

Ksharim



Lesson 34

Israel in the Liturgy



1. Outline

Prayer as replacement for the sacrifices
References to the land in the liturgy
Longing for redemption in the form of return

2. Introduction

Probably the one text with which most of our students are likely to have continued and maybe even frequent contact is the siddur. The siddur provides opportunities for teaching about our connection to Israel on a number of different levels, each of which might be appropriate for different age levels and different ideologies. This lesson seeks to chart several different Israel connections in the standard weekday and Shabbat liturgy. Note that for purposes of illustrating these connections we use the traditional prayerbook; some of the passages may not be present, or may have been edited, in Reform and Conservative and Reconstructionist liturgy; these changes themselves can serve as teaching opportunities.

3. Lesson goals

- a. To stimulate thinking about the spiritual significance of Eretz Yisrael in Jewish religious identity
- b. To raise awareness of the specific Israel links in the siddur
- c. To stimulate thinking about the place of Israel in the siddur's vision of redemption

4. Expanded outline

- a. Prayer as replacement for the sacrifices
 - i. While there are certainly examples of personal prayer in the Bible, the overwhelming emphasis is on the sacrificial cult as the main means of communication with God. And, of course, that means that initially that communication can occur only at the Mishkan in the desert – and ultimately, at the Temple in Jerusalem.
 - ii. The opening chapters of Leviticus describe the rules for various ad hoc sacrifices, for a sin, or in thanksgiving. Chapter 17 emphasizes the law that sacrifices of any kind can only be offered at the Mishkan – not in one's back yard or any other shrine. And 23 describes the sacrifices for the holidays. Then,

Numbers 28 recapitulates the holidays, and adds the sacrifices for every day (vss. 3-8), Shabbat (vss. 9-10), and Rosh Chodesh (vss. 11-15). Note that the daily sacrifices are two, one in the morning and one at twilight, and on Shabbat there are the regular two daily sacrifices plus an extra two lambs.

iii. Sacrifices, really?

The question arises, of course, how we are supposed to feel about this glorious period in our history, when we worshipped God by a ceremony that seems to many of us today barbaric and disgusting. Perhaps the best known discussion of this problem is not modern, but medieval, in Rambam's Guide for the Perplexed, where he suggests what seems to be an evolutionary approach which actually might work for modern perplexed Jews as well. The whole chapter (Part III chapter 32) is appended to this outline.

iv. Consolidation:

During the period of the Judges there was no central shrine, and religious life seems to have been somewhat chaotic. In the last chapter of Judges and the first of Samuel, it appears that there was a major shrine where people went to sacrifice from at least some of the tribes, at Shiloh, in Samaria. As soon as David assumes power, he conquers Jerusalem from the Jebusites and makes it his capital (II Samuel 5) and begins a process of centralizing the government and cult of the whole nation there, a process that reaches its peak in Solomon's dedication of the Temple in I Kings 8. When the northern tribes rebel after Solomon's death, a major act of the rebels' king, Jeroboam, is to create a new sacrificial center to wean the people away from the centrality of Jerusalem (I Kings 12:25-33). But later, it seems, even in Judah, there were those who deviated from the absolute centrality of the Temple, as we see from Josiah's cleanup of competing shrines in his reform, not long before the end of the Judean kingdom (II Kings 23:4-25).

v. The destruction: crisis and response

The destruction of the Temple represented a religious crisis – for if it was the only place God could be worshipped (by means of sacrifices), and it was gone, what would become of our relationship to God? And so began the process which continued even after the restoration and the rebuilding of the Temple, of shifting the emphasis from sacrifice to prayer, and the creation of the institution of the synagogue, and a ritual of prayer that ultimately replaced the sacrifices completely. The early synagogue, and the early development of prayer are huge fields of archaeological and historical research and there

are lots of unanswered questions. We will not go into the details in this unit. For our purposes, what is important is that by the time of the destruction of the Second Temple, the institution of the synagogue was ready to take over, and within the century, the core of the liturgy of regular communal prayer in the synagogue had been set.

It seems that the groundwork for the decentralization and/or spiritualization of worship was already laid in Josiah's time – if it is true, as many scholars believe, that the book of Deuteronomy was written in the context of Josiah's reform, then in his consolidation of the sacrificial cult in Jerusalem he simultaneously had to permit secular slaughter, since people couldn't come to Jerusalem every time they wanted to eat meat. Thus, Deuteronomy 12:13-28.

The traditional view is that the basic structure of the liturgy was set by the "Great Assembly" established by Ezra during the restoration, in the 5th century BCE – this is stated in the Talmud, Berachot 33a. And the Mishnah describes a service performed by the kohanim in the Second Temple, not so different from our own, in Tamid 5:1.

vi. The Talmud in Berachot 26b offers two explanations for three daily prayers, morning, afternoon, and evening (beyond the reference to three prayers in Daniel 6:11):

1. The Patriarchs instituted them:

- a. Shacharit – Abraham – Genesis 19:27
- b. Mincha – Isaac – Genesis 24:63
- c. Ma'ariv – Jacob – Genesis 28:11

2. They correspond to sacrifices

- a. Shacharit – the morning sacrifice – Numbers 28:3-4
- b. Mincha – the twilight sacrifice – Numbers 28:4
- c. Ma'ariv – the remnants that continue to burn all night
- d. Musaf on Shabbat – the extra sacrifice – Numbers 28:9

The fact that the Ma'ariv service is not based on a specifically commanded sacrifice explains the difference with respect to the recitation of the Amidah – in Shacharit and Mincha, it must be recited out loud, whereas in Ma'ariv it is prayed silently.

The bottom line, conceptually: every time we participate in public worship, in one of the three services, we are in a way reenacting the sacrificial service in the Temple. And note, it is customary to face in the direction of the Temple when we pray, lest we forget that connection. God may be everywhere, but we "aim" our prayers to the

Temple Mount. See, the summary of the halacha in this matter in this advertisement for a “Kosher Compass:”

http://koshercompass.com/catalog/information.php?info_id=4&osCsId=f62d69ffcac2544c0cdb2bbab90ab981

b. References to the land in the liturgy

i. **The Shma**

While the Shma is of course seen as a universal declaration of faith, the fine print contains rather specific references to our covenantal relationship to the land of Israel. The second paragraph of the recitation of the Shma consists of Deuteronomy 11:13-21, which is an explicit restatement of the concept of covenant regarding the land itself: obey the commandments, and the rain will fall and you will prosper; be tempted to serve other gods – and “you will soon perish from the good land...” What do we think when we read this? What is its referent for us? A historical memory? A universal equation (effective anywhere)? A warning regarding the modern state of Israel?

ii. **Seasonal references**

Aside from holiday references to the seasons in Israel, the daily and Shabbat liturgy contains a few reminders of where we are:

1. In the second blessing of the amidah: from Shemini Atzeret until Pesach, Jews everywhere in the world add the words “who makes the wind blow and the rain fall.” (referring, of course, to the wind and rain in *Eretz Yisrael*). And in Israel (only), from Pesach until Shemini Atzeret, they replace that phrase with “who brings down the dew.”
2. In the ninth blessing, “Bless for us, O Lord our God, this year and all the varieties of its produce for our good...”

From Pesach to December 4: ...Bestow a blessing on the earth and satisfy us with Your goodness...

From Dec. 4 to Pesach: Bestow dew and rain for a blessing on the earth and satisfy us with Your goodness... [where dew and rain apparently means “rain”]

This blessing, in general, refers to the agriculture of *Eretz Yisrael*.

- iii. Of the Psalms included in the standard liturgy, one stands out for its geographical emphasis. A common interpretation of Psalm 29, which is included both in Kabbalat Shabbat and in the Torah Service on Shabbat morning, is that it is a description of a thunderstorm moving across Israel, coming in from the Mediterranean from the northwest, sweeping

from Lebanon to the desert, breaking trees and reminding us of the Flood.

- iv. The *Birkat Hamazon* (grace after meals) contains a number of links to the land. In particular:
1. The second blessing opens with the words: “We thank you O Lord our God, for having given to our fathers such a desirable, good and spacious land as a heritage...” and ends with “Blessed are You, O Lord, for the land and for the food. This blessing seems to be based on our agricultural relationship to the land of Israel: our universal prayer of thanks for food, after every meal, reminds of the good old days when our food was derived from the soil and rain of Eretz Yisrael; hence every time we eat, we think about those days and that place. Our gratitude for food in general connects to all land – but through it, to the specific land of Israel. It could be said that not only with every visit to the synagogue does the traditional Jew remind him/herself of the connection to Israel – past and future – but even with every bite of food s/he takes. Israel is nature to us, the soil, our roots, the source of our sustenance – even if we live elsewhere and eat bread made of wheat from Kansas (indeed, in Israel today most grain is imported...)
 2. The third blessing, asking for redemption, also emphasizes a specific geographical reference: “Have mercy, O Lord our God, on Israel Your people, on Jerusalem Your city, on Zion the abode of your glory, on the royal house of David...etc.” After every meal, no matter where we eat it, we remember where we wish we had eaten it...
 3. Note that versions of the *Birkat Hamazon* printed since 1948 include among the short prayers at the end: “May the All-merciful one bless the State of Israel, the first flowering of our redemption.” This of course bring us to a discussion not about our connection to the land, but about the meaning of the modern state in Jewish history: is it indeed the first stage of the redemption?
- c. Longing for redemption in the form of return
- i. In the second blessing preceding the Shma: “O bring us home in peace from the four corners of the earth, and lead us upright to our land...”
 - ii. The daily amidah contains several prayers reminding us of our exiled state and asking for return/restoration:

1. Tenth blessing: "Sound the great shofar of our freedom, raise the signal to gather our exiles..."
 2. Fourteenth blessing: "Return in mercy to Jerusalem Your city, and dwell in it as You have promised. Rebuild it soon in our days..."
 3. Seventeenth blessing: "...Restore the service to Your most holy house and receive in love and with favor the sacrifices of Israel and their prayer..."
- iii. And on Shabbat:
1. Lecha Dodi in Kabbalat Shabbat: "...O royal city, sanctuary of the King, arise and go forth from your ruins..." etc.
 2. Musaf on Shabbat – middle blessing: "...lead us in joy back to our land and plant us within our borders..."
[By the way, the early Reform movement decided to eliminate Musaf, as the movement wanted to cleanse the service of things they didn't believe in – like the longing for restoration – but in the end realized that if they eliminated it, most people would arrive in time for Kiddush...]
- iv. There are of course many more references to redemption and return in the holiday liturgy – the high holy days and the three pilgrimage festivals. However, these days have been treated in different units, and our focus here is on the everyday or every week repetition of texts that connect the worshipper with the land and our exile from it and longing for return.

Appendix: Maimonides on sacrifices
Guide for the Perplexed, Part III, Chapter 32

CHAPTER XXXII

ON considering the Divine acts, or the processes of Nature, we get an insight into the prudence and wisdom of God as displayed in the creation of animals, with the gradual development of the movements of their limbs and the relative positions of the latter, and we perceive also His wisdom and plan in the successive and gradual development of the whole condition of each individual. The gradual development of the animals' movements and the relative position of the limbs may be illustrated by the brain. The front part is very soft, the back part is a little hard, the spinal marrow is still harder, and the farther it extends the harder it becomes. The nerves are the organs of sensation and motion. Some nerves are only required for sensation, or for slight movements, as,

e.g., the movement of the eyelids or of the jaws; these nerves originate in the brain. The nerves which are required for the movements of the limbs come from the spinal marrow. But nerves, even those that come directly from the spinal cord, are too soft to set the joints in motion; therefore God made the following arrangement: the nerves branch out into fibres which are covered with flesh, and become muscles: the nerves that come forth at the extremities of the muscles and have already commenced to harden, and to combine with hard pieces of ligaments, are the sinews which are joined and attached to the limbs. By this gradual development the nerves are enabled to set the limbs in motion. I quote this one instance because it is the most evident of the wonders described in the book *On the use of the limbs*: but the use of the limbs is clearly perceived by all who examine them with a sharp eye. In a similar manner did God provide for each individual animal of the class of mammalia. When such an animal is born it is extremely tender, and cannot be fed with dry food. Therefore breasts were provided which yield milk, and the young can be fed with moist food which corresponds to the condition of the limbs of the animal, until the latter have gradually become dry and hard.

Many precepts in our Law are the result of a similar course adopted by the same Supreme Being. It is, namely, impossible to go suddenly from one extreme to the other: it is therefore according to the nature of man impossible for him suddenly to discontinue everything to which he has been accustomed. Now God sent Moses to make [the Israelites] a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod. xix. 6) by means of the knowledge of God. Comp." Unto thee it was showed that thou mightest know that the Lord is God (Dent. iv. 35):" Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord is God" (ibid. v. 39). The Israelites were commanded to devote themselves to His service; comp." and to serve him with all your heart" (ibid. xi. 13):" and you shall serve the Lord your God" (Exod. xxiii. 25);" and ye shall serve him" (Dent. xiii. 5). But the custom which was in those days general among all men, and the general mode of worship in which the Israelites were brought up, consisted in sacrificing animals in those temples which contained certain images, to bow down to those images, and to bum incense before them; religious and ascetic persons were in those days the persons that were devoted to the service in the temples erected to the stars, as has been explained by us. It was in accordance with the wisdom and plan of God, as displayed in the whole Creation, that He did not command us to give up and to discontinue all these manners of service; for to obey such a commandment it would have been contrary to the nature of man, who generally cleaves to that to which he is used; it would in those days have made the same impression as a prophet would make at present if he called us to the service of God and told us in His name, that we should not pray to Him, not fast, not seek His help in time of trouble; that we should serve Him in thought, and not by any action. For this reason God allowed these kinds of service to continue; He transferred to His service that which had formerly served as a worship of created beings, and of things imaginary and unreal, and commanded us to serve Him in the same manner; viz., to build unto Him a temple; comp." And they shall make unto me a sanctuary" (Exod. xxv. 8): to have the altar erected to His name;

comp." An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me" (ibid. XX. 2 1): to offer the sacrifices to Him; comp." If any man of you bring an offering unto the Lord" (Lev. i. 2), to bow down to Him. and to burn incense before Him. He has forbidden to do any of these things to any other being; comp." He who sacrificeth unto any God, save the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed * (Exod. xxii. 19):" For thou shalt bow down to no other God" (ibid. xxxiv. 14). He selected priests for the service in the temple; comp." And they shall minister unto me in the priest's office" (ibid. xxviii. 41). He made it obligatory that certain gifts, called the gifts of the Levites and the priests, should be assigned to them for their maintenance while they are engaged in the service of the temple and its sacrifices. By this Divine plan it was effected that the traces of idolatry were blotted out, and the truly great principle of our faith, the Existence and Unity of God, was firmly established; this result was thus obtained without deterring or confusing the minds of the people by the abolition of the service to which they were accustomed and which alone was familiar to them. I know that you will at first thought reject this idea and find it strange: you will put the following question to me in your heart : How can we suppose that Divine commandments, prohibitions, and important acts, which are fully explained, and for which certain seasons are fixed, should not have been commanded for their own sake, but only for the sake of some other thing: as if they were only the means which He employed for His primary object ? What prevented Him from making His primary object a direct commandment to us, and to give us the capacity of obeying it ? Those precepts which in your opinion are only the means and not the object would then have been unnecessary. Hear my answer, which will cure your heart of this disease and will show you the truth of that which I have pointed out to you. There occurs in the Law a passage which contains exactly the same idea; it is the following : " God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt; but God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea," etc. (Exod. xiii. 17). Here God led the people about, away from the direct road which He originally intended, because He feared they might meet on that way with hardships too great for their ordinary strength; He took them by another road in order to obtain thereby His original object. In the same manner God refrained from prescribing what the people by their natural disposition would be incapable of obeying, and gave the above-mentioned commandments as a means of securing His chief object, viz., to spread a knowledge of Him [among the people], and to cause them to reject idolatry. It is contrary to man's nature that he should suddenly abandon all the different kinds of Divine service and the different customs in which he has been brought up, and which have been so general, that they were considered as a matter of course; it would be just as if a person trained to work as a slave with mortar and bricks, or similar things, should interrupt his work, clean his hands, and at once fight with real giants. It was the result of God's wisdom that the Israelites were led about in the wilderness till they acquired courage. For it is a well-known fact that travelling in the wilderness, and privation of bodily enjoyments, such as bathing, produce courage, whilst the reverse is the source of faint-heartedness: besides, another generation rose during the wanderings that had not been accustomed to

degradation and slavery. All the travelling in the wilderness was regulated by Divine commands through Moses; comp." At the commandment of the Lord they rested, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed; they kept the charge of the Lord and the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses" (Num. ix. 23). In the same way the portion of the Law under discussion is the result of divine wisdom, according to which people are allowed to continue the kind of worship to which they have been accustomed, in order that they might acquire the true faith, which is the chief object [of God's commandments]. You ask, What could have prevented God from commanding us directly, that which is the chief object, and from giving us the capacity of obeying it ? This would lead to a second question, What prevented God from leading the Israelites through the way of the land of the Philistines, and endowing them with strength for fighting ? The leading about by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night would then not have been necessary. A third question would then be asked in reference to the good promised as reward for the keeping of the commandments, and the evil foretold as a punishment for sins. It is the following question: As it is the chief object and purpose of God that we should believe in the Law, and act according to that which is written therein, why has He not given us the capacity of continually believing in it, and following its guidance, instead of holding out to us reward for obedience, and punishment for disobedience, or of actually giving all the predicted reward and punishment ? For [the promises and the threats] are but the means of leading to this chief object. What prevented Him from giving us, as part of our nature, the will to do that which He desires us to do, and to abandon the kind of worship which He rejects ? There is one general answer to these three questions, and to all questions of the same character: it is this : Although in every one of the signs [related in Scripture] the natural property of some individual being is changed, the nature of man is never changed by God by way of miracle. It is in accordance with this important principle that God said," O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me," etc. (Dent. v. 26). It is also for this reason that He distinctly stated the commandments and the prohibitions, the reward and the punishment. This principle as regards miracles has been frequently explained by us in our works: I do not say this because I believe that it is difficult for God to change the nature of every individual person; on the contrary, it is possible, and it is in His power, according to the principles taught in Scripture; but it has never been His will to do it, and it never will be. If it were part of His will to change [at His desire] the nature of any person, the mission of prophets and the giving of the Law would have been altogether superfluous.

I now return to my theme. As the sacrificial service is not the primary object [of the commandments about sacrifice], whilst supplications, Prayers and similar kinds of worship are nearer to the primary object, and indispensable for obtaining it, a great difference was made in the Law between these two kinds of service. The one kind, which consists in offering sacrifices, although the sacrifices are offered to the name of God, has not been made obligatory for us to the same extent as it had been before. We were not commanded to sacrifice in every place, and in every time, or to build a temple in every place, or to permit any one who desires to become priest and to

sacrifice. On the contrary, all this is prohibited unto us. Only one temple has been appointed," in the place which the Lord shall choose" (Deut. xii. 26): in no other place is it allowed to sacrifice: comp." Take heed to thyself, that thou offer not thy burnt-offerings in every place that thou seest" (ibid. v. 13); and only the members of a particular family were allowed to officiate as priests. All these restrictions served to limit this kind of worship, and keep it within those bounds within which God did not think it necessary to abolish sacrificial service altogether. But prayer and supplication can be offered everywhere and by every person. The same is the case with the commandment of zizit (Num. xy. 38); mezuzah (Dent. vi. 9; xi. 20); tefillin (Exod. xiii. 9, 16); and similar kinds of divine service.

Because of this principle which I explained to you, the Prophets in their books are frequently found to rebuke their fellow-men for being over-zealous and exerting themselves too much in bringing sacrifices: the prophets thus distinctly declared that the object of the sacrifices is not very essential, and that God does not require them. Samuel therefore said," Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord" (I Sam. xv. 22) ? Isaiah exclaimed," To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me ? saith the Lord" (Isa. i. 11): Jeremiah declared:" For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offering or sacrifices. But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my, voice, and

I will be your God, and ye shall be my people" (Jer. vii. 22, 23). This passage has been found difficult in the opinion of all those whose words .I read or heard; they ask, How can Jeremiah say that God did not command us about burnt-offering and sacrifice, seeing so many precepts refer to sacrifice ? The sense of the passage agrees with what I explained to you. Jeremiah says [in the name of God) the primary object of the precepts is this, Know me, and serve no other being;" I will be your God, and ye shall be my people" (Lev. xxvi. 12). But the commandment that sacrifices shall be brought and that the temple shall be visited has for its object the success of that principle among you; and for its sake I have transferred these modes of worship to my name; idolatry shall thereby be utterly destroyed, and Jewish faith firmly established. You, however, have ignored this object, and taken hold of that which is only the means of obtaining it; you have doubted my existence," ye have denied the Lord, and said he is not" (Jer. v. 12): ye served idols;" burnt incense unto Baal, and walked after other gods whom ye know not. And come and stand before me in this house" (ibid. vii. 9-10); i.e., you do not go beyond attending the temple of the Lord, and offering sacrifices: but this is not the chief object.-- I have another way of explaining this passage with exactly the same result. For it is distinctly stated in Scripture, and handed down by tradition, that the first commandments communicated to us did not include any law at an about burnt-offering and sacrifice. You must not see any difficulty in the Passover which was commanded in Egypt; there was a particular and evident reason for that, as will be explained by me (chap. xlvi.). Besides it was revealed in the land of Egypt; whilst the laws to which Jeremiah alludes in the above passage are those which were revealed

after the departure from Egypt. For this reason it is distinctly added," in the day that I brought them out from the land of Egypt." The first commandment after the departure from Egypt was given at Marah, in the following words," If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments" (Exod. xv. 26)." There he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them" (ibid. ver. 25). According to the true traditional explanation, Sabbath and civil laws were revealed at Marah:" statute" alludes to Sabbath, and" ordinance" to civil laws, which are the means of removing injustice. The chief object of the Law, as has been shown by us, is the teaching of truths; to which the truth of the creatio ex nihilo belongs. It is known that the object of the law of Sabbath is to confirm and to establish this principle, as we have shown in this treatise (Part. II. chap. xxxi.). In addition to the teaching of truths the Law aims at the removal of injustice from mankind. We have thus proved that the first laws do not refer to burnt-offering and sacrifice, which are of secondary importance. The same idea which is contained in the above passage from Jeremiah is also expressed in the Psalms, where the people are rebuked that they ignore the chief object, and make no distinction between chief and subsidiary lessons. The Psalmist says:" Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee : I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt-offerings, they have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds" (Ps. 1. 29).-- Wherever this subject is mentioned, this is its meaning. Consider it well, and reflect on it.