

PARSHAH SUMMARY & COMMENTARY

Tzav

Leviticus 6:1-8:36;

Torah Reading for Week of March 16-22, 2002

The Parshah of Tzav ("command"), continues G-d's instruction to Moses of the laws of the *korbanot*, the animal and meal offerings that were the central feature of the service in the Sanctuary. "**Command** Aaron and his sons," says G-d to Moses:

This is the law of the Ascending Offering: It is offering that ascends upon the pyre of the Altar all night until the morning, and the fire of the Altar shall be kept burning in it.

The priest shall put on his linen garment, and his linen breeches shall he put on his flesh, and take up the ashes which the fire has consumed with the Ascending Offering on the Altar, and he shall put them beside the Altar. And

*he shall put off his garments, and put on **other** garments, and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place.*

And the fire upon the Altar shall be kept burning in it; it shall not be put out. And the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the Ascending Offering in order upon it; and he shall burn on it the fat of the Peace Offerings.

A constant fire shall burn upon the Altar; it shall never go out.

As in the previous **Parshah of Vayikra**, here, too, are recounted the laws of the "ascending offering" (*olah*), meal offering (*minchah*), sin offering (*chatat*), guilt offering (*asham*), and peace offering (*shelamim*). In the repetition, many new details are added. A general difference is that Vayikra addresses itself to the one bringing the *korban*, while the laws of Tzav are addressed to the Kohen ("priest") who offers it up upon the Altar, outlining his duties and specifying the portions of the *korban* that are **given to him**.

Thus we read of the **Kohen's duty** to keep the fires of the Altar constantly burning, and to remove the accumulated ashes each morning (an action called *terumat hadeshen*, which was the first activity of the daily service in the Sanctuary). We also learn that each Kohen was obligated to

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AND G-D SPOKE TO MOSES, SAYING: COMMAND AARON AND HIS SON... THIS IS THE LAW OF THE ASCENDING OFFERING... (LEVITICUS 6:1-2)

The expression *tzav* ("command") implies an urging for now and for future generations.

(Torat Kohanim; Rashi)

The king Moshiach will arise and restore the kingdom of David to its glory of old, to its original sovereignty. He will build the Holy Temple and gather the dispersed of Israel. In his times, all the laws of the Torah will be reinstated as before; the sacrifices will be offered, the Sabbatical year and the Jubilee year instituted as outlined in the Torah.

(Maimonides)

IT IS OFFERING THAT ASCENDS UPON THE PYRE OF THE ALTAR (6:2)

The location of the Altar is very exactly defined, and is never to be changed... It is a commonly-held tradition that the place where David and Solomon built the Altar on the threshing floor of Arona, is the very place where Abraham built an altar and bound Isaac upon it; this is where Noah built [an altar] when he

came out from the ark; this is where Cain and Abel brought their offerings; this is where Adam the First Man offered a *korban* when he was created—and it is from [the earth of] this place that he was created. Thus the Sages have said: Man was formed from the place of his atonement..

(Maimonides)

Ten miracles were performed for our forefathers in the Holy Temple: No woman ever miscarried because of the smell of the holy meat. The holy meat never spoiled. Never was a fly seen in the slaughterhouse. Never did the High Priest have an accidental seminal discharge on Yom Kippur. The rains did not extinguish the wood-fire burning upon the altar. The wind did not prevail over the column of smoke [rising from the altar]. No disqualifying problem was ever discovered in the *Omer* offering, the Two Loaves or the Showbread. They stood crowded but had ample space in which to prostrate themselves. Never did a snake or scorpion cause injury in Jerusalem. And no man ever said to his fellow "My lodging in Jerusalem is too cramped for me."

(Ethics of the Fathers 5:5)

IT IS OFFERING THAT ASCENDS UPON THE PYRE OF THE ALTAR (6:2)

Why is the word *mokdah* ("pyre") written in the Torah with a miniature *hei*? To teach us that the fire in one's soul should be

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bring a **meal offering** on the day that he was initiated into the service of the Sanctuary; the *Kohen Gadol* ("High Priest") brought a meal offering **each day**, half of which was offered in the morning, and the other half in the afternoon. These offerings, as well as any other type of meal offering brought by a Kohen, are burned entirely on the Altar. Meal offerings brought by everyone else are eaten by the Kohanim, after a "handful" has been removed for burning on the Altar.

The sin offering and the guilt offering are both **eaten by the Kohen**, after the prescribed *chalabim* (veins of fat) are removed and burned on the Altar. It is strictly forbidden to leave over any part of the *korban* past the prescribed time (one day and one night for the *chatat* and *asham*, two days and the intervening night for the *shelamim*). Even the residue absorbed by the pot in which the meat was cooked becomes

forbidden for consumption; thus:

An earthen vessel in which it is cooked shall be broken; and if it be cooked in a copper pot, it shall be scoured and rinsed in water

The Torah also sets down the rules as to which Kohen should receive these portions of the offerings:

The priest that offers any man's ascending offering, the priest shall have for himself the hide of the ascending offering which he has offered.

Meal offerings that are baked in the oven, and those that are prepared in the pot and in the pan, shall be the priest's that offers them.

And every meal offering mingled with oil, and dry, shall all the sons of Aaron have, one as the other.

Meat and Bread

As for the *shelamim* (peace offering), after the prescribed *chalabim* are burned on the Altar, the Kohen who did the offering receives two portions of the animal: the *chazeh* (chest) and the *shok* (right hind leg). The rest of the meat is eaten by the owner (the one who brought the offering).

One who brings a *shelamim* also brings an accompanying meal offering, which includes three types of cakes, all pre-

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understated; it should burn within, but show nothing on the outside.

(The Rebbe of Kotz)

AND THE PRIEST SHALL PUT ON HIS LINEN GARMENT, AND HIS LINEN BREECHES SHALL HE PUT ON HIS FLESH (6:3)

"His linen garment"—this teaches us that the priestly garments must fit the priest's measure, and must not drag on the floor or be raised above. (The word used here for "his garment," *mido*, literally means "his measure").

"And his linen breeches shall he put on his flesh"—this teaches us that there must be nothing intervening between his flesh and the priestly garments..

(Talmud, Yoma 23b; Rashi)

AND HE SHALL PUT OFF HIS GARMENTS, AND PUT ON OTHER GARMENTS (6:4)

Clothes in which he cooked for his master, should not be worn when serving a goblet to his master.

(Talmud, Yoma 23b)

AND THE FIRE UPON THE ALTAR SHALL BE KEPT BURNING IN IT... AND THE PRIEST SHALL BURN WOOD ON IT EVERY MORNING (6:5)

Although a fire descended from heaven upon the Altar, it is a mitzvah to add to it a humanly produced fire.

(Talmud, Ervin 63a)

This is a rule that applies to all areas of life: the gifts of life are bestowed upon us from Above, yet it is G-d's desire that we add to them the product of our own initiative.

(The Chassidic Masters)

AND THE FIRE UPON THE ALTAR SHALL BE KEPT BURNING IN IT... AND THE PRIEST SHALL BURN WOOD ON IT EVERY MORNING (6:5)

There is a fire of love for G-d that burns within every soul. It is the task of the "Kohen"—the spiritual leaders of the generation—to feed and preserve this fire.e.

(Alshich)

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pared with olive oil: unleavened loaves, flat matzot, and loaves made of boiled flour (also unleavened). In a certain type of *shelamim*—the *todah* or “thanksgiving offering,” brought by a person who has **survived** a life-endangering occurrence—a fourth type of cake was added: leavened loaves (leaven was permitted in this case, since no part of the said loaves were offered on the Altar itself). The Kohen received one of each type of cake, while the remainder were eaten by the owner.

The portions of the *korbanot* that were eaten—whether by the Kohen or by the owner—had to be eaten “in holiness”—within the parameters of their prescribed time, their prescribed place (depending on the type of *korban*, either

within the Sanctuary Courtyard or within the city walls of Jerusalem), and the person eating them had to be in a state of ritual purity (*taharah*).

Again the Torah repeats its warning that those portions of the *korban* offered on the Altar—the specified veins of **fat and the blood**—must not be eaten in *any* animal eligible for sacrifice (i.e., cattle, sheep or goats; in birds, whose fat was not specifically offered, only blood is forbidden).

Our Parshah concludes its section on the *korbanot*:

This is the law for the ascending offering, for the meal offering, for the sin offering, for the guilt offering, for the inauguration offering, and for the sacrifice of the peace offering; which G-d commanded Moses in Mount Sinai, on the day that he commanded the children of Israel to present their offerings to G-d, in the wilderness of Sinai.

Inauguration

The Torah now relates how Moses initiated Aaron and his sons into priesthood during the “Seven days of Inauguration” (Adar 23 to Adar 29), as Moses had been instructed in the Parshah of Tetzaveh.

On each of these seven days, Moses erected the Sanctuary, anointed it with the Anointing Oil, dressed Aaron and his sons in the priestly garments, and anointed them. On each of

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A CONSTANT FIRE SHALL BURN UPON THE ALTAR; IT SHALL NEVER GO OUT (6:6)

“Constantly”—even on Shabbat; “constantly”—even under conditions of ritual impurity; “it shall never go out”—also not during the journeys [through the desert, when the Altar was covered with a cloth of purple wool]. What did they do with the fire during the journeys? They placed over it a copper bowl.

(Jerusalem Talmud, Yoma 4:6)

Shabbat is when we disengage ourselves from all things material; “ritual impurity” (*tum'ah*) represents an opposite state—one of excessive enmeshment in the mundane. Yet the Torah instructs that the fire upon the Altar must be kept burning “even on Shabbat” and “even under conditions of ritual impurity.”

There are times when we believe ourselves to be “above it all” as the spirituality of the moment transports beyond the so-called trivialities of physical life. Conversely, there are times when we feel overwhelmed by those very “trivialities.” Says the Torah: the fire on your internal Altar must—and can—be kept burning at all times. No moment in your life is too exalted or too debased to sustain your passion and enthusiasm in the fulfillment of the purpose to which you were created, which is to raise up to

G-d the materials of your everyday existence.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

“It shall never go out—also not during the journeys.” Special care must be taken during the “journeys” of life—the times that a person ventures away from the home environment that fosters his character and integrity—so that the fire in his soul should not succumb to alien influences.

(Maayanah Shel Torah)

AND THE REMAINDER SHALL BE EATEN BY AARON AND HIS SON... IT IS THEIR PORTION, WHICH I HAVE GIVEN TO THEM FROM MY FIRE (6:9-10)

The Kohanim receive from the Supernal Table.

(Talmud, Chulin 120a)

G-d said to the Kohen: You eat at My table, and you drink at My table. This is comparable to a king of flesh and blood who gave gifts to his sons, and to one son he gave no gift. Said the king to this son: “Though I have given you no gift, you shall eat at My table, and you shall drink at My table.” (The Kohanim received no land when the Holy Land was apportioned to the tribes of Israel).

(Sifri)

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these days Aaron and his sons brought a series of offerings, while Moses officiated as the priest and offered them on the Altar. These were: a bullock brought as a *chataf*, and two rams—one as an *olah* and the second as a specially ordained “ram of inauguration” (the procedure followed was similar to that of the *shelamim*).

And Moses said to Aaron and to his sons:

Cook the meat at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and there eat it with the bread that is in the basket of

the bread of consecration... And that which remains of the flesh and of the bread shall you burn with fire.

And you shall not go out of the doorway of the Tent of Meeting for seven days, until the days of your consecration be at an end: for seven days shall he consecrate you...

And Aaron and his sons did all the things which G-d had commanded by the hand of Moses.

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THIS IS THE OFFERING OF AARON AND OF HIS SONS... A MEAL OFFERING PERPETUAL, HALF OF IT IN THE MORNING, AND HALF OF IT AT NIGHT (6:13)

The High Priest’s daily offering was a meal offering, the offering of a poor man. This, for two reasons: that a poor man bringing his pauper’s offering to the Sanctuary should not be ashamed; and to awaken humility in the High Priest’s heart, with the appreciation that before G-d he is the equal of the most impoverished of his brethren.

(Abarbanel)

The priest brought a meal offering on the day that he began serving in the Sanctuary, while the High Priest brought one every day. It is a mark of greatness that a person regards his every day as a new beginning in which he strives to transcend all his previous achievements.

(Maayanah Shel Torah)

THIS IS THE LAW OF THE SIN OFFERING... THE KOHEN THAT ATONES SHALL EAT IT (6:18-19)

The Kohanim eat, and the owner of the *korban* achieves atonement.

(Talmud, Pesachim 59b)

AND EVERY MEAL OFFERING MINGLED WITH OIL, AND DRY (7:10)

The “meal offering mingled with oil” is the donated Meal Offering (whose “handful” is removed before baking); the “dry” Meal Offering is the one brought as a sin offering or by the *sotah* (woman accused of adultery), which did not contain any oil.

(Rashi)

IF HE OFFERS IT IN THANKSGIVING... (7:12)

There are four who are required to bring a thanksgiving offering: one who traverses the sea, one who crosses a desert, one who was ill and recovered, and one who was imprisoned and was released.

(Talmud, Berachot 54b)

THIS IS THE LAW FOR THE ASCENDING OFFERING... (7:37)

What is the significance of the verse, “This is the law for the ascent-offering, for the meal-offering, for the sin-offering, and for the guilt-offering?” It teaches that whoever occupies himself with the study of the Torah is as though he were offering an ascent-offering, a meal-offering a sin-offering, and a guilt-offering... Whoever occupies himself with the study of the laws of the sin-offering, it is as though he were offering a sin-offering; and whoever occupies himself with the study of the laws of the guilt-offering, it is as though he were offering a guilt-offering.

(Talmud, Menachot 110a)

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FROM THE CHASSIDIC MASTERS

THE OUTDOOR ALTAR

Rabbi Elazar would give a coin to a pauper and only then he would pray (Talmud, Bava Batra 10a)

The Holy Temple in Jerusalem was a human-like structure: its chambers and furnishings corresponded to the various organs and faculties which make up the human being. As our sages point out, when G-d tells Moses, “they shall make for Me a Sanctuary, and I shall dwell within them” (Exodus 25:8) He does not say, “I shall dwell within it” but, “within them.” In other words, while the Holy Temple was the focal point of man’s service of his Creator and the place which most expressed G-d’s presence in our world, the objective of the Temple service was that man apply the awareness and experience of the Divine which pervaded the Holy Temple to all aspects of his daily life. So each of the Temple’s vessels and the services which were performed with them has its equivalent in the manner in which man lives his life and serves his Creator.

The services performed in the Temple fall under two general categories: the “inner services” in the Temple proper (the *heichal*), and the “outer services” in the Temple courtyard (the *azarah*). On the individual level, this translates into the two basic domains of human endeavor: (a) a person’s inner spiritual development, and (b), the more external areas of his life - his efforts to refine his material self and his involvements with his fellows and the world about him.

The Path of the Flame

A person’s instinctive feeling may be that he ought to work his way from the inside out. First, he will deal with the internal needs of his soul; then, he will turn his attention to “outside” matters. Having achieved an inner peace and perfection, he will be in the position to truly influence his surroundings. Tend to the home fires, he tells himself, before concerning

yourself with the illumination of the outside.

But in the Temple, things are done the other way around. The day begins by lighting the fire on the *mizbeiach hachitzon*, the “external altar” which stands in the Temple courtyard. In fact, Torah law specifically stipulates that the “internal altar” and the *menorah* (candelabra) which stand in the Temple’s inner chamber, are to be lighted from the fires of the external *mizbeiach*.

The *menorah*’s seven oil lamps represent the Divine wisdom of Torah; the “internal altar” corresponds to man’s refinement and perfection of his higher, spiritual faculties. But spiritual gluttony is no less selfish than the physical sort, and one who focuses solely on self-realization and self-fulfillment — be it in the most positive and lofty sense — is turning his Holy Temple inside out.

True, the more one himself possesses, the more he has to give to others. It is also true that as long as a person is himself lacking in a certain area, it is extremely difficult for him to rectify such a failing in his fellow. Yet certainly the needs of others cannot be ignored until such time as one has attained perfection.

Furthermore, we often find that in reaching out to others, the primary beneficiary is oneself: an idea explained to others is now more fully and deeply understood, helping another in a crisis opens up reserves of faith and fortitude one hardly knew existed. This is the lesson implicit in the fact that the *menorah* and the “internal altar” were lit from the fire out in the courtyard: reach out to others - the “other” within you (i.e. your material self) and the literal others to whose lives he can contribute some light and warmth. These selfless acts of illumination will, in turn, ignite the “home fires” of your Temple’s inner chambers in the true and ultimate sense. Your study and prayer will imbue your mind and heart with a true appreciation of and attachment to the Almighty.

Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, www.therebbe.org; adapted by Yanki Tauber, editor@chabadonline.com