

## Kesher Minyan - Musaf Amidah

**Marc Brettler** The future restoration is imagined as the return from Babylonian exile, the Temple's reconstruction, and the restoration of sacrifices. Even though Psalm 51:19 proclaims, "True sacrifice is a contrite spirit," classical rabbinic Judaism typically anticipated a restoration of the Temple cult.

### Isaiah 58:13-14

אִם-תִּשָׁיב מִשַּׁבַּת רַגְלְךָ עֲשׂוֹת חֲפְצֶיךָ בַּיּוֹם קִדְשִׁי וְקִרְאתָ לַשַּׁבָּת עֹנֵג לְקִדּוֹשׁ אֲדֹנָי מִכָּבֵד וְכִבְדֹתָו מֵעֲשׂוֹת  
דְּרָכֶיךָ מִמִּצּוֹא חֲפְצֶיךָ וְדָבַר דְּבָר: אֲזַי תִּתְעַנֵּג עַל-אֲדֹנָי וְהִרְכַּבְתִּיךָ עַל-בְּמוֹתַי אֶרֶץ וְהֵאֲכִילְתִּי יֶךָ נַחֲלֹת יַעֲקֹב  
אֲבִיךָ כִּי פִי אֲדֹנָי דִּבֶּר:

If you refrain from trampling the sabbath, from pursuing your affairs on My holy day; If you call the sabbath "delight," (*oneg*) The LORD's holy day "honored;" and if you honor it and go not your ways nor look to your affairs, nor strike bargains—Then you can seek the favor (*titangu*) of the LORD. I will set you astride the heights of the earth, And let you enjoy the heritage of your father Jacob— For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

**Elliot Dorff** The traditional liturgy requests the restoration of our homeland and Temple so that we can again fulfill the Torah's command to offer the musaf sacrifice. The Talmud, however, is ambivalent about the idea of restoring sacrifices. "Prayer," says Rabbi Eleazar (Ber. 32b), "is more efficacious than animal offerings, as it says, 'What need have I of all your sacrifices?'" (Is. 1:11); and then, 'When you lift up your hands [in prayer] (Isa. 1:15). Isaiah's primary point is that God accepts neither sacrifices nor prayer if people act immorally, but the fact that "prayer" is mentioned after "sacrifice" is taken to indicate that God regards prayer as more efficacious.

Maimonides goes even further: he maintains that God never wanted sacrifice to begin with; God went along with the practice only to let the Israelites worship the way other people in the ancient world did (*Guide for the Perplexed*, part 3, chap. 32). This notion of evolution informs the Conservative Movement's practice regarding the retention of Musaf.

Rabbi Robert Gordis, who chaired its original Prayer Book Commission in 1945, explains that the prayer for the restoration of sacrifice exemplifies "passages in the traditional Prayer Book that no longer seem to express the convictions and hopes of our day... [Still] the sacrificial system represents a legitimate stage in the evolution of Judaism and religion generally... [so] neither the deletion of the Musaf nor its retention unchanged would satisfy the basic principles of a Jewish Prayer Book for the modern age." Conservative liturgy has maintained this sentence

asking God to restore our homeland, but transformed the request to restore the Temple into a historical recollection: "For there our ancestors offered the required sacrifices..." Mention of sacrifice becomes a reminder of our ancestors' devotion to God, and a stimulus for our own devotions expressed through prayer.

**Daniel Landes** The musaf sacrifice was offered at the sixth halakhic hour, but the service on which it is based can be prayed earlier, as long as Shacharit and the Torah reading have been completed. Nonetheless it should be said before the seventh halakhic hour is completed, for by then the musaf offering was over... the essence of the usual Amidah is one's personal cry for help in all of one's finitude... the sacrificial element is mostly indicated in the precision and nuance of time and the grace - the choreography - of the actual performance. This is not the case of Musaf, which is not attributed to any patriarch, and therefore is completely derived from its sacrificial roots not just as to form but also to content. The Musaf Amidah is both the verbal evocation of the sacrifice and its virtual reenactment. The verse applied to it is *un'shalmah farim s'fateinu*, "Instead of bulls we will pay the offering of our lips" (Hosea 14:3). This means that the kavannah should be that the words of the Musaf Amidah be indeed a sacrifice.

The sacrificial system is commonly derided. I have heard the scorn heaped on this so-called brutal and wasteful cultic rite - often at banqueting halls or fine restaurants where mounds of flesh are consumed by ravenous crowds and even greater mounds are discarded afterwards. How different was the sacrifice, a *korban* in Hebrew, meaning "to draw us near," and intended to us closer to God. The *korban* is an expression of life's finitude, an encounter with mortality, a forced admission of how fleeting life really is. The priests of old would lay hands upon the sacrifice, then (in some cases) say a *vidui* ("confession"), and then sprinkle or dash the blood on the altar, as if to say, "There but for the grace of God go I." But even as sacrifice allows us to encounter human finitude, it also draws us near to infinity. The *korban* allows for transformation: the offering and the lifting up of the merely material into the spiritual. From the most base and mundane parts of existence, one brings a gift that finds its way to God.

**Ellen Frankel** Non-Orthodox texts have either historicized the sacrifices, changing the verbs to past tense; made the Musaf Amidah optional; offered alternatives, such as poems or meditation; or dropped the Musaf Amidah altogether. Whether a worshiper looks backwards to a lost sacrificial system, looks forward to a restored one, or transforms the system into a metaphor, it's useful to explore how biblical and rabbinic literature regard women's roles within the context of Temple sacrifice, a matter not often discussed by most scholars, rabbis, or educators. Were women obligated to bring sacrifices to the Temple? Were they even allowed to do so? Israelite women were required to perform a number of sacrifices, including one

following childbirth, a thanksgiving offering, and a meal offering after recovering from illness or danger; the paschal offering on Passover; sin and purification offerings to atone for unintentional transgressions; Nazirite offerings to mark their fulfillment of Nazirite vow; and *tazria*, *m'tsora*, and *zavah* offerings after being cured from certain diseases and unusual bodily discharges. In addition, women could choose to participate in certain other offerings even though they were not obligated to perform them, such as the first fruits offering (*bikurim*) on Shavuot; donating a half-shekel tax for the Temple (*sh'kalim*); and voluntary donations such as peace offerings (*sh'amim*) and other contributions. Furthermore, women were permitted to lay their hands upon sacrificial animals (*s'mikhah*) prior to their slaughter, even if these offerings were not obligatory (Ber. 19a).

Clarifying women's obligations vis-a-vis Temple sacrifices has helped support efforts to expand women's liturgical roles in today's traditional community. It has been consistently argued within Orthodoxy that women cannot lead services because as voluntary worshipers themselves, they cannot fulfill the role of representing men who are obliged to offer prayers. However, since biblical and rabbinic texts establish that women *were* obligated to bring certain sacrifices during Temple times, they should accordingly be allowed to play the same leadership role as men in leading services.

**Ilana Kurshen, *If All the Seas were Ink***

I thought about how *t'rumat hadeshen* is not unlike emptying the dishwasher, a ritual that links the day that has passed to the day that is dawning. After unloading the dishwasher, I Kirshen continued with my daily rituals: I froze the breast milk I had pumped the previous day and cleaned out the bottles, and then I set up Matan's place setting with his map-of-the-world placemat and his monkey sippy cup. These are activities I perform every morning; they are love's austere and lonely offices, and they are, in a sense, my version of the *Korban Tamid*, the daily sacrifice offered every morning in the Temple.