

# Mitzva 95 – Build the Beit HaMikdash

Sefer HaChinuch 95

מצות בנין בית הבחירה - לבנות בית לשם יי, כלומר שנהיה מקריבים שם קרבנותינו אליו, ושם תהיה העלייה לרגל וקבוץ כל ישראל בכל שנה, שנאמר ועשו לי מקדש. וזאת המצוה כוללת עמה הכלים הצריכים בבית אל העבודה, כגון המנורה והשלחן והמזבח וכל שאר הכלים כלם.

The commandment of building the Choice House: To build a house for the sake of God, meaning to say that we would bring Him sacrifices there and that pilgrimage and yearly gathering of all of Israel be there, as it is stated (Exodus 25:8), "And let them make Me a sanctuary." And with it, this commandment includes the vessels needed for the service of the House of God - such as the menorah, the table, the altar, and all of the other vessels.

דע בני, כי כל אשר יגיע אצל השם בעשות בני אדם כל מצותיו איננו רק שחפץ השם להיטיב לנו, ובהיות האדם מכשר ומוכן בעשית אותן מצות לקבל הטובה אז ייטיב אליו השם, ועל כן הודיעם דרך טוב להיותם טובים, והיא דרך התורה

[Devarim 10:12-13

וַעֲתָהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ שָׂאֵל מֵעַמְּךָ כִּי אִם-לְיִרְאָה אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לִלְכֹּת בְּכָל-דַּרְכָּיו וְלֹאֲהַבָּהוּ אֹתוֹ וְלַעֲבֹד אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ:

And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God demand of you? Only this: to revere the LORD your God, to walk only in His paths, to love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and soul,

לְשַׁמֵּר אֶת-מִצְוֹת יְהוָה וְאֶת-חֻקֹּתָיו אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוֶּה הַיּוֹם לְטוֹב לָךְ:

keeping the LORD's commandments and laws, which I enjoin upon you today, for your good.]

And we will explain the dwelling of the Divine Presence in this place in this way according to the simple understanding: Even though, in truth, our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Megillah 28a) [that] their sanctity is upon them, even when they are desolate - which implies that there is no reason at all for the dwelling of the Divine Presence from the side of the worshipers - [still,] it is possible to say that God chose this place to bless from it people that He crated, as we have said. And [just] like it was His desire to send a prophet to people to teach them the path in which they should walk and [so] merit to preserve their souls, so too did He desire, in His great kindnesses, to fix a place on earth for them that would be prepared for the good of people and their merit - and all of this is from His kindnesses to His creatures.

And from here, in that this is the grounding of our opinion about the matter of His commandments, blessed be He, we are obligated to say that the building of the House for God, may He be blessed, for us to do our prayers and sacrifices to Him in it - it is all to prepare our hearts to His service, may He be elevated. [It is] not from His need to sit in the house of people and to come under the shade of their beams - whether they build it from cedars of Lebanon or from cypresses, 'as the heavens and the heavens of the heavens cannot contain Him,' and they [only] stand by His spirit; 'surely the house that people built' would [not] be needed for His glory, God forbid. Are the things not known and clear that it

is all for the refinement of our bodies? As bodies are refined by actions; and by the multiplication of good actions and their great constancy, the thoughts of the heart become purified, cleansed [and] sanitized - and God desires the good of the creatures, as we have said. And therefore, He commanded us to fix a place that would be pure and completely clean to purify the thoughts of people there and to refine their [our] hearts towards Him in it. And maybe He, blessed be He, chose that place and prepared it for the good of people from its being exactly at the center of the world, and the center is choicer than the ends; or for [another] reason that He, blessed be He, would be [its] Knower. And through the refinement of action and the purification of thought that we will have there, our minds will rise to clinging with the Highest mind.

And the laying down of this reason in the matter of the Temple obligates us also to make the matter of the sacrifices and the tribe of its workers and the precious well-known vessels rely on the very same reason, according to the simple understanding. Did we not say that the main [inclinations] of the heart follow after the actions? And, if so, the heart of a person will not be properly purified only with the word of the lips, that he say between himself and the wall, "I have sinned, I will not [do it] again." But when he does a great act for his sin, to take 'he-goats from his pens' and to exert himself to bring them to the prepared house to the priest, and [do] all of the procedure that it written about the sacrifices of the sinners - from all of this great action - he will fix the badness of sin in his soul, and it will be avoided by him the [next] time.

And I found with Ramban, may his memory be blessed, [an explanation] on the [level] of the simple meaning, similar to this reason. As he wrote (Ramban on Leviticus 1:9) in the name of others, and this is his language: Since the deeds of people are determined by thought, speech and action, God, may He be blessed, commanded that when he sins, he brings a sacrifice and place his hands upon him corresponding to the deed, and confess with his mouth corresponding to the speech, and burn the innards and the kidneys, as they are the instruments of thought and desire. And the limbs [of the sacrifice] correspond to the hands and feet of a person that does all of his work. And he sprinkles the blood on the altar corresponding to the blood of his soul, so that a person think in doing all of this that he sinned to God with his body and his soul, and it is fit for him that his blood be spilled and his body burnt; were it not for the kindness of the Creator, who took an exchange and ransom from him [in] the sacrifice - that its blood be instead of his blood and its soul be instead of his soul. And the central limbs correspond to his central limbs. And the portions with which to sustain the teachers of Torah [are so] that they will pray for him. And the daily sacrifice is because there is no saving the community from always sinning. And these words are tenable [and] grab the heart, like the words of classic homiletic teachings (Shabbat 87a). To here [are his words]. And he wrote at more length about the matter and wrote, "And in the way of truth (mysticism), the sacrifices contain a hidden secret, etc.," as he wrote in his commentary on Parshat Vaykra.

And we will add other things on the [level] of the simple meaning, and say that it is from this root that God commanded us to always sacrifice from things about which the heart of man covets, like meat and wine and bread, so that the heart be more aroused with this matter. And it [likewise] obligated the poor person to bring from his little [supply] of flour that his eyes and heart are upon all of the day. And there is another arousal of the heart with animal sacrifices from the angle of similarity, as human and animal bodies are similar in all of their matters - they are only differentiated that in this one, intellect was given into it, and not into that one. And when the human body goes out of the realm of the intellect at the time of the sin, he must know that he has entered the realm of animals at that time, as this is the only

thing that differentiates them. And therefore he is commanded to take a body of flesh like him and to bring it to the place chosen for the raising of the intellect and to burn it there, and to forget its memory - it shall be completely [incinerated], 'it shall not be remembered and it shall not be thought of,' corresponding to his body - in order to form a strong image in his heart that any matter of a body without intellect is lost and completely null. And he should [thus] rejoice in his portion of an intelligent soul with which God has graced him, [and] which exists forever.

And let it not be difficult to you in putting down this reason, how it is that we would ever bring a voluntary offering, as our reason also [explains] voluntary offerings: Since we have said that a sacrifice is an illustration of the lowering of bodies and the elevation of soul, the sacrificer will find benefit to [learn this] lesson, even without a known sin.

And about the sacrifice of Azazel that would be sent alive to a place of destruction and of extinction, we will say about the simple understanding of the matter [as follows]: The complete sinner should not imagine that after his soul receive the punishment for [the] sins, it will return to stand in the place of the good or [that] there will be some survival and good - even if he is like Yerovam the son of Nevat and his colleagues - just like he sees the whole entire year that the body of the animal that is an illustration for the body of the sinner has some remnants in the House of God, may He be blessed, in the ashes that stay there at the time of the burning. [As] they do not take them out from the Temple until after much time. Therefore in [this] living goat that carries all of the sins, they will see a hint that a sinner whose sins are great - like the heretics and those that deny Torah or the revival of the dead, and all of those that oppose Israel are included [as well] - will never see any good, and 'their worm will never die and their fire will never be extinguished.' [It is] like the procedure of this goat - [that] in his carrying the multitude of sins of all of Israel, is sent completely to a desolate land. He is not found in the House of God, not for slaughter and not for sprinkling - 'its memory will be lost from the earth.' And this is [the meaning of] what they, may their memory be blessed, said (Talmud Yerushalmi Yoma 6:3) that at the time that Israel was accepted, [the goat] would not reach halfway [down] the mountain before it would become [detached,] limb [from] limb - to show them the illustration of a complete sinner. As so will he be quickly destroyed, and he will be entirely, completely destroyed. [This is] in order that they would learn and [understand] the lesson and improve their ways. And this sign is good for them, as only he who loves one teaches him lessons, as it is written (Proverbs 13:24), "but he who loves him disciplines him early."

From the laws of the commandment is that which they, may their memory be blessed, said (Zevachim 112b) that before the Temple was built in Jerusalem, they would sacrifice in other places; but from when the Temple was built, all of the places were forbidden to build a house for the sake of God and to sacrifice there - as it is stated (Psalms 132:14), "This is the place of My resting forever and ever.

ונוהגת מצוה זו בזמן שרוב ישראל על אדמתן. וזו מן המצות שאינן מוטלות על היחיד כי אם על הצבור כולו, כשיבנה הבית במהרה בימינו יתקיים מצות עשה.