



PARSHA FROM THE SOURCE

פרשה ממקורה

3 Nissan 5786

פרשת ויקרא תשפ"ו

Vayikra, along with many times in Chumash, is filled with details of korbanot. What is the significance of them? Why do we bring them?

Moreh HaNevuchim (3:42)

Spain, 12th c.

...For the reason behind the sacrifices is because the Egyptians and the Chaldeans—among whom Israel had lived as strangers and sojourners for ages—worshiped cattle and sheep. The Egyptians worshiped the lamb, and the Chaldeans worshiped demons which appeared to them in the form of goats, while the people of India to this day never slaughter cattle."

"For this reason, [God] commanded [Israel] to slaughter these three species to the 'Honored Name,' so that it would be known that the very thing they considered to be the ultimate sin is exactly what they should offer to the Creator, and through it, their iniquities would be atoned for. For this is how evil beliefs, which are the illnesses of the soul, are healed; for every ailment and every sickness is healed only by its opposite.

מורה הנבוכים (ג:מב) [הועתק

מהרמב"ן עה"ת ויקרא א:ט]

רב משה בן מיימון

כי טעם הקרבנות, בעבור שהמצרים והכשדים, אשר היו ישראל גרים ותושבים בארצם מעולם, היו עובדים לבקר ולצאן, כי המצרים עובדים לטלה והכשדים עובדים לשדים אשר יראו להם בדמות שעירים, ואנשי הודו עד היום לא ישחטו בקר לעולם. בעבור כן צוה לשחוט אלה השלשה מינין לשם הנכבד כדי שיודע כי הדבר שהיו חושבים כי הם בתכלית העבירה הוא אשר יקריבו לבורא, ובו יתכפרו העונות. כי כן יתרפאו האמונות הרעות שהם מדוי הנפש, כי כל מדוה וכל חולי לא יתרפא כי אם בהפכו...

The Rambam learns that the institution of Korbanot is really based in the evils of idol worship. Do we have any other mitzvot where we take something bad and use it for the good?

Ramban Vayikra (1:9)

Spain, 12th c.

It is more fitting to accept the reason for the offerings which scholars say, namely that since man's deeds are accomplished through thought, speech and action, therefore Hashem commanded that when man sins and brings an offering, he should lay his hands upon it in contrast to the [evil] deed [committed]. He should confess his sin verbally in contrast to his [evil] speech, and he should burn the innards and the kidneys [of the offering] in fire because they are the instruments of thought and desire in the human being. He should burn the legs [of the offering] since they correspond to the hands and feet of a person, which do all his work.

He should sprinkle the blood upon the altar, which is analogous to the blood in his body. All these acts are performed in order that when they are done, a person should realize that he has sinned against Hashem with his body and his soul, and that "his" blood should really be spilled and "his" body burned, were it not for the loving-kindness of the Creator, Who took from him a substitute and a ransom, namely this offering, so that its blood should be in place of his blood, its life in place of his life, and that the chief limbs of the offering should be in place of the chief parts of his body...

רמב"ן ויקרא א:ט

ר' משה בן נחמן

ויותר ראוי לשמוע הטעם שאומרים בהם, כי בעבור שמעשי בני אדם נגמרים במחשבה ובדבור ובמעשה, צוה השם כי כאשר יחטא יביא קרבן, יסמוך ידיו עליו כנגד המעשה, ויתודה בפיו כנגד הדבור, וישרוף באש הקרב והכליות שהם כלי המחשבה והתאוה, והכרעים כנגד ידיו ורגליו של אדם העושים כל מלאכתו, ויזרוק הדם על המזבח כנגד דמו בנפשו, כדי שיחשוב אדם בעשותו כל אלה כי חטא לאלקיו בגופו ובנפשו, וראוי לו שישפך דמו וישרף גופו לולא חסד הבורא שלקח ממנו תמורה וכפר הקרבן הזה שיהא דמו תחת דמו, נפש תחת נפש, וראשי אברי הקרבן כנגד ראשי אבריו...

What is the focus of korbanot according to the Ramban? How does it differ from the Rambam?

Mishna Torah (Hilchos Me'ilah 8:8)

Lithuania, 12th c.

The decrees are the mitzvot whose motivating rationales are not known ... All of the sacrifices are in the category of decrees. Our Sages said: "The world exists for the sake of the service of the sacrifices." For through the performance of the decrees and the judgments the righteous merit the life of the world to come...

משנה תורה הלכות מעילה (ח:ח)

ר' משה בן מיימון

והחוקים הן המצוות שאין טעמן ידוע...
וכל הקרבנות כולן מכלל החוקים הן.
אמרו חכמים שבשביל עבודת הקרבנות
העולם עומד. שבעשיית החוקים
והמשפטים זוכין הישרים לחיי העולם
הבא....

Does the Rambam differ here than above from the Moreh HaNevuchim?

Questions for Reflection:

1. Is there a way to reconcile these different opinions?
2. Is it worth trying to understand korbanot to the best of our abilities?
Does it fall into the category of a chok?

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