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PARASHAT HASHAVUA

PARASHAT PINCHAS

**Were *Mussaf* Sacrifices Offered in the Desert?
By Rav Yehuda Rock**

The well-known opinion of the Ramban states that the *mussaf* (additional) sacrifices, which are listed in our *parasha*, were not offered in the desert; they were instituted only at the time when Bnei Yisrael entered the land. In this *shiur* we shall examine this view and propose an approach according to which the *mussaf* sacrifices were indeed offered, but in a manner that was different from the custom fixed for future generations. We shall then examine the significance of this hypothesis.

The crux of Ramban's opinion is stated in *Parashat Emor*, at the beginning of the section discussing the festivals:

But [God] mentions the festivals here, in the *Torat Kohanim* [*Sefer Vayikra*, which is devoted to matters of priesthood], since these are days when the [special additional] sacrifices are offered, and He hints to them, as it is written, "You shall sacrifice an offering by fire to God," and at the end of the *parasha* it says, "These are the festivals of God which you will declare as holy convocations, to sacrifice an offering by fire to God; a burnt offering and a meal offering, a sacrifice, and libation offerings." (*Vayikra* 23:2)

However, God does not go on to detail the *mussaf* offerings, for it was not His wish that they be implemented in the desert. After those who will enter the land are numbered, in *Sefer Bamidbar*, and [God] commands, "To these the land shall be divided," then all the *mussaf* sacrifices are set out, in *Parashat Pinchas*, so that [Bnei Yisrael] will perform them in the land – presently, as well as for future generations... but the [festive] days themselves [as set out here, in *Parashat Emor*] are to be observed immediately.

Ramban compares the section listing the *mussaf* sacrifices (in our *parasha*) with the section on the festivals (which opens with the words, "These are the festivals of God...," in *Parashat Emor*, *Vayikra* 23). He notes that the festive sacrifices are a central theme in the section on the festivals. For almost every festival we find the words, "You shall sacrifice an offering by fire to God," and at the end of the *parasha*, the concluding verse emphasizes the matter of the sacrifices (23:37): "These are the festivals of God which you will declare as holy convocations, to sacrifice an offering by fire to God; a burnt offering and a meal offering, a sacrifice, and libation offerings; each day and the thing set for it..." The Torah is talking to the community (in the plural); hence, there is an obligation to offer the special communal sacrifices prescribed for the festivals – the *mussaf* sacrifices.

Despite the obligation of the sacrifices being emphasized in the section that lists the festivals (in *Parashat Emor*), the actual sacrifices themselves are not listed there (except in the case of Shavuot). The Torah simply refers to "an offering by fire to God." Only when we come to *Parashat Pinchas* does the Torah give a detailed list of the *mussaf* sacrifices (*Bamidbar* 28:1-3):

God spoke to Moshe, saying:

Command Bnei Yisrael, and say to them:

My offering, the provision of my offerings by fire, for a sweet savor to Me, shall you observe to offer to me at its appointed time.

And you shall say to them:

This is the offering by fire which you shall offer to God:

Two lambs of the first year, without blemish...

And on the Shabbat day, two lambs of the first year without blemish... the burnt offering of every Shabbat, in addition to the daily burnt offering and its libation offering.

And at the beginnings of your months you shall offer a burnt offering to God: two young bulls... it shall be performed in addition to the daily burnt offering and its libation offering.

And in the first month... on the fifteenth day of this month is a festival, seven days... and you shall sacrifice an offering by fire as a burnt offering to God: two young bulls... it shall be performed in addition to the daily burnt offering and its libation offering...

And on the day of the first fruits...

And in the seventh month, on the first of the month...

And on the tenth of the month...

And on the fifteenth day...

These you shall do for God on your festivals, aside from your vows and your freewill offerings, for your burnt offerings and for your meal offerings and for your drink offerings and for your peace offerings.

And Moshe told Bnei Yisrael according to all that God had commanded Moshe.

Unquestionably, this section detailing the *mussaf* sacrifices refers directly to the "offerings by fire" (*ishei*) mentioned in the section on the festivals in *Parashat Emor*. This is borne out by the expression, "This is the offering by fire which you shall sacrifice to God." The same conclusion is supported by the verse – "These you shall do for God on your festivals, aside from your vows and your freewill offerings, for your burnt offerings and for your meal offerings and for your drink offerings and for your peace offerings," which is remarkably similar to the summary towards the end of the section on the festivals (*Vayikra* 23:37-38): "These are the festivals of God which you will declare as holy convocations, to sacrifice an offering by fire to God; a burnt offering and a meal offering, a sacrifice, and libation offerings; each day and the thing set for it; aside from the *Shabbatot* unto God and aside from your gifts and aside from all your vows and aside from all your freewill offerings that you shall give to God."

Ramban concludes, on the basis of its structure, that this section on the festivals, conveyed during the first or second year in the desert, teaches only that in the future Bnei Yisrael will be required to offer sacrifices on the festivals, while the details appear later, in the section on the *mussaf* sacrifices in *Parashat Pinchas*. And since the section on the *mussaf* sacrifices was conveyed – as we deduce from its position in the text – only in the fortieth year, just as the nation was about to enter the land, Ramban concludes that the obligation of the *mussaf* sacrifices came into effect only with the entry into the land.

Ramban's approach raises several difficulties.

The main problem is that in the section on the festivals the entry into the land is mentioned only once – at the beginning of the unit that discusses the *omer* and the two loaves:

God spoke to Moshe, saying: Speak to Bnei Yisrael, and tell them: When you come to the land which I am giving you, and you harvest its harvest, you shall bring an *omer* of the first of your harvest to the kohen....

Ramban translates this into a sweeping assertion that all the sacrifices of this entire section are to be observed only from the time of the entry into the land. However, if this were the intention, the Torah should introduce the entire section on the festivals with this general instruction. The fact that the Torah uses this introduction only for the specific unit dealing with sacrifices of a prominently agricultural nature proves that only this specific unit applies only upon entry into the land, while the rest of the section applies in the desert, too.

Secondly, there are discrepancies between the two sections that demand some explanation no matter how we approach them, but which are especially difficult in light of Ramban's interpretation. The discrepancies we refer to are: the daily sacrifices, Shabbat, and Rosh Chodesh. The daily sacrifice is featured in *Parashat Tetzaveh*, but is absent from the section of the festivals in *Emor*. Shabbat is mentioned at the beginning of the section on the festivals, but there is no mention there of any obligation of a sacrifice. Rosh Chodesh appears nowhere prior to the section on the *mussaf* sacrifices, in our *parasha*. The section on the *mussaf* sacrifices, however, opens with the daily sacrifice, the *mussaf* of Shabbat, and the *mussaf* of Rosh Chodesh. While these discrepancies are perplexing, as noted, no matter which approach we adopt, they are especially problematic from the perspective of Ramban's approach, which maintains that the main purpose of the section on the *mussaf* sacrifices is to enumerate and detail the *mussaf* sacrifices that are mentioned only briefly in the section on the festivals.

The key to solving the problem would seem to lie precisely in the routine style of the commands with regard to the festivals, "You shall sacrifice an offering by fire to God." As noted, this command is given to the generation that left Egypt – as evidenced by the chronology of the text, and Ramban agrees with this. As noted, too, the Torah does not make the observance of the command dependent on the time of entry into the land – as we see from the fact that it is only in connection with the *omer*, and the festival of Shavuot, that we are told, "When you come to the land...." Apparently, what this means is that during the period of the desert, Bnei Yisrael were required to bring special sacrifices ("offerings by fire") on the festivals, but were not yet commanded in all the details of the sacrifices.

Thus, the obligation of festive sacrifices during the period of the desert was a special sort of obligation, similar to an obligatory sacrifice but also to a freewill sacrifice. The bringing of communal sacrifices on the festivals was obligatory, but the number of sacrifices and their types was a matter of freewill giving. (See Ramban's discussion of the concept of a freewill offering as pertaining to the community, see *Vayikra* 1:2.)

A similar model seems to exist in the form of the sacrifices of the princes of the tribes. God tells Moshe (*Bamidbar* 7:11): "One prince each day, one prince each day; they shall offer their sacrifice for the inauguration of the altar" – with no detailing of the sacrifice; the princes decided what to offer.

Hence, the section on the *mussaf* sacrifices should not be viewed as coming only to fill in the details of the sacrifices mentioned in the section on the festivals. Rather, this section comes to change the custom that was practiced during the period of the desert: until now, the obligation had been to offer some special sacrifice in honor of the festival, its composition left to the choice of *Am Yisrael*. From now onwards, the Torah commands and defines the specific sacrifices to be offered. While some relationship clearly exists between the two sources, and the section on the *mussaf* sacrifices undoubtedly refers to the sacrifices mentioned in the section on the festivals (as Ramban asserts), it does more than merely list the substance of those sacrifices, which is not yet known; it also changes and introduces something new into the substance of the command.

Our task now is to understand this change. In fact, there are three separate issues that require clarification: the point of the section on the festivals, in the context of which it is appropriate that the Torah requires some sacrifice that is undefined; the point of the section on the *mussaf* sacrifices, in the context of which it is appropriate that the Torah require certain specific, defined sacrifices; and the cause of the change that comes about at the end of the period in the desert.

For the purposes of clarifying these issues, let us focus directly on the section on the festivals (*Vayikra* 23).

This section contains a number of structural difficulties.

Let us first view the main ideas of the section:

- (1) God spoke to Moshe, saying:
- (2) Speak to Bnei Yisrael and say to them: The festivals of God, which you will proclaim as holy convocations – these are My festivals:
- (3) Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Shabbat *shabbaton*, a holy convocation; no work shall be done; it is a Shabbat unto God throughout your dwellings.
- (4) These are the festivals of God, holy convocations, which you shall proclaim at their appointed times:
- (5) In the first month, on the fourteenth of the month, at twilight, is Pesach unto God. (6) And on the fifteenth day of that month is a Festival of Matzot unto God; you shall eat

- matzot for seven days. (7) On the first day there shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall do no servile work; (8) and you shall sacrifice an offering by fire to God for seven days. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall do no servile work.
- (9) And God spoke to Moshe, saying: (10) Speak to Bnei Yisrael and say to them: When you come to the land which I give you, and harvest its harvest, then you shall bring an *omer* of the first of your harvest to the kohen... (15) And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Shabbat... (16) ... and you shall offer a new meal offering to God... (18) And you shall offer, along with the bread, seven lambs... an offering by fire for a sweet savor to God... (21) And you shall proclaim on that very day, that it be a holy convocation to you; you shall do no servile work; it is an eternal statute throughout your dwellings, for your generations...
- (23) And God spoke to Moshe, saying: (24) Speak to Bnei Yisrael, saying: In the seventh month, on the first of the month, you shall have a Shabbat, a memorial of sounding [the shofar]; a holy convocation. (25) You shall do no servile work, and you shall offer an offering by fire to God.
- (26) And God spoke to Moshe, saying: (27) Also on the tenth [day] of this seventh month there shall be a Day of Atonement; you shall have a holy convocation, and afflict your souls, and sacrifice an offering by fire to God. (28) You shall perform no servile work on that very day, for it is a Day of Atonement, to atone for you before the Lord your God. (29) For any soul that is not afflicted on that very day shall be cut off from its people. (30) And any soul that performs any work on that very day – I shall destroy that soul from amongst its people. (31) You shall perform no work; it is an eternal statute for your generations, throughout your dwellings. (32) It is a Shabbat *shabbaton* to you, and you shall afflict your souls. On the ninth of the month in the evening – from evening to evening shall you commemorate your Shabbat.
- (33) And God spoke to Moshe, saying: (34) Speak to Bnei Yisrael, saying: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the festival of Sukkot, for seven days, unto God. (35) On the first day is a holy convocation; you shall do no servile work. (36) Seven days shall you sacrifice an offering by fire unto God. On the eighth day there shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall sacrifice an offering by fire to God; it is an *atzeret*; you shall do no work.
- (37) These are the festivals of God which you will declare as holy convocations, to sacrifice an offering by fire to God; a burnt offering and a meal offering, a sacrifice, and libation offerings; each day and the thing set for it; (38) aside from the *Shabbatot* unto God and aside from your gifts and aside from all your vows

- and aside from all your freewill offerings that you shall give to God.
- (39) Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you gather in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate a festival unto God for seven days. On the first day is a *Shabbaton*, and on the eighth day is a *Shabbaton*. (40) And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of the *hadar* tree... (41) And you shall observe it as a festival unto God for seven days in the year; it is an eternal statute for your generations... (42) You shall dwell in *sukkot* for seven days...
- (44) And Moshe told Bnei Yisrael the festivals of God.

The first difficulty in the section on the festivals concerns the relationship between verse 2 and verse 4. Each is structured as an introduction, and each conveys almost the same information. In between, the Torah inserts the commandment of Shabbat. For what reason are both of these verses necessary? Why does verse 4 appear in the form of an introduction after the Torah has already described one "appointed time" (Shabbat)?

Secondly, in verses 37-38 we are told, "These are the festivals of God ... aside from the Shabbatot unto God..." Why does the section conclude by telling us that the festivals included in it are "aside from" Shabbat, when Shabbat is the first "festival" that the section addresses? Moreover, the simple reading of the verses would indicate that the festivals listed here are times when sacrifices are to be offered, aside from other occasions of sacrifice – as vows or freewill offerings. Shabbat appears in the list of other occasions for offering sacrifices, and this would seem to indicate that sacrifices may be offered on Shabbat. But Shabbat is the only festival in this section where no mention is made of sacrifices at all!

Verses 37-38 are problematic from another perspective, too: their content and style indicate that they are verses of conclusion, but they appear in the middle of the verses discussing the festival of Sukkot. Four entire verses devoted to the festival of Sukkot appear after the Torah has already summed up with the words, "These are the festivals of God"!

Another structural problem arises from the fact that on one hand this section has both an introduction and a conclusion ("These are the festivals of God... These are the festivals of God...") that would seem to include all the festivals in the *parasha* as the content of the discussion, but on the other hand, most of the festivals are separated from one another with a new Divine command. In other words, in His first command, God indicates that what follows is a full list of festivals, and in the concluding command He indicates that a full list of festivals has just been set out – even though at the end of each festival the Divine command ends, and then a new one is introduced for the next festival!

We are forced to conclude that this *parasha* interweaves two different aspects.

We adopt here the exegetical methodology known as the "*shittat ha-bechinot*," developed by my Rav and teacher, Rav Mordechai Breuer. (Rav Breuer sets out his approach, and the

commentary in which he implements it, in his books *Pirkei Mo'adot*, *Pirkei Bereishit*, and *Shittat ha-Bechinot Shel ha-Rav Mordekhai Breuer*.) According to this approach, God writes the Torah in layers, with narratives or halakhic units that parallel one another – different "aspects" – each of which is able to stand alone and to be read in its own right, such that sometimes they appear to contradict one another. Often, these aspects are intertwined, creating a complex or multi-layered unit. This complex unit blurs the points of transition between one aspect and the other, but highlights the difficulties inherent in these transitions. Each story expresses its own independent content, which is important in its own right; however, there is some relationship between them, which justifies their integration into a single text. By delving into the difficulties that arise from the joining together of the two aspects – such as repetitions or contradictions – we are able to expose the two independent "aspects," and thereafter to explore their significance. Here we shall apply this methodology to the section on the festivals.

The fact that the section has two introductions (verses 2,4) and a conclusion (verses 37-38) that appears prior to the final end of the section, tells us that it is comprised of two aspects. Each introductory verse starts off one aspect, with Shabbat (verse 3) belonging only to that aspect introduced by the first introductory verse. The concluding verse belongs only to one aspect, while the verses about the festival of Sukkot, which appear after that concluding verse (39-43) belong only to that aspect that has no concluding verse.

In the concluding verse we read, "These are the festivals of God... aside from God's *shabbatot*..." Hence, the concluding verse belongs to the aspect that makes no mention of Shabbat – i.e., the aspect introduced by the second verse of introduction. And the verses related to Sukkot, which appear after the concluding verse, belong to the aspect introduced by the first verse of introduction.

From the style of verse 39, which comes immediately after the concluding verse, it is clear that it conveys new information concerning the establishment of the festival of Sukkot: "Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you gather in the produce of the land, you shall observe God's festival for seven days..." Hence, in this aspect the festival of Sukkot has not previously been mentioned; verses 34-36 must therefore belong to the aspect associated with the second verse of introduction.

The two aspects are distributed, according to our analysis thus far, as follows:

| I | II |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Introductory verse (2) | |
| Shabbat (3) | |
| | Introductory verse (4) |
| ... | ... |
| | Sukkot (34-36) |
| | Concluding verse (37-38) |
| Sukkot (39-43) | |

This division is sufficient basis for us to glean the basic textual characteristics of the respective aspects. The two introductory verses define the subject of the section as "the festivals of God," which are the times when *Am Yisrael*

"proclaim them as holy convocations." In other words, the central subject of the section, common to both aspects, is the command to sanctify certain appointed times to God, and the different ways in which this sanctity is given expression.

One practical expression of the sanctity of these times is common to both aspects – the prohibition on work. The prohibition on work appears with regard to Shabbat, in verse 3 which belongs to Aspect I, as well as in the verses discussing Sukkot (34-36), which belong to Aspect II. The prohibition on work, then, is the most fundamental expression of the sanctity of these special times. Its significance seems to be a setting aside of this time from mundane concerns, for the sake of focusing on God and on His service, in its most general sense.

However, the aspects are distinguished from one another by means of other characteristics. The most prominent difference concerns the subject of our discussion here – the matter of the sacrifices to be offered on the festivals. The closing verse of Aspect II defines the manner in which the festivals are proclaimed as holy convocations as a sacrifice of an offering by fire to God: "These are God's festivals which you shall proclaim as holy convocations, to sacrifice an offering by fire to God..." For Shabbat, as we have seen, the section on the festivals prescribes no sacrifice. This, then, is a fundamental difference between the two aspects: Aspect II establishes the sanctification of the special times by means of communal offerings, while in Aspect I the sanctification is performed in other ways.

We shall not be able to complete a full analysis of the section in accordance with its aspects within the framework of the present *shiur*. We shall note only that it is possible to demonstrate that most of the other festivals, which we have not yet discussed, may be divided into aspects, in such a way that each festival finds expression in both aspects. There are only two exceptions: Shabbat, as we have seen, belongs only to Aspect I, while Pesach and the Festival of Matzot belong only to Aspect II.

For our purposes – the discussion of the festive sacrifices – we are interested only in Aspect II. We are interested in examining not the relationship between it and Aspect I, but rather the relationship between it and the section on the *mussaf* sacrifices. The division of the section on the festivals into aspects provided us with an important piece of information in this regard: not only does the Shabbat of the section on festivals require no communal sacrifices, but in the aspect of the section on festivals that deals with communal sacrifices, Shabbat is omitted.

Thus, the differences between the section on the festivals (as reflected in Aspect II) and the section on the *mussaf* sacrifices are the following:

- * The section on the festivals establishes obligations that involve communal sacrifices of an unspecified nature.
- * The section on the festivals establishes obligations of communal sacrifices only for the pilgrim festivals and the High Holy Days – not for Shabbat and not for Rosh Chodesh. The section on *mussaf* sacrifices, on the other hand, includes the daily sacrifice, and also

establishes the *mussaf* sacrifices for Shabbat and for Rosh Chodesh.

The appointed times that are addressed by the section on the festivals are diverse in their specific nature: on one hand there are joyous festivals, such as Sukkot, while on the other hand there is a day of "affliction of the soul," on Yom Kippur. Thus, the unifying characteristic of the *parasha* lies not in the realm of the specific character of the festivals that are included in it, but rather in the manner in which the appointed time is sanctified. In each instance there is a holy convocation, with a prohibition on labor, and with communal sacrifices.

Nevertheless, the section does not establish the sanctification of Shabbat or Rosh Chodesh. This demands some explanation. If the section is able to establish the same mechanism for the sanctification of time, to apply to such diverse days as the Festival of Matzot, the festival of Sukkot and Yom Kippur, then why not include Shabbat, too?

It seems that the section on the festivals focuses on special appointed times – not the mundane day-to-day, and not even the appointed times that recur every week or every month.

The explanation for this would seem to be that the significance of the sanctification of time, in this context, is the infusion of time with festivity and specialness, and the connection of this festivity with closeness to God by means of the sacrifices. Admittedly, Aspect I also sanctifies Shabbat, but Aspect II appears to aspire to a deeper and more all-encompassing subjective sensation: a total investment of man's heart in Divine service; an experience that is difficult to sustain on an on-going basis, and which requires its own special, dedicated time. Accordingly, we can also understand why the Torah does not stipulate the details of the sacrifices. Since the Torah desires these sacrifices, it is proper that they be commanded. However, the nature of the sacrifices that are desired in this context is that of freewill offerings. The bringer of a freewill offering – be it an individual or the community – by definition transcends extroverted obedience, and invests his thoughts and feelings in his freewill offering and his sacrifice. For this reason, the Torah introduces the commands concerning the Mishkan with the words, "From every man whose heart is generous shall you take My contribution." For the same reason, the first command to issue from the Tent of Meeting, in the wake of the resting of the Divine Presence, is the matter of freewill offerings (*Vayikra* 1-3). Likewise in the section on the festivals, the limitation to specific special times that occur only a few times in the year, and the leaving of the details of the sacrifice to the freewill of the community, come together to create unique events of festive communal voluntarism for the purpose of drawing close to God.

The point of the section on the *mussaf* sacrifices is entirely different. This section opens with a general statement (*Bamidbar* 28:2): "My offering, the provision of my offerings by fire, for a sweet savor to Me, shall you observe to offer to me at its appointed time." And the section begins with the daily sacrifice, echoing almost word-for-word the section on the daily sacrifice at appears at the end of the command concerning the Mishkan.

The point of this *parasha* is the keeping of God's bread upon the altar: a concern for fixed, assured sacrificial service that maintains the Mishkan as a fixed framework of Divine

service and allows God's Presence to dwell within it permanently. This is not a matter of special, out-of-the-ordinary festivity, but rather one of permanence and continuity. Permanence and continuity are influenced by the times, and are adapted to them: a special time is worthy of having its own special Divine service. On Shabbat, a time when a person doubles his bread to as to have two loaves, the community doubles its sacrifice and brings two extra lambs in addition to the usual two of the daily sacrifices. At other special times, such as Rosh Chodesh and other festivals, the community adds even more to its fixed sacrifice. For this reason, the Torah emphasizes for each festival that the sacrifices are "aside from (i.e., in addition to) the daily burnt offering." As *Chazal* put it: "Such that it will not be that your table is full, while your Master's table is empty" (*Beitza* 20b).

The section on the *mussaf* sacrifices appears in the Torah immediately following the story of the transfer of leadership from Moshe to Yehoshua. Apparently, under Moshe's leadership – a period of clear manifestation of the Presence of God and His Providence being realized through the direct contact between Moshe and God – the nation's connection with God was fixed and continuous. There was no need for special sacrifices in order to preserve this relationship; the daily sacrifice was sufficient. Of course, there was – and always is – a need to deepen and strengthen the relationship, and it is for this reason that the section on the festivals appears, in *Parashat Emor*. However, the permanence and continuity are open and apparent.

For future generations, both aspects would be obligatory. On the practical level, there is no contradiction, since the section on the *mussaf* sacrifices includes those actions that are commanded in the section on the festivals, too. But on the experiential level, we are faced with two challenges. We are commanded, on one hand, to integrate all of our special appointed times – festivals, holy days, and even special events in our private lives – within a permanent and consistent aspiration to serve God in our lives. On the other hand, we must invest in the closeness to God at these special times and experience this closeness, as though our relationship was always that special and severed from our everyday lives.

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