

Parashat Tzav

פרשת צו

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Why is fat to be offered by fire before God?

השבועות הזה קוראים / This Week's Reading

תורה: Leviticus 6:1-8:36

הפטרה: 1 Samuel 15:1-34

הברית: Luke 4-6

החדשה

Triennial cycle: Vayikra / Leviticus 6:1-7:10

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Vayikra / Leviticus 7:1 'Now this is the law of the guilt offering; it is most holy. (NASB) In the Torah, the five major korbanot (offerings) are described as being "most holy" as we see here in *Vayikra / Leviticus 7:1* and the detailing of the Asham (Guilt) offering. There are two major components of the guilt offering, (i) slaying of the animal taking its blood and sprinkling it upon the altar (7:2) and (ii) offering all its fat upon the altar, including the fat on the tail, the fat that covers the entrails (7:3) and the fat that is upon the kidneys and the liver. It is interesting that in Hebrew the word for "fat" is שומן meaning "fat, grease, fatness" whereas the Hebrew bible uses חלב "khelev" meaning "tallow, fat, lard;" in addition to this, the Hebrew root word for fat (חלב) also means "milk." What is the significance of the commandment to offer the fat upon the altar? Why is the Hebrew word חלב used for "fat" commanded to be offered upon the altar above the other types of meat in the body? Could it be that "fat" has a certain spiritual significance that is important for our lives?

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ויקרא 6-7:1

1 וְזֹאת תּוֹרַת הָאֲשָׁם קֹדֶשׁ קֹדְשִׁים הוּא: בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר
2 יִשְׁחָטוּ אֶת־הָעֹלָה יִשְׁחָטוּ אֶת־הָאֲשָׁם וְאֶת־דָּמּוֹ יִזְרֹק
3 עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב: וְאֶת־כָּל־חֵלְבוֹ יִקְרִיב מִמֶּנּוּ אֶת־
4 הָאֵלֶיּהָ וְאֶת־הַחֵלֶב הַמְכַסֶּה אֶת־הַקִּרְבִּי: וְאֶת־שְׁתֵּי
5 הַכְּפָלִיִּת וְאֶת־הַחֵלֶב אֲשֶׁר עָלֶיהֶן אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַכְּפָלִים
6 וְאֶת־הַיִּתְרֵת עַל־הַכְּפֹד עַל־הַכְּפָלִית יִסְרְנָה: וְהַקִּטּוֹר
7 אֹתָם הִכֵּהוּן הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֵשׁ לַיהוָה אֲשֶׁם הוּא: כָּל־זֶכֶר
8 בְּכֹרֶתִים יֵאָכְלוּ בְּמָקוֹם קֹדֶשׁ יֵאָכְלֵן קֹדֶשׁ קֹדְשִׁים הוּא:

Fat is described in the bible as being the choicest part of the animal to be offered upon the altar before the lord, in verses such as *Shemot / Exodus* chapters

Vayikra / Leviticus 7:1-10

7:1 'Now this is the law of the guilt offering; it is most holy. 7:2 'In the place where they slay the burnt offering they are to slay the guilt offering, and he shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar. 7:3 'Then he shall offer from it all its fat: the fat tail and the fat that covers the entrails, 7:4 and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, which is on the loins, and the lobe on the liver he shall remove with the kidneys. 7:5 'The priest shall offer them up in smoke on the altar as an offering by fire to the Lord; it is a guilt offering. 7:6 'Every male among the priests may eat of it. It shall be eaten in a holy place; it is most holy. 7:7 'The guilt offering is like the sin offering, there is one law for them; the priest who makes atonement with it shall have it. 7:8 'Also the priest who presents any man's burnt offering, that priest shall have for himself the skin of the burnt offering which he has presented. 7:9 'Likewise, every grain offering that is baked in the oven and everything prepared in a pan or on a griddle shall belong to the priest who presents it. 7:10 'Every grain offering, mixed with oil or dry, shall belong to all the sons of Aaron, to all alike. (NASB)

30 23 and 29, *Vayikra / Leviticus* chapters 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 16, and 17, *Bamidbar / Numbers* chapter 18, *Devarim / Deuteronomy* chapter 32. These verses single out specifically saying the fat is the portion of the animal that is essential for correctly making an offering upon the altar. There are also verses from the Neviim (Prophets) that attest to the fat of the sacrifices, see *Mishpatim / Judges* 3:22, 1
 35 *Samuel* 2:15-16, and 15:22, *Melechim alef / 1 Kings* 8:64, *Yeshayah / Isaiah* 1:11, 34:6, 43:24, and 34:6, and *Ezekiel* 34:3, 44:7, and 44:15, *Devrei Hayyamim* 7:7, 29:35, and 35:14. According to the scriptures, whether literally or figuratively, khelev is a reference to the richest or choicest part of the animal. In the Story of Cain and Abel, Abel brought the best of his flock and of their “fat” portions and it was pleasing to the Lord and the scriptures say that God “had regard” for Abel. It is interesting that God used the imperfect third person masculine singular form of “yasa” meaning deliverance to describe how these fat portions were pleasing to Him as an offering. The imperfect form expresses an ongoing action. So because
 40 of Abel’s actions bringing the first of his flock and offering the choice portions, the “fat portions” God saved him.
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בראשית 4:4

4 הָאֲדָמָה מְנַחֶה לְיְהוָה: וְהִבֵּל הֵבִיא גַם־הוּא מִבְּכֹרוֹת צֹאֲנוֹ וּמִחֲלֵבֵהֶן וַיִּשַׁע יְהוָה אֶל־הִבֵּל וְאֶל־מְנַחְתּוֹ:

Bereshit / Genesis 4:4
 4:4 Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; (NASB)

50 Another illustration that fat is a reference to the finest, richest, and choicest part is found in the use of the word “khelev” to refer to the choicest land of Egypt, found in *Bereshit / Genesis* 45:18.

בראשית 45:18

18 עָשׂוּ מַעֲנֵנוּ אֶת־בְּעִירְכֶם וּלְכוּ־בָאוּ אֶרְצָה כְּנַעַן: וּקְחוּ אֶת־אֲבִיכֶם וְאֶת־בְּתֻיְכֶם וּבָאוּ אֵלַי וְאֶתְנֶה לָכֶם אֶת־טוֹב אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְאֶכְלוּ אֶת־חֵלֶב הָאָרֶץ: וְאֶתְהָ

Bereshit / Genesis 45:18
 45:18 and take your father and your households and come to me, and I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you will eat the fat of the land.' (NASB)

55 The verse here says “and you will eat the fat of the land” so the use of “fat” in this context indicates that God will provide the choices part of Mitzrayim (Egypt) for the children of Yisrael while they are in Egypt.

מִפְּלוֹ עָלַי שִׁקְר וְדָיִם אֲנִי בְּכַל־לִבִּי אֲצַר פְּקוּדֶיךָ: מִפֶּשַׁע כַּחֲלֵב לִפְנֵי אֲנִי תוֹרַתְךָ שֶׁשִּׁשְׁעֵתִי: מוֹבִילִי כִּי־עֲנִיתִי לְמַעַן אֶלְמַד חֻקֶּיךָ: מוֹבִילִי תוֹרַת־פִּיךָ מֵאֲלָפֵי זָהָב וְכֶסֶף:

Another use of the word “khelev” is found in *Tehilim / Psalms* 119:69-72, which says 119:69 *The arrogant have forged a lie against me; With all my heart I will observe Your precepts.* 119:70 *Their heart is covered with fat, But I delight in Your law.* 119:71 *It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.* 119:72 *The law of Your mouth is better to me Than thousands of gold and silver pieces.* (NASB)

Here, in the context of the Scriptures, David is speaking about men who have lied

70 about him saying they are evil men (119:69). The very next verse (119:70) says
that “*their heart is covered with fat*” and then says that “*but I delight in Your*
Torah,” the parallel that is used here, between fat and delight in the Torah, in the
text illustrates that “khelev” (fat) is used to mean that the hearts of the evil men do
not love or delight in God’s Torah (they do not delight in the way of the Lord).
75 Fat is used in this context as a negative word to denote the state of the heart of an
evil man. The context (surrounding sentences and paragraphs) clarify the
meaning and use of the word.

The Asham (guilt) offering was brought before God, where the animal was
to suffer instead of the offerer. From the language of the Torah, it appears that the
80 offerer slew the animal and the priest collected the blood. The Priest would bring
the portion of blood and fat to be devoted to God and burnt upon the altar.
According to the scriptures, the fat portions are the choicest portions that are to be
offered to the Lord and in addition to this, fat is used to describe the nature of a
sinful heart. The fat of an animal is devoid of feeling; there are no nerve points
85 within fat tissues. Drawing a parallel to fat, the fatness of heart is a scriptural
representation of moral insensibility because fat has no feeling. As the fat was to
be laid out on the burnt offering, so too must our hearts be laid out before God.
This draws another parallel with self-denial and mortification of the flesh (see
Colossians chapter 3) that results from our devotedness to God. The fire purifies
90 the sacrifice, and in the same way, purifies our hearts. Fire is used in the
scriptures as a picture of divine justice and typifies the sanctification for sin. We
also learned that the root word for Khelev (fat) is Khalav meaning “milk.” Milk
in the scriptures is frequently mentioned in connection with honey (see *Shemot /*
Exodus 3:8; 13:5; Yehoshua / Joshua 5:6; Yeshaya / Isaiah 7:15, 22; and
95 *Yeremiyah / Jeremiah 11:5*) and sheep (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:14*) goats
(*Mishley / Proverbs 27:27*) camels (*Bereshit / Genesis 32:15*), and cows were
made to give their milk for the use of man. Milk is used figuratively as a sign of
abundance in *Bereshit / Genesis 49:12; Ezekiel 25:4; and Joel 3:18*. Milk is also
100 used as a reference to the rudiments of doctrine (*1 Corinthians 3:2 and Ivrit /*
Hebrews 5:12, 13) and of the unadulterated word of God in *1 Peter 2:2*.
Therefore, it is not surprising that khelev is used to indicate the abundance of land
in Mitzrayim (Egypt), and the choicest portions to be offered upon the altar before
the Lord. The symbolism of the fat in the mitzvot in this week’s Parashat on the
Chetet, Asham, and Shalamim offerings, draws upon the root meaning to
105 symbolized sustenance, in the sense of the best things (milk and honey) in our
lives are to be given to the Lord. Whereas the worst things, the fatness of our
heart, the wickedness or sin is to be burned up and sanctified in God’s holy Fire.
Also realize that the sacrifice Yeshua made He offered himself as the choicest
portion, God’s only son, there is no greater thing, choice or perfect thing that
110 could have been brought and offered as a blood atonement for our sins than
Yeshua himself, God’s only Son. Today, know that if you are truly repentant, and
confess your sins before God believing Yeshua laid his life down for yours, and
that his blood was shed for the forgiveness of your sins, you are justified, you are
saved, you are redeemed, and God will have “regard” (*Bereshit / Genesis 4:4*) for
115 you. The ultimate result will be spending an eternity with the God of our fathers,
Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, the God of Yisrael. What a wonderful God we

Interesting side note:

Did you know that meat mixed with a little fat actually tastes better? Take for example deer meat. Deer meat has a strong flavor that is characteristic of a wild animal. Some people do not like the taste and refuse to eat deer meat. A solution to this is to mix in a little beef fat with the deer meat. Once the beef fat and deer meat are mixed together, the strong flavor goes away and the meat tastes much better.

have, and what a wonderful description He has provided for us within the Hebrew Scriptures.

120 Heavenly Father,

Help me to live my life for You and to offer the fat, the good portions to be used by You. Today I lay down the fatness of my heart, sinful thoughts, actions, and anything that draws me away from You. I thank You for providing atonement for my soul in Yeshua the Messiah. I believe that He is the Messiah, and that by my faith in Him (Yeshua) You will forgive my sins. Please forgive me of my sins Lord and thank you for such a wonderful salvation. I give You all of the honor, the glory, and the praise. In Yeshua’s name I pray.

130 Amen!

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Be Blessed in Yeshua, Christ our Messiah!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:
Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
“Yeshua” King Messiah forever and ever

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