] matter is that a man who is complete as is befitting him, his main [essence] is embedded above in the supernal source of his soul. It then passes by way of many hundreds of thousands of worlds until its other end enters the body of man below. This is [the meaning of the verse], "Ki Chelek HaShem Amo, Yaakov Chevel Nachalato - For the L-rds portion is his people; Yaakov is the lot of his inheritance". [That is,] his main essence which is bound and embedded above is a portion of Havayah, literally, so to speak. It then chains down like a rope until it comes into the body of man (See later in chapter 17). All of his actions reach up to arouse his supernal source. This is like the matter of a rope, that if one was to shake its lower end it will arouse and shake also its upper end."

The Nefesh HaChaim then continues and brings the identical explanation as the Baal HaTanya (which is a direct continuation of the statement you take issue with) regarding the verse, "Vayipach B'Apav Nishmat Chayim - And he blew into his nostrils a soul of life":

"This is what it means when it states, "And He blew into his nostrils the soul of life", i.e. the soul that the life of all the upper worlds and all the lower worlds are dependent upon that soul, and exist through it."

What soul is this that he speaks of? If you turn to the beginning of the chapter he states very clearly in the first paragraph: "...He, Blessed is He, is the soul of everything!"

**Mesora:** Here you project your own spin onto words that do not convey what you wish. These rabbis would not contradict what is true, meaning, Maimonides's second of his 13 Principles:

### "Principle II. The Unity of God

*Meaning to say to accept that this is the quintessential idea of Oneness. It is not like the oneness of a pair (i.e. pair of shoes - one group) or and not one like a species. And not like man that has many individuals nor like a body that divides into many different parts until no end (everything keeps on being divisible). Rather God is one and there is no other oneness like His. This is the second principle and is taught in what it says "Hear Israel, Hashem your God, Hashem is one."*

You see; the real injustice here is your claim that all the rabbis you quote deny Maimonides's principle.

**Reader:** The Vilna Gaon states in his commentary on Hechalot, Hechalah Tinyana, Hechal 1:

"..So too in man, the Neshamah, Chayah and Yechidah which are included in the general category of Neshamah are the three upper [levels] of the Ruach of a person, however, the Neshamah itself which is the three upper [levels] themselves do not enter the body of a person at all, and they are Godliness. This is the mystery of 'Ish HaElokim - The Man of God'."

**Mesora:** I am surprised you feel this supports the view that pieces of God abide in man. You seem to be working with an agenda, and twist what you wish to meet it.

**Reader:** Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, in Sefer Pardes Rimonim, Shaar 32, Chapter 1, uses the same verse from Job in the same manner as the Baal HaTanya in describing the soul of Man:

"After having explained in the previous Shaar that [the soul of] man is a 'Chelek Eloka MiMa'al - a part of God from Above', therefore, if a person is pure and righteous in his actions and is bound with bonds of love to the roots of Holiness with his soul which goes up through all the worlds and all the levels, as was explained in the previous Shaar, so therefore, when he acts in a way of righteousness and uprightness etc..."

**Mesora:** But Maimonides explains in his 13 Principles, which you defend later, that God is not subject to division. Therefore, you do an injustice with your interpretation here of "portion" translating it to mean, "part". It truthfully means "inheritance" as is clear from the original source in Job:

*"A treaty have I made with my eye; for what shall I gaze at a virgin? And what portion shall I have with God above, and an inheritance of God on high?"*

Job declared he never gazed lustfully, for in doing so, one forfeits his "portion with God". But Tanya distorts the word "portion", not as the end of the verse clarifies as "inheritance", but wrongly, ascribing "parts" to God. This verse in Job simply means that Job admits he will forfeit his "portion" (inheritance) with God. Through sin, Job says he will lose this world and the next. Job is not describing God, that He has parts, God forbid. Job is describing his inheritance.

**Reader:** Rabbi Mordechai Ben Yaakov of Prague, in Sefer Asis Rimonim V'Plach HaRimon (which is a commentary on Pardes Rimonim of the RaMaK), Shaar 32 (of Biur Darkey HaKavanah), Chapter 1 states as follows:

"Know that since man is a 'Chelek Eloka MiMa'al - a part of God from Above' and is bound with the roots of Holiness, through the chaining down of his soul from level to level, then, this above mentioned chain is like a ladder through which the awakening of his deeds bring about the unification of the upper Sefirot through him etc."

Note how the RaMaK and Rabbi Mordechai Ben Yaakov of Prague are both explaining the same matter that the Gaon of Vilna, Rabbi Chaim

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## Letters: Reputation vs Reason

*Avraham ben  
haRambam says in his  
intro to Ain Yaakov,  
that we must not  
follow someone based  
on reputation, but on  
reason alone.*

Velozhin and the Baal HaTanya are explaining, and indeed they all understand this verse in the same manner as the Baal HaTanya. According to your understanding of the verse from Job (31:2) all of the aforementioned Torah Sages must therefore also be heretics.

**Mesora:** So far all you suggest these rabbis state is your own interpretation. Also, name throwing doesn't make something a "truth". Your position contradicts God's words to Moses, and to Isaiah. All the rabbi's quotes in the world cannot make your position true. Ironically, these quoted rabbis would agree.

**Reader:** You write:

"The Torah is quite clear, reputation plays no role when determining truth, we are not to fear man, even one who claims he is the Messiah, and even Moses. Certainly Rebbe Zalman may be opposed."

I find it quite interesting that while "standing up" for the principles of our faith, you seem to neglect and forget several of the primary principles, specifically those that deal with our Prophets of God, and even more specifically with our Prophet Moshe, whom Maimonides calls "the father of the Prophets" in the thirteen principles of faith. However, since you are so determined at understanding the truth regardless of the reputation of the speaker, let me give you some words of truth which I pray you will heed.

Your articles are a testimony of your sheer ignorance and utter arrogance. When these two qualities are found together they create a deadly and destructive combination. I therefore urge you from the bottom of my heart to remove and destroy all traces of these false and slanderous articles against these great Sages and Leaders of Judaism, so they may not be held against your soul in its time of judgment. The damage that has already been done cannot be revoked, but future damage to your "part of God from Above" may be avoided.

- Shimon

**Mesora:** It is not unusual that those with no rational defense will resort to personal attacks, and you continue this behavior. As I mentioned already in other responses, I have yet to hear an explanation as to how "part" of God may abide in man. Your response bereft of any "theory" reinforces the fact that no explanation for "God possessing parts" exists. Your view denies Torah verses, Maimonides' Principles, and reason.

Evidently, you feel your words alone are insufficient to convince me of your opinion. So what is your thought: that a personal attack will finally convert me to your thinking? Chazal referred to the "issues", not attacking the individual. Learn from them.

But your approach to quote many sources without attempting to deal with the "position" itself is meaningless. No number of sources can alter what is reasonable or God's words: "For man cannot know Me while alive." (Exod. 33:21) From here we learn that we may know nothing about God. So you words and quotes that man's soul is akin to God's in some way, violates this pasuk (verse).

"To what shall you equate Me that I should be similar, says God?" (Isaiah, 40:25) From here we learn that absolutely no equation exists between God and anything we know, including our soul. Hence, the statement that a portion of God is within man violates this prohibition not to equate God to anything. Additionally, it violates the true idea that God is indivisible, as "division" is also something, which cannot be predicated of God, based on Isaiah, and clearly stated by Maimonides.

Contend with these verses and absolute truths before quoting others without understanding.

I will end offering you one final thought: what do you do when Ramban argues with Maimonides in philosophy, where there is no psak, no ruling? If these men are equally wise, and you have no others commenting, surely either one of them is wrong, or they are both wrong, as opposite opinions in philosophy cannot be correct. Your approach to "follow the leader" does not work here. Ultimately you must do as these two great minds displayed: "think for yourself". For why didn't Ramban follow Maimonides? Why didn't Ramban follow Rashi? The fact that they did not "follow the leader" must teach you that man is obligated to think for himself. The author of Chovas Halavavos (Duties of the Heart) goes into length on this in his introduction. I suggest you read it.

Your knee-jerk reaction is symptomatic of a devotion to your views, bereft of any understanding. You blindly defend that which you cannot explain. You are mortified that someone will follow another view, which denounces your own, and claims your rebbes are wrong. But no man is always correct. You react based on emotion, and not thought. For I see in your words no explanation disproving my position, and validating your view. Had you an argument clearly disproving my position, you would certainly use that line of defense. But as you do not, it is clear you have no argument other than quoting other rabbis. But these rabbis cannot and do not argue on the quotes from Exodus, Isaiah, and Maimonides' 13 Principles. Those truths are clear to anyone.

Instead of your uncompromising devotion to your projections, pledge a new, uncompromising devotion to truth. Accept the fact that perhaps your view may be wrong. Does your honesty allow that of you? I have retracted when proven wrong. Any honest person must do so. Instead of throwing names and quotes around that cannot claim heresy and deny Torah and Prophets, think, and then realize what is false, and what must be true. ■

# SACRIFICE



**RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM**

There is a famous argument between Ramban and Maimonides on the purpose of sacrifice. Maimonides writes in his great work the Guide for the Perplexed (Book III, Chap. 46) that the purpose of sacrifice is to eradicate false notions that certain species of animals were deities. By sacrificing to G-d, the heathens' worshiped species, we counter the problem, as Maimonides writes:

"...In order to eradicate these false principles, the law commands us to offer sacrifices only of these three kinds: 'Ye shall bring your offering of cattle, of the herd and of the flock' (Lev. 1:2). Thus the very act which considered by the heathen as the greatest crime, is the means of approaching G-d, and obtaining His pardon for our sins. In this manner, evil principles, the diseases of the human soul, are cured by other principles which are diametrically opposite."

Ramban argues vehemently on Maimonides in the beginning of his commentary in the book of Leviticus (Lev. 1:9). There, Ramban lodges two salient arguments:

1) We see that sacrifice existed in the days of Adam's son Able, and in Noah's days when idolatry of this kind did not yet exist. Therefore Maimonides cannot be correct to suggest that sacrifice is to function to remove idolatrous notions.

2) Sacrifice is really viewed as an approach to G-d, as shown by Bilaam's offerings, not a neutralizing procedure. How can sacrifice be a negative, i.e., an agent countering idolatry, when it is described as a positive, "a pleasant fragrance".

These questions certainly require a response. But I wondered, is Ramban really suggesting that Maimonides was ignorant of the stories in every Torah, that of Able, and Noah and

Bilaam? This possibility is absurd. So what exactly is Ramban saying when quoting the facts that these early individuals offered sacrifice?

We are forced to say that Maimonides knew very well that sacrifice existed prior to the command at Sinai. Perhaps then, Maimonides' reasoning is that the Sinaic command of sacrifice is that alone to which he refers which is to counter idolatry. But cases prior to the Sinaic command of sacrifice were not for the eradication of idolatry. But again, this answer is far too basic that someone like a Ramban would not consider. I am of the opinion that Ramban considered this answer, and yet, still lodged his arguments against Maimonides.

Perhaps Ramban held that even with the sacrificial command at Sinai, sacrifice can not be removed from its original form. This I believe to be the pivotal point between Ramban and Maimonides.

Ramban held that although a new command and Torah system was given, nonetheless, if sacrifice had an inceptional structure, i.e., to approach G-d, it cannot deviate from this form. It may have incorporated additional purposes at Sinai, but it cannot be exclusively to eradicate idolatry as Maimonides holds. There is sound reasoning as to why Ramban takes this approach. When something comes into existence, its form at that moment is integral to its definition. Water was created in a moist state, and as such, it is inherently moist. Water without moisture is not water. Once dust was created inherently dry, this feature forms part of its very definition. So also, sacrifice at Adam's, Able's and Noah's time, emerged as man's own attempt to approach G-d. Since this is the very inception of the institution of sacrifice, sacrifice by nature is an approach to G-d, and cannot be viewed as lacking this property. Sacrifice without approach to G-d is no longer sacrifice, according to Ramban. Based on this reasoning, Ramban held that sacrifice could not be defined solely as that

which eradicates idolatry. It must - by definition - include the inceptional property of an approach to G-d.

However, Maimonides was of the opinion that although sacrifice came into existence in this form, as Ramban says, nonetheless, Sinai has the ability to redefine its structure from the ground up, and completely undermine its original nature. But this addresses Ramban's second argument alone, dealing with the structure of sacrifice. I believe his first argument to be dealing with the goal of sacrifice. There, Ramban is of the opinion that just as the structure cannot deviate, so also the goal of approaching G-d must be an inherent property of sacrifice. It is for this reason that Ramban gives two arguments, as each addresses an additional point of contention Ramban had with Maimonides' view.

According to Maimonides, Sinai had the ability to take an institution and completely redefine it. The new reality of "national commandments" given at Sinai are so overwhelmingly objective in their truth, so real, as they emanate from G-d as part of His Will, that commandments go so far as to define what truth is. The Sinaic Commandments redefined reality for the Jew. Sacrifice according to Maimonides for all halachik intents and purposes didn't exist prior to Sinai. Historically it did, but now as the Jews had new laws governing their lives, previously known activities were only similar in name, and nothing else. Sacrifice prior and subsequent to Sinai were as divergent in nature as are color and weight. This was clear to Maimonides, and he therefore had no qualms about explaining sacrifice as if it never existed before.

Ramban was of the opinion that although Sinai redefines our actions, it only adds the nature of 'command' to a preexisting institution of sacrifice, but it does not redefine its original nature. ■