

# מכון הדר

## MECHON HADAR

### Redeeming the *Akeidah*, *Halakhah*, and Ourselves

Rabbi Ethan Tucker – [tucker@mechonhadar.org](mailto:tucker@mechonhadar.org)

#### Center for Jewish Law and Values

#### I. Child sacrifice: First impressions

##### דברים יב:כט-לא

<sup>29</sup>כִּי־יִכְרִית׃ יְקֹנֶה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה בֹא־שָׁמָּה לְרַשֹּׁת אוֹתָם מִפְּנֵיךָ וְיִרְשָׁתָם אֹתָם וְיִשְׁבְּתָם בְּאַרְצָם׃ <sup>30</sup>הִשָּׁמֶר לְךָ פֶּן־תִּנְקֹשׁ אַחֲרֵיהֶם אַחֲרֵי הַשְׁמָדָם מִפְּנֵיךָ וּפֶן־תִּדְרֹשׁ לְאֱלֹהֵיהֶם לֵאמֹר אֵיכָה יַעֲבֹדוּ הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה אֶת־אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וְאֶעֱשֶׂה־כֵּן גַּם־אֲנִי׃ <sup>31</sup>לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂה כֵן לִיקְנוֹת אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי כָל־תּוֹעֵבֶת יְקֹנֶה אֲשֶׁר שָׂנֵא עֲשׂוֹ לְאֱלֹהֵיהֶם כִּי גַם אֶת־בְּנֵיהֶם וְאֶת־בָּנֹתֵיהֶם יִשְׂרְפוּ בָאֵשׁ לְאֱלֹהֵיהֶם׃

#### Devarim 12:29-31

<sup>29</sup>When the Lord your God cuts down in front of you the nations that you are coming to dispossess, and you take over from them and live in their land: <sup>30</sup>Be careful that you are not ensnared by them after destroying them, lest you seek out their gods, saying: “How did these nations worship their gods? I will do the same!” <sup>31</sup>Do not act in these ways to the Lord your God, for they performed for their gods all manner of atrocities that the Lord hates. They even burned their sons and daughters in fire to their gods!

##### ירמיהו יט:ג-ה

<sup>3</sup>וְאָמַרְתָּ שְׁמַעוּ דְּבַר־יְקֹנֶה מַלְכֵי יְהוּדָה וַיִּשְׁבְּי יְרוּשָׁלַם כֹּה־אָמַר׃ יְקֹנֶה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הִנְנִי מֵבִיא רָעָה עַל־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר כָּל־שְׂמֵעָה תִצְלָנָה אֲזִנֵּיו׃ <sup>4</sup>יַעֲזֹב אֲשֶׁר עֲזָבְנִי וַיִּנְכָּרוּ אֶת־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וַיִּקְטְרוּ־בּוֹ לְאֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדָעוּם הַמָּה וְאֲבוֹתֵיהֶם וּמַלְכֵי יְהוּדָה וּמִלְּאֻוּ אֶת־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה דָּם נָקִים׃ <sup>5</sup>וַיִּבְנוּ אֶת־בָּמֹת הַבַּעַל לְשָׂרִי אֶת־בְּנֵיהֶם בָּאֵשׁ עֹלֹת לַבַּעַל אֲשֶׁר לֹא־צִוִּיתִי וְלֹא דִבַּרְתִּי וְלֹא עָלְתָה עָלַי לִפְנֵי׃

#### Yirmiyahu 19:3-5

<sup>3</sup>You shall say: “Hear the word of the Lord, kings of Judah and residents of Jerusalem! So says the Lord of Hosts the God of Israel: I will bring evil to this place, such the ears of any who hear of it will ring.

<sup>4</sup>Because they have abandoned me and made this place foreign. They offered incense in it to other gods that neither they nor their ancestors, nor the kings of Judah knew. They filled this place with the blood of

innocents. <sup>5</sup>They build the high places of Ba'al so that they could burn their children in fire as offerings to Ba'al, which I did not command, nor speak, nor ever considered.

### תהלים קו:לח

וַיִּשְׁפְּכוּ דָם נָקִי דַם־בְּנֵיהֶם וּבְנוֹתֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר זָבְחוּ לְעִצְבֵּי כְנָעַן וַתִּחַנֶּף הָאֶרֶץ בְּדָמִים:

### Tehillim 106:38

They spilled innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan. The land was corrupted with blood.

### ספרי דברים פיסקא קמח

רבי יוסי אומר אלעזר בני אומר בו שלשה דברים אשר לא צויתי בתורה, ולא דברתי בעשרת הדברות, ולא עלתה על לבי שיקריב אדם את בנו על גב המזבח, אחרים אומרים אשר לא צויתי על יפתח, ולא דברתי על מישע מלך מואב, ולא עלתה על לבי, שיקריב אברהם בנו על גבי המזבח

### Sifrei Devarim #148

R. Yose says: My son Elazar says three things about this [verse]: “Which I did not command”—in the Torah, “which I did not speak”—in the ten commandments, “and which I never considered”—that a man would sacrifice his son on the altar. Others say: “Which I did not command”—with respect to Yiftah, “which I did not speak”—with respect to Mesha, the king of Moav, “and which I never considered”—that Avraham would sacrifice his son on the altar.

## II. Akeidah as moral surrender

### Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*

And God tempted Abraham and said unto him: take Isaac, thine only son, whom thou lovest and go to the land Moriah and sacrifice him there on a mountain which I shall show thee.

It was in the early morning, Abraham arose betimes and had his asses saddled. He departed from his tent, and Isaac with him; but Sarah looked out of the window after them until they were out of sight. Silently they rode for three days; but on the fourth morning Abraham said not a word but lifted up his eyes and beheld Mount Moriah in the distance. He left his servants behind and, leading Isaac by the hand, he approached the mountain. But Abraham said to himself: “I shall surely conceal from Isaac whither he is going.” He stood still, he laid his hand on Isaac’s head to bless him, and Isaac bowed down to receive his

blessing. And Abraham's aspect was fatherly, his glance was mild, his speech admonishing. But Isaac understood him not, his soul would not rise to him; he embraced Abraham's knees, he besought him at his feet, he begged for his young life, for his beautiful hopes, he recalled the joy in Abraham's house when he was born, he reminded him of the sorrow and the loneliness that would be after him. Then did Abraham raise up the youth and lead him by his hand, and his words were full of consolation and admonishment. But Isaac understood him not. He ascended Mount Moriah, but Isaac understood him not. Then Abraham averted his face for a moment; but when Isaac looked again, his father's countenance was changed, his glance wild, his aspect terrible, he seized Isaac and threw him to the ground and said: "Thou foolish lad, believest thou I am thy father? An idol-worshipper am I. Believest thou it is God's command? Nay, but my pleasure." Then Isaac trembled and cried out in his fear: "God in heaven, have pity on me, God of Abraham, show mercy to me, I have no father on earth, be thou then my father!" But Abraham said softly to himself: "Father in heaven, I thank thee. Better is it that he believes me inhuman than that he should lose his faith in thee."

### **ישעיהו ליבוביץ, "אברהם ואיוב", יהדות, עם יהודי, ומדינת ישראל, 393**

...שאין יראת ה' של אברהם שרק הוא נקרא "מאמין" כיראת ה' של כל שאר אישי חומש בראשית, ואין ההבדל בין שתי היראות הללו מתגלה אלא בעקידה. יראה זו זהה עם האהבה, ואמנם אברהם הוא הדמות המקראית היחידה הזוכה לכינוי "אוהב ה'" (ישעיהו מא, ח) כסגורם של נאשמי סדום אברהם טוען טענות מבחינת הצדק והמשפט והרחמים—שהם קטגוריות אנושיות, ועליהן הוא "מואיל" להתווכח עם ה'. אולם כשעמדה אמונתו במבחן—נדום, אע"פ שכאן דווקא יכול היה לטעון טענות נמרצות, לא רק מבחינת הצדק אלא אף מבחינת האמת: "שהיה לו פתחון פה לומר אתמול אמרת לי כי ביצחק יקרא לך זרע ועכשיו אתה אומר לי לשחטו ולא אמר כלום (תנח' בוכר). שתיקתו של אברהם...מעידה שאמונתו אינה אמונה "על תנאי" ואינה מוגדרת בגדרי המוסר האנושי.

### **Yeshayahu Leibowitz, "Abraham and Job", *Judaism, The Jewish People and the State of Israel*, 393**

...The fear of God possessed by Avraham—the only one to be called faithful (*ma'amin*) [see Bereishit 15:6]—is unlike the fear of God of any other personality in Bereishit, and the distinction only becomes manifest in the context of the Akeidah. This fear is identical to love, and indeed Avraham is the only Biblical character described as "a lover of God" (Yeshayahu 41:8). When he defends the people of S'dom, Avraham advances claims based on justice and law and mercy—all human categories—and based on them, he "deigns" to argue with God. However, when his faith was put to the test—he is silenced, even though he could have advanced very strong arguments, not just based on justice, but based on truth itself: "He could have said, 'Yesterday you told me that Yitzḥak will be your genealogical line, and now you tell me to

slaughter him?’ And yet he said nothing.” Avraham’s silence demonstrates that his faith is not a conditional faith and is not limited by the limitations of human morality.

#### **בראשית יח:כג-כו**

וַיָּגֶשׁ אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הָאֵף תִּסְּפֶה צָדִיק עִם־רָשָׁע׃<sup>24</sup> אִילִי יֵשׁ חַמְשִׁים צָדִיקִים בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר הָעִיר הָאֵף תִּסְּפֶה וְלֹא־תִשָּׂא לְמָקוֹם לְמַעַן חַמְשִׁים הַצָּדִיקִים אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבָּהּ׃<sup>25</sup> חָלִילָה לָּךְ מַעֲשֵׂתוֹ כְּדַבֵּר הִנֵּה לְהַמִּית צָדִיק עִם־רָשָׁע וְהִנֵּה כְּצָדִיק כְּרָשָׁע חָלִילָה לָּךְ הַשִּׁפְט׃ כָּל־הָאָרֶץ לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט׃<sup>26</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יְקֹנֶן אִם־אֶמְצָא בְּסֹדֶם חַמְשִׁים צָדִיקִים בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר וְנִשְׂאֵתִי לְכָל־הַמָּקוֹם בְּעִבּוּרָם׃

#### **Bereishit 18:23-26**

<sup>23</sup>Avraham came close and said: “Will you really sweep away the innocent along with the guilty? <sup>24</sup>Perhaps there are fifty innocent within the city, will you really sweep it away? Will you not bear with the place because of the fifty innocent that are in its midst? <sup>25</sup>Heaven forbid for you to do a thing like this, to deal death to the innocent along with the guilty, that it should come about: like the innocent, like the guilty. Heaven forbid for you! The judge of all the earth—will he not do what is just?” <sup>26</sup>God said: “If I find in S’dom fifty innocent people, in the midst of the city, then I will show favour to the whole place for their sake.”

### **III. Putting the Akeidah in Perspective**

#### **R. David Hartman, *A Heart of Many Rooms*, 14**

The God of Abraham, therefore, takes two very different forms in the book of Genesis: a God who demands total surrender to His command [the God Abraham encounters at the Akeidah] and a God who invites independent moral critique and judgment [the God Abraham encounters at Sodom]. These two paradigms have informed religious life as well as interpretation and exegesis throughout Jewish history. For many teachers from the time of the Talmud to the modern period, including Yeshayahu Leibowitz and my own teacher, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, the Akeidah, the binding of Isaac, was the dominant paradigm of religious life and thought. For them, the survival and continuity of the tradition require the unconditional surrender and loyalty that the Akeidah represents. To be claimed by God, I must be willing to sacrifice my intellect and intuition, to give up everything I know and cherish as a human being, in deference and obedience to the word of God.

Contemporary critiques of those who appeal to moral considerations in questions of religious practice and change often invoke an Akeidah mode of reasoning, arguing (or implicitly presupposing) that religious life would lose all credibility if submission and surrender were any less than total. The belief that “if you change anything, everything will collapse” owes its logic and conviction to the silence of Abraham in the binding of Isaac story.

Yet, Abraham, in pleading for Sodom, felt that God was not beyond his own understanding of moral argument and persuasion. This other paradigm, therefore, says: “Bring your moral intuitions, your subjective sense of dignity and justice into your understanding of the reality of God.” Not only does it not threaten or undermine religious consciousness, but it is actually necessary for recognizing the validity and applicability of the divine command.

**R. David Hartman, *From Defender to Critic*, 160, 164, 227**

These stories, seen side by side, present us with the paradox that is Abraham. The forefather of the great monotheistic traditions contained within him two incompatible realities: one of heroic self-affirmation, and one of self-denial. In one story, the protagonist maintains the ability to render an independent moral awareness, to know what he knows. He is an actor with full authority over his moral universe. In the other story, he is unable to recognize even his most primal paternal instinct. In one story, he acts; in the other, he simply obeys. The fact that two such dichotomous approaches are embodied by the very same person only highlights the polarity of these two narratives...

The ultimate question for me, then, is which story do we embrace? Which Abraham presents the truest picture of what it means to be a person and a Jew?...

Abraham’s moral confrontation with God at Sodom is the central paradigm for my philosophy of Judaism. The legitimacy of Abraham’s claims—and God’s fundamental acceptance of these claims—clearly illustrates for me the precept that our relationship with God must empower us to take responsibility for and trust our innermost convictions. The most important lesson we learn from our forefather Abraham is the legitimacy of personal moral intuition.

**R. David Hartman, *From Defender to Critic*, 171**

I maintain that the Akeidah is not constitutive of Judaism. It is a moment in a religious life, but it is just that: a moment. It is not the organizing framework for how to live... There are moments when the life of faith requires submission or silence... Eventually, we all reach a moment in our lives when we feel the world is absurd, when we wonder why we should continue. The Akeidah means we acknowledge—and allow a place for—resignation as a moment in the spiritual life.

**IV. Recapturing the ethical Abraham**

**Robert Gordis, “The Faith of Abraham: A Note on Kierkegaard’s Teleological Suspension of the Ethical”, *Judaism* 25 (1976): 414-419**

When the Akeidah narrative is read in the larger context of the book of Genesis, it offers no support for the doctrine of “the teleological suspension of the ethical.”... Just four chapters earlier, when God reveals his decision to destroy the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham does not hesitate to dispute the decision... Here there is no hint of “submission” by the “knight of faith” to the incomprehensible will of God. Abraham feels that God’s decision is in violation of the ethical law and he expresses his unshakable conviction that God cannot violate the principles of righteousness, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth act justly?”... How, then, can Abraham, himself, have submitted to an active violation of the ethical law? In view of Abraham’s ringing affirmation of the binding character of the moral law, how is this uncomplaining acceptance of God’s command to sacrifice his son to be understood?

Kierkegaard’s interpretation of the text must be pronounced an anachronism made possible only by ignoring the testimony of history. It is a grafting of an alien concept upon the authentic biblical and Jewish understanding of God’s will which does not command or condone the violation of the moral law, either by God or by man. Men’s insight into the content of morality changes and, it is hoped, grows deeper with time. But, from the biblical period to the present, the maintenance of the ethical law and obedience to its precepts remain the categorical imperative of Judaism.

**שמות כב: כח-כט**

<sup>28</sup>מִלְאָתְךָ וְדַמְעָךָ לֹא תֵאַחַר בְּכוֹר בְּנִיךָ תִּתֶּן לִי:

<sup>29</sup>כִּן תַּעֲשֶׂה לְשִׁרְךָ לְצֹאנְךָ שְׁבַעַת יָמִים יִהְיֶה עִם אָמוּ בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי תִתְּנוּ לִי:

## Shemot 22:28-29

<sup>28</sup>Do not delay the fullness of your harvest nor the outflow of your presses. Give me your firstborn sons.

<sup>29</sup>Do likewise with your oxen and sheep. Let it remain with its mother for seven days; on the eighth day, give it to me.

### שופטים יא:ל-לב, לד-מ

<sup>30</sup>וַיֵּדֶר יִפְתָּח נָדָר לַיהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אִם נָתַן תִּתֶּן אֶת בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן בְּיָדִי: <sup>31</sup>וְהָיָה הַיּוֹצֵא אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִדֹּלֶתִי בֵּיתִי לִקְרָאתִי בְּשׁוּבִי בְּשָׁלוֹם מִבְּנֵי עַמּוֹן וְהָיָה לַיהוָה וְהָעֲלִיתִהוּ עֹלָה:

<sup>32</sup>וַיַּעֲבֹר יִפְתָּח אֶל בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן לְהִלָּחֶם בָּם וַיִּתְּנֵם יְהוָה לַיהוָה: ...

<sup>34</sup>וַיָּבֹא יִפְתָּח הַמְצַפֶּה אֶל בֵּיתוֹ וְהִנֵּה בָתוֹ יֹצֵאת לִקְרָאתוֹ בְּתַפִּים וּבְמַחְלוֹת וְרַק הִיא יְחִידָה אֵין לָהּ מִמֶּנּוּ בֵּן אוֹ בַת: <sup>35</sup>וַיְהִי כִרְאוֹתָיו אוֹתָהּ וַיִּקְרַע אֶת בְּגָדָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵהָא בָתִּי הַכֹּרֶעַ הַכֹּרֶעַתָּנִי וְאֵת הַיִּית בְּעַכְרִי וְאֶנְכִּי פָצִיתִי פִּי אֶל יְהוָה וְלֹא אוּכַל לָשׁוּב: <sup>36</sup>וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אָבִי פָצִיתָה אֶת פִּיךָ אֶל יְהוָה עָשָׂה לִּי כַּאֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִפִּיךָ אַחֲרֵי אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לָךְ יְהוָה נְקֻמוֹת מֵאֹיְבֶיךָ מִבְּנֵי עַמּוֹן: <sup>37</sup>וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל אָבִיהָ יַעֲשֶׂה לִּי הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה הַרְפָּה מִמֶּנִּי שְׁנָיִם חֳדָשִׁים וְאַלְכָּה וְיִרְדָּתִי עַל הָהָרִים וְאֶבְכֶּה עַל בְּתוּלִי אֲנֹכִי וְרַעֲיָתִי וְרַעֲוֹתַי: <sup>38</sup>וַיֹּאמֶר לָכֵי וַיִּשְׁלַח אוֹתָהּ שְׁנֵי חֳדָשִׁים וַתֵּלֶךְ הִיא וְרַעֲוֹתֶיהָ וַתִּבְכְּ עַל בְּתוּלֶיהָ עַל הָהָרִים: <sup>39</sup>וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ שְׁנָיִם חֳדָשִׁים וַתָּשָׁב אֶל אָבִיהָ וַיַּעַשׂ לָהּ אֶת נְדָרוֹ אֲשֶׁר נָדָר וְהָיָה לָהּ יָדָעָה אִישׁ וַתְּהִי חֹק בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: <sup>40</sup>מִיָּמִים יָמִימָה תִּלְכְּנָה בָנוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְתַנּוֹת לְבַת יִפְתָּח הַגִּלְעָדִי אַרְבַּעַת יָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה:

## Shoftim 11:30-32, 34-40

<sup>30</sup>Yiftah vowed a vow to the Lord and said: “If You will indeed deliver the Ammonites into my hand, <sup>31</sup>then whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the Ammonites, it shall be the Lord’s, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering.”

<sup>32</sup>So Yiftah went to fight the Ammonites; and the Lord delivered them into his hand...

<sup>34</sup>Yiftah came to Mizpah, to his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances; and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter. <sup>35</sup>And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he tore his clothes, and said: “Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low, and you cause me trouble; for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot take it back.” <sup>36</sup>She said to him: “My father, you have opened your mouth to the Lord; do to me in keeping with what has come out of your mouth; for the Lord has avenged you of your enemies, from the Ammonites.” <sup>37</sup>And she said to her father: “Let this thing be done for me: Leave me alone for two months, let me leave and go down to the hills and bewail my virginity, I and my companions.” <sup>38</sup>He said: “Go.” He sent her away for two months; and she departed, she and her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains.

<sup>39</sup>And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned to her father, who did with her according

to his vow which he had vowed; and she had not been intimate with a man. It was a custom in Israel,<sup>40</sup> that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Yiftah the Gileadite four days a year.

#### מלכים ב ג:כו-כז

<sup>26</sup>וַיֵּרָא מֶלֶךְ מוֹאָב כִּי חִזַּק מִמֶּנּוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ חֶמְדָּה וַיִּקַּח אוֹתוֹ שִׁבְעָה מֵאוֹת אִישׁ שֶׁלֶף חֶרֶב לְהִבָּקֵיעַ אֶל מֶלֶךְ אֱדוֹם וְלֹא יָכְלוּ: <sup>27</sup>וַיִּקַּח אֶת בְּנוֹ הַבְּכוֹר אֲשֶׁר יָמְלֹךְ תַּחְתָּיו וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ עָלָה עַל הַחֲמָה וַיְהִי קֶצֶף גָּדוֹל עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּסְעוּ מֵעָלָיו וַיָּשֻׁבוּ לְאֶרֶץ:

#### II Melakhim 3:26-27

<sup>26</sup>When the king of Moav saw that he was being overwhelmed in battle, he took with him seven hundred swordsmen to break through to the king of Edom; but they could not. <sup>27</sup>Then he took his eldest son who would have reigned in his stead and offered him for a burnt-offering upon the wall. And there came great wrath upon Israel; and they departed from him, and returned to their own land.

#### מיכה ו:ו-ח

<sup>6</sup>בְּמָה אֶקְדֶּם יְקֹנָה אֶכַּף לֵאלֹהֵי מָרוֹם הֲאֶקְדָּמֶנּוּ בַּעֲלוֹת בַּעֲגָלִים בְּנֵי שָׁנָה: <sup>7</sup>הֲיִרְצָה יְקֹנָה בְּאַלְפֵי אֵילִים בְּרִבְבוֹת נַחֲלֵי שִׁמֹן הָאֵתָן בְּכוֹרֵי פִשְׁעֵי פָרִי בִטְנֵי חַטָּאת נִפְשֵׁי: <sup>8</sup>הֲגִיד לְךָ אָדָם מֶה טוֹב וּמָה יְקֹנָה דֹרֵשׁ מִמֶּךָ כִּי אִם עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט וְאַהֲבַת חֶסֶד וְהִצָּנֶע לָכֶת עִם אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

#### Mikhah 6:6-8

<sup>6</sup>“With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with newborn calves? <sup>7</sup>Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body to purify my soul?” <sup>8</sup>It has been told to you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: only to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

#### V. Shifting biblical morality

#### דברים יח:ט-יב

<sup>9</sup>כִּי אַתָּה בָּא אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-יִקְנֶה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ לֹא-תִלְמַד לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּתוּעַבֹת הַגּוֹיִם הָהֵם: <sup>10</sup>לֹא-יִמָּצֵא בְּךָ מַעֲבִיר בְּנוֹ-וּבִתּוֹ בָּאֵשׁ קֶסֶם קְסָמִים מְעוֹנָן וּמִנְחָשׁ וּמִכֶּשֶׁף: <sup>11</sup>וְחָבֵר חֶבֶר וְשֹׁאֵל אוֹב וְיִדְעָנִי וְדָרַשׁ אֶל-הַמָּתִים: <sup>12</sup>כִּי-תוּעַבֹת יְקֹנָה כָּל-עֲשֵׂה אֱלֹה וּבִגְלָל הַתוּעֵבֹת הָאֵלֶּה יִקְנֶה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מוֹרִישׁ אוֹתָם מִפָּנֶיךָ:



## Devarim 18:9-12

<sup>9</sup>When you enter the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you are not to learn to do according to the abominations of those nations. <sup>10</sup>There is not to be found among you **one having his son or his daughter cross through fire**, an augurer of augury, a hidden-sorcerer, a diviner, or an enchanter, <sup>11</sup>or a tier of (magical) tying-knots, or a seeker of ghosts or favorable-spirits, or an inquirer of the dead. <sup>12</sup>For an abomination to the Lord is anyone who does these things, and because of these abominations the Lord your God is dispossessing them from before you!

### דברים טז:כב

וְלֹא־תִקֵּים לְךָ מִצֵּבָה אֲשֶׁר שָׁנָא יְקֹנֵן אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

## Devarim 16:22

Do not set up a stone monument, which the Lord your God hates.

### רש"י שם

ואף על פי שהיתה אהובה לו בימי האבות עכשיו שנאה מאחר שעשאוהו אלו חק לעבודה זרה

### Rashi *ad loc*

Even though [the stone monument] was beloved to [God] in the days of the patriarchs, now God hates it, since [the Canaanites] turned it into an idolatrous practice.

## VI. Our role in the revision of divine law

### במדבר רבה (וילנא) פרשה יט:לג

ד"א אז ישיר ישראל זה אחד מג' דברים שאמר משה לפני הקב"ה וא"ל למדתני, אמר לפניו רבש"ע מנין ישראל יודעין מה עשו לא במצרים נתגדלו וכל מצרים עובדי עבודת כוכבים הם וכשנתת את התורה לא נתת אותה להם ואף לא היו עומדין שם שנאמר (שמות כ:יח) ויעמד העם מרחוק ולא נתת אותה אלא לי שנאמר (שם / שמות / כד) ואל משה אמר עלה אל ה' וכשנתת את הדברות לא נתת להם לא אמרת אני ה' אלהיכם אלא (שם / שמות / כ) אנכי ה' אלהיך לי אמרת שמא חטאתי אמר לו הקב"ה חייך יפה אמרת למדתני, מכאן ואילך אני אומר בלשון אני ה' אלהיכם.

השניה כשאמר לו הקב"ה פוקד עון אבות על בנים אמר משה רבש"ע כמה רשעים הולידו צדיקים יהיו נוטלין מעונות אביהם תרח עובד צלמים ואברהם בנו צדיק וכן חזקיה צדיק ואחז אביו רשע וכן יאשיה צדיק ואמון אביו רשע וכן נאה שיהו הצדיקים לוקין בעון אביהם אמר לו הקב"ה למדתני, חייך שאני מבטל דברי ומקיים דבריך שנאמר (דברים כד) לא יומתו אבות על בנים ובנים לא יומתו על אבות...

השלישית כשאמר לו הקב"ה עשה מלחמה עם סיחון אפי' הוא אינו מבקש לעשות עמך את תתגר בו מלחמה שנאמר (דברים ב) קומו סעו ועברו את נחל ארנון ומשה לא עשה כן אלא מה כתיב למעלה ואשלח מלאכים א"ל הקב"ה חייך שאני מבטל דברי ומקיים דברייך שנא' (שם /דברים/ כ) כי תקרב אל עיר להלחם עליה וקראת אליה לשלום...

### **Bemidbar Rabbah (Vilna) 19:33**

[Three times] Moshe said something to God, and God responded, “You have taught me.”

1. [At the time of the golden calf] Moshe said before him: Master of the Universe, how could Israel have appreciated the evil of its actions? Were they not raised in Egypt, where all are idolators? And when you gave the Torah, you did not give it to them and they were not even standing nearby, as it says: “The people stood from afar” (Shemot 20:18). And you only gave the Torah to me, as it says: “And to Moshe he said: Come up to Adonai!” (24:1) And when you gave the Ten Commandments, you did not give them to them! You did not say **אני ה' אלהיכם** (I am the Lord your, *pl.*, God) but rather **אנכי ה' אלהיך** (your, *sing.*)! (20:2)... The Holy and Blessed One said to him, “By your life! You have spoken well and you have taught me. From here on I will speak to them in the language of **אני ה' אלהיכם** (your, *pl.*).”

2. When the Holy and Blessed One said to Moshe, “Accounting sins of the parents on the children” (Devarim 5:9), Moshe said: Master of the Universe! How many wicked people have given born to righteous children who would, by this decree, suffer from the sins of their ancestors? Teraḥ worshipped idols but his son Avraham was righteous. So too, [King] Hizkiyah was righteous, but his father Amon was wicked. Is this right that the righteous should be beaten for their parents’ sins? The Holy and Blessed One said to him: “You have taught me. By your life, I will nullify my words and fulfill yours.” As it says: “Do not put parents to the death for children, nor children for parents” (24:16).

3. When the Holy and Blessed One told Moshe, Make war on Siḥon, even if he does not seek conflict with you, you instigate the battle with him! As it says: “Get up and travel! Cross the wadi of Arnon [and attack Siḥon]” (Devarim 2:24). But Moshe did not do so. What does it say a few verses earlier? “And I sent messengers [offering peace to Siḥon, but he refused]” (26). The Holy and Blessed One said to him: “By your life!, I am nullifying my words and fulfilling yours!” As it says: “When you approach a city to make war on it, you must call out to it with an offer of peace” (20:1).