

פרשת

שמיני

Parashat Shemini

Vayikra / Leviticus 9:1-11:47, Ezekiel 36:16-38
Mark 9:1-13

For every Door that You Enter there is a Choice

In the opening verses to Parashat Shemini, we read the following regarding Aaron and his sons, *9:1 Now it came about on the eighth day that Moses called Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel; 9:2 and he said to Aaron, 'Take for yourself a calf, a bull, for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering, both without defect, and offer them before the Lord. (NASB)* Here we find the command for Aaron and his sons to first make atonement on behalf of themselves prior to making atonement on behalf of the people. In the book of Leviticus, the subject is the offering of sacrifices which are brought on behalf of the Israelites at large. The Scriptures this week include Aaron and his sons in order to qualify them for the service that is to be rendered on behalf of the people. This teaches us that *"fulfilling one of God's commandments involves expense to the party fulfilling it."* The rabbis have differences in opinion as expressed in the Talmud Bavli (*Kidushin 29*) where the meaning of the wording of our verse, leads to the conclusion that Aaron and his sons would experience considerable personal inconvenience in carrying out the instructions in order to bring an offering on behalf of the people. This is considered as if they had been asked to spend their own funds in performing this commandment (*here they had to bring a sacrifice on behalf of themselves*). This concept of the requirement of

the priesthood to make atonement on their own behalf, that is coupled to spending one's own funds, or involving expense in the party fulfilling it, has led to much theological debate in the Christian faith in relation to Yeshua the Messiah and what we read according to *Hebrews 7:27*. With the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (70 AD), the author of the book of Hebrews writes the following, *7:23 The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, 7:24 but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. 7:25 Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. 7:26 For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; 7:27 who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. 7:28 For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever. 8:1 Now the main point in what has been said is this we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 8:2 a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. (NASB)* The author of the book of Hebrews is speaking of this rabbinic concept of "*fulfilling one of God's commandments involves expense to the party fulfilling it.*" *Hebrews 7* speaks of the priesthood and draws a parallel to Yeshua the Messiah, the priests involved in the Tabernacle were limited by their mortality, and Yeshua in his immortality, is able to make atonement forever. The matter involving Yeshua's expense was the laying down of his own life on behalf of others. The Author of Hebrews says that He was perfect, and did not need to bring atonement on his own behalf in order to make atonement on our behalf. The Torah appointed men who were weak, and the Lord God in heaven appointed His son who was made perfect forever in the resurrection to eternal life. The ceasing to make atonement on behalf of this high priest (Yeshua) was due to his having been resurrected in perfection and eternal life. The author of Hebrews says the point of this comparison is that we have a Cohen HaGadol (High Priest) who sits at the right hand of God to minister in the Tabernacle

the Lord Himself has put together in heaven. The *Mishnah Yoma 8:9* writes the following, “(9) *R. Akiva says, Happy are you, Israel! Before whom are you purified, and who purifies you [of your transgressions]? Your Father Who is in heaven. For it is said, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean”; and it is also said, “The ritual bath of Israel is the Lord”; even as a ritual bath purifies the unclean, so does the Holy One, Blessed be He, purify Israel.*” (משנה יומא ח:ט) (ט) אמר רבי עקיבא, אשריכם ישראל, לפני מי אתם מטהרין, ומי מטהר אתכם, אביכם שבשמים, שנאמר, [יחזקאל לו:כה] “וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם.” ואומר, [ירמיה יז:יג] “מקוה ישראל ה’”, מה מקוה (מטהר את הטמאים, אף הקדוש ברוך הוא מטהר את ישראל). We have a high priest who cleanses and purifies us of our transgressions (sins) before our Father in heaven. Note how the rabbis in the Mishnah state that the Lord Himself purifies and cleanses using the mikvah (ritual bath) as an example and proof text, that the Holy One Blessed be He purifies Israel. Yeshua the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Holy One of God, in similar manner purifies us. These concepts of the Messiah of purifying and making atonement for his people are not outside of the basic philosophy of the rabbis.

This week we are looking at *Vayikra / Leviticus 9:1-24*.

Vayikra / Leviticus 9:1-24

9:1 Now it came about on the eighth day that Moses called Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel; 9:2 and he said to Aaron, ‘Take for yourself a calf, a bull, for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering, both without defect, and offer them before the Lord. 9:3 ‘Then to the sons of Israel you shall speak, saying, ‘Take a male goat for a sin offering, and a calf and a lamb, both one year old, without defect, for a burnt offering, 9:4 and an ox and a ram for peace offerings, to sacrifice before the Lord, and a grain offering mixed with oil; for today the Lord will appear to you.’ 9:5 So they took what Moses had commanded to the front of the tent of meeting, and the whole congregation came near and stood before the Lord. 9:6 Moses said, ‘This is the thing which the Lord has commanded you to do, that the

glory of the Lord may appear to you.’ 9:7 Moses then said to Aaron, ‘Come near to the altar and offer your sin offering and your burnt offering, that you may make atonement for yourself and for the people; then make the offering for the people, that you may make atonement for them, just as the Lord has commanded.’ 9:8 So Aaron came near to the altar and slaughtered the calf of the sin offering which was for himself. 9:9 Aaron’s sons presented the blood to him; and he dipped his finger in the blood and put some on the horns of the altar, and poured out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. 9:10 The fat and the kidneys and the lobe of the liver of the sin offering, he then offered up in smoke on the altar just as the Lord had commanded Moses. 9:11 The flesh and the skin, however, he burned with fire outside the camp. 9:12 Then he slaughtered the burnt offering; and Aaron’s sons handed the blood to him and he sprinkled it around on the altar. 9:13 They handed the burnt offering to him in pieces, with the head, and he offered them up in smoke on the altar. 9:14 He also washed the entrails and the legs, and offered them up in smoke with the burnt offering on the altar. 9:15 Then he presented the people’s offering, and took the goat of the sin offering which was for the people, and slaughtered it and offered it for sin, like the first. 9:16 He also presented the burnt offering, and offered it according to the ordinance. 9:17 Next he presented the grain offering, and filled his hand with some of it and offered it up in smoke on the altar, besides the burnt offering of the morning. 9:18 Then he slaughtered the ox and the ram, the sacrifice of peace offerings which was for the people; and Aaron’s sons handed the blood to him and he sprinkled it around on the altar. 9:19 As for the portions of fat from the ox and from the ram, the fat tail, and the fat covering, and the kidneys and the lobe of the liver, 9:20 they now placed the portions of fat on the breasts; and he offered them up in smoke on the altar. 9:21 But the

breasts and the right thigh Aaron presented as a wave offering before the Lord, just as Moses had commanded. 9:22 Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them, and he stepped down after making the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings. 9:23 Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting. When they came out and blessed the people, the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people. 9:24 Then fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the portions of fat on the altar; and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces. (NASB)

This week's Torah portion speaks of the importance of the priests first bringing atonement on behalf of themselves, where the Torah states, *9:1 Now it came about on the eighth day that Moses called Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel; 9:2 and he said to Aaron, 'Take for yourself a calf, a bull, for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering, both without defect, and offer them before the Lord. (NASB)* Here the command for Aaron and his sons is to first make atonement on behalf of themselves prior to making atonement on behalf of the people. This leads us to understand that there is some imperfection that is found in the priesthood due to sin as a result of the men being involved in the intermediary position between the people and the Lord God of Israel. In the book of Leviticus, the subject is the offering of sacrifices which are brought on behalf of the Israelites at large. The Torah portion this week includes the need for Aaron and his sons to receive atonement in order to qualify them for the service that is to be rendered on behalf of the people. The rabbis have the following to say concerning *Vayikra / Leviticus 9:2* and atonement.

Daat Zkenim on Vayikra / Leviticus 9:2 Part 1

קח לך עגל, "take a calf for yourself, etc." the Torah here tells Aaron to take a calf instead of a bullock (fully matured animal) as seeing that the status of the priesthood had been had been undermined by the golden calf in which he had been involved, it required a calf to re-

store its status to its former eminence.

The classic Jewish interpretation for these Scriptures is the Lord specified a “calf” due to the sin of the golden calf (also see Rashi and Rambam on *Vayikra / Leviticus 9:2*). The status of the priesthood was compromised due to sin and due to Aaron helping the people to construct the golden idol. These series of verses from *Vayikra / Leviticus* takes place immediately after the giving of the instructions for the offerings. The priesthood’s ordination and installation into their offices of service at the altar and Tabernacle are about to take place. *Vayikra / Leviticus 9:2-10* are unique because they are instructions for what will be the first offerings given by the Aaronic priesthood. The point is they were to proceed everyone else prior to standing in as an intermediary on behalf of the people. Rabbi Ibn Ezra has the following to say concerning *Vayikra / Leviticus 9:2*.

Ibn Ezra 9:2 Part 1

a young calf During the seven days of installation they brought a young bullock as a sin-offering [Exodus 29:1] and a ram as a burnt-offering [Exodus 29:18]. Scripture does not specify here whether use of the term calf denotes an animal under one year of age. I believe, though, that “bullock” and “calf” are probably similar in meaning when an age is not mentioned.

Part 2

without a defect describes both the calf and the ram. The bullocks of installation atoned for the Altar, while this calf is to atone for Aaron (I have already explained the meaning of the word “atone”).

Ibn Ezra recognizes these sacrifices as being a part of the ordination service to officially install the priests into their services. The question is whether the word “calf” represents the youngling under a year of age. The point is that this calf brought atonement for Aaron and his sons.

Chizkuni on Vayikra / Leviticus 9:2 Part 1

קח לך עגל, “take for yourself a calf;” it was customary for the priest to take a bull as a sin offering as is written in Leviticus 4:3 מא' חטא וגו' “if the High Priest will sin, etc.; in other words, the calf will atone for the sin of the golden calf. [According to Sifra we must understand that verse as referring specifically to this High Priest. Ed.]

The Chuzkuni commentary on *Vayikra / Leviticus 9:2* states that it was customary to take a bull for a sin offering as opposed to the calf. The calf was meant to atone for the sin of the priest. The basic conclusion is that this wording was chosen in the Torah because it is in reference to the atoning for the sin of the golden calf.

With the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (70 AD), the author of the book of Hebrews writes the following, *7:23 The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, 7:24 but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. 7:25 Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. 7:26 For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; 7:27 who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. 7:28 For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever. 8:1 Now the main point in what has been said is this we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 8:2 a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. (NASB)* as mentioned earlier, the author of the book of Hebrews is speaking of this rabbinic concept of “fulfilling one of God’s commandments involves expense to the party fulfilling it.” *Hebrews 7* speaks of the priesthood and draws a parallel to Yeshua the Messiah, the priests involved in the Tabernacle were limited by their mortality, and Yeshua in his immortality, is said to be able to

make atonement forever. The matter involving Yeshua's expense was the laying down of his own life on behalf of others. It is important to note something here, Yeshua did not need to bring atonement first on his own behalf prior to making atonement on behalf of the people in his own blood. This suggests for us that sin never desecrated or blemished Yeshua internally or externally. At least this is the interpretations based upon the Apostolic Writings. He did not carry around any envy, bitterness, or gall, there was nothing in Him that would disqualify Him in any way from bringing atonement on behalf of the people and paying the penalty for our sins. Yeshua the Messiah was qualified in every way to be the sacrifice for our sins. Consider, however, that the literal sin offering He made at His crucifixion took only a few hours to unfold. Reflecting upon what Yeshua accomplished is sobering to anyone of a mature mind who has attempted to walk in his ways, even a small portion of what He did. It should certainly lead us to the deepest gratitude we can offer. *Isaiah 53:9-10* gives us an insight into God's attitude toward His Son's sacrifice:

Isaiah 53:9-10

53:9 His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

53:10 But the Lord was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand. (NASB)

Based upon what is written in the Scriptures, not one time did Yeshua's heart rise up in an attempt to deceive or to strike out in violent anger. He was childlike in attitude yet mature in His wisdom, and it pleased the God of Israel to bruise and put Him to grief as the offering for our sins. When we consider what we have been studying thus far, it is important to realize that a great payment creates obligations on behalf of God's people. This is explained in *1 John 1:8* through *2:1* which speaks volumes about us:

1 John 1:8-2:1

1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; (NASB)

John is instructing us about the obligation we have due to receiving atonement through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Forgiveness does not remove from us the obligation to keep the commands of God. The law of God is not done away once we are under the blood of Yeshua the Messiah. The reason being is due to the covenant of God. The promises of God are founded upon the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants. The new covenant in the Messiah is founded upon these covenants. When we build upon a foundation, after the building is completed, we can not tear down the foundation upon which it stands. This is why the Torah has not passed away, and how Yeshua's death paid for our past sins because it is based upon the Torah. Though His death will pay for sins committed after our original forgiveness, we are urged not to break God's laws. Sinning without serious regard and deep appreciation for the Messiah's death brings us into danger of committing the unpardonable sin (*Hebrews 10:26, 28-29*). A disciplined and robust effort to obey God's commands witnesses to Him the depth of our appreciation for the mercy and grace He gives through the Messiah.

It is for this reason that we give our praises to Yeshua the Messiah, just as is written in *Tehillim / Psalms 116:1-19*, the psalm opens saying, א אֶהְבֶּתִי כִּי-יִשְׁמַע | יְהוָה אֶת-קוּלִי תַחֲנוּנָיִ: ב כִּי-הִטָּה אָזְנוֹ לִי : אֶקְרָא: *116:1 I love the Lord, because He hears My voice and my supplications. 116:2 Because He has inclined His ear to me, Therefore I shall call upon Him as long as I live. (NASB)* Throughout history, God's people have cried out to the Lord in times of distress. It may be at times many years of prayer before we receive an answer, where a single cry out to the Lord brings direction and deliverance. David

said in his psalm, *“Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me”* (Tehillim / Psalm 50:15). The Lord is merciful when He hears our prayers. We are instructed according to the Scriptures to call out to the Lord our Father in heaven in times of trouble.

- *“Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me”* (Tehillim / Psalm 50:15).
- *“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not”* (Jeremiah 33:3).
- *“The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles”* (Tehillim / Psalm 34:17).
- *“When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me”* (Tehillim / Psalm 56:9).

According to the book of Nehemiah, the people called out in deep distress saying the following, *Nehemiah 9:9 ‘You saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, And heard their cry (וַעֲקָתָם) by the Red Sea. 9:10 ‘Then You performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh, Against all his servants and all the people of his land; For You knew that they acted arrogantly toward them, And made a name for Yourself as it is this day. (NASB, ט וַתִּרְא אֶת-עֲנִי אֲבֹתֵינוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאֶת-וַעֲקָתָם שְׁמַעְתָּ עַל-יָם, קוּף: י וַתִּתֵּן אֹתָת וּמִפְתֵּימ בְּפִרְעֹה וּבְכָל-עַבְדָּיו וּבְכָל-עַם אֶרֶצוּ כִּי יִדְעָתָ כִּי הָיָה: (הַיָּדוּ עֲלֵיהֶם וַתַּעַשׂ-לָהֶּ שֵׁם כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה: We also read in Shemot / Exodus 15:25 the following, 15:25 Then he cried (וַיִּצְעַק) out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree; and he threw it into the waters, and the waters became sweet. There He made for them a statute and regulation, and there He tested them. (NASB, כה וַיִּצְעַק אֶל-יְהוָה וַיִּוְרָהוּ, (יְהוָה עָץ וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶל-הַמַּיִם וַיִּמְתְּקוּ הַמַּיִם שָׁם שָׁם לוֹ חֹק וּמִשְׁפָּט וְשָׁם נִסָּהוּ: The people cried out with a shout unto the Lord. In the prayer of Jabez we read the following: 1 Chronicles 4:10 Now Jabez called (וַיִּקְרָא) on the God of Israel, saying, ‘Oh that You would bless me indeed and enlarge my border, and that Your hand might be with me, and that You*

would keep me from harm that it may not pain me!’ And God granted him what he requested. (NASB, וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲבֵז לֵאלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אִם- בָּרוּךְ תִּבְרַכְנִי וְהִרְבִּיתָ אֶת-גְּבוּלֵי וְהִיָּתָה יְדִי עִמִּי וְעָשִׂיתָ מִרְעָה לְבִלְתִּי עֲצָבִי: Jabez called out to the God of Israel with a loud voice. According to *2 Chronicles 13:15*, the Lord delivered Judah from wicked men when they shouted out to the Lord during a time of war. *2 Chronicles 13:14* When Judah turned around, behold, they were attacked both front and rear; so they cried (וַיִּצְעֲקוּ) to the Lord, and the priests blew the trumpets. *13:15* Then the men of Judah raised a war cry (וַיִּרְיֵעוּ), and when the men of Judah raised the war cry, then it was that God routed Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. *13:16* When the sons of Israel fled before Judah, God gave them into their hand. (NASB, וַיִּפְּנוּ יְהוּדָה וְהִנֵּה לָהֶם הַמִּלְחָמָה פְּנִים וְאַחֹר וַיִּצְעֲקוּ לֵיהִנֵּה וְהַפְּהָגִים מִחֻצְצָרִים [מִחֻצְצָרוֹת: טו וַיִּרְיֵעוּ אִישׁ יְהוּדָה וַיְהִי בְהִרְיֵעַ אִישׁ יְהוּדָה וְהֵאֲלִיֵּהֶם נִגְף אֶת-יִרְבָּעָם וְכָל-יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְנֵי אַבְיָה וְיְהוּדָה: The Psalmist calls out to the Lord for help according to *Tehillim / Psalms 145:19* “He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry [shavah], and will save them” (NASB, יט רְצוֹן-יִרְאִיו יַעֲשֶׂה וְאֶת- צְעָקָתָם יִשְׁמַע וְיוֹשִׁיעֵם: David said in *Tehillim / Psalms 9:12* For He who requires blood remembers them; He does not forget the cry (צְעָקָתָם) of the afflicted. (NASB, יג כִּי-דָרַשׁ דָּמִים אוֹתָם זָכַר לֹא-שָׁכַח צְעָקַת עֲנִיִּים,)) When Peter walked out upon the water he cried out to Yeshua for help, “afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried [krazo], saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him” (*Matthew 14:30–31*). The blind man in Jericho heard that Yeshua was passing by and he cried out to him for help, *Luke 18:35-43* states, *18:35* As Jesus was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging. *18:36* Now hearing a crowd going by, he began to inquire what this was. *18:37* They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. *18:38* And he called out, saying, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ *18:39* Those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ *18:40* And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he came near, He questioned him, *18:41* ‘What do you

want Me to do for you?’ And he said, ‘Lord, I want to regain my sight!’ 18:42 And Jesus said to him, ‘Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.’ 18:43 Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God. (NASB) What we find here based upon the biblical text is the crying out to the Lord in these cases is even though these were an act of desperation, these people were expressing their faith in the Lord God of Israel, in His goodness and power to deliver them in their time of need. The crying out to the Lord demonstrated our genuine humility, the surrendering of our circumstances to the Lord, a plea for mercy, the realization of our own personal helplessness, our faith in the Lord’s power, and an expression of our desperation for help. The crying out to the Lord is the admission of one’s need for God’s help, just as David said in *Tehillim / Psalms 18:6* saying, *“In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.”* Sometimes it is difficult to admit that we cannot solve our own problems. It is at this point that we admit when a situation becomes desperate enough that we need the Lord’s help, we need to repent of our pride, don’t try to bargain with the Lord, but leave our trust and all of who we are in His hands. The reason being, apart from our faith, we have been driven to the point of despair or destruction and realize our unworthiness before the Lord to even seek His help and deliverance. This is what motivates us to cry out to the Lord because of what we read in *Lamentations 3:21-26*, *3:21 This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. 3:22 The Lord’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. 3:23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. 3:24 ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘Therefore I have hope in Him.’ 3:25 The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, To the person who seeks Him. 3:26 It is good that he waits silently For the salvation of the Lord. (NASB)* The point is that we know the Lord is merciful, and so we should not wait until the most desperate of times before seeking the Lord’s help and counsel.

In this week’s Torah portion, we are given reasons for the New Testament conclusions for the necessity to believe in Yeshua the Messiah as our high priest. We stand at the door of choice based upon what we are being taught in the word of God. At the entry of every door is

a choice. If you choose to enter, allowing Yeshua to enter your life, you choose life, and choose to seek the Lords help to begin the change process that will effect the very core of your being, to live in God's ways, to obey His commands, and to walk in the footsteps of Yeshua the Messiah. Based upon the Scriptures, this is the plan for what the Lord wants for our lives.



