



Shabbat Table Talk Page

Overview

- **Parashah: Tzav (צו, "Command!")**
- **Chapters: Leviticus 6:8-8:36^[e]**



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְעֲסוֹק בְּדַבְּרֵי תוֹרָה

– Torah Study Blessing –

Synopsis

Recall that the climax of the revelation given at Sinai was the commandment to construct the Sanctuary, otherwise called the Mishkan or the “Tabernacle.” Nearly half of the Book of Exodus is focused on the Tabernacle, and the book concludes with the Shekhinah Glory of God filling the Holy of Holies section of the Tent. The Book of Leviticus begins right where the book of Exodus left off, with God calling to Moses from the Tent of Meeting to explain the various animal and grain offerings (korbanot) that may be offered at the new Tabernacle.

In this week’s Torah portion many of the laws of the sacrifices given to the people are repeated, though this time Moses addressed the priests directly and provided additional details about how to perform their functions. For example, the priests were to ensure that the fire of altar never went out and that the whole burnt offering (olah) was consumed as it burned throughout the night. Additional rules concerning the removal of ashes from the altar, the portion of the offerings that were given to the priests, and the cleansing of utensils are given.

Each priest was obligated to bring a grain offering (minchah) on the day that he served in the sanctuary, and the High Priest was required to bring a grain offering each day, half of which was burned upon the altar in the morning, and the other half in the afternoon. Grain offerings brought by others were regarded as food for the priests, after a “handful” had been removed to be burned upon the altar. Likewise portions of some of the animal sacrifices were given to the priests for food (after the fat and blood had been removed and burned on the altar).

After these laws were given, God instructed Moses to consecrate Aaron and his sons for their service in the priesthood. This involved washing them with water, arraying them in the priestly garments, and anointing them with holy oil. During the ordination ceremony, a sin offering and burnt offering were slaughtered on behalf of the priests, and then a special “ram of ordination” (*eil ha-milu'im*) was slaughtered. Some of this ram’s blood was put on the right ear, right thumb, and big toe of the priests, and the rest was sprinkled around the altar. The sacrifice was then “waved” before the LORD and its meat was eaten with unleavened bread at the entrance to the Mishkan. Aaron and his sons were thereafter required to remain within the Mishkan for seven days and nights until their period of consecration was complete.



Basic Questions

1. What is the Hebrew word for holiness? ¹
2. What does the word *korban* (קָרְבָּן) mean? ²
3. List the names of the five types of offerings. ³
4. What kinds of animals could be offered at the Mishkan? ⁴
5. What had to be constantly on the altar (*mizbe'ach*)? ⁵
6. What time of day did the priest place wood on the altar? ⁶
7. What was the first task of the daily service at the Mishkan? ⁷
8. What was required of the High Priest *every* morning and evening? ⁸
9. What was forbidden to be offered with *minchah* (grain offerings)? ⁹
10. What additional ingredient was added to all offerings, and why? ¹⁰
11. What is an *olah* offering? ¹¹
12. What is a *minchah* offering? ¹²
13. What is special about a peace offerings (shelamim)? ¹³
14. What part of an animal sacrifice *always* belongs to God? ¹⁴



¹ Kedushah, from the word *kadash* (קָדַשׁ) that means “to set apart” or sanctify. Saints are called “kedoshim” (קְדוּשִׁים).

² It is a general word for “offering” or “gift,” from the root (*karov*) which means to come near. The plural is *korbanot*.

³ Olah (ascending/whole burnt offering); Minchah (grain offering); Shelamim (well-being offering); chatat (sin offering); and Asham (guilt offering). There is also a Todah or “thanksgiving offering” that is a type of shelamim.

⁴ Defect-free cattle: oxen (a bull or cow), sheep (a ram or ewe), or goats (a buck or doe). The poor could offer turtledoves and pigeons.

⁵ Fire of the burnt offering was known as *tamid*, or perpetual (6:12). The evening sacrifice was kept burning through the night until the flames could kindle the wood for the morning burnt offering. On this the Talmud comments, “continually - even on Shabbat; continually - even in a state of impurity.” During the journeys through the desert, when the altar was covered with a cloth of purple wool, the fire was placed over it a copper bowl. Rav Chiyah said: the fire is Yitzchak’s, as it is written, “Behold, here is the fire and the wood...” (Gen. 22:7)

⁶ Every morning and evening to ensure the fire never went out.

⁷ To tend the fire at the altar and remove the accumulated ashes each morning (terumat hadeshen). The priest had to wear his ceremonial clothes when he removed the ashes, but changed into plain clothes when he left the Mishkan. He had to offer minchah (grain offering) upon the altar twice a day – in the morning and in the evening.

⁸ Leaven (*chametz*) and honey (*devash*), since both induced fermentation (i.e., decay/death). There are 2 exceptions. Salt (*melakh*) because it preserved the offering and prevented rotting (decay symbolizes death).

¹¹ A (male) whole burnt offering, “an ascending offering, a fire-offering of a sweet savor to God” (1:9).

¹² An unleavened grain offering that could be mixed with five different kinds of oil and spices. A portion of the grain was burned on the altar and the rest donated to the priests. The grain offering was often given by the poor.

¹³ Everyone benefited from it: The blood and fat went to the Altar (God); the breast and thigh went to the priests, and the hide and flesh went to the owner, who shared them with his family and friends in a communion meal.

¹⁴ The fat (*chelev*): “All the fat is the LORD’s” (Lev. 3:11).



15. What was done with the blood of the sacrificed animals? ¹⁵
16. What two animal products are *forbidden* (i.e., asur) to eat? ¹⁶
17. What is a “Thanksgiving” offering? ¹⁷
18. Is leaven always forbidden (asur) in sacrifice? ¹⁸
19. What was done with “leftovers” of the animal sacrifices? ¹⁹
20. Do priests get to eat from all sin offerings? ²⁰
21. What was the priest’s portion of the olah (whole burnt offering)? ²¹
22. Can grain be given as a chatat (sin) offering? ²²
23. When an animal was sacrificed, why were both hands placed on its head? ²³
24. What is distinctive about a guilt offering (asham)? ²⁴
25. What do the words “clean” (*tahor*) and “unclean” (*tamei*) mean? ²⁵
26. Can a person in an “unclean” state eat of the sacrifices? ²⁶
27. What was done with the blood of the “Ram of Ordination”? ²⁷
28. What is a “wave offering” called in Hebrew? ²⁸
29. What percentage of the 613 laws of the Torah are given in the Book of Leviticus? ²⁹



¹⁵ It was sprinkled around the altar and sometimes applied to the horns of the altar. On the Day of Atonement, blood was applied to the horns of the altar of incense and dashed (or sprinkled) upon the kapporet (Mercy Seat) 7 times.

¹⁶ The Torah states we may not eat blood or fat.

¹⁷ A type of shelamim (peace offering) given in thanks for deliverance. Today Birkat HaGomel is recited in its place. According to midrash, in the days of Messiah, all sacrifices will be annulled except for the “thank offering.”

¹⁸ No. It was used for the “thank offering” and also for the wave offering of the loaves during Shavuot (Pentecost).

¹⁹ They were burned entirely on the altar after their “expiration date” (one day and one night for the chatat and asham; the intervening night for freewill shelamim). Even the residue absorbed by the pot in which the meat was cooked becomes forbidden for consumption after the expiration date but must be *kashered* (scalded).

²⁰ Not all. Sin offerings whose blood is used to make atonement in the Holy Place are to be entirely burned (6:30).

²¹ The hide of the animal was given to the priest who performed the sacrifice (Lev. 7:8).

²² Yes, though no oil or frankincense may be mixed with the unleavened fine flour.

²³ To symbolize that it is a substitute for the person who brought it. The laying on of hands is called semikah.

²⁴ Restitution had to be made (usually 20%) along with the sacrifice.

²⁵ These terms refer to *ritual* acceptability regarding the performance of various commandments. It is important to note that they do not refer to physical cleanliness as much as meeting the conditions for participation in ritual. In post-Temple times, these concepts have been reassigned to toharat ha-mishpachah, “family purity” such as niddah (menstruation), the use of the mikveh (cleansing bath) seven days after the flow ceases.

²⁶ No. All who ate the sacrificial food had to be in a state of ritual purity (taharah).

²⁷ Its blood was applied to the right earlobe, thumb, and big toe of those being installed to serve as God’s priests.

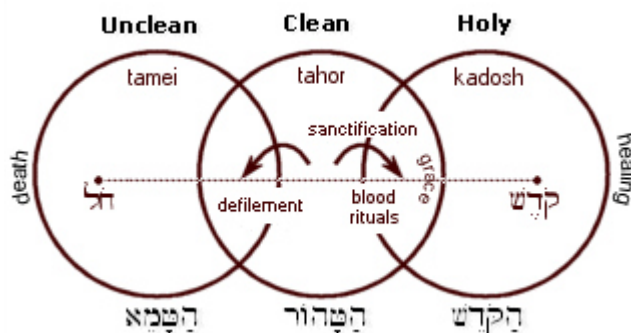
²⁸ Tenufah – an offering “waved” before the LORD in special offering. According to the Talmud (Menachot 62a), a tenufah was moved back and forth, up and down, to symbolize the fact that it is being offered to the Ruler of the entire world. First-fruit wave offerings marked the beginning of the spring grain harvest and the counting period between Passover and Shavuot (i.e., the omer count). The waving of the two loaves was a climax of Shavuot.

²⁹ Over 40%.



Discussion Topics

1. The purpose of the sacrificial system in the Mishkan was to draw people close to God. This involved a process of “moving” from the realm of the “unclean” (tamei) to the “clean” (tahor), and from the clean to the realm of the “holy” (kadosh). In addition, many of the blood rituals of the altar were intended to bring “atonement” (kapparah) for sin and guilt. The Torah makes clear that the realm of the holy must be separate from the realm of the unclean, and only those in a state of cleanness can therefore draw close to God. Discuss how the sacrificial death of Yeshua functions as the way you can draw close to God.



2. Consider how Aaron and his sons were consecrated to serve as God’s chosen priests. First they were washed with water, arrayed in holy garments, and anointed with oil. Next they laid their hands on the head of a sin offering (chatat) and a whole burnt offering (olah). A sacrificial “ram of ordination” was then slaughtered and some of its blood was applied to their right ears, thumbs, and big toes. The flesh of this ram was then “waved” before the altar before being burned upon the altar. Its blood was also mixed with anointing oil and then sprinkled upon the priests, who then ate its meat with unleavened bread before the altar. All this was a prelude to the revelation of the Glory of the LORD in their midst. Discuss how this consecration is a “type” or “picture” of our service as God’s priests of the New Covenant.
3. How do you reconcile the Torah’s prohibition against drinking blood (Lev. 7:26-27, 17:8-12), with Yeshua’s statement, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (John 6:53)? The metaphor of “eating his flesh” makes sense regarding his role as the Lamb of God (the Passover that was to be eaten), but the analogy seems to fail in the case of drinking blood. Compare Yeshua’s statement that “Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:54) with his earlier statement, “this is the will of my Father, that everyone who *looks on the Son and believes in him* should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:40). Also compare Yeshua’s statement, “Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood *abides* in me, and I in him” with other metaphors about *abiding* in Him (e.g., John 15:4-6). Finally, consider the prohibition of drinking blood given by the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:29. Discuss how you understand these things.



For Next Week:

- Read parashat **Shemini** (i.e., Leviticus 9:1-11:47)
- Read the Haftarah (2 Samuel 6:1-7:17)
- Read the New Testament (Hebrews 8:1-6)

