

To Seek, to Serve, and to Obey with a Joyful Heart

This weeks reading is from [Parashat Tzav \(Vayikra / Leviticus 6:1-8:36\)](#), the opening verses in Parashat Tzav continues from last week with the Lord speaking to Moshe with regard to the guilt offering, and proceeds to describe the involvement of the Priests in the Olah (הֶעֱלָה, raise) offering (6:8-9), the Minchah (הַמִּנְחָה, grain) offering, the Chatat (הַחֲטָאת, sin) offering, the Asham (הַשֵּׁחַ, guilt) offering, and the Shelamim (זֶבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים, Peace) offering. The Torat (תּוֹרָה, instruction) of the Olah offering is to be kept burning continually. The Torat of the Minchah offering is to present it before the Lord at the altar (6:14-18). The Torat of the Chatat offering is to be eaten it in a holy place. The Torat of the Asham offering, it is to be slain in the same place the burnt offering is slain (7:1-2) and eaten in a holy place. The Olah Korban is burned up completely and continually, the smoke goes up to heaven as a pleasing aroma. The Asham Korban is to be slain in the same location as the Olah Korban showing a connection to the Olah offering in the offering of our guilt which goes up as a pleasing aroma. The Torat of the Shelamim offering (7:11-13) states this is a thanksgiving offering, it is a Terumah, and one is to bring it with the cakes of unleavened bread and the person is to present one of every type of offering as a contribution to the Lord (7:13-16). The Zevakh Shelamim represents table fellowship, and peace with man and with God. Table fellowship is representative of the intimate relationship we have with the Lord. Within the description of these things, the Scriptures continue to describe the Sacrificial system and the various sacrifices that are to be brought by the reason *“if a man sins.”* This indicates the Lord desires for man to live a repentant life and to turn from sin.

In last week’s study on Parashat Vayikra, we looked at the opening chapters of the book of Leviticus and the sacrificial system God had put in place for His people. We also studied the rabbis discussion on the meaning of the phrase, *“the Tabernacle of the Testimony.”* The conclusion by the rabbis was the Torah is God’s testimony to all of mankind and that God has declared there is salvation in Israel. Taking the perspective from the Apostolic Writings, it is important to understand what it means to bear the testimony of God in our lives. The way this is accomplished is

by living our lives according to the Scriptures, and to literally walk in the footsteps of the Messiah.

ספר ויקרא פרק ה

כ וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:
כא נֶפֶשׁ כִּי תַחֲטָא וּמַעֲלָה מֵעַל
בִּיהוָה וְכַחַשׁ בְּעַמִּיתוֹ בְּפִקְדוֹן
או-בְּתִשׁוּמַת יָד או בְּגִזְל או
עֲשָׂק אֶת-עַמִּיתוֹ: כב או-מִצָּא
אֲבֹדָה וְכַחַשׁ בָּהּ וְנִשְׁבַּע עַל-
שָׁקָר עַל-אַחַת מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר-יַעֲשֶׂה
הָאָדָם לַחֲטָא כְּהֵנָּה: כג וְהָיָה
כִּי-יַחֲטָא וְאָשָׁם וְהָשִׁיב אֶת-
הַגִּזְלָה אֲשֶׁר גָּזַל או אֶת-הָעֲשָׂק
אֲשֶׁר עֲשָׂק או אֶת-הַפִּקְדוֹן אֲשֶׁר
הִפְקִד אֹתוֹ או אֶת-הָאֲבֹדָה אֲשֶׁר
מָצָא:

Vayikra / Leviticus 6:1-3

6:1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 6:2 'When a person sins and acts unfaithfully against the Lord, and deceives his companion in regard to a deposit or a security entrusted to him, or through robbery, or if he has extorted from his companion, 6:3 or has found what was lost and lied about it and sworn falsely, so that he sins in regard to any one of the things a man may do; 6:4 then it shall be, when he sins and becomes guilty, that he shall restore what he took by robbery or what he got by extortion, or the deposit which was entrusted to him or the lost thing which he found, (NASB)

Note, the English translation reference to *Vayikra / Leviticus 6:1-3* is to the MT *Vayikra / Leviticus 5:20-23*. There is a slight discrepancy between the English and Hebrew translations, the English editors decided to divide the chapters differently than what we find in the MT. When this happens, it is always important to take note and to study what is going on in the text. Moshe is writing continuing his thought on unintentional sin (being unaware), a man remains guilty even if he unknowingly sins, and contrasts this to the one who is intentionally sinning and deceiving his brother. Sforno comments on these verses saying the following:

Sforno on Genesis 31:50, Part 1

:עד, ראה אלוקים עדי, *look that G'd will punish you if you do not treat my daughters properly, seeing He is a witness*
The whole line may be understood as analogous to Leviticus 5:21 'ומעלה מעל בה' *where the trespass against G'd is considered as something that only G'd is aware of,*

there being no human witnesses at hand to testify against the sinner. G'd is always the third party when two people have a disagreement, seeing He knows the true facts of the situation.

Sforno on Leviticus 5:23, Part 1

:והשיב את הגזלה..ואת אשמו יביא. the sacrifice does not achieve atonement until the guilty party has first satisfied the demands on him by the injured party.

Sforno at the end of chapter 5 speaks of guilt due to the violation of the command that is unknown, and only the Lord knows (only God is aware of) and when two people are involved, the Lord is the only One who knows the true facts. In *Vayikra / Leviticus 5:23* one must return what he has stolen and add a fifth. Sforno states this is illustrated in *Vayikra / Leviticus 5:25* which says the following:

Vayikra / Leviticus 5:25:

5:25 And he shall bring his forfeit unto the LORD, a ram without blemish out of the flock, according to thy valuation, for a guilt-offering, unto the priest. (וְאֶת־אֲשָׁמוֹ יָבִיא) (לִיתְהֵא אֵיל תַּמִּים מִן־הַצֹּאן בְּעֶרְכָּךָ לְאִשָּׁם אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן:

Notice how these verses are connected to the previous section (*i.e. these verses should not have been separated into another chapter*). The Scriptures say when one commits an intentional sin to deceive his brother, the ram without blemish is to be “*according to the valuation of the guilt offering unto the priest.*” What is meant by the valuation of the guilt offering? The point is that in the case of intentional sin, repentance isn't enough. One needs to also make restitution for the stolen goods or the injury and here the priest makes the decision on what must be done. One must make right what was wronged.

While reading through the Apostolic Writings, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the book of Acts, the Epistles of Paul and the disciples, and the book of the Revelation of John, there appears to be limited discussions on the topic of the Sacrifices. The reason being, these

teachings were within the context of the first century synagogue services, therefore those listening already had a general knowledge of the sacrifices. (e.g. *Matthew 8:2-4, Mark 1:40-44, Luke 5:12-14, Yeshua healed the leper and told the man to go and show himself to the priests and offer the prescribed sacrifices as a testimony to the priests. It was understood what was required of the covenant relationship Israel had with God according to the Torah and having been healed, they were to follow through with their covenant agreement with God.*) The Torah, having been taught in the synagogues throughout Israel every Shabbat and through the week, was common knowledge amongst the children of Israel. In order for a more proper understanding of the Apostolic Writings, we must study the Torah, otherwise the NT may be greatly misunderstood. Many people today simply gloss over these Scriptures from Parshiot Vayikra and Tzav because they are all about the sacrifices, not realizing how our understanding of Yeshua's death, burial, and resurrection greatly depends upon our understanding of the Torah, especially in light of intentional verses unintentional sin. (*Hebrews 10:26*)

In the Apostolic Writings, the book of Hebrews provides some context upon the Sacrifices and goes on to describe the Temple sacrifices in relation to the Sacrifice provided by Yeshua the Messiah. According to the Torah, the role of the Priest in the process of atonement appears to be an important one. Studying the rabbinic commentary, a lot of discussion is given on the atonement process and the Sacrifice as we saw according to Sforno. The point is, the Lord is showing us not only was the role of the priest to bear our iniquity and our guilt for the purpose of making atonement, he was also involved in making decisions on how one is to make restitution due to our sin.

In *Hebrews 9:13-22*, a parallel is drawn between the Temple sacrifices and the act of Yeshua giving himself for the forgiveness of our sins. The author of Hebrews says, *9:14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (NASB)* It is interesting how he says "*cleansing the conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*" Many have used this as a proof text against obeying the Torah, but this is not what the author is speaking of or is it? We do know through past discussions regarding *Galatians* and *Acts 15* that the Pharisees were promoting the ritual conversion in order to enter into

the covenant with God and with Yeshua. The point was that one enters the covenant by faith, and the stipulations (requirements) of the covenant are performed out of a love for God and to bear testimony to His Word, and not for a means of earning salvation. The idea of works being dead, mentioned by the author of Hebrews, is within the context of the person who believes their observance of the Torah will provide them with entrance into heaven. Paul, in *Romans 6-7*, said that when the command came, so did sin, and he died. Obeying the command for the purpose of gaining entrance into heaven, is a “*dead work*.” In addition to this, based upon Paul’s letter to the *Romans 6-7*, sin is also considered a “*dead work*.” An important point here is that the reason Paul’s writings are confusing to us is because he is working within multiple threads of thinking which is characteristic of rabbinic and Jewish thought. Note how in the midrashim there are various interpretations on the same verse, phrase, or word. In midrash, each of the rabbinic interpretations of the Scriptures have an equally valid point. Similarly, Paul uses his rabbinic background in the process of writing his letters to the Romans and others. The point is, our obedience to God’s word should be motivated by our love for the Lord, and not for the purpose of getting something out of it (e.g. gaining heaven). The author of Hebrews is correct, Yeshua came teaching us that we serve God and others out of love, and not for the end goal of “*receiving*.” Therefore, those who teach that man earned his salvation in the OT are suggesting a form of covetous relationship man had with God under the Mosaic Law. That is obviously an erroneous doctrine.

In *Tehillim/Psalms 89*, Ethan the Ezrahite says, אִם-יַעֲזֹבוּ בְּנֵי תוֹ- לֹא יִבְמַשְׁפְּטִי לֹא יִלְכוּן: לֵב אִם-תִּקְרָתִי יִחַלְלוּ וּמִצְוֹתַי לֹא יִשְׁמְרוּ: לֵב וּפְקֻדָּתַי רָתִי וּבְמַשְׁפָּטִי לֹא יִלְכוּן: לֵב אִם-תִּקְרָתִי יִחַלְלוּ וּמִצְוֹתַי לֹא יִשְׁמְרוּ: לֵב וּפְקֻדָּתַי רָתִי וּבְמַשְׁפָּטִי לֹא יִלְכוּן: *89:30 ‘If his sons forsake My law And do not walk in My judgments, 89:31 If they violate My statutes And do not keep My commandments, 89:32 Then I will punish their transgression with the rod And their iniquity with stripes. (NASB)* The significance of the Torah for our lives is discovered by the psalmists declaration of the sons of God forsaking God’s law and not walking according to His judgments. Notice the way the MT renders the psalmists words, אִם-יַעֲזֹבוּ בְּנֵי תוֹרָתִי וּבְמַשְׁפָּטִי, לֹא יִלְכוּן (תוֹרָתִי). The author did not say if they do not remember (לֹא לְזָכוֹר). This suggests that those who forsake have knowledge of what they are forsaking and

they are intentionally walking away from the Torah. The rabbis say of the Lord, *“I give you good doctrine, do not forsake my Torah,”* therefore it is very unwise to forsake obedience. The Mishnah Pirkei Avot describes how the rabbis view the Torah and why it is so significant as Ethan the Ezrahite writes the one who forsakes Torah perishes.

Mishnah Pirkei Avot 6:6

Greater is Torah than priesthood and kingship, for monarchy is obtained with thirty levels, and priesthood with twenty-four, and Torah is obtained with forty-eight things. And they are these: learning, listening of the ear, preparation of speech, understanding of the heart, reverence, awe, humility, happiness, purity, service of Sages, care in [selection of] friends, debate of the students, clarification, reading, learning, minimal commodities, minimal worldly occupation, minimal pleasure, minimal sleep, minimal conversation, minimal laughter, patience, generosity, trust in Sages, acceptance of suffering, knowing one’s place, gladness in one’s portion, erection of a fence to his words, lack of self-aggrandizement, lovableness, love of God, love of the creatures, love of the righteous, love of the upright, love of rebuke, distancing from honor, lack of arrogance in learning, lack of joy in teaching, lifting of a burden with one’s friend, judgement with the benefit of the doubt, standing for the truth, standing for peace, deliberation in study, questioning and responding, hearing and adding, learning in order to teach and learning in order to act, making his master wiser, focusing one’s words, citing the source, for it is taught that one who cites a source brings redemption to the world, as it says (Esther 2:22): “Esther told the king in Mordekhai’s name.”

The Mishnah describes the one who studies Torah as being patient, a listener, having understanding, reverence for God, humble, he is slow to speak and quick to listen, he is not arrogant, does not seek honor or self aggrandizement, he has love for others, and stands for truth and justice, and learns to act wisely. There is no question why the rabbis say, or why

Ethan believes violating the mitzvot leads to punishment and death. The rabbis continue in the Mishnah saying the following:

Mishnah Pirkei Avot 6:7

Great is Torah, for it gives life to those who do it in this world and in the next world, as it says: 'For they are life to those that find them, and healing to all his flesh' (Proverbs 4:22), and it says 'It will be healing for your navel, and tonic to your bones' (Proverbs 3:8). And it says 'It is a tree of life to those who hold it, and those who grasp it are happy' (Proverbs 3:18). And it says 'For they are an accompaniment of grace for your head, and a necklace for your throat' (Proverbs 1:9). And it says 'She will give your head an accompaniment of grace; with a crown of glory she will protect you' (Proverbs 4:9). And it says 'For by me your days will be multiplied, and you will be given additional years of life' (Proverbs 9:11). And it says 'Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left is wealth and honor' (Proverbs 3:16), and it says 'For length of days and years of life and peace will be added to you' (Proverbs 3:2), and it says 'her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace' (Proverbs 3: 17).

The descriptions given of the Torah are a reference to living our lives for the Lord and doing what is right. The concepts of protection, grace, glory, and years added to life and everlasting life are drawn into context of obeying God's word. The idea that the Torah has benefit in the Olam Haba is because the Torah, righteousness, justice, holiness, and truth are eternal, since these are characteristics of the Lord and He is eternal. The Aramaic Targum states, לא אין ישבקון בנוי אוריתי ובדיני לא יהלכון: לב אין קיימי יפסון ופיקודי לא ינטרון: לג ואסער על ידהון דשיבטא דרשיעין מרדיהון
89:31 If his sons abandon my Torah, and do not walk in my judgments, 89:32 If they violate my covenant, and do not keep my commandments, 89:33 Then I will punish their rebellions by means of the rod of the wicked, and their iniquities by the demons that plague them. (EMC) Notice the Lord says that punishment comes by way

of the rod with many stripes in the MT. The rabbis interpret the method of punishment the Lord uses is by the “rod of the wicked” meaning that the Lord will raise up a wicked nation to punish Israel if she forsakes His commands. Do you think today, bad things may happen by reason of violation of the Torah?

The psalmist continues saying, לַד' וַחֲסָדָיו לֹא-אָפִיר מֵעֵמוּ וְלֹא אֲשַׁקֵּר, בְּאֲמוּנָתִי: לֵה לֹא-אֲחַלֵּל בְּרִיתִי וּמוֹצָא שִׁפְתֵי לֹא אֲשַׁנֶּה: לוֹ אַחַת נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי בְּקֹדֶשׁ אֱמ-לְדָוִד אֲכַזֵּב: לֹא זָרְעוּ לְעוֹלָם יִהְיֶה וְכִסְאוֹ כְשֶׁמֶשׁ נִגְדִי: לֹא כִּי־רַחַם יִשְׁחַק בְּאֲמוֹן סָלָה: 89:33 *‘But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him, Nor deal falsely in My faithfulness. 89:34 ‘My covenant I will not violate, Nor will I alter the utterance of My lips. 89:35 ‘Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David. 89:36 ‘His descendants shall endure forever And his throne as the sun before Me. 89:37 ‘It shall be established forever like the moon, And the witness in the sky is faithful.’ Selah. (NASB)* Note how the Lord will not forsake His people even though they may forsake Him. He speaks of the people Israel, how the Lord will not cause them to be utterly destroyed, because of His covenant and promises with David. The Lord swore that his descendants will endure and will be established forever. This is significant because the psalm demonstrates the unfailing faithfulness of God to His people. This is why the Lord is always seeking for men to repent and turn from their sins, and places things in our lives to lead us to that position, to having understanding, a reverence for God, to be humble, to have love for others, and to stand for truth and justice, and helping us to learn to act wisely. This is why we are always told to walk in His ways or to walk as Yeshua the Messiah walked (*1 John 2:4-6*).

This week’s Torah portion, Parashat Tzav, coupled with the commentary from the rabbis and the book of Hebrews chapter 9, reveals to us what Yeshua the Messiah has done is paralleled to the Asham (guilt) and Chatat (sin) offerings. We have a High Priest today, right now, and we have a Priest who took (bore) our sins from us, and who made atonement on our behalf. By doing this Yeshua has become our righteousness and brings a newness of life, He has separated us and made us holy before the Lord God Almighty. Now that we are a holy people, we are called to live holy lives. The way we do this is by separating ourselves from the way the world lives by obeying God’s Torah. All of these things are taught in the

Apostolic Writings (NT) and draw us back to the importance of living in obedience to the Lord and His Holy Word. By faith the Lord God sends His Spirit to empower us to overcome sin and to live for Him. Thus, our lives as the children of God should be noted by our diligence in serving and seeking Him. The point is if we have Him dwelling in our midst, in our hearts, and in our lives, He gives us the power and the will to seek, to serve, and obey with a joyful heart.



