

« Pinchas Polonsky, a notable refusenik of the Soviet era, is today a prolific thinker and writer, introducing Jewish philosophy to the broader public. His latest work, deeply influenced by the teachings of Rabbi Yehuda Leon Ashkenazi, one of French Jewry's leading philosophers, will introduce his monumental ideas to a wider audience. »

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, Chief Rabbi of Moscow, President of the Conference of European Rabbis (CER)

## BIBLE DYNAMICS – EVOLVING PERSONALITIES AND IDEAS

Biblical personalities are traditionally perceived as larger-than-life, heroic figures, who surmount incredible obstacles to advance the world. And yet, little emphasis is placed on their own personal evolution.

But according to the centuries-old Kabbalistic tradition revealed in our times by Rabbi Y. L. Ashkenazi (Manitou), the heroes of the Torah are evolving personalities who undergo profound change over the course of their lives, while acquiring new ideas and personal qualities through their

ongoing dialogue with God. The *Bible Dynamics* commentary is a unique interpretation of the Torah through the lens of this tradition.

The previously published Russian edition of *Bible Dynamics* is a complete commentary on the entire Pentateuch. The present volume is the English translation of this work.

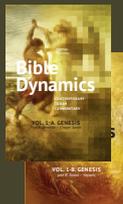


Pinchas Polonsky was born in Moscow in 1958, and from 1975 was active in Russia's religious Jewish underground. After emigrating to Israel in 1987 and settling in Samaria, he continued to study and teach at the Bar Ilan and Ariel universities.

Dr. Polonsky is among the most popular Russian-language authors, having published over twenty books on Jewish practice and philosophy, of which the best known are: *Gates of Prayer*; *Rabbi A. I. Kook*; *The Jewish view on Christianity*; and *Israel and Humanity – a New Stage of Development*.

His life quest is modernization of Judaism within the traditional framework.

MORE BOOKS  
IN THE  
BIBLE DYNAMICS  
SERIES



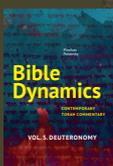
Genesis part A,  
part B



Exodus



Numbers



Deuteronomy

ISBN 978-1-949900-24-8



9 781949 900248 >

Bible Dynamics  
LEVITICUS

Pinchas  
Polonsky

III

Pinchas  
Polonsky

# Bible Dynamics

CONTEMPORARY  
TORAH  
COMMENTARY

VOL. 3. LEVITICUS

Пинхас Полонский

# Библейская Динамика

Комментарий к Торе

Согласно учению р. Иехуды-Леона Ашкенази (Маниту)  
и р. Ури Шерки

ТОМ 3. ЛЕВИТ

פינחס פולונסקי

## אבות בתנועה

ההתפתחותם האישית של אבות האומה

לפי תורתו של הרב המקובל יהודא-ליאון אשכנזי (מניטו)  
והרב אורי שרקי

כרך 3. ספר ויקרא

**Pinchas Polonsky**

**BIBLE DYNAMICS**  
**Evolving Personalities and Ideas**

**Contemporary Torah Commentary**

**Following the teaching of**  
**Rabbi Yehuda Leon Ashkenazi (Manitou)**  
**and Rabbi Ouri Cherki**

**VOL. 3. LEVITICUS**

**Translated from Russian**  
**by Alex Shlyankevich**



2025 / 5785



**OROT YERUSHALAIM**

**DERECH ZION**

**Данная электронная версия  
предназначена для свободного использования**

Можно пересылать ее и выставлять в интернет.

Все книги П. Полонского можно скачать на:

**<https://pinchaspolonsky.org/>**

Если вы хотите получать сообщения о новостях сайта и новых материалах, или заказать бумажную версию, напишите на **[ppolonsky@gmail.com](mailto:ppolonsky@gmail.com)**

Если вы хотите помочь нашей деятельности – вот реквизиты: **<https://pinchaspolonsky.org/donations/>**

Видеолекции: **<https://www.youtube.com/@ppolonsky10>**

Фейсбук: **<https://www.facebook.com/pinchas.polonsky>**

Телеграм-канал: **[https://t.me/P\\_Polonsky](https://t.me/P_Polonsky)**

In memory of

**Ilia Salita**

(1967–2020)

the president of Genesis Philanthropy Group  
and the passionate Jewish leader  
whose life was dedicated to strengthening bonds  
between Israel and the Diaspora



We are very grateful

**to Mikhail Fridman**

for support in translation  
of the "Bible Dynamics" commentary into English



---

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful to Rabbi Ouri Cherki, one of modern Israel's most distinguished rabbis and religious philosophers, a follower of Rav Zvi Yehuda Kook and a disciple of Rabbi Yehuda Leon Ashkenazi (Manitou). Rabbi Cherki's insightful lessons have enabled me to explore the innovative Torah approach that underpins the *Bible Dynamics* commentary.

I am indebted to Mikhail Fridman, whose generous support made the English translation of the *Bible Dynamics* series possible.

I'm thankful to Alex Shlyankevich, who skillfully edited and translated this volume into English.

I am fortunate to have received valuable advice and ongoing support for both the original Russian edition and its English translation from Rabbi Yehuda HaKohen, Leonid and Irina Margulis, Svetlana Rousakovski, Masha Yaglom, Yuri Livshets, Grigory Yashgur, Galina Zolotusky, Michael Sherman, Yulia Yaglom, Boris and Anna Gulko, Michael Leypounskiy, Olga Emlin, Rivka Rosin, Galina Bleikh, Iris Mersel, Arkady Mayofis, Yehudit Agracheva, Nechama Simanovich, Vladimir Tartakovsky, Avshalom Donskoy, Yulia Lokteva, Evgeny Kogan, Mikhail Zule, Maria Kopylova, Gershon Levitsky, Yulia Patrakova, Nathan Brusovani, Baruch and Rina Yusin, Marina and Mikhail Magrilov, Valery Khaiznikov, A. B., Ilya Brodsky, Roman Rytov, Anatoly Gurevich, Marat Ressin, and Moshe Yanovsky.

Pinchas Polonsky  
2025 r.  
Jerusalem

## CONTENTS

<b>§ 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS</b> .....	19
§ 1.1. The Name of the Book .....	19
§ 1.2. Leviticus and Numbers – The Two Sequels to Exodus .....	19
§ 1.3. Man’s Response to God .....	20
§ 1.4. The Structure of the Book of Leviticus .....	21
<b>§ 2. THE PROBLEM OF THE TEMPLE AND SACRIFICES</b> .....	23
§ 2.1. The Significance of the Temple .....	23
§ 2.2. The Temple as the Eighth Day of Creation .....	24
§ 2.3. The Ambiguous Attitude of Jewish Tradition Towards Sacrifices .....	24
§ 2.4. Sacrifices and Prayer .....	26
§ 2.5. Will Sacrifices Be Restored in the Rebuilt Temple? .....	28
§ 2.6. The Possibility of Rebuilding the Temple in Our Time .....	29
<b>WEEKLY PORTION 1. VAYIKRA</b> .....	32
<b>§ 3. OLAH, BURNT OFFERING</b> .....	33
§ 3.1. Vayikra and Tzav: Sacrifices from the People’s and Priests’ Perspectives .....	33
§ 3.2. The Call to Moses from the Tabernacle (1:1) .....	36
§ 3.3. The Burnt Offering of Large Livestock (1:2-9) .....	37
§ 3.4. Two Kinds of Voluntary Sacrifices: The Burnt and Peace Offerings .....	41
§ 3.5. The Burnt Offering of Small Livestock (1:10-13) .....	42
§ 3.6. The Burnt Offering of Birds (1:14-17) .....	43
<b>§ 4. MINHA, THE BREAD OFFERING</b> .....	46
§ 4.1. The Unbaked Bread Offering (2:1-3) .....	46
§ 4.2. The Temple and Sacrifice Divisions: The Holy and Most Holy .....	47
§ 4.3. Types of Baked Bread Offerings (2:4-10) .....	48
§ 4.4. Leaven, Honey, and Salt (2:11-13) .....	50
§ 4.5. The Offering of the First Fruits (2:14-16) .....	51
<b>§ 5. SHLAMIM, PEACE OFFERINGS</b> .....	53
§ 5.1. The Peace Offering of Cattle (3:1-5) .....	53
§ 5.2. The Peace Offering of Small Livestock (3:6-16) .....	55
§ 5.3. The Prohibition Against Eating Fat and Blood (3:17) .....	57

<b>§ 6. HATAT, THE SIN OFFERING</b> .....	58
§ 6.1. The Sin Offering for the Priest (4:1-12) .....	58
§ 6.2. The Purification Offering for the People (4:13-21) .....	62
§ 6.3. The Purification Offering for a Chieftain (4:22-26) .....	64
§ 6.4. The Purification Offering for an Ordinary Person (4:27-35) .....	66
<b>§ 7. THE GUILT OFFERING</b> .....	69
§ 7.1. The Difference Between the Sin and Guilt Offerings .....	69
§ 7.2. The Guilt Offering for Transgressions of Negligence (5:1-13) .....	70
§ 7.3. The Misuse of Holy Objects (5:14-16) .....	74
§ 7.4. The Guilt Offering in Case of Doubt (5:17-19) .....	75
§ 7.5. The Guilt Offering for a Breach of Financial Trust (5:20-26) .....	76
<b>WEEKLY PORTION 2. TZAV</b> .....	78
<b>§ 8. THE ORDER OF SACRIFICES</b> .....	79
§ 8.1. The Burnt Offering and Fire on the Altar (6:1-6) .....	79
§ 8.2. The Meal Offerings (6:7-11) .....	81
§ 8.3. The Meal Offering for the Priest (6:12-16) .....	82
§ 8.4. The Sin Offering (6:17-23) .....	84
§ 8.5. The Guilt Offering and the Priests' Portions (7:1-10) .....	86
§ 8.6. The Peace Offering (7:11-21) .....	88
§ 8.7. The Prohibition Against Eating Fat and Blood (7:22-27) .....	91
§ 8.8. The Priests' Share of the Well-being Offerings (7:28-38) .....	93
<b>§ 9. THE CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS</b> .....	96
§ 9.1. The Vestments of the Priests (8:1-13) .....	96
§ 9.2. The Consecration Procedure (8:14-36) .....	99
<b>WEEKLY PORTION 3. SHMINI</b> .....	104
<b>§ 10. THE BEGINNING OF THE SERVICE</b> .....	105
§ 10.1. The First Offerings (9:1-24) .....	105
§ 10.2. The Death of Aaron's Sons (10:1-7) .....	109
§ 10.3. The Prohibition Against Drinking Wine During Service (10:8-11) .....	112
§ 10.4. The Synthesis of Moses' and Aaron's Approaches (10:12-20) .....	114

<b>§ 11. THE CLEAN AND UNCLEAN ANIMALS</b> .....	118
§ 11.1. The Concepts of Cleanliness and Uncleanliness .....	118
§ 11.2. The Land Animals (11:1-8) .....	120
§ 11.3. The Aquatic Animals (11:9-12) .....	123
§ 11.4. The Flying Animals (11:13-22) .....	124
§ 11.5. Defilement from Contact with Unclean Animals (11:23-43) .....	126
§ 11.6. Ritual Impurity Is Incompatible with the Pursuit of Holiness (11:44-47) .....	131
<b>WEEKLY PORTION 4. TAZRIA</b> .....	133
<b>§ 12. THE PURIFICATION AFTER CHILDBIRTH</b> .....	134
§ 12.1. The Periods of Purification after Childbirth (12:1-5) .....	134
§ 12.2. The Offering after Childbirth (12:6-8) .....	136
<b>§ 13. TZARAAT</b> .....	138
§ 13.1. Tzaraat and Its Relationship to Leprosy .....	138
§ 13.2. The Cause and Meaning of Tzaraat .....	140
§ 13.3. The Early Signs of Tzaraat (13:1-8) .....	142
§ 13.4. Tzaraat Changes Between Afflicted and Normal Skin and Vice Versa (13:9-17) .....	145
§ 13.5. Tzaraat at the Location of Healed Inflammation (13:18-23) .....	147
§ 13.6. Tzaraat at the Site of a Healed Burn (13:24-28) .....	149
§ 13.7. The Affliction on the Head or in the Beard (13:29-37) .....	151
§ 13.8. The Faded White Spots (13:38-39) .....	154
§ 13.9. Tzaraat on a Bald Head or Forehead (13:40-44) .....	154
§ 13.10. The Conduct of the Metzora (13:45-46) .....	156
§ 13.11. Tzaraat on Clothing (13:47-59) .....	157
<b>WEEKLY PORTION 5. METZORA</b> .....	161
<b>§ 14. PURIFICATION FROM TZARAAT</b> .....	162
§ 14.1. The Procedure for Purifying the Metzora (14:1-20) .....	162
§ 14.2. The Purification of a Poor Metzora (14:21-32) .....	170
§ 14.3. Tzaraat on the House Walls (14:33-57) .....	172
<b>§ 15. BODILY DISCHARGES</b> .....	178
§ 15.1. The Discharge of "Pus" (15:1-15) .....	178
§ 15.2. The Discharge of Seminal Fluid (15:16-18) .....	182
§ 15.3. Menstrual Bleeding (15:19-24) .....	183
§ 15.4. Bleeding Outside the Regular Menstrual Period (15:25-30) .....	184

§ 15.5. Purification from Impurity Due to Discharges (15:31-33)	186
<b>WEEKLY PORTION 6. ACHREI MOT</b>	187
<b>§ 16. THE YOM KIPPUR SERVICE AND THE DAY OF ATONEMENT</b>	188
§ 16.1. Structure of Achrei Mot	188
§ 16.2. The High Priest Enters the Holy of Holies Only on Yom Kippur (16:1-4)	188
§ 16.3. The Day of Atonement Offerings: The Scapegoat (16:5-28)	190
§ 16.4. The Fast of the Day of Atonement (16:29-31)	196
§ 16.5. Only the High Priest Conducts the Day of Atonement Service (16:32-34)	197
<b>§ 17. THE PROHIBITION OF IMPROPER SLAUGHTER</b>	199
§ 17.1. The Prohibition of Slaughtering Livestock without an Offering (17:1-9)	199
§ 17.2. The Prohibition Against Eating Blood (17:10-14)	201
§ 17.3. The Impurity of Carcasses and Animals Torn by Beasts (17:15-16)	203
<b>§ 18. FORBIDDEN SEXUAL RELATIONS</b>	205
§ 18.1. Do Not Follow the Customs of Egypt and Canaan (18:1-5)	205
§ 18.2. Forbidden Sexual Relations with Relatives (18:6-18)	206
§ 18.3. Other Forbidden Sexual Relations (18:19-23)	210
§ 18.4. The Holy Land Does Not Tolerate Transgressions (18:24-30)	211
<b>WEEKLY PORTION 7. KEDOSHIM</b>	213
<b>§ 19. THE LAWS OF HOLINESS</b>	214
§ 19.1. Holiness as Imitation of God (19:1-2)	214
§ 19.2. The Relationship Between Holiness and Other Torah Commandments: The Approaches of Maimonides and Nachmanides	215
§ 19.3. Holiness as the Fullness of Being	216
§ 19.4. Holiness as an Encounter with God	217
§ 19.5. Initial Steps Toward Holiness: Parents, Sabbath, and Prohibition of Idolatry (19:3-4)	217
§ 19.6. The Peace Offering Must Be Eaten without Delay (19:5-8)	218

§ 19.7. Social Justice (19:9-17)	220
§ 19.8. Love Your Neighbor as Yourself (19:18)	223
§ 19.9. Observe My Statutes (19:19-32)	225
§ 19.10. Ethical Standards (19:33-37)	230
<b>§ 20. PUNISHMENT FOR DISREGARDING HOLINESS</b>	232
§ 20.1. The Punishment for Worship of Molech (20:1-6)	232
§ 20.2. Sanctify Yourselves and Be Holy (20:7-8)	234
§ 20.3. The Punishments for Family and Sexual Offenses (20:9-21)	234
§ 20.4. Holiness of the People and the Land of Israel (20:22-27)	237
<b>WEEKLY PORTION 8. EMOR</b>	239
<b>§ 21. THE LAWS CONCERNING THE PRIESTS</b>	240
§ 21.1. The Laws Concerning the Ordinary Priests (21:1-9)	240
§ 21.2. The Laws Concerning the High Priest (21:10-15)	243
§ 21.3. A Priest with a Blemish (21:16-24)	245
§ 21.4. An Impure Priest Cannot Serve (22:1-9)	247
§ 21.5. A Layperson Cannot Partake in the Holy Offerings (22:10-16)	249
§ 21.6. Animals with a Blemish Cannot Be Offered (22:17-25)	251
§ 21.7. Animals Acceptable for Sacrifice (22:26-33)	253
<b>§ 22. THE FESTIVAL SYSTEM</b>	255
§ 22.1. Shabbat and Festivals (23:1-3)	255
§ 22.2. Pesach (23:4-8)	256
§ 22.3. The Offering of the First Sheaf, the Omer (23:9-14)	258
§ 22.4. The Dispute Between the Pharisees and Sadducees Concerning the Omer	261
§ 22.5. The Counting of the Omer and Shavuot (23:15-22)	264
§ 22.6. The Festival of Blowing the Shofar (23:23-25)	267
§ 22.7. The Day of Atonement (23:26-32)	268
§ 22.8. Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret (23:33-43)	269
§ 22.9. The Historical and Agricultural Dimensions of the Festivals	272
§ 22.10. The Conclusion of the Holiday System (23:44)	273
<b>§ 23. THE LAMP, THE SHOWBREAD, AND THE STORY OF THE SON OF AN ISRAELITE WOMAN AND AN EGYPTIAN</b>	274
§ 23.1. The Lamp (24:1-4)	274
§ 23.2. The Showbread (24:5-9)	275

§ 23.3. The Son of an Israelite Woman and an Egyptian (24:10-23) .....	277
§ 23.4. “The Son of an Israelite Woman and an Egyptian” in the Context of the Festivals: Israel’s Independence Day .....	281
<b>WEEKLY PORTION 9. BEHAR</b> .....	284
<b>§ 24. THE SABBATICAL AND JUBILEE YEARS AND THE PROHIBITION AGAINST OPPRESSING ONE’S BROTHER</b> .....	285
§ 24.1. The Holiness of the Place: Mount Sinai and the Land of Israel (25:1) .....	285
§ 24.2. The Sabbatical Year (25:2-7) .....	286
§ 24.3. The Jubilee Year (25:8-19) .....	288
§ 24.4. Status of the Sabbatical and Jubilee Years in Jewish History .....	292
§ 24.5. Between Attachment to and Independence from the Land: How the Sabbatical Year Sustains Spiritual Balance .....	293
§ 24.6. Sustenance During the Sabbatical and Jubilee Years (25:20-22) .....	294
§ 24.7. The Redemption of Land and Houses (25:23-28) .....	295
§ 24.8. A House Within a Walled City (25:29-34) .....	297
<b>§ 25. THE PROHIBITION AGAINST OPPRESSING THE POOR AND SLAVES</b> .....	300
§ 25.1. The Prohibition of Usury Towards the Poor (25:35-38) .....	300
§ 25.2. The Prohibition Against Enslaving the Israelites (25:39-46) .....	302
§ 25.3. If an Israelite Is Sold to a Resident Alien (25:47-55) .....	305
§ 25.4. Differences Between Exodus and Leviticus in Their Approaches to Slavery and the Sabbatical Year .....	307
§ 25.5. Completing the Theme of Holiness: The Prohibition of Idolatry and the Violation of the Sabbath (26:1-2) .....	308
<b>WEEKLY PORTION 10. BECHUKOTAI</b> .....	309
<b>§ 26. BLESSINGS AND CURSES FOR KEEPING AND VIOLATING THE COVENANT</b> .....	310
§ 26.1. Blessings and Curses as Part of the Covenant .....	310
§ 26.2. The Blessings for Keeping the Covenant (26:3-13) .....	311
§ 26.3. The Curses for Violating the Covenant (26:14-39) .....	313
§ 26.4. The Correction (26:40-45) .....	318
§ 26.5. All This Was Given at Sinai (26:46) .....	320

---

<b>§ 27. CONSECRATION TO GOD AND THE REDEMPTION OF THE CONSECRATED</b> .....	321
§ 27.1. The Consecration of Man (27:1-8) .....	321
§ 27.2. The Consecration of Livestock (27:9-13) .....	322
§ 27.3. The Consecration of the House and Field (27:14-25) .....	324
§ 27.4. The Consecration of the Firstborn Cattle (27:26-27) .....	326
§ 27.5. The Status of the Avowed Property or Person (27:28-33) .....	327
§ 27.6. Finale: The Commandments Were Given at Mount Sinai (27:34) .....	329

---

## § 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

### § 1.1. THE NAME OF THE BOOK

The names of the books of the Torah used in the English-speaking world – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy – are the result of a multistage translation process: from the original Hebrew into Greek (in the Septuagint), then into Latin (in the Vulgate), and finally into English.

The third book of the Torah was originally known in rabbinic tradition as *Torat Kohanim* (“The Teaching of the Priests”), referring to the instructions given to the Kohanim (priests). It was translated into Greek in the Septuagint as *Leuitikon*, and later into Latin as *Leviticus*, both meaning “that which pertains to the Levites.” These translations replaced the specific term *Kohanim* with the broader term *Levites*, likely reflecting an external or generalized understanding of Israelite religious functionaries. The English title “Leviticus” was adopted directly from the Latin without further modification.

Since the Hebrew names – *Bereshit*, *Shemot*, *Vayikra*, *Bamidbar*, and *Devarim* – refer both to the books themselves and the first weekly Torah portion in each book, we use the translated names – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy – for the books, and retain the Hebrew names for the weekly portions to avoid confusion.

### § 1.2. LEVITICUS AND NUMBERS – THE TWO SEQUELS TO EXODUS

At the end of our commentary on Exodus, we noted that this book addresses two major themes: (1) the history of the Jewish people and

(2) holiness, specifically the Covenant at Mount Sinai. Accordingly, Exodus has a dual ending:

(1) The history of the people: “When the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle, the Israelites would set out on their various journeys” (40:36), moving on to the next encampment. This theme continues in Numbers, which begins with the cloud rising and the people setting out.

(2) Holiness: “The cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the Presence of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the Presence of the Lord filled the Tabernacle” (40:34-35). This theme continues in Leviticus, which begins with God inviting Moses to enter the Tent of Meeting.

Therefore, the Book of Leviticus and the Book of Numbers are two parallel continuations of the narrative established in the Book of Exodus.

Exodus provides a comprehensive description of holiness as a system, encompassing the covenant, the law, the Temple, and the priesthood. Leviticus provides a detailed explanation of how this system operates.

### § 1.3. MAN’S RESPONSE TO GOD

Unlike other books of the Torah, Leviticus contains very few events, all of which occurred within a single month, a year after the Israelites’ Exodus from Egypt, during their final days at Mount Sinai. The Book of Exodus has a top-down orientation, with God speaking to the people, revealing Himself, and guiding them. In contrast, the Book of Leviticus is bottom-up, with the people responding to God. Leviticus begins by discussing sacrifices as a means for people to approach God. It then addresses ritual purity and impurity, explaining how individuals should be aware of their surroundings and their state to uphold the former and manage the latter. The central theme of Leviticus, holiness, is then introduced.

If holiness is what draws us closer to God, then Leviticus outlines the “techniques” for attaining holiness, including fostering relationships among people. All matters – attitudes toward the Land, social laws, holidays, and daily life – are examined through the lens of holiness. Exodus tackles similar themes but from a social

standpoint. In this manner, Exodus and Leviticus complement each other.

#### § 1.4. THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

Leviticus can be divided into three parts, each containing detailed laws and describing related events, whether they have already occurred or will occur in the future. It comprizes ten weekly portions, organized by topic as follows:

##### A. Sacrifices

###### Laws:

The instructions for the people on performing sacrifices (Chapters 1-5, Weekly Portion 1, *Vayikra*)

The instructions for the priests on performing sacrifices (Chapters 6-7, Weekly Portion 2, *Tzav*)

###### Events:

The seven days of dedicating the Tabernacle (Chapter 8, Weekly Portion 2, *Tzav*)

The eighth day (Chapter 9, Weekly Portion 3, *Shemini*)

The death of Aaron's sons (Chapter 10, Weekly Portion 3, *Shemini*)

##### B. Ritual Impurity and Purification

###### Laws:

The ritual impurity caused by contact with animals and the dead (Chapter 11)

The ritual impurity of a woman in labor (Chapter 12, Weekly Portion 4, *Tazria*)

The ritual impurity caused by *tazria* (Chapter 13)

The ritual impurity of *metzora* (Chapter 14, Weekly Portion 5, Metzora)

The ritual impurity caused by discharge from the body (Chapter 15)

###### Events:

The High Priest's service during Yom Kippur (Chapter 16, Weekly Portion 6, *Achrei Mot*)

### C. Holiness

#### Laws:

The holiness of the people and the individual, Part 1 (Chapters 17-18)

The holiness of the people and the individual, Part 2 (Chapters 19-20, Weekly Portion 7, *Kedoshim*)

The holiness of priests and Temple sacrifices (Chapters 21-22, Weekly Portion 8, *Emor*)

The holidays as the sanctity of time (Chapters 23-24)

The Sabbatical and Jubilee Years as the holiness of the relationship with the Land (Chapter 25, Weekly Portion 9, *Behar*)

#### Events:

The blessings and curses as a result of fulfilling or breaking the Covenant (Chapter 26, Weekly Portion 10, *Bechukotai*)

The dedications to God and the Temple (Chapter 27)

---

## § 2. THE PROBLEM OF THE TEMPLE AND SACRIFICES

### § 2.1. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TEMPLE

The Book of Exodus recounts how Moses ascends Mount Sinai and receives the Revelation. Since the people cannot ascend with him, Moses must bring the revealed teaching to the Israelites. Moreover, he must establish conditions that enable the people to perceive the ongoing Revelation, ensuring it remains a constant presence in the nation's life. To facilitate this, God commands the construction of the Temple – or, more specifically, the Tabernacle – a portable and miniature replica of the Temple at Sinai. Consequently, the second half of the Book of Exodus, following the giving of the Torah, is dedicated to the construction of the Tabernacle.

The Temple is extraordinarily significant in Jewish tradition. It garners such attention and emphasis that one might be led to believe that everything in the Torah exists for the sake of the Temple.

The world is “a place” of encounters between God and His Creation. However, to fully grasp this idea, it is essential to create a special space for the most intense, open encounters that leave no doubt about God's presence among the people. Such a meeting occurred at Sinai and continued in the Temple.

The Temple's holiness may suggest that it was purposely set apart from the world. However, its main purpose was to guide the world in discovering the direction and means to reach God.

In essence, the Temple was the source of the Divine voice for humanity. From the Temple, holiness spread – first to the Jewish people and then to the entire world. Judaism's mission was to convey the holiness of the Temple to mankind. In this way, the world would

gradually elevate to the spiritual level of the Temple, transforming the profane into a holy – through which man connects with God.

## § 2.2. THE TEMPLE AS THE EIGHTH DAY OF CREATION

In our commentary on the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, we noted that, while recounting each of the six days of Creation, the Torah states, “And there was evening and there was morning, a certain day,” indicating that each day was completed. However, this format is not applied to the description of the seventh day, suggesting that it remains unfinished. Thus, in a sense, all of human history is an ongoing Shabbat of God, during which He no longer alters the “rules of the game,” and everything operates according to its natural laws. (Sometimes, when the world needs saving, God performs miracles; that is, He intervenes in natural processes – just as Sabbath restrictions are lifted in cases of life-threatening danger.)

However, when the Torah discusses the Temple service, it refers to the “eighth day” (Leviticus 9:1). Kabbalah links this eighth day with the seven days of Creation, explaining that humanity will transition into the Eighth Day after the completion of the “natural stage” of history, “God’s Shabbat.” Thus, the Temple can be viewed as the “embassy” of the Eighth Day within the world of the Seventh Day.

In the world of the Seventh Day, God remains hidden from us, yet on the Eighth Day, God’s presence will be undeniable to all. Our task is to engage in a dialogue with God during the Seventh Day, guiding the world into the Eighth Day.

## § 2.3. THE AMBIGUOUS ATTITUDE OF JEWISH TRADITION TOWARDS SACRIFICES

Although the Temple and sacrifices are often linked, they should not be equated. The Temple and sacrifices represent distinct aspects of man’s relationship with God. In Jewish tradition, the attitude toward the Temple is entirely positive, whereas the attitude toward sacrifices is somewhat ambiguous.

*Vayikra*, the first weekly portion of Leviticus, focuses on the sacrifices in the Temple, and much is discussed about them in the

subsequent sections as well. From the Torah's emphasis on sacrifices, we can infer their significance.

However, the Sages, in the Haftara (the fragment from the Books of Prophets read in the synagogue after the weekly Torah chapter) for the section *Vayikra*, chose a passage from Isaiah 43-44 that seems to convey the opposite message: that one should not place too much importance on sacrifices and that repentance and the correction of sins are more significant than sacrifices for the purification of man before God.

In Jewish tradition, there are two approaches to understanding the meaning of sacrifices.

According to some sages representing the rationalist school in Judaism, the main purpose of sacrifices was to distance people from idolatry. Since humans are naturally inclined to worship the Supreme Being, they have offered sacrifices to various idols, and it was not possible to wean them away from this practice all at once. Therefore, the Torah, considering human weaknesses, commanded the Jewish people to offer sacrifices to God so that they would not offer them to idols. In other words, these sacrifices served as a means of gradually weaning people from sacrifices in general, facilitating a transition from paganism to a purely spiritual service.

Maimonides, in *Guide for the Perplexed* 3:32, argues that the entire institution of sacrifice was shaped by the cultural context of ancient times. If the Torah had introduced worship based solely on prayer, the people of that era would not have understood or accepted it. Practices deeply ingrained in human behavior can be changed only gradually. According to Maimonides, the highest form of worship is not even prayer but intellectual understanding. However, even today, we are neither capable nor halachically permitted to replace prayer with thought alone.

In contrast, the majority, particularly those aligned with the mystical tradition, held an opposing view of sacrifices. They argued that the commandments of the Torah, especially the central ones, such as sacrifices, are not dictated by temporary historical circumstances. The fact that Abel and Cain offered sacrifices long before idolatry existed suggests that sacrifices hold intrinsic, eternal significance. Furthermore, the Hebrew word *korban* (sacrifice) derives from the root *karav*, meaning "to draw near." This implies that sacrifices are not merely a means to distance oneself from idolatry but rather a way to draw closer to God.

From this perspective, sacrifices include both educational and mystical aspects:

**Educational:** The animal serves as a substitute for the individual making the sacrifice, reminding the offerer that he deserves death for his sins but is spared by God's mercy, allowing the animal to take his place.

**Mystical:** Sacrifices foster a profound unity among the individual making the offering, his environment, the priests, and God, merging them into a single spiritual whole. This mystical aspect will be explored further in the discussion of *shlomim* (peace offerings). However, the true significance of this mystical unity remains largely inaccessible today. It is akin to describing the taste of a meal that no one has experienced for two thousand years.

#### § 2.4. SACRIFICES AND PRAYER

Sacrifice and prayer are two fundamentally different ways of approaching God. Sacrifices trace back to humanity's earliest generations, while prayer developed much later in human history.

Sacrifice is intuitive: when receiving a gift, it feels natural to offer something in return. By sacrificing a portion of one's possessions, a person acknowledges that everything he has comes from God. This act can express gratitude, seek forgiveness, or plead for the preservation of the current state of affairs. For instance, once the flood subsided, Noah's first action after leaving the ark was to offer a sacrifice. This gesture expressed gratitude for his survival and a plea that such a disaster would not happen again. Noah's implicit message was: "We are thankful to have been spared and wish to prevent a similar calamity in the future." God responded with the assurance: "Never again will I send a flood to destroy the earth."

The same logic applies to a sin offering: offerer recognizes that his wrongdoing harms the world and pleads, "I have sinned and endangered creation; let this offering prevent further consequences." Therefore, sacrifice often seeks to maintain the status quo and prevent further damage.

Prayer is fundamentally different. It is a bold request to God for improvement – a way of saying, "I see the world You created, and while it is magnificent, I humbly suggest that some aspects could be

improved. My friend Yossi is ill, and I am asking You for his recovery...” This level of interaction between man and God is extraordinary! How can a finite human presume to offer suggestions for enhancing God’s creation? Yet in this act, the person praying feels like a co-creator of the world.

This distinction explains why sacrifices in the Torah are regulated meticulously while prayers remain unstructured. In Biblical times, supplicatory prayers were typically offered only by prophets, as the average person did not feel entitled to petition God directly. For instance, when God speaks to Abimelech, king of Gerar, He says: “... since he [Abraham] is a prophet, he will intercede for you – to save your life” (Genesis 20:7).

The Tanakh records prayers from only a few exceptional individuals. It was not until the Second Temple period that prayer became available to all.

Ideally, there should be a balance between gratitude for the world’s functioning and a desire to improve it – a balance between sacrifice and prayer. After the destruction of the Temple, sacrifices ceased, and prayer assumed a dual role, replacing sacrifices while preserving its traditional function of personal supplication. This shift necessitated the establishment of a structured system for prayers, including fixed texts and times for recitation, mirroring the Temple’s order of service.

However, this strict order of prayer can appear to contradict the creative essence of prayer, which permits individuals to choose their own words, intentions, and petitions freely.

Over the two thousand years since the Temple’s destruction, the modern mindset has distanced itself from the concept of sacrifices. Contemporary culture grapples with the idea of ritual sacrifice, often perceiving it as primitive or unnecessary. For many today, the Temple is seen as “a house of prayer for all nations” (Isaiah 56:7), rather than as a site for slaughter.

Yet the Hebrew Bible’s emphasis on sacrifices, including the aforementioned verses from Isaiah, underscores their significance. Without sacrifices, the ideal of complete spiritual development in the world may remain unattainable. Still, the prospect of restoring sacrifices in modern times presents profound challenges, both culturally and spiritually.

## § 2.5. WILL SACRIFICES BE RESTORED IN THE REBUILT TEMPLE?

A fundamental tenet of Judaism is the belief in the coming of the Messiah and the restoration of the Temple. But should sacrifices be reinstated? The issue does not lie in the act of killing animals itself (though that raises its own ethical concerns) but in the notion that central religious experiences would once again be tied to such practices. Rather than fostering a sense of closeness to God, animal sacrifices would likely alienate modern individuals from Him. This form of holiness is no longer compatible with contemporary sensibilities.

Rav Avraham Yitzhak Kook's approach to this issue is particularly significant. He believed that the rejection of animal sacrifices is not a concession to "modern trends," but rather a result of humanity's spiritual evolution and the development of a more refined dialogue with God. Rav Kook held a similar perspective on the transformation of many societal values as civilization progresses. He argued that when the world becomes predominantly vegetarian, animal sacrifices will no longer be necessary in the Temple. Vegetarianism, regarded as an ideal in Judaism, reflects the state of humanity in the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve ate only the fruit of the trees. However, Rav Kook emphasized that this shift should not be imposed; it will occur naturally when society reaches the appropriate spiritual level.

Once the world embraces vegetarianism, the Sanhedrin (the supreme council of Torah sages, which must be reestablished before the Temple is rebuilt) will reinterpret Torah verses to replace animal sacrifices with grain offerings. Rav Kook pointed to verses in the Torah that are currently understood to refer to animal sacrifices, explaining how they could be reinterpreted to establish Jewish law allowing for bread offerings instead. These offerings would provide an appropriate and meaningful symbolic act, offering a positive mystical experience that aligns with modern ethics and aesthetics.

Of course, the conscious decision to abstain from meat currently applies to a small but steadily growing segment of humanity. However, a widespread transition to vegetarianism could be supported by technological advancements, potentially even within the next few decades. Existing technologies for producing artificial meat – cultivated from cells without the need to slaughter animals –

could render meat alternatives indistinguishable from natural meat and affordable for mainstream consumption.

At first glance, this shift toward vegetarianism might seem spiritually insufficient, as it would stem from technological innovation rather than ethical considerations. However, if we perceive scientific progress as an expression of *imitatio Dei* (imitating God as Creator), then the choice to refrain from killing animals for food, facilitated by technology, is not lacking in spirituality. Rather, it signifies a profound moral evolution that aligns with divine principles.

We believe that the Third Temple will be rebuilt, but its services will be conducted without animal sacrifices, relying exclusively on plant-based offerings. This approach will be far more effective in bringing modern people closer to God. When Jewish vegetarians recite prayers anticipating the restoration of Temple sacrifices, they often envision precisely this substitution.

## § 2.6. THE POSSIBILITY OF REBUILDING THE TEMPLE IN OUR TIME

Until the mid-20th century, the prevailing view in Judaism was that Jews should avoid taking independent action to return to the Land of Israel or to establish any form of Jewish sovereignty there. Similarly, the Temple would not be built by human hands but would descend from heaven at the time of God's choosing. Few religious leaders argued that the return to the Land and the rebuilding of the Temple should come from human initiative.

Over the past two centuries, however, a segment of the Jewish religious community has shifted towards an active revival of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel. These ideas were first introduced – albeit not published – by the Vilna Gaon, the preeminent Jewish religious authority of the late 18th century. In the mid-19th century, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Kalischer further developed and published these concepts. Kalischer argued that the return to the Land of Israel and the construction of the Temple would be the responsibility of the Jewish people themselves. These ideas were adopted by several prominent rabbis, marking the inception of religious Zionism as a movement. Notably, this occurred decades before the emergence of secular political Zionism.

In the early 20th century, Rav Kook expanded these ideas, transforming them into a theological framework. Following the establishment of the State of Israel, the majority of religious Jews viewed the active return to the Land and the construction of the state as acts of religious significance rather than merely political or nationalistic endeavors.

However, there remains no consensus in Judaism regarding the proactive rebuilding of the Temple. This hesitance may stem from the belief that the time for such a monumental biblical act has not yet arrived. The concept appears to be evolving gradually, paralleling the development of the means to realize it – similar to how the idea of a human-led return to the Land of Israel, an act equally rooted in biblical prophecy, gained widespread acceptance only when such a return became practically feasible.

Today, movements advocating for ascent and prayer on the Temple Mount are gaining momentum, and conversations about the Temple's significance and role are thriving. Together, these developments are steadily fostering a social demand for its reconstruction.

Within the Torah's worldview, life without the Temple is incomplete, underscoring the need for its eventual restoration. However, the Temple cannot be built by an individual or a single Jewish community; it must be a collective effort of the entire Jewish people. For instance, if a billionaire were to purchase the Temple Mount, build a temple according to all halachic specifications, and appoint priests to conduct the service, such an initiative would lack religious significance because it would not fulfill the criteria for recognition as the Temple.

According to Maimonides, the messianic process unfolds in a specific sequence: first, the Jewish people must settle in the Land of Israel; next, they must appoint a king who ensures security against external threats. Only then can the Temple be built. In essence, the construction of the Temple depends on establishing a robust and fully realized Jewish national life. This sequence is reflected in the history of the First Temple: it was not built during the reigns of Saul or David, but by Solomon, the third king of Israel, whose reign ushered in an era of such stability that wars ceased altogether.

Similarly, in our time, the Temple could not be rebuilt until the State of Israel attained a level of security that was so convincing that no external power would contemplate attacking it. Only during a

prolonged period of peace, accompanied by a unified national desire for the Temple's restoration, can its construction commence.

This remains a distant goal. Today, while Israel continues to face defensive wars and the Jewish people do not yet feel an immediate collective yearning for the Temple, there are steps we can take toward its eventual restoration. We should study the Temple's role and significance as the place from which, as the prophet Isaiah declared, the Divine Word emanates to all humanity: "For out of Zion shall go forth the Torah, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3). In parallel, we should practice ascending to the Temple Mount, as praying there strengthens the Jewish people's connection to the memory of the Temple and fosters a growing sense of the need for its restoration. Through these actions, we set the foundation for a future in which the Temple can once more serve as a source of divine inspiration and guidance for the Jewish people and the world.

**WEEKLY  
PORTION 1**

**VAYIKRA**

### § 3. OLAH, BURNT OFFERING

#### § 3.1. VAYIKRA AND TZAV: SACRIFICES FROM THE PEOPLE'S AND PRIESTS' PERSPECTIVES

The first two weekly portions of Leviticus, *Vayikra* and *Tzav*, focus on the topic of sacrifice. However, each portion examines sacrifices from a different perspective: in *Vayikra*, they are described as understood and carried out by ordinary offerers, while in *Tzav*, they are presented from the perspective of the Temple and the priests.

These two perspectives correspond to “Moses’ aspect” and “Aaron’s aspect” of the Temple, which, as noted in the commentary on the Book of Exodus, alternate in the Temple’s description. This distinction is most vividly illustrated by the juxtaposition of weekly portions 7, *Terumah*, where the offerings are voluntary, reflecting “Moses’ aspect”, and 8, *Tetzaveh*, where everything in the Temple is performed by command, reflecting “Aaron’s aspect” (see Commentary on the Book of Exodus, § 2.2 and § 21).

This duality continues at the beginning of Leviticus. The initial focus is on the human desire to draw closer to God, emphasized in *Vayikra*, which discusses voluntary offerings: “When any of you presents an offering...” (Leviticus 1:2). This aligns with a voluntary approach to “Moses’ aspect.” Only afterward are the obligatory sacrifices, intended to atone for transgressions, discussed. Accordingly, *Tzav* begins with a command to the priests, which they are obligated to carry out: “Command Aaron and his sons...” (Leviticus 6:2). This represents an obligatory aspect of Aaron’s role.

The order of the sacrifices in *Vayikra* and *Tzav* differs. In *Vayikra*, which describes “Moses’ aspect,” the order of the sacrifices is as follows:

1. Burnt offering
2. Grain offering
3. Peace offering
4. Sin offering
5. Guilt offering

The most elevated sacrifices come first. The burnt and grain offerings express a person’s desire to draw closer to God without expecting anything in return. This act is similar to a person offering themselves as a sacrifice. According to the Torah, such sacrifices are available to people of all nations.

The peace offering, the third in the order, reflects a more complex process: a person’s participation in the “meal of God.” The fire on the altar consumes the sacrifice offered to God, the priests receive their portion, and the offerer, along with his family, also participates in the “meal with God.” Such sacrifices can only be offered by those with “priestly status,” meaning Jews, who are “a kingdom of priests” (Exodus 19:6). Representatives of other nations cannot offer this sacrifice.

The sin and guilt offerings, which follow the peace offering, result from a person’s mistakes and aim to correct them. These offerings are made after an infraction; therefore, they appear at the end of the list. Thus, the order of the sacrifices in *Vayikra* aligns with the ideal of voluntary offerings.

In contrast, *Tzav*, which presents “Aaron’s aspect,” discusses sacrifices from the perspective of priestly duties. Therefore, the order differs:

1. Burnt offering
2. Grain offering
3. Sin offering
4. Guilt offering
5. Peace offering
6. Dedication of Aaron and his sons

The burnt offering and the grain offering come first, while the peace offering is moved from the middle toward the end of the list. The sin offering and the guilt offering precede the peace offering. Additionally, the consecration offerings for the priests are included.

This order shifts the focus. The burnt offering is addressed in the context of the nightly burning of the remains after the actual sacrifice, indicating that *Tzav* begins where *Vayikra* left off. Much attention is given not to the sacrifice itself but to the consumption of the offerings, thereby emphasizing the completion of the sacrificial process.

In *Tzav*, the grain offering is described in terms of its preparation and associated prohibitions. The part of the grain offering to be burned is specified, while the remainder is allocated to the priests, along with detailed rules on its consumption. Although *Vayikra* also mentions the consumption of the grain offering, *Tzav* provides a more comprehensive discussion.

*Tzav* further addresses the consumption of guilt and sin offerings by the priests. Only after presenting these details does it discuss the peace offerings consumed by the offerers, with only a portion set aside for the priests.

Thus, the order of the sacrifices reflects how they are consumed. First comes the burnt offering, which is entirely burned; then the offerings eaten by the priests; and finally, those consumed chiefly by the offerers. The consecration offerings for the priests are mentioned only in *Tzav*, as they are absent from *Vayikra*, which is primarily aimed at the people. This describes sacrifices from the perspective of the Temple and the priests.

In *Vayikra*, the central figure is the person offering the sacrifice. The order of the service reflects the offerer's perspective, emphasizing the fundamental distinction between voluntary and obligatory sacrifices. From the offerer's standpoint, these represent two distinct experiences, each requiring a different approach to reaching the Temple for the presentation of the sacrifice and engaging in worship.

However, such distinctions hold less significance for the priest serving in the Temple. For the priest, the order of the sacrifice is almost independent of its purpose. What matters more are the differences in the ritual of consuming the sacrifice, which shape the priest's experience: in the burnt offering, he has no share; in the sin offering, he acts as a partner of the altar in consuming the sacrifice;

and in the peace offering, all three – the altar, the priest, and the offerer – share in the ritual.

As noted, the Book of Leviticus is also known as *Torat Kohanim*, meaning “the Teaching of the Priests.” However, it does not begin with the priests but with the individual entering the Temple. In many ancient cultures, temple priests were secluded from the masses, and their service was deliberately shrouded in mystery. This arose from the belief that ordinary people could not serve God – only the chosen few could.

To prevent this idea from taking root among the Jewish people and to ensure that the priesthood would not become an exclusive caste alienating others from drawing closer to God and sensing His presence, Leviticus begins by focusing on the experiences of ordinary individuals offering sacrifices. In contrast, the priests are portrayed as emissaries whose special role in Temple service is defined by the will of the people.

While most of Leviticus addresses Temple service, it concludes by discussing matters concerning the holiness of the *people*, including the festivals, the Sabbatical Year, and the Jubilee Year – laws that apply outside the Temple.

Thus, while Leviticus focuses on the priests, its main purpose is to emphasize the ordinary person’s connection to the realm of holiness.

### § 3.2. THE CALL TO MOSES FROM THE TABERNACLE (1:1)

א וַיִּקְרָא אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר יי אֵלָיו מֵאֶהֱל מוֹעֵד לְאֶמֶר:

**(1) And the Lord called to Moshe, and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying:**

**Called to Moshe:** The phrase “And the Lord called to Moses,” which begins Leviticus, echoes God’s initial call to Moses in the Book of Exodus (3:4): “God called to him out of the bush: ‘Moses! Moses!’” God’s appearance in the burning bush and His call from the Tent of Meeting occur in the same region, near Mount Sinai. This parallel highlights the successful completion of the first task – the Exodus and the reception of the Torah – and signifies the transition to the second task: implementing the principles of the Torah in the lives of the Jewish people.

**And the Lord called to Moshe, and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting:** To “call” and to “speak” are two distinct actions. First, there must be an invitation, and only then can a revelation occur. Thus, this invitation is referenced both in the narrative of the revelation at Sinai (“and He called to Moses,” Exodus 24:16) and here, in the description of the revelation in the Tent of Meeting, the portable, movable replica of Sinai.

At the end of Exodus (40:35), we learn that Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting “because the cloud had settled upon it, and the presence of the Lord filled the Tabernacle.” However, this is no longer the case, and the Midrash describes the situation: The pillar of cloud that filled the Tabernacle retreated into the space between the cherubim on the Ark, thus clearing the way for Moses. Henceforth, it was from this space between the cherubim, where the Pillar hid, that revelation would come.

Called: The word *Vayikra* (“called”) in the Torah scroll is written with a diminutive letter aleph, which, according to tradition, was done by Moses himself. One interpretation of this unusual lettering is that the Revelation described in the Book of Leviticus comes from the Tent of Meeting and is, therefore, regarded as a lower level than the Revelation at Mount Sinai.

### § 3.3. THE BURNT OFFERING OF LARGE LIVESTOCK (1:2-9)

ב דבַר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אָזְמֵם כִּי-יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם קִרְבָּן לַיהוָה מִן-הַבְּהֵמָה מִן-הַבָּקָר וּמִן-הַצֹּאֵן תִּקְרִיבוּ אֶת-קִרְבְּנֵיכֶם: ג אִם-עֲלֶה קִרְבָּנוֹ מִן-הַבָּקָר זָכָר תָּמִים יִקְרִיבֶנּוּ אֶל-פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד יִקְרִיב אֹתוֹ לְרֹצְנוֹ לִפְנֵי יְיָ: ד וְסָמַךְ יָדוֹ עַל רֹאשׁ הָעֵלָה וּנְרָצָה לוֹ לְכַפֵּר עָלָיו: ה וְשִׁתַּט אֶת-כֶּן הַבָּקָר לִפְנֵי יְיָ וְהִקְרִיבוּ בְנֵי אֱהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֲנִים אֶת-הַדָּם וְנָרְקוּ אֶת-הַדָּם עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סְבִיב אֲשֶׁר-פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד: ו וְהִפְשִׁיט אֶת-הָעֵלָה וּנְתַח אֹתָהּ לְנֹתְחֶיהָ: ז וְנָתַנּוּ בְנֵי אֱהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֲנִים אֵשׁ עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְעָרְכוּ עֲצִים עַל-הָאֵשׁ: ח וְעָרְכוּ בְנֵי אֱהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֲנִים אֶת הַנְּתָחִים אֶת-הָרֹאשׁ וְאֶת-הַפֶּדֶר עַל-הָעֲצִים אֲשֶׁר עַל-הָאֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: ט וְקִרְבוּ וּכְרָעוּ רִתְּצוּ בְּיָמֵם וְהִקְטִיר הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-הַכֹּל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ עֲלֶה אִשָּׁה רִים-נִיחֹס לַיהוָה:

**(2) Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: When a man presents an offering of cattle to the LORD, he shall choose his offering from the herd or from the flock.**

(3) If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall make his offering a male without blemish; he shall bring it to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, for acceptance in his behalf before the LORD.

(4) He shall lay his hand upon the head of the burnt offering, that it may be acceptable in his behalf, in expiation for him.

(5) The bull shall be slaughtered before the LORD; and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall offer the blood, dashing the blood against all sides of the altar which is at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.

(6) The burnt offering shall be flayed and cut up into sections.

(7) The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar and lay out wood upon the fire;

(8) and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall lay out the sections, with the head and the suet, on the wood that is on the fire upon the altar.

(9) The entrails and the legs shall be washed with water; and the priest shall turn the whole into smoke on the altar as a burnt offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD.

**(2) Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: When a man presents an offering of cattle to the LORD:** The essence of Temple service lies in the people making offerings, rather than in the priest performing the sacrifice. The entire nation engages in the sacrifices, while the priests assist them.

**When a man presents an offering:** The term "when" (or "if") signifies voluntary sacrifices.

**presents an offering:** In Hebrew, there are several words for sacrifices. The term used here, *korban*, is derived from *karav* ("to draw near"), characterizing the sacrifice as a means of drawing near to God. (The translation of *korban* as "sacrifice" in many languages conveys the idea of "giving something up," which does not fully reflect the essence of "drawing near to God.")

Although offerings to God are described in the Torah from the very beginning of humanity, the word *korban* does not appear

initially. Cain and Abel brought a *mincha* (meal offering) (Genesis 4:3), and Noah and the Patriarchs offered *ola* (burnt offerings). These types of offerings reflect a perception of God as exalted and distant, without the sense of closeness. After the Revelation at Sinai, the situation changes: God reveals Himself to humanity and gives the Torah, establishing the connection. Consequently, offerings serve as a means of drawing near to God, taking a central place in Leviticus.

**a man:** *Adam*. Later, in discussions about other offerings, the offerer is referred to as *nefesh* (“soul”). The unusual use of *adam* here is interpreted by the Midrash in two ways: (1) It refers to anyone, including non-Jews. Any person wishing to draw near to God may bring an offering to the Temple, which will be accepted and placed on the altar. This specifically applies to the *ola* (“burnt offering”). (2) It alludes to atonement for Adam’s sin. Adam not only ate from the Tree of Knowledge but also denied God’s goodness, portraying himself as a victim: “The woman whom You gave to be with me – she gave me of the tree, and I ate” (Genesis 3:12). Gratitude to God, expressed through the burnt offering, rectifies Adam’s sin.

**he shall choose his offering from the herd or from the flock:** Only domesticated animals, which humans care for, may be offered. Wild animals, even if they are kosher, cannot be sacrificed because they do not represent human effort and responsibility.

**from the herd or from the flock:** Each person could choose an offering according to their means. Cattle were a more expensive offering.

**(3) If his offering is a burnt offering:** *Ola* (“burnt offering”) means “ascending.” It symbolizes a gift wholly consumed by fire, signifying total dedication to God.

**from the herd:** This refers to the first option for a burnt offering: a bull. Such an offering could only be brought by wealthy individuals.

**a male without blemish:** This rule applies to all offerings. Everything in the Temple must be not only correct but also aesthetically pleasing. Therefore, priests with physical defects cannot serve, and blemished animals cannot be offered on the altar.

**he shall bring it to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting:** The offerer must personally bring the animal to the courtyard of the Tabernacle (or Temple) without delegating this task to others, emphasizing his desire to ascend to Heaven.

**(4) He shall lay his hand upon the head of the burnt offering:**

This laying on of hands (*semicha*) symbolizes dedication. Both hands were placed on the head of the offering (see Exodus 29:10 and Leviticus 16:21), as if transferring part of oneself, identifying with the offering as a symbol that the animal is sacrificed in place of the person. (*Semicha* also symbolizes connection and continuity: “And the LORD said to Moses: Take Joshua son of Nun, and lay your hand upon him... Invest him with some of your authority, so that the whole Israelite community may obey” (Numbers 27:18-20). This act not only appoints Joshua but also conveys part of Moses’ essence. Since the Second Temple period, *semicha* also referred to the ordination of a rabbi.)

**that it may be acceptable in his behalf, in expiation for him:**

This is not atonement for a specific act but “atonement for the general situation.” If a person does not feel gratitude to God for their life, this lack of gratitude is considered a sin, and the burnt offering atones for this potential sin.

**(5) The bull shall be slaughtered:** Ideally, the slaughter is performed by the offerer. While priests typically carried out this task, Jewish law permitted the offerer to do so, which enhanced his sense of participation in the service.

**Aaron’s sons, the priests:** This refers not only to Aaron’s descendants but also to other priests authorized to serve.

**dashing the blood against all sides of the altar:** Blood represents the most tangible aspect of life. Sprinkling it on the altar symbolizes the connection between the life force granted to a person and its Divine Source.

**(6) The burnt offering shall be flayed:** The skin is neither burned nor discarded; rather, it is given to the priest. The inability to offer the sacrifice completely symbolizes the imperfect state of the world, where not all elements can be elevated.

**cut up into sections:** This act symbolizes the psychological transformation that the offeror undergoes.

**(7) The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar:** The fire on the altar must burn constantly (Leviticus 6:2). Therefore, the phrase “put fire” refers to adding new wood with each offering.

Progress cannot depend solely on past efforts but requires fresh energy.

**(8) And Aaron's sons, the priests, shall lay out the sections, with the head and the suet, on the wood:** "The head" represents thoughts, while "the suet" symbolizes excess and indulgence. Elevating these elements reflects the correction of a flawed existence.

**(9) The entrails and the legs shall be washed with water:** Legs, symbolizing external impurities, and entrails, internal ones, must be washed before being offered.

**and the priest shall turn the whole into smoke on the altar:** "Turning into smoke" signifies "burning to create a fragrance," similar to the burning of incense. The act of burning symbolizes the transformation from material to spiritual.

**an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD:** God appreciates the offering's transformative effect on the individual.

#### § 3.4. TWO KINDS OF VOLUNTARY SACRIFICES: THE BURNT AND PEACE OFFERINGS

A person can voluntarily bring two types of sacrifices: *ola*, or "burnt offerings," and *shlamim*, or "peace offerings." The key difference between them lies in their consumption: the burnt offering is completely consumed by fire on the altar, while the peace offering has only a small portion burned on the altar. A portion of the peace offering is given to the priests, and the remaining meat, along with the accompanying bread, is eaten by the offerer, his friends, and relatives.

Essentially, peace offerings were family celebrations, with God and the priests as honored participants. When a significant event occurred within a family, they sought to strengthen their connection to God. The Torah establishes a time limit for consuming sacrificial meals – within one or two days, depending on the type of sacrifice. A small family would not be able to consume such a large amount of food in such a short time. As a result, guests were invited to these feasts, fostering friendships and uniting the community.

The burnt offering, however, was accompanied by various emotions. A person presenting a burnt offering often felt his sinfulness and imperfection and sought to make an offering to atone.

Thus, the burnt offering expressed awe and reverence toward God, while the peace offering reflected love for Him. Both emotions – reverence and love – are essential and should be balanced in our lives.

### § 3.5. THE BURNT OFFERING OF SMALL LIVESTOCK (1:10-13)

י ואם-מן-הצאן קרבנו מן-הפסחים או מן-העזים לעלה זכר תמים יקריבנו: יא ושחט אתו על גרף המזבח צפנה לפני יי וגרלו בגו אהרו הפהגים את-דמו על-המזבח סביב: יב ונתח אתו לנתחיו ואת-ראשו ואת-פדרו וערו וערו הפהו הפהו אתם על-העצים אשר על-האש אשר על-המזבח: יג והקרב והכרעים ירתץ במים והקריב הפהו את-הפל והקטיר המזבחה עלה הוא אשה גים ניהם ליי:

**(10) If his offering for a burnt offering is from the flock, of sheep or of goats, he shall make his offering a male without blemish.**

**(11) It shall be slaughtered before the LORD on the north side of the altar; and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall dash its blood against all sides of the altar.**

**(12) When it has been cut up into sections, the priest shall lay them out, with the head and the suet, on the wood that is on the fire upon the altar.**

**(13) The entrails and the legs shall be washed with water; and the priest shall offer up and turn the whole into smoke on the altar. It is a burnt offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD.**

**(10) If his offering for a burnt offering is from the flock, of sheep or of goats, he shall make his offering a male without blemish:** This is the second type of burnt offering: the lamb. The laws and procedures for offering a lamb are the same as for offering a bull, emphasizing that economic differences – one person may afford a bull while another can only offer a lamb – do not affect the essence of the sacrifice.

**(11) It shall be slaughtered before the LORD on the north side of the altar:** Since the rules for offering large livestock (a bull) and small livestock (a lamb) are the same, but the texts of the verses differ slightly, the Midrash adds that this detail applies to the bull as well. Thus, the offering of small livestock, which may seem less significant than that of large livestock, can convey important details applicable to the more substantial offering.

In Jewish tradition, the north side symbolizes judgment and concealment, as the sun does not shine from that direction. This points to the hidden imperfection of creation, which the offering atones for.

**(13) It is a burnt offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD:** The passage concludes with the same words as the preceding one. The person offering small livestock receives equal regard from God as someone who offers large livestock.

If the laws for offering a burnt offering from large and small livestock are identical, why are these offerings described in two separate passages?

The likely explanation lies in how the person offering the sacrifice perceives it, shaped by his understanding of his status and worldview.

A bull represents power and working capability. It is expensive and can only be offered by a wealthy, independent individual. Such a person identifies with the mighty bull, seeing himself as a significant figure responsible not only for his own well-being but also for those around him. When he wishes to make a sacrifice, he brings a bull.

A lamb, by contrast, is a modest offering brought by a humble individual of limited means who views himself as “one among the flock.”

Men with different outlooks on life bring different offerings; thus, the Torah addresses each separately.

However, the laws regarding the offering of a bull and a lamb are identical, and the economic differences do not affect the nature of the sacrifice.

### § 3.6. THE BURNT OFFERING OF BIRDS (1:14-17)

יד וְאִם מִן-הָעוֹף עֲלֶה קָרְבָּנוֹ לְגֵי וְהִקְרִיב מִן-הַתְּרִים אֹו מִן-בְּגֵי הַיּוֹנָה  
אֶת-קָרְבָּנוֹ: טו וְהִקְרִיבוּ הַפֶּהֱלֹ אֶל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וּמִלֶּק וּמִלֶּק אֶת-רֹאשׁוֹ וְהִקְטִיר

הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְנִמְצָה דָמוֹ עַל קִיר הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: טו וְהִסִּיר אֶת-מִרְאָתוֹ בְּנִצָּתָהּ  
וְהִשְׁלִיךְ וְהִשְׁלִיךְ אֹתָהּ אֲצֵל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְדָמָה אֶל-מִקְלוֹם הַדָּשָׁן: יז וְשָׁפַע  
אֹתוֹ בְּכַנְפָיו לֹא יְבַדִּיל וְהִקְטִיר אֹתוֹ הַכֹּהֵן הַמִּזְבֵּחַ עַל-הָעֵצִים אֲשֶׁר עַל-  
הָאֵשׁ עֲלֶה הוּא אִשָּׁה גַיִם גִּיתָם לְיָי:

**(14) If his offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, he shall choose his offering from turtledoves or pigeons.**

**(15) The priest shall bring it to the altar, nip off its head, and turn it into smoke on the altar; and its blood shall be drained out against the side of the altar.**

**(16) He shall remove its crop with its contents, and cast it into the place of the ashes at the east side of the altar.**

**(17) He shall tear it open by its wings, without severing it. And the priest shall turn it into smoke on the altar, upon the wood that is on the fire: it is a burnt offering, an offering by fire, of pleasing odor to the LORD.**

**(14) If his offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds:** This is the third type of burnt offering. It may be chosen for economic reasons but also carries symbolic significance. A bird represents flight, a dream often associated with human aspiration. The three options for burnt offerings – large livestock, small livestock, or birds – express three perspectives on oneself: as an “independent individual,” “one among the flock,” or “aspiring to soar.”

**he shall choose his offering from turtledoves or pigeons:** Unlike livestock, both male and female birds may be offered. In biblical times, pigeons were domesticated birds; otherwise, they could not have been used for offerings. However, they were “free domestic birds” capable of flight, unlike chickens or roosters, which cannot fly.

**(15) The priest shall bring it to the altar, nip off its head:** Unlike livestock, which is typically slaughtered in the kosher way (*shechita*, as for food), sacrificial birds are killed by nipping off their heads. This act is known as *melikah*, a method that renders the bird unfit for consumption.

**and its blood shall be drained out against the side of the altar:** The act of draining blood symbolically returns the life force to God.

**and turn it into smoke on the altar:** This phrase signifies transforming the bird into a pleasant aroma. Unlike burnt offerings of livestock, the bird is not divided into pieces.

**(16) He shall remove its crop with its contents:** The crop and stomach are removed and discarded; these parts cannot be offered, similar to the exclusion of the skin in livestock offerings.

**and cast it into the place of the ashes at the east side of the altar:** This refers to the location where the ashes, removed from the altar, are temporarily placed before being taken outside the camp.

**(17) He shall tear it open by its wings, without severing it:** A burnt offering of birds reflects the sense of “incompleteness in one’s flight,” symbolized by the nipping of the neck and the tearing of the wings without fully severing them or cutting the bird apart.

**It is a burnt offering, an offering by fire, of pleasing odor to the LORD:** The same phrase applies to all types of offerings. The Midrash states, “It does not matter whether one offers much or little; what matters is that his heart is directed toward Heaven.”

## § 4. MINHA, THE BREAD OFFERING

### § 4.1. THE UNBAKED BREAD OFFERING (2:1-3)

א וּנְפֹשׁ כְּרִיב קָרְבָן מִנְחָה לַיהוָה בְּלֶחֶם יִהְיֶה יִהְיֶה קָרְבָּנוֹ וַיִּצַק עָלֶיהָ שֶׁמֶן  
וַנְתֵן עָלֶיהָ לְבֹנָה: ב וַהֲבִיאָה אֶל-בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֲנִים וְקִמֵץ מִשָּׁם מְלֵא  
קִמְצוֹ מִסֹּלֶתָהּ וּמִשְׁמֶנָּה עַל כָּל-לֶבְנָתָהּ וְהַקְטִיר וְהַקְטִיר הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-  
אֲזִקְרָתָהּ הַמְזֻבָּחָה אֲשֶׁה בַיּוֹם נִיחֹם לַיהוָה: ג וְהַנּוֹתְרֹת מִן-הַמִּנְחָה לְאַהֲרֹן  
וּלְבָנָיו קֹדֶשׁ קֹדְשִׁים מְאֹדֵי יי:

**(1) When anyone presents a meal offering to the LORD, his offering shall be of choice flour; he shall pour oil upon it, lay frankincense on it,**

**(2) and present it to Aaron's sons, the priests. The priest shall take from it a handful of the choice flour and oil, and all of the frankincense; and this token portion he shall turn into smoke on the altar, an offering by fire, of pleasing odor to the LORD.**

**(3) And the remainder of the meal offering shall be for Aaron and his sons, a most holy portion from the LORD's offerings by fire.**

**(1) When anyone presents a meal offering to the LORD:** The meal offering, *minha*, is similar to the burnt offering, as the sacrificer “gives it up completely” and does not partake of it himself.

As noted earlier, these types of voluntary offerings correspond to a person's self-perception: the bull represents independence, a driving force that changes the world; the sheep represents “one of the flock,” and the bird symbolizes the desire to leave the earth

and soar. Finally, the meal offering signifies food and sustenance. A worshiper offers a sacrifice that reflects what matters most to him. This often aligns with the offerer's social standing and material circumstances.

**his offering shall be of choice flour:** *Soleth*, coarse-ground refined wheat flour, refers to an offering made from raw flour. Different types of baked offerings are discussed later in the Torah.

**he shall pour oil upon it:** Olive oil enhances the bread, making it richer.

**lay frankincense on it:** Frankincense is a fragrant resin, and its delightful aroma adds a sense of grandeur and solemnity to the meal offering.

**(2) and present it to Aaron's sons, the priests:** The individual making the sacrifice personally brings it to the Temple.

**The priest shall take from it a handful of the choice flour and oil:** Only "the first handful" was brought to the altar. Separating this portion of the offering is seen as analogous to slaughtering an animal and pouring its blood on the altar.

**and all of the frankincense:** This is an extra embellishment of the gift, provided in its entirety.

**and this token portion he shall turn into smoke on the altar:** This serves to "remind" the Creator of the merits of the one who presented the offering.

**(3) And the remainder of the meal offering shall be for Aaron and his sons:** Although only a small portion is burned, the rest is still regarded simply as "the remainder," an addition to what was burned. The priests received their portion as "what remained from the fire of the altar," not directly from the person who brought the offering.

**a most holy:** After the "handful" was burned, the remaining dough was baked and regarded as "a most holy portion."

#### § 4.2 THE TEMPLE AND SACRIFICE DIVISIONS: THE HOLY AND MOST HOLY

The Temple was divided into two sections: (1) the Holy (the first chamber, which contained the table, the menorah, and the golden

altar of incense) and (2) the Most Holy, literally the Holy of Holies (separated by a curtain, where the Ark of the Covenant was kept).

Similarly, sacrifices were classified as holy (the Talmud refers to them as “lesser or lighter holy”) and most holy.

Only priests could eat the most holy sacrifices, and only in the Temple courtyard; these could not be taken outside the Temple.

Sacrifices of lesser holiness could be taken outside the Temple and consumed by the priests and their family members. Some lesser holiness sacrifices, such as peace offerings or the Passover sacrifice, could also be eaten by those who brought them, as the entire Jewish people held the status of a nation of priests (Exodus 19:6).

In all cases, the sacrifices could only be consumed in a state of ritual purity and within a limited timeframe (one or two days, depending on the type of sacrifice). Additional priestly restrictions also applied in specific circumstances.

#### § 4.3. TYPES OF BAKED BREAD OFFERINGS (2:4-10)

ד וכי תקרב קרבן מנחה מנחה מאפה מאפה תגור תגור סלת סלות מצת  
 בלילת בשמן ורקיקי מצות משתים בשמן: ה ואם-מנחה על-המחבת  
 קרבנך סלת בלילה בשמן בשמן מצה תהיה: ו פתות אתה פתים ויצקת  
 עליה שמן מנחה הוא: ז ואם-מנחת מרחשת קרבנך סלת בשמן תעשה:  
 ח והבאת את-המנחה אשר יעשה מאלה ליי והקריבה אל-הפתו והגישה  
 אל-המזבח: ט והרים הפהו מן-המנחה את-אזפרתה והקטיר והקטיר  
 המנחה אשר גיס גיחם גיחם ליי: י והנותרת מן-המנחה לאהרן ולבניו  
 קדש קדשים מאשי יי:

**(4) If the sacrifice is a bread offering from the baking in the oven, let it be unleavened loaves of the best flour mixed with oil, or unleavened cakes anointed with oil.**

**(5) And if the sacrifice be a bread offering from the pan, let it be unleavened, of the best flour mixed with oil.**

**(6) Break it in pieces and pour oil on it, it will be an offering.**

**(7) And if the sacrifice is a bread offering from the pot, let it be of the best flour with oil.**

**(8) And the offering made of it you shall bring to the Lord: you shall bring the sacrifice to the priest, and he shall bring it to the altar.**

**(9) And the priest shall take off the memorial portion of the gift, and shall burn it on the altar. This is burning on the fire, a fragrance pleasing to the Lord.**

**(10) And the remainder of the offering to Aaron and his sons. This is the Holy of Holies from the burnt offering to the Lord.**

**(4) If the sacrifice is a bread offering:** This verse lists several options for bread offerings, allowing the offerer to feel freer in choosing the form of the sacrifice. Even a poor person could choose among various ways to participate.

**unleavened loaves:** All bread brought to the altar was unleavened, similar to matzah.

**of the best flour mixed with oil:** All bread offerings needed to be made from the finest flour and to include olive oil and frankincense, which added a sense of solemnity.

**(5-6) And if the sacrifice be a bread offering from the pan... Break it in pieces:** Breaking bread into pieces applies to all bread offerings. However, it is particularly noted here because bread baked on a pan resembled crispy wafers, which were hard and difficult to eat whole. This action parallels the cutting of burnt offerings into pieces (see 1:6) and symbolizes the offerer “breaking himself into pieces” to overcome the deficiencies of his existence.

**(7) And if the sacrifice is a bread offering from the pot:** The three main methods of food preparation – baking, pan-frying, and boiling – are all listed here. Every type of food can be dedicated to God.

**(8) you shall bring the sacrifice to the priest, and he shall bring it to the altar:** A person cannot place his offering on the altar alone; he needs the mediation of a priest.

**(9-10) And the priest shall take off the memorial portion of the gift, and shall burn it on the altar... And the remainder of the offering to Aaron and his sons:** This procedure applies to all

bread offerings. The priest burns a small portion of the offering, while the remainder is given to Aaron and his sons, highlighting the sacred status of the offering.

#### § 4.4. LEAVEN, HONEY, AND SALT (2:11-13)

יא כָּל-הַמִּנְחָה אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרִיבוּ לַיהוָה לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה חֶמֶץ כִּי כָל-שְׂאֵר וְכָל-דָּבָשׁ  
לֹא-תִקְטְרוּ מִמֶּנּוּ אִשָּׁה לַיהוָה: יב קִרְבָּן רֵאשִׁית תִּקְרִיבוּ אֹתָם לַיהוָה וְאֶל-  
הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לֹא-יַעֲלוּ לְרֵיחַ לְבָרִים גִּיחֹם: יג וְכָל-קִרְבָּן מִנְחָתְךָ בַּמִּלַּח תִּמְלַח  
וְלֹא תִשְׁבִּית מִלַּח בְּרִית אֱלֹהֶיךָ מֵעַל מִנְחָתְךָ עַל כָּל-קִרְבָּנְךָ תִּקְרִיב מִלַּח:

**(11) No meal offering that you offer to the LORD shall be made with leaven, for you must not turn any leaven or honey into smoke as an offering by fire to the LORD.**

**(12) You may bring them to the LORD as an offering of choice products; but they shall not be offered up on the altar for a pleasing odor.**

**(13) You shall season all your meal offerings with salt; you shall not omit from your meal offering the salt of the covenant with your God; with all your offerings you must offer salt.**

**(11) No meal offering that you offer to the LORD shall be made with leaven:** Leaven, or *hametz*, refers to grain products fermented with yeast.

**or honey:** This does not refer to bee honey, but rather to sweet fruit juice, particularly from dates. This juice was also utilized as a leavening agent.

**(12) You may bring them to the LORD as an offering of choice products; but they shall not be offered up on the altar for a pleasing odor:** Leavened bread and fruit juices (“honey”) are not inherently negative; they are also brought to the Temple as offerings of First Fruits (Leviticus 23:17; Deuteronomy 26:2). These offerings symbolize gratitude, along with self-reliance, success, prosperity, and the richness of the Land “flowing with milk and honey.” Serving God from a place of confidence and abundance is not only acceptable but

also celebrated by the Torah as an important aspect of life. However, since fruits and leavened bread can symbolize pride, they were not placed on the altar, ensuring that no hint of self-aggrandizement entered the Temple service. Instead, humility is represented by matzah – unleavened bread that remains flat and does not rise.

**(13) You shall season all your meal offerings with salt:** Salt symbolizes the inanimate world, which, like the worlds of living beings and plants, also has its role in the service of the Temple.

**the salt of the covenant with your God:** Salt carries a dual symbolism. On one hand, it serves as a preservative that does not spoil and protects other substances from decay. On the other hand, salt carries negative connotations and destructive associations; it is often depicted as a form of punishment. For example, saltwater is undrinkable; Lot's wife was transformed into a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26); and in the Book of Judges (9:45), Abimelech scatters salt around a conquered city to render its land barren.

This dual nature makes salt a potent symbol of the Covenant: when honored, it preserves and protects, but when breached, it leads to consequences and destruction.

#### § 4.5. THE OFFERING OF THE FIRST FRUITS (2:14-16)

יד ואם-תקריב מנחת בפורים לגי אביב קלוי באש גרש כרמל תקריב  
את מנחת בפוריך: טו ונתת עליה שמן ושמת עליה לבנה מנחה הוא: טז  
והקטיר הפחן את-אזפרתה מגרשה ומשמנה על כל-לבנתה אשה לגי:

**(14) If you bring a meal offering of the first fruits to the LORD, you shall bring new ears, parched with fire, grits of the fresh grain, as your meal offering of the first fruits.**

**(15) You shall add oil to it and lay frankincense on it; it is a meal offering.**

**(16) And the priest shall turn a token portion of it into smoke: some of the grits and oil, with all of the frankincense, as an offering by fire to the LORD.**

**(14) If you bring a meal offering of the first fruits to the LORD:** This refers to the Omer offering. It is mentioned here due to

its association with the category of “first fruits of the new harvest,” despite its differing nature. This offering is mandatory and presented as a single offering on behalf of the entire nation. For more details, see 23:10–14.

**you shall bring new ears, parched with fire, grits of the fresh grain:** This offering features fresh barley ears, roasted over a fire and ground into grits.

**(15) You shall add oil to it and lay frankincense on it; it is a meal offering:** Its laws are consistent with those of other meal offerings.

**(16) And the priest shall turn a token portion of it into smoke:** From the grain and oil, only a small portion is burned, while all the frankincense is completely consumed by fire. The remainder is given to the priests.

## § 5. SHLAMIM, PEACE OFFERINGS

### § 5.1. THE PEACE OFFERING OF CATTLE (3:1-5)

א וְאִם-יִזְבַּח שְׁלָמִים קָרְבָּנוֹ אִם מִן-הַבְּקָר הוּא מִקְרִיב אִם-זָכָר אִם-נִקְבָּה תָמִים יִקְרִיבוּ וְקָרִיבוּ לִפְנֵי יי: וי: ב וְסָמַךְ יָדוֹ עַל-רֹאשׁ קָרְבָּנוֹ קָרְבָּנוֹ וּשְׁחָטוּ פֶתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְזָרְקוּ בְּנֵי אֹהֶל הַכֹּהֲנִים אֶת-הַדָּם עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב: ג וְהִקְרִיב מִזְבַּח הַשְּׁלָמִים אִשָּׁה לְגִי אֶת-הַחֹלֶב הַמְכֻסָּה אֶת-הַקֶּרֶב וְאֵת וְאֵת כָּל-הַחֹלֶב אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַקֶּרֶב: ד וְאֵת שְׁתֵּי שְׁתֵּי הַכִּלְיֹת וְאֵת-הַחֹלֶב אֲשֶׁר עַלֶּהֶן אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַכְּסָלִים וְאֵת-הַיִּתְרֹת עַל-הַכֶּבֶד עַל-הַכִּלְיֹת יְסִירֶנָּה: ה וְהִקְטִירוּ אֹתוֹ בְּגִי-אֹהֶל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ עַל-הַעֹלָה אֲשֶׁר עַל-הָעֵצִים אֲשֶׁר עַל-הָאֵשׁ אִשָּׁה גֵרִים נִיחָם לְיִי:

- (1) If his offering is a sacrifice of well-being – if he offers of the herd, whether a male or female, he shall bring before the LORD one without blemish.
- (2) He shall lay his hand upon the head of his offering and slaughter it at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall dash the blood against all sides of the altar.
- (3) He shall then present, from the sacrifice of well-being, an offering by fire to the LORD: the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is about the entrails;
- (4) the two kidneys and the fat that is on them, that is at the loins; and the protuberance on the liver, which he shall remove with the kidneys.
- (5) Aaron's sons shall turn these into smoke on the altar, with the burnt offering which is upon the wood that is

**on the fire, as an offering by fire, of pleasing odor to the LORD.**

**(1) If his offering is a sacrifice of well-being:** *Shlamim*, a “sacrifice of well-being,” is a type of voluntary offering. Unlike burnt offerings and grain offerings, which are wholly given to the Temple, this offering is divided among the altar (the fat, or suet, along with the kidneys and liver lobe), the priests (the breast and thigh), and the offerer, who shares the remaining meat with his family and guests. It expresses love and joy toward God rather than awe. *Shlamim* comes from *shalom*, meaning “peace, harmony, balance, wholeness,” signifying the harmonious relationship between God, the Temple, and the offerer. This is not about self-denial but about harmony. *Shlamim* were eaten “close to the Temple” – within the camp in the wilderness, on the surrounding hills in Shiloh, or within the city walls of Jerusalem. The meat had to be consumed quickly, which led to many guests being invited. This transformed the meal into a family celebration that reinforced unity and connection with the Temple and God. It elevated the home to the level of the Temple, the family table to the status of an altar, and the family and guests to a priestly sanctity similar to that of the Paschal offering.

*Shlamim* sanctify the material. While the desire to wholly dedicate oneself to God (as expressed in burnt offerings) is noble, the world operates not through self-sacrifice but through harmony, expressed by *shlamim*.

**of the herd:** Here, the size of the animal reflects the scale of the celebration rather than the status of the offerer. Sizable cattle would be brought if a large family feast with many guests was planned.

**Whether a male or female:** Unlike the stricter requirement for burnt offerings, which must be males, the mood of a well-being offering is softer and more relaxed, allowing the sacrifice of either male or female animals.

**without blemish:** Animals with blemishes are prohibited for all offerings.

**(2) He shall lay his hand upon the head of his offering:** This refers to *semichah*, the act of dedication, as with the burnt offering.

**and slaughter it at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting and Aaron’s sons, the priests, shall dash the blood against all sides of the altar:** Sprinkling blood always symbolizes atonement. Although well-being offerings represent joy, preliminary atonement

is still necessary, which is why *semicha* and blood sprinkling are integral to the ritual.

**(3-4) He shall then present, from the sacrifice of well-being, an offering by fire to the LORD: the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is about the entrails, the two kidneys and the fat that is on them, that is at the loins; and the protuberance on the liver:** Only the lower abdominal organs located below the diaphragm, seen as the “seat of biological life,” are placed on the altar. They embody the essence of life and are offered to God.

**(5) Aaron’s sons shall turn these into smoke on the altar, with the burnt offering:** This is a “mini burnt offering.”

#### § 5.2. THE PEACE OFFERING OF SMALL LIVESTOCK (3:6-16)

ו ואם-מן-הצאן קרבנו לזבח שלמים ליהוה זכר או נקבה תמים יקריבנו:  
 ז אם-כשכב הוא-מקריב את-קרבנו והקריב אתו לפני יהוה: ח וסמך את-  
 ידו על-ראש קרבנו ושתט אתו לפני אהל מועד וזרקו בנז אהרן את-דמו  
 על-המזבח סביב: ט והקריב מזבח השלמים אשר ליהוה חלב האליה  
 תמימה לעמת העצה וסירנה ואת-החלב המכסה את-הקרב ואת כל-  
 החלב אשר על-הקרב: י ואת שתי הפלית ואת-החלב אשר עלהו אשר  
 על-הפסלים ואת-היתרת על-הכבד על-הפלית וסירנה: יא והקטירו  
 הפהו המזבחה לחם אשר ליי:

יב ואם עז קרבנו והקריבו לפני יהוה: יג וסמך את-ידו על-ראשו  
 ושתט אתו לפני אהל מועד וזרקו בנז אהרן את-דמו על-המזבח סביב:  
 יד והקריב ממנו קרבנו אשר ליהוה את-החלב המכסה את-הקרב ואת כל-  
 החלב אשר על-הקרב: טו ואת שתי הפלית ואת-החלב אשר עלהו אשר  
 על-הפסלים ואת-היתרת על-הכבד על-הפלית וסירנה: טז והקטירם  
 הפהו המזבחה לחם אשר לגרים ניהם כל-חלב ליי:

**(6) And if his offering for a sacrifice of well-being to the LORD is from the flock, male or female, he shall offer one without blemish.**

**(7) If he presents a sheep as his offering, he shall bring it before the LORD**

**(8) and lay his hand upon the head of his offering. It shall be slaughtered before the Tent of Meeting, and Aaron's sons shall dash its blood against all sides of the altar.**

**(9) He shall then present, from the sacrifice of well-being, an offering by fire to the LORD: its fat, the whole broad tail, which he shall remove close to the backbone; the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is about the entrails;**

**(10) the two kidneys and the fat that is on them, that is at the loins; and the protuberance on the liver, which he shall remove with the kidneys.**

**(11) The priest shall turn these into smoke on the altar as food, an offering by fire to the LORD.**

**(12) If his offering is a goat, he shall bring it before the LORD**

**(13) and lay his hand upon its head. It shall be slaughtered before the Tent of Meeting, and Aaron's sons shall dash its blood against all sides of the altar.**

**(14) He shall then present as his offering from it, as an offering by fire to the LORD: the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is about the entrails;**

**(15) the two kidneys and the fat that is on them, that is at the loins; and the protuberance on the liver, which he shall remove with the kidneys.**

**(16) The priest shall turn these into smoke on the altar as food, an offering by fire, of pleasing odor. All fat is the LORD's.**

**(6) And if his offering for a sacrifice of well-being to the LORD is from the flock:** When the family celebration was modest, the sacrifice of well-being came from small livestock.

**(7-12) If he presents a sheep as his offering ... If his offering is a goat:** For sheep, the parts burned on the altar include the broad tail, which goats lack. This distinction explains why the regulations for peace offerings from small livestock are divided into two parts.

**(8) and lay his hand upon the head of his offering:** The method of offering sacrifices for small livestock is essentially the same as that for large livestock.

**(11) The priest shall turn these into smoke on the altar as food, an offering by fire to the LORD:** The fat burned on the altar is called “bread of fire for the LORD,” highlighting the unifying aspect of the meal: both the Most High and man partake from a single sacrifice, symbolizing harmony and connection.

### § 5.3. THE PROHIBITION AGAINST EATING FAT AND BLOOD (3:17)

יִזְחַקְתָּ עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֶיךָ בְּכֹל מוֹשְׁבֵי־תֵיכֶם כָּל־תְּלַב וְכָל־דָּם לֹא תֹאכְלוּ:

**(17) It is a law for all time throughout the ages, in all your settlements: you must not eat any fat or any blood.**

**(17) It is a law for all time throughout the ages:** This commandment is applicable regardless of whether sacrifices are offered in a given era.

**in all your settlements:** This law is not limited to the Land of Israel but applies wherever the Jewish people live.

**you must not eat any fat or any blood:** Fat (referring to suet or visceral fat) and blood are forbidden because these substances are reserved for the altar. Blood serves as atonement for human sins, while fat symbolizes the renunciation of pride.

In Hebrew, visceral fat, or “fat on the internal organs,” is referred to as *chelev*, and is forbidden to eat. This differs from *shuman*, “fat in the meat,” which is permitted. Symbolically, *chelev* represents “the best part,” which is why it is designated for the altar and prohibited for human consumption.

Because of the complexity involved in distinguishing between permissible and forbidden parts of the animal, butchering carcasses, according to Jewish law, is a specialized task carried out only by trained professionals.

Further details regarding this prohibition are provided later in the section of *Tzav* (7:22–27).

## § 6. HATAT, THE SIN OFFERING

### § 6.1. THE SIN OFFERING FOR THE PRIEST (4:1-12)

א ויִדְבַר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: לֵאמֹר: ב דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר נֹפֵשׁ  
 כִּי-תִחַטָּא בְשִׁגְגָה מִכָּל מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא תַעֲשִׂינָה וְעָשִׂיהָ מֵאֲחַת מִהֲנֵה:  
 ג אִם הִכְהֵן הַמַּשְׁיִים יִחַטָּא לְאַשְׁמַת הָעַם וְהִקְרִיב עַל חַטָּאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָטָא  
 ד פֶּן-בְּנֵי תַמִּים תַּמִּים לִיהוָה לְחַטָּאת: ד וְהִבְיֵא אֶת-הַפֶּה אֶל-פֶּתַח אֹהֶל  
 ה מוֹעֵד לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְסָמַךְ אֶת-יָדוֹ עַל-רֹאשׁ הַפֶּה וְשָׁתַט אֶת-הַפֶּה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה:  
 ו וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן הַמַּשְׁיִים הַמַּשְׁיִים מִדָּם הַפֶּה וְהִבְיֵא אֹתוֹ אֶל-אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד:  
 ז וְטָבַל הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-אֶצְבָּעוֹ בְּדָם בְּדָם וְהִזָּה מִן-הַדָּם שְׁבַע שְׁבַע פְּעָמִים  
 ח פְּעָמִים לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֶת-פְּרִכֶת הַקֹּדֶשׁ: ז וְנָתַן הַכֹּהֵן מִן-הַדָּם עַל-קַרְנוֹת  
 ט מִזְבֵּחַ קֹטֶרֶת הַסַּמִּים לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְאֶת כָּל-דָּם הַפֶּה הַפֶּה  
 יו יִשְׁפֹךְ אֶל-יְסוּד מִזְבֵּחַ הָעֹלָה אֲשֶׁר-פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד: ח וְאֶת-כָּל-תֵּלֶב פֶּה  
 יא הַחַטָּאת יָרִים מִמֶּנּוּ אֶת-הַחֵלֶב הַמְכֻסָּה עַל-הַקָּרֶב וְאֵת כָּל-הַחֵלֶב אֲשֶׁר  
 יב עַל-הַקָּרֶב: ט וְאֵת שְׁתֵּי הַכְּלִיֹּת וְאֶת-הַחֵלֶב אֲשֶׁר עָלֵיהֶן אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַכֹּסֶלִים  
 יג וְאֶת-הַיִּתְרֵת עַל-הַכֶּבֶד עַל-הַכְּלִיֹּת יְסִירָנָה: י כָּאֲשֶׁר יוֹרֵם מִשׁוֹר גִּבַּח  
 יד הַשְּׁלָמִים וְהַקְטִירֵם הַכֹּהֵן עַל מִזְבֵּחַ הָעֹלָה: יא וְאֶת-עוֹר הַפֶּה וְאֶת-כָּל-  
 יו בְּשׂוֹר עַל-רֹאשׁוֹ וְעַל-פְּרָעָיו וְקַרְבּוֹ וּפְרָשׁוֹ: יב וְהוֹצִיא אֶת-כָּל-הַפֶּה אֶל-  
 יז מַחוּץ לַמִּחֲנֶה אֶל-מְקוֹם טְהוֹר אֶל-שֹׁפַף הַדָּשָׁן וְשָׂרַף אֹתוֹ עַל-עֵצִים בְּאֵשׁ  
 יח עַל-שֹׁפַף הַדָּשָׁן יִשְׂרָף:

(1) The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

(2) Speak to the Israelite people thus: When a person unwittingly incurs guilt in any of the Lord's commandments about things not to be done, and does one of them –

(3) If it is the anointed priest who has incurred guilt, so that blame falls upon the people, he shall offer for the sin of which he is guilty a bull of the herd without blemish as a sin offering to the Lord.

(4) He shall bring the bull to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, before the Lord, and lay his hand upon the head of the bull. The bull shall be slaughtered before the Lord;

(5) and the anointed priest shall take some of the bull's blood and bring it into the Tent of Meeting.

(6) The priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle of the blood seven times before the Lord, in front of the curtain of the Shrine.

(7) The priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of aromatic incense, which is in the Tent of Meeting, before the Lord; and all the rest of the bull's blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering, which is at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.

(8) He shall remove all the fat from the bull of sin offering: the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is about the entrails;

(9) the two kidneys and the fat that is on them, that is at the loins; and the protuberance on the liver, which he shall remove with the kidneys –

(10) just as it is removed from the ox of the sacrifice of well-being. The priest shall turn them into smoke on the altar of burnt offering.

(11) But the hide of the bull and all its flesh, as well as its head and legs, its entrails and its dung –

(12) all the rest of the bull, he shall carry to a clean place outside the camp, to the ash heap, and burn it up in a wood fire; it shall be burned on the ash heap.

(1) **The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:** Here begins the description of a new type of offering: mandatory sacrifices for atonement. These sacrifices serve as pleas for forgiveness.

The first of these mandatory sacrifices is *chatat*, the sin offering, which is brought by a person who unintentionally violated a serious prohibition.

The Torah outlines various situations involving those who commit such transgressions: (1) the priest, (2) the entire community, (3) the leader, and (4) the ordinary individual. Sins and mistakes can occur at every level. Neither religious nor secular authorities, nor the community as a whole, or individual people, should be idealized.

**(2) guilt:** The term *chet*, or sin, means “missing the mark” or “failing to achieve the goal.” Sin reflects a situation in which a person has erred or failed to reach his potential. The root of the word *chatat*, or sin offering, also carries the meaning of purification.

**unwittingly incurs guilt in any of the Lord’s commandments about things not to be done:** This pertains to violations of strict Torah prohibitions rather than minor transgressions.

**(3) If it is the anointed priest who has incurred guilt:** The term “anointed priest” primarily refers to the High Priest.

**so that blame falls upon the people:** A sin or mistake made by the High Priest becomes a “blame upon the people.” Since priests play a significant role in atoning for the sins of ordinary individuals, their transgressions are viewed as particularly grave.

**(5) and the anointed priest shall take some of the bull’s blood:** Tradition teaches that the primary act of atonement is repentance, not the offering itself. However, the Torah does not explicitly mention this, as it assumes that offering sacrifices inherently includes feelings of repentance and a desire to correct what was wrong sin.

**and bring it into the Tent of Meeting:** The Tent of Meeting is the first chamber of the Temple, featuring the Lampstand, the Table with the Bread of Display, and the Altar of Incense. This chamber symbolizes the “space for atonement” and is separated from the Holy of Holies by a curtain, where the Ark resides.

**(6) The priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle of the blood seven times:** The priest’s sin defiles not only the individual but also the inner sanctum of the Temple. To purify it,

blood is sprinkled on the Altar of Incense, which is one of the inner vessels of the Temple.

**in front of the curtain of the Shrine:** This refers to the curtain that separates the Holy of Holies – the innermost chamber containing the Ark – from the first chamber of the Temple.

The High Priest would sprinkle the blood in front of the curtain, but not on it. The High Priest's sins affected only the first chamber of the Temple, which is associated with atonement, not the Holy of Holies, which is connected to revelation. Therefore, his mistakes caused defects in atonement but not in revelation.

**(7) The priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar:** The Temple contained two altars: the large Altar of Burnt Offerings in the courtyard and the smaller Altar of Incense inside the sanctuary, “before the Lord in the Tent of Meeting.” In less severe cases, blood was sprinkled only on the outer altar, while in more severe cases, it was also applied to the inner altar.

**the horns of the altar:** The primary features of altars in the Temple, as well as other ancient altars, were the “horns,” which are protrusions found at the four corners of the altar (see 6:1).

**and all the rest of the bull's blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering.** At the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the Altar for burnt offerings stood, where animal sacrifices were made.

**(8) He shall remove all the fat from the bull of sin offering:** The removal of visceral fat is done for all sin offerings.

**(10) just as it is removed from the ox of the sacrifice of well-being:** The peace offering is referenced here for comparison, as it symbolizes peace and harmony. Likewise, the sin offering facilitates reconciliation.

**(12) all the rest of the bull, he shall carry to a clean place outside the camp, to the ash heap, and burn it up in a wood fire:** The bull itself is not offered on the altar but is burned outside the camp.

The *chatat* offering facilitates purification from sin; however, it does not contribute to any additional spiritual elevation.

## § 6.2. THE PURIFICATION OFFERING FOR THE PEOPLE (4:13-21)

יג ואם כל-עדת ישראל ישגו ונעלם דבר מעיני הקהל ועשו אחת מכל-מצות יהנה אשר לא-תעשינה ואשמו: יד ונדדעה הסטאת אשר חטאו עליה והקריבו הקהל פר בן-בקר לחטאת והביאו אתו לפני אהל מועד: טו ונסמכו זקני העדה את-ידיהם על-ראש הפר לפני יהנה ושתט את-הפר לפני יהנה: טז והביא הפהן המשים המשים מדם הפר אל-אהל מועד: יז וטבל הפהן אצבעו מן-הדם והזה שבע פעמים לפני יהנה את פגי הפרכת: יח ומן-הדם יתן על-קרנת המזבח אשר לפני יהנה אשר באהל מועד ואת כל-הדם ישפך אל-יסוד מזבח העולה אשר-פתח אהל מועד: יט ואת כל-חלבו ירים ממנו והקטיר המזבחה: כ ועשה לפך כאשר עשה לפך החטאת פן יעשה-לו וכפר עלהם הפהן ונסלח להם: כא והוציא את-הפר אל-מחול למחנה ושרף אתו כאשר שרף את הפר הראשון חטאת הקהל הוא:

**(13) If the whole community of Israel errs, and the matter escapes the notice of the congregation, so that they violate any of the LORD's prohibitive commandments and thus incur guilt,**

**(14) When the sin they have committed becomes known, the congregation shall offer a young bull of the herd as a purification offering, and bring it before the Tent of Meeting.**

**(15) The elders of the community shall lay their hands upon the head of the bull before the LORD, and the bull shall be slaughtered before the LORD.**

**(16) The anointed priest shall bring some of the blood of the bull into the Tent of Meeting,**

**(17) and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle it seven times before the LORD, in front of the curtain.**

**(18) He shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar that is before the LORD in the Tent of Meeting, and the rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering, which is at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.**

**(19) He shall remove all its fat and turn it into smoke on the altar.**

**(20) He shall do with this bull just as he did with the bull of purification offering. Thus the priest shall make expiation for them, and they shall be forgiven.**

**(21) He shall carry the bull outside the camp and burn it as he burned the first bull; it is the purification offering for the congregation.**

**(13) If the whole community of Israel:** The nation, as a collective entity, can act rightly or wrongly. It can be righteous or guilty, repentant or in need of correction. History serves as the biography of this national persona.

The collective opinion of the people should not be idealized. The phrase *Vox populi, vox Dei* (“The voice of the people is the voice of God”) is not universally accurate – nations as a whole can and do make mistakes, as history abundantly demonstrates.

**errs, and the matter escapes the notice of the congregation:** The Talmud interprets this as a dual error: (1) the Sanhedrin (the Supreme Religious Court) errs, including Torah scholars and leadership, and (2) the entire nation errs by believing the mistaken ruling of the sages. Believing the erroneous opinion of an authority represents a personal error and sin for each individual. While the opinions of sages should be respected, it is fundamentally wrong to accept them without question. A critical approach must be applied to all matters, including those concerning Torah authorities. Therefore, a position like “a religious authority said so, and I followed it without questioning” cannot serve as an excuse.

**and thus incur guilt:** This phrase (used here and in subsequent passages) can be interpreted in two ways: (1) becomes guilty, incurs guilt, or (2) acknowledges guilt. The second interpretation implies that recognizing an error is the first step toward correction.

**(14) When the sin they have committed becomes known:** When the nation realizes it has acted incorrectly, a society must be prepared to acknowledge its mistakes and take responsibility, rather than shifting blame onto others, such as claiming, “I was following orders, so I’m not at fault.”

**(14-15) The congregation shall offer a young bull... The elders of the community shall lay their hands upon the head of the bull before the LORD:** The elders, described as “people’s representatives,” act on behalf of the community, unlike the High Priest or a chieftain, who are considered “official representatives.”

**(18) He shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar that is before the LORD in the Tent of Meeting:** The sin of the entire nation, much like that of the High Priest, is so serious that it inflicts harm upon the inner sanctum of the Temple.

### § 6.3. THE PURIFICATION OFFERING FOR A CHIEFTAIN (4:22-26)

כב אֲשֶׁר נָשִׂיא יִקְטָא וְעִשָׂה אַחַת מִכָּל-מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֲלֵהֶיוּ אֲשֶׁר לֹא-  
תַעֲשִׂינָהּ בְּשִׁגְגָה וְאִשָּׁם: כג אֹ-הוֹדַע אֱלֵיוֹ סְטָאָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָטָא בָּהּ וְהִבִּיא  
אֶת-קָרְבָּנוֹ שְׁעִיר עִזִּים זָכָר תָּמִים: כד וְסָמָךְ יָדוֹ עַל-רֵאשׁ הַשְּׁעִיר  
וְשִׁתָּת אֹתוֹ בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-יִשְׁתָּת אֶת-הָעֹלָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה חֲטָאת הוּא: כה  
וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן מַדָּם הַחֲטָאת בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ וְנָתַן עַל-קַרְנֵת מִזְבֵּחַ הָעֹלָה וְאֶת-דָּמֹ  
יִשְׁפֹּךְ אֶל-יִסּוֹד מִזְבֵּחַ הָעֹלָה: כו וְאֶת-כָּל-חֲלָבֹ יִקְטִיר הַמִּזְבֵּחַה כָּחֲלָב  
זָבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים וְכִפֹּר עָלָיו הַכֹּהֵן מִחֲטָאתוֹ וְנִסְלַח לוֹ:

**(22) When a chieftain incurs guilt by doing unwittingly any of the things which by the commandments of the LORD his God ought not to be done, and he realizes his guilt –**

**(23) or the sin of which he is guilty is brought to his knowledge – he shall bring as his offering a male goat without blemish.**

**(24) He shall lay his hand upon the head of the goat; and it shall be slaughtered at the spot where the burnt offering is slaughtered before the LORD. It is a sin offering.**

**(25) The priest shall take with his finger some of the blood of the sin offering and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and the rest of its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar.**

**(26) He shall turn all its fat into smoke on the altar, like the fat of the sacrifice of well-being. Thus the priest shall make expiation on his behalf for his sin, and he shall be forgiven.**

**(22) When a chieftain incurs guilt:** The description of the chieftain's sin begins with "when" rather than "if," implying that those in positions of power will inevitably sin.

**chieftain:** The Hebrew term *nasi* refers to a tribal leader or other political figure in the Torah. In modern Hebrew, it is used as the title "president."

**and he realizes his guilt:** As previously noted, this phrase can be interpreted as either "becomes guilty" or "acknowledges his sin." The Midrash emphasizes that political leaders are prone to committing sins. Even great and righteous kings such as Saul, David, and Solomon made mistakes. The critical question is whether those in power will acknowledge their wrongdoings.

**(23) Or the sin of which he is guilty is brought to his knowledge:** If he does not realize it himself, but it is explained to him that he acted wrongly, he should admit it.

**he shall bring as his offering a male goat without blemish:** For the sins of the High Priest or the entire community, a bull is brought as the offering. In contrast, a chieftain brings a goat.

If a bull represents an independent entity that works and transforms the world, a goat is the leader of the flock that guides others. Thus, political leaders are assigned a goat for their sacrifice.

**(25) The priest shall take with his finger some of the blood of the sin offering and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering:** This refers to the outer altar located at the entrance to the Sanctuary, not the inner altar, as seen with the sin offerings for the High Priest or the community. This distinction suggests that the mistakes of a political leader inflict only external harm to the Temple rather than compromising its inner sanctity.

Spiritually, a chieftain's sin signifies a less severe crisis. People view political leaders with skepticism and do not connect with them deeply. While the leader is important and guides the nation, his mistakes invoke anger rather than existential upheaval. In contrast,

a sin committed by the High Priest or the entire community leads to a more profound spiritual shock.

#### § 6.4. THE PURIFICATION OFFERING FOR AN ORDINARY PERSON (4:27-35)

כז ואם-גִּבְשׁ אֶתֶּת תַּחֲטָא בְּשִׁגְגָה מֵעַם הָאָרֶץ בְּעִשְׂתָּהּ אֶחֶת מִמִּצְוֹת יְהוָה  
אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תַעֲשִׂינָהּ וְאָשָׁם: כח או הוֹדַע אֵלָיו חֲטָאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָטָא חָטָא  
וְהֵבִיא קֶרְבָּנוֹ שְׁעִירַת עִזִּים תְּמִימָה גְּבִיָּה עַל-חֲטָאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָטָא: כט  
וְסֹמֵךְ אֶת-יָדוֹ עַל רֹאשׁ הַחֲטָאת וְשִׁחַט אֶת-הַחֲטָאת בְּמִקְוֹם בְּמִקְוֹם בְּמִקְוֹם  
הָעֵלֶה: ל וְלָקַח הַפֶּהוּן מִדָּמָהּ בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ וְנָתַן עַל-קֶרְנֵת מִזְבֵּחַ הָעֵלֶה וְאֶת-כָּל-  
דָּמָהּ יִשְׁפֹךְ אֶל-יִסּוּד הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: לא וְאֶת-כָּל-חֲלֵבָהּ יִסִּיר יִסִּיר כְּאֲשֶׁר הוֹסֵר  
חֵלֶב מֵעַל זֶבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים וְהַקְטִיר הַפֶּהוּן הַמְזֻבָּח לַגֵּרִים נִיחֹס לַיהוָה וְכִפֹּר  
עָלָיו הַפֶּהוּן וְנִסְלַח לוֹ: לב ואם-כָּבֵשׂ גִּבִּיא קֶרְבָּנוֹ לְחֲטָאת גְּבִיָּה תְּמִימָה  
יִבְיָאָנָה: לג וְסֹמֵךְ אֶת-יָדוֹ עַל רֹאשׁ הַחֲטָאת וְשִׁחַט אֶתֶּת לְחֲטָאת בְּמִקְוֹם  
אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁחַט אֶת-הָעֵלֶה: לד וְלָקַח הַפֶּהוּן מִדָּם מִדָּם הַחֲטָאת בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ וְנָתַן  
עַל-קֶרְנֵת מִזְבֵּחַ הָעֵלֶה וְאֶת-כָּל-דָּמָהּ יִשְׁפֹךְ אֶל-יִסּוּד הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: לה וְאֶת-  
כָּל-חֲלֵבָהּ יִסִּיר כְּאֲשֶׁר יוֹסֵר חֵלֶב-הַכֹּפֶשֶׁב מִזֶּבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים וְהַקְטִיר הַפֶּהוּן  
אֶתֶּת הַמְזֻבָּחָה עַל אֲשֵׁי יְהוָה וְכִפֹּר עָלָיו הַפֶּהוּן עַל-חֲטָאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר-חָטָא  
וְנִסְלַח לוֹ:

**(27) If any person from among the populace unwittingly incurs guilt by doing any of the things which by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done, and he realizes his guilt**

**(28) or the sin of which he is guilty is brought to his knowledge – he shall bring a female goat without blemish as his offering for the sin of which he is guilty.**

**(29) He shall lay his hand upon the head of the sin offering, and the sin offering shall be slaughtered at the place of the burnt offering.**

**(30) The priest shall take with his finger some of its blood and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering; and all the rest of its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar.**

(31) He shall remove all its fat, just as the fat is removed from the sacrifice of well-being; and the priest shall turn it into smoke on the altar, for a pleasing odor to the LORD. Thus the priest shall make expiation for him, and he shall be forgiven.

(32) If, however, he brings a sheep as his offering for a sin offering, he shall bring a female without blemish.

(33) He shall lay his hand upon the head of the sin offering, and it shall be slaughtered as a sin offering at the spot where the burnt offering is slaughtered.

(34) The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering; and all the rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar.

(35) He shall remove all its fat, just as the fat of the sheep of the sacrifice of well-being is removed; and the priest shall turn them into smoke on the altar, with the LORD's offerings by fire. Thus the priest shall make expiation on his behalf for the sin of which he is guilty, and he shall be forgiven.

(27) **If any person from among the populace:** The phrase “from among the populace,” *am ha'aretz*, here refers to ordinary farmers, a term that denotes the common people in a positive manner. In the Talmudic period and later Jewish culture, the connotation of the expression “people of the land” shifted, and it began to be used pejoratively to describe the uneducated common folk. However, in the Tanakh, such an attitude toward people would be unacceptable.

(28) **He shall bring a female goat without blemish:** A goat represents an ordinary member of a flock, a follower rather than a leader, reflecting the role of an average individual.

(30) **The priest shall take with his finger some of its blood and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering:** This is done on the outer altar, as the sin of an ordinary person causes only external damage to the sanctity of the Temple.

**(32-35) If, however, he brings a sheep as his offering for a sin offering ... He shall remove all its fat, just as the fat of the sheep of the sacrifice of well-being is removed:** Since a goat and a sheep differ in the amount of fat to be burned on the altar (the sheep includes the broad tail, as noted in 4:9), these cases are addressed separately.

## § 7. THE GUILT OFFERING

### § 7.1. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SIN AND GUILT OFFERINGS

The *hatat*, the sin offering (described in the previous chapter), and the *asham*, the guilt offering (discussed here), are two types of offerings brought during the process of repentance for transgressing a commandment, as a plea for God's forgiveness. In both cases, an individual needs purification. However, the sin offering, *hatat*, is presented after committing an error that leads to severe transgressions. In contrast, the guilt offering, *asham*, is brought for an offense committed either knowingly or in cases of less serious violations committed negligently.

Severe transgressions of Torah commandments due to inadvertence disrupt the communal sanctity of the Jewish people. In such situations, it is necessary to purify the Temple, for which the horns of the altar are sprinkled with the blood of the *hatat* sacrifice. Therefore, when describing the *hatat*, the Torah details what should be done with the offering but does not specify the circumstances under which it is brought, as the focus is on purifying the Temple, which represents collective holiness. The size of the offering depends on the status of the individual, as the damage to communal holiness varies depending on whether a priest, a community, a leader, or an ordinary person committed the transgression.

Deliberate transgression of a commandment, however, constitutes individual guilt that does not harm the collective holiness. Therefore, in such a situation, it is the individual sinner who needs purification, not the Temple, which remains unaffected by the personal sin. Consequently, in the case of the *asham* (guilt offering), the blood is

not sprinkled on the horns of the altar, although it is sprinkled on the walls of the outer altar. The Torah provides detailed instructions on what to bring as an *asham* offering and for which transgressions (considering relatively minor cases), but does not elaborate on the ritual process, as the focus is on the sinner, not the Temple. The size of the offering depends on the sinner's financial capacity, rather than their social status, as is the case with the *hatat*.

## § 7.2. THE GUILT OFFERING FOR TRANSGRESSIONS OF NEGLIGENCE (5:1-13)

א וּנְפֹשׁ כִּי-תִחַטָּא וְשָׁמְעָה קוֹל אֱלֹהִים וְהָיָה עֹד אָז רָאָה אָז יִדַּע אִם-לֹא יִגִּיד וְנִשְׂא עֲוֹנוֹ: ב אִם נֶפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר תִּגְעַ בְּכָל-דְּבָר טְמֵאָה אוֹ בְּנִבְלַת חַיָּה טְמֵאָה אוֹ בְּנִבְלַת בְּהֵמָה טְמֵאָה אוֹ בְּנִבְלַת שָׂרִץ טְמֵאָה וְנִעְלַמְס מִמֶּנּוּ וְהָיָה טְמֵאָה וְאִשָּׁם: ג אִם כִּי יִגְעַ בְּטִמְאַת אָדָם לְכָל טְמֵאָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִטְמָא בָּהּ וְנִעְלַמְס מִמֶּנּוּ וְהָיָה גַּדַע וְאִשָּׁם: ד אִם נֶפֶשׁ כִּי תִשָּׁבַע לְבִטּוּא בְּשִׁפְטִים לְהִרְעַ אִם לְהִיטִיב לְכָל אֲשֶׁר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטֹא הָאָדָם בְּשִׁבְעָה וְנִעְלַמְס מִמֶּנּוּ וְהָיָה-גַּדַע וְאִשָּׁם לְאַתַּת מֵאֲלֹהִים: ה וְהִיָּה כִּי-יִאֲשָׁם לְאַתַּת מֵאֲלֹהִים וְהִתְנַדָּה אֲשֶׁר חָטָא עָלֶיהָ: ו וְהִבִּיא אֶת-אֲשָׁמוֹ לַיהוָה עַל חַטָּאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָטָא נִקְבָּה מִן-הַצֹּאֵן כְּשִׁבְהָ אוֹ-שְׁעִירַת עֲזִים לְחַטָּאת וְכֹפֶר עָלָיו הַפְּהִן מִחַטָּאתוֹ: ז וְאִם-לֹא תִגִּיעַ יָדוֹ דִּי שֹׁהַ וְהִבִּיא אֶת-אֲשָׁמוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָטָא שְׁתֵּי תַרְיָם אוֹ-שְׁנֵי בְּנֵי-יֹונָה לַיהוָה אֶתְד לְחַטָּאת וְאֶתְד לְעֹלָה: ח וְהִבִּיא אִתָּם אֶל-הַפְּהִן וְהִקְרִיב אֶת-אֲשֶׁר לְחַטָּאת רִאשׁוֹנָה וּמִלֶּק אֶת-רִאשׁוֹ מִמּוֹל עֶרְפוֹ וְלֹא יִבְדִּיל: ט וְהָיָה מִדָּם הַחַטָּאת עַל-קִיר הַמִּזְבֵּחַס וְהַנִּשְׂאָר בְּדָם יִמָּצָה אֶל-יְסוֹד הַמִּזְבֵּחַס הַמִּזְבֵּחַס חַטָּאת הָיָה: י וְאֶת-הַשְּׁנֵי יַעֲשֶׂה עֹלָה כַּמִּשְׁפָּט וְכֹפֶר עָלָיו הַפְּהִן מִחַטָּאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר-חָטָא וְנִסְלַח וְנִסְלַח לוֹ: יא וְאִם-לֹא תִשָּׁיִג יָדוֹ לְשְׁתֵּי תַרְיָם אוֹ לְשְׁנֵי בְּנֵי-יֹונָה וְהִבִּיא אֶת-קֶרְבָּנוֹ אֲשֶׁר אֲשֶׁר חָטָא עֲשִׂירַת הָאֶפֶה סֹלֶת לְחַטָּאת לֹא-יִשִּׁים עָלֶיהָ שֶׁמֶן וְלֹא-יִתֵּן עָלֶיהָ עֹלָה לְבָנָה כִּי חַטָּאת הָיָה: יב וְהִבִּיאָהּ אֶל-הַפְּהִן וְקִמֵּץ הַפְּהִן מִמֶּנָּה מְלֹוא קִמְצוֹ אֶת-אֲזִכְרֹתָהּ וְהִקְטִיר וְהִקְטִיר הַמִּזְבֵּחַס עַל אֲשֵׁי יְהוָה חַטָּאת הָיָה: יג וְכֹפֶר עָלָיו הַפְּהִן עַל-חַטָּאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר-חָטָא מֵאַתַּת מֵאֲלֹהִים וְנִסְלַח לוֹ וְהִיָּתָה לָּהּ כַּמִּנְחָה:

**(1) If a person incurs guilt – When he has heard a public imprecation and (being able to testify because) he was either a witness, having seen or known of the matter – yet does not give information, he shall bear his guilt;**

- 
- (2) Or when a person touches any unclean thing – be it the carcass of an unclean beast, the carcass of unclean cattle, or the carcass of an unclean creeping thing – and the fact has escaped him, and then, being unclean, he realizes his guilt;
- (3) Or when he touches human uncleanness – any such uncleanness whereby one becomes unclean – and, though he has known it, the fact has escaped him, but later he realizes his guilt;
- (4) Or when a person utters an oath to bad or good purpose – whatever a man may utter in an oath – and, though he has known it, the fact has escaped him, but later he realizes his guilt in any of these matters
- (5) Upon realizing his guilt in any of these matters, he shall confess that wherein he has sinned.
- (6) And he shall bring as his penalty to the LORD, for the sin of which he is guilty, a female from the flock, sheep or goat, as a sin offering; and the priest shall make expiation on his behalf for his sin.
- (7) But if his means do not suffice for a sheep, he shall bring to the LORD, as his penalty for that of which he is guilty, two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering.
- (8) He shall bring them to the priest, who shall offer first the one for the sin offering: He shall nip its head at the nape without severing it.
- (9) He shall sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering on the side of the altar, and what remains of the blood shall be drained out at the base of the altar; it is a sin offering.
- (10) And he shall prepare the second as a burnt offering, according to regulation. Thus the priest shall make expiation on his behalf for the sin of which he is guilty, and he shall be forgiven.
- (11) And if his means do not suffice for two turtledoves or two pigeons, he shall bring as his offering for that of

**which he is guilty a tenth of an *ephah* of choice flour for a sin offering; he shall not add oil to it or lay frankincense on it, for it is a sin offering.**

**(12) He shall bring it to the priest, and the priest shall scoop out of it a handful as a token portion of it, and turn it into smoke on the altar, with the LORD's offerings by fire; it is a sin offering.**

**(13) Thus the priest shall make expiation on his behalf for whichever of these sins he is guilty, and he shall be forgiven. It shall belong to the priest, like the meal offering.**

**(1) If a person incurs guilt – When he has heard a public imprecation and (being able to testify because) he was either a witness, having seen or known of the matter – yet does not give information, he shall bear his guilt:** During court proceedings, a public adjuration calls on anyone with relevant testimony to come forward and clarify the matter. A witness who withholds testimony, thereby denying justice to his fellow, bears guilt. While this guilt is not judicial or legal, it constitutes a moral transgression before his fellow man and God. Upon acknowledgment and repentance, he must present a guilt offering.

**(2) touches any unclean thing:** The concept of *tumah* (ritual impurity) in Hebrew pertains to spiritual impurity and is distinct from physical cleanliness. Ritual impurity reflects the imperfections of the world, stemming from mortality, unclean animals, and certain human conditions. While there is no prohibition against impurity for the general population, priests must avoid it, and the Torah mandates purification for anyone who becomes impure.

**or when he touches any unclean thing and the fact has escaped him:** According to Jewish law, guilt only arises if someone in a state of impurity enters the Temple or consumes offerings. However, the plain reading suggests that guilt stems from neglecting purification after becoming impure.

**he shall bear his guilt:** Such negligence is viewed as irresponsibility bordering on willful transgression, requiring a guilt offering (*asham*) rather than a purification offering (*hatat*).

**(3) Or when he touches human uncleanness:** The specific cases of human impurity are elaborated on later in Leviticus.

**but later he realizes his guilt:** Acknowledging guilt represents the first step toward correction.

**(4) Or when a person utters an oath:** Accountability arises if the oath is spoken aloud, not merely thought.

**to bad or good purpose:** The oath may concern actions upon oneself, such as vowing to eat or abstain from certain foods.

**the fact has escaped him:** If an individual forgets and violates the oath, the law considers them guilty. However, the text suggests that mere neglect of the oath, even without violation, constitutes guilt due to frivolity.

**(5) Upon realizing his guilt in any of these matters, he shall confess that wherein he has sinned:** Confession is a crucial step in the atonement process; without it, a guilt offering cannot be accepted.

**(6) And he shall bring as his penalty to the LORD, for the sin of which he is guilty, a female from the flock, sheep or goat:** A female sheep or goat signifies a less severe transgression, and the Torah offers a means for people to atone without excessive burden.

**(7) But if his means do not suffice for a sheep:** The purpose of the guilt offering is corrective and educational. Its cost is calibrated to the offender's financial capacity – it must be substantial enough to instill a sense of responsibility without being burdensome.

**two turtledoves or two pigeons:** A poorer individual may substitute birds for sheep. Because birds cannot be divided into parts like livestock, two birds are necessary: one for purification and one for the burnt offering.

**(8-10) He shall bring them to the priest, who shall offer first the one for the sin offering:** Purification should come before presenting a gift to God.

**(11) And if his means do not suffice for two turtledoves or two pigeons:** This offering is for those who are truly impoverished.

**he shall not add oil to it or lay frankincense on it:** Since the offering atones for sin, it should not appear lavish or decorative. Instead, it consists solely of flour mixed with water.

### § 7.3. THE MISUSE OF HOLY OBJECTS (5:14-16)

יד וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: טו נֹפֵשׁ כִּי-תִמְעַל מֵעַל וְחִטָּאָה בְּשִׁגְגָה מִקֹּדְשֵׁי יְהוָה וְהִבִּיא אֶת-אֲשָׁמוֹ לַיהוָה לַיהוָה אֵיל תְּמִים מִן-הַצֹּאן בְּעֶרְכָּךְ כֶּסֶף-שְׁקָלִים בְּשִׁקְל-הַקֹּדֶשׁ לְאִשָּׁם: טז וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר חָטָא מִן-הַקֹּדֶשׁ יִשְׁלֵם וְאֶת-חֲמִישְׁתּוֹ יִסַּף עָלָיו וַנִּתֵּן אֹתוֹ לַכֹּהֵן וְהַפְּהֵן יִכְפֹּר עָלָיו בְּאֵיל הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְנִסְלַח וְנִסְלַח לוֹ:

**(14) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:**

**(15) When a person commits a trespass, being unwittingly remiss in regard to any of the LORD's sacred things, he shall bring as his penalty to the LORD a ram without blemish from the flock, convertible into payment in silver by the sanctuary weight, as a guilt offering.**

**(16) He shall make restitution for that wherein he was remiss about the sacred thing, and he shall add a fifth part to it and give it to the priest. The priest shall then make expiation on his behalf with the ram of the guilt offering, and he shall be forgiven.**

**(15) When a person commits a trespass, being unwittingly remiss in regard to any of the LORD's sacred things:** This refers to someone who unintentionally uses something consecrated to the Temple for personal purposes, thereby violating its sanctity.

**he shall bring as his penalty to the LORD... convertible into payment in silver by the sanctuary weight, as a guilt offering:** According to the law, the guilt offering in this case must be valued at no less than two silver shekels according to the sanctuary weight. However, a straightforward interpretation of the Torah may also suggest that the priest is permitted to assess the offender's financial situation and determine the value of the offering accordingly. The offering must be both affordable and significant enough for the individual to feel the weight of his responsibilities transgression.

**(16) He shall make restitution for that wherein he was remiss about the sacred thing, and he shall add a fifth part to it:** The addition of one-fifth to the restitution acts as a penalty in addition to the repayment for what was improperly acquired used.

**he shall give it to the priest, and the priest shall then make expiation on his behalf with the ram of the guilt offering, and he shall be forgiven:** A Midrash emphasizes the leniency of this punishment. God forgives the misuse of His sanctified property by requiring only restitution, a penalty of one-fifth, and the sacrifice of a ram. In contrast, a mortal king might impose much harsher penalties for a similar offense against his possessions.

#### § 7.4. THE GUILT OFFERING IN CASE OF DOUBT (5:17-19)

יז ואם-נִפְשׁ כִּי תִחַטָּא וְעָשְׂתָה אַחַת מִכָּל-מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא תַעֲשִׂינָהּ וְלֹא-יָדַע וְאָשָׁם וְנָשָׂא עֹנֹו: יח וְהָבִיִּא אֵיל תְּמִים מִן-הַצֹּאן בְּעֶרְכָּהּ בְּעֶרְכָּהּ לְאָשָׁם אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן וְכִפֶּר עָלָיו הַכֹּהֵן עַל שְׂגֵגָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר-שָׁגָג וְהוּא לֹא-יָדַע וְנִסְלַח לוֹ: יט אָשָׁם הוּא אָשָׁם אָשָׁם לִי:

**(17) And a person who, without knowing it, sins in regard to any of God's commandments about things not to be done, and then realizes guilt: Such a person shall be subject to punishment.**

**(18) He shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish from the flock, valued by you at the price for a guilt offering; and the priest shall make expiation on his behalf for the error that he committed unknowingly, and he shall be forgiven.**

**(19) It is a guilt offering; he has incurred guilt before the Lord.**

**(17) And a person who, without knowing it, sins in regard to any of God's commandments:** This refers to a person who has committed something questionable and is unsure whether it constitutes a violation. His guilt lies primarily in acting irresponsibly, without proper consideration.

**(18-19) He shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish from the flock, valued by you at the price for a guilt offering... It is a guilt offering; he has incurred guilt before the Lord:** Irresponsible behavior is regarded as a more serious offense than an unintentional mistake. Consequently, in these cases, the guilt offering requires a ram, which is more valuable than the sheep used for the sin offering.

#### § 7.5. THE GUILT OFFERING FOR A BREACH OF FINANCIAL TRUST (5:20-26)

כ וידבר יהוה אל-משה לאמר: לאמר: כא נפש כי תחטא תחטא ומעלה מעל ביהוה וכחש בעמיאיו בפקדון או-בתשומת יד או בגזל או עשק את-עמיתו: כבאו-מצא אבדה וכחש בה ונשבע על-שקר על-אחת מכל אשר-יעשה האדם לחטא בהנה: כג והיה כי-יחטא ואשם ואשם והשיב את-הגזלה אשר גזל או את-העשק אשר אשר עשק או את-הפקדון אשר הפקד הפקד אתו או את-האבדה אשר מצא: כד או מכל אשר-ישבע עליו עליו לשקר ושלים אתו בראשו וחמשתיו יסף עליו לאשר הוא לו יתגנו ביום אשמתו: כה ואת-אשמו יביא ליהוה איל תמים מן-הצאן בערפך לאשם אל-הפקדון: כו וכפר עליו הפקדון לפני יהוה ונסלח לו על-אחת מכל אשר-יעשה לאשמה בה:

**(20) The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:**

**(21) When a person sins and commits a trespass against the Lord by dealing deceitfully with his neighbor in the matter of a deposit or a pledge, or through robbery, or by defrauding his neighbor;**

**(22) or by finding something lost and lying about it; if he swears falsely regarding any of the various things that one may do and sin thereby –**

**(23) when he has thus sinned and realized his guilt, he shall restore that which he got through robbery or fraud, or the deposit that was entrusted to him, or the lost thing that he found,**

**(24) or anything else about which he swore falsely; he shall repay it in its entirety and add a fifth part to it. He shall bring it to its owner as soon as he realizes his guilt.**

**(25) And he shall bring to the priest, as his guilt offering to the Lord, a ram without blemish from the flock, or the equivalent, as a guilt offering.**

**(26) The priest shall make expiation on his behalf before the Lord, and he shall be forgiven for whatever he may have done to draw blame thereby.**

**(21) When a person sins and commits a trespass against the Lord:** These cases involve situations without witnesses, relying solely on trust. Deceit in these circumstances is regarded as a transgression primarily against God.

**(21-22) In the matter of a deposit or a pledge, or through robbery... if he swears falsely regarding any of the various things that one may do and sin thereby:** These refer to common situations where individuals, lacking evidence, might unjustly assert claims against their neighbor's property.

**(24) He shall repay it in its entirety and add a fifth part to it:** Instances of dishonest behavior toward a neighbor's property are punished in the same manner as the misappropriation of Temple property.

**(25) And he shall bring to the priest, as his guilt offering to the Lord:** A guilt offering to atone for transgressions against God can only be made after rectifying the harm caused to another person.

**WEEKLY  
PORTION 2**

**TZAV**

## § 8. THE ORDER OF SACRIFICES

### § 8.1. THE BURNT OFFERING AND FIRE ON THE ALTAR (6:1-6)

א וינדבֹר יי אֶל-מִשְׁחָה לְאֹמֶר: לְאֹמֶר: ב צֹא אֶת-אֶהָרֹן וְאֶת-בְּנָיו לְאֹמֶר נֹאֵת תּוֹרַת הָעֹלָה הוּא הָעֹלָה עַל־מִזְבֵּחַ עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ כָּל-הַלֵּילָה עַד-הַבֹּקֶר וְאֵשׁ וְאֵשׁ הַמִּזְבֵּחַ תּוֹקֵד בּוֹ: ג וְלִבֶּשׁ הַכֹּהֵן מִדּוֹ בֹד וּמְכַנְסֵי-בֹד יִלְבָּשׁ עַל-בְּשָׂרוֹ וְהָרִים אֶת-הַדָּשָׁן אֲשֶׁר תֹּאכַל הָאֵשׁ אֶת-הָעֹלָה עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְשִׂמּוֹ אֵצֶל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: ד וּפִשֵׁט אֶת-בְּגָדָיו וְלִבֶּשׁ בְּגָדִים אֲחֵרִים וְהוֹצִיא אֶת-הַדָּשָׁן אֶל-מַחֲוֵז לְמַחֲנֶה אֶל-מְקוֹם טְהוֹר: ה וְהָאֵשׁ עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ תּוֹקֵד-בּוֹ לֹא תִכָּבֵה וּבִעֹר עֲלֶיהָ הַכֹּהֵן עֲצִים בַּבֹּקֶר וְעֵרֹד עֲלֶיהָ הָעֹלָה וְהַקְטִיר עֲלֶיהָ חִלְבֵי הַשְּׁלָמִים: ו אֵשׁ תִּמְיֵד תּוֹקֵד עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לֹא תִכָּבֵה:

**(1) The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:**

**(2) Command Aaron and his sons thus: This is the ritual of the burnt offering. The burnt offering itself shall remain where it is burned upon the altar all night until morning, while the fire on the altar is kept going on it.**

**(3) The priest shall dress in linen raiment, with linen breeches next to his body; and he shall take up the ashes to which the fire has reduced the burnt offering on the altar and place them beside the altar.**

**(4) He shall then take off his vestments and put on other vestments, and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place.**

**(5) The fire on the altar shall be kept burning, not to go out: every morning the priest shall feed wood to it, lay**

**out the burnt offering on it, and turn into smoke the fat parts of the offerings of well-being.**

**(6) A perpetual fire shall be kept burning on the altar, not to go out.**

**(2) Command Aaron and his sons thus:** As noted earlier, the weekly portion of *Tzav* describes the sacrifices from the priests' perspective and outlines their responsibilities in the Temple.

**This is the ritual of the burnt offering: It shall remain where it is burned upon the altar all night until morning:** Unlike other sacrifices, in which only a small part was burned and consumed quickly, burnt offerings were completely burned, which required significantly more time.

**(3) The priest shall dress in linen raiment:** Of the four elements of the priest's attire (Exodus 28), only two are mentioned here, as this is not a complete service but rather a preparation for it.

**and he shall take up the ashes...and place them beside the altar:** Removing the ashes was the first task of the morning. This completed the cycle of sacrifices from the previous day and marked the beginning of the new day's offerings.

**(4) He shall then take off his vestments and put on other vestments:** Service garments were prohibited from being worn outside the Temple courtyard. Thus, the priest had to change into ordinary clothing.

**(5) The fire on the altar shall be kept burning, not to go out.** When replacing burned-out wood with new logs, the priest must ensure that the fire does not extinguish.

**and lay out the burnt offering on it:** The continual burnt offering, known as *tamid*, precedes other sacrifices. It was required to be placed directly on the logs, which had not yet contained anything else.

**(6) A perpetual fire shall be kept burning on the altar, not to go out:** From this fire on the altar, the Lamp in the Temple was kindled.

Thus, the order of sacrifices in the Temple was as follows: First, the *tamid*, the daily morning burnt sacrifice for the entire Jewish people, was offered. If it was a Sabbath or a festival, the special sacrifices for that day were presented. On weekdays, private sacrifices (whether voluntary or obligatory) were made by individuals who came to the Temple on that day. Finally, before sundown, the second *tamid*, the daily afternoon burnt sacrifice for the entire people, was offered. The sacrifices remained on the altar through the night and burned until morning.

### § 8.2. THE MEAL OFFERINGS (6:7-11)

ז וְזֹאת תּוֹרַת הַמִּנְחָה הַקֹּרֵב אֶתָּה בְּגִי-אֶהְרֹן לִפְנֵי יְיָ אֶל-פְּנֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: ח  
וְהַרִים מִמֶּנּוּ בְקַמְצוֹ מִסֵּלֶת הַמִּנְחָה וּמִשְׁמֶנֶה וְאֵת כָּל-הַלֶּבֶנָּה אֲשֶׁר עַל-  
הַמִּנְחָה וְהַקֵּטִיר הַמִּזְבֵּחַ בַּיּוֹם נִיחָם אֲזַכְּרֶתָּה לֵי: ט וְהַגִּדְתָּרְתָּ מִמֶּנָּה יֶאֱכְלוּ  
אֶהְרֹן וּבָנָיו מִצֹּת תֹּאכַל בְּמִקּוֹם קֹדֶשׁ בְּחֹצֵר אֶהֱל-מוֹעֵד יֶאֱכְלוּהָ: י לֹא  
תֵאָפֶה חֲמִיץ חֲלָקִים נִתְתִּי אֶתָּה מֵאֲשֵׁי קֹדֶשׁ קֹדְשִׁים הוּא כְּחֹטְאֵת וּכְאֲשֵׁם:  
יֵא כָל-זָכָר בְּבִגְי אֶהְרֹן יֶאֱכְלֶנָּה חֶק-עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם מֵאֲשֵׁי יְיָ כָּל  
אֲשֶׁר-יִגַע בָּהֶם יִקְדָּשׁ:

**(7) And this is the ritual of the meal offering: Aaron's sons shall present it before the Lord, in front of the altar.**

**(8) A handful of the choice flour and oil of the meal offering shall be taken from it, with all the frankincense that is on the meal offering, and this shall be turned into smoke on the altar as a pleasing odor to the Lord.**

**(9) Aaron and his sons shall eat the remainder of it; it shall be eaten as unleavened cakes in the sacred precinct; they shall eat it in the enclosure of the Tent of Meeting.**

**(10) It shall not be baked with leaven. I have given it as their portion from My offerings by fire; it is most holy, like the sin offering and the guilt offering.**

**(11) Like the sin offering and the guilt offering, it is most holy; any male among Aaron's descendants may eat of it. It is a due for all time throughout the ages, from the Lord's offerings by fire. Whatever touches these shall become holy.**

**(7) And this is the ritual of the meal offering:** Earlier in Chapter 2, several types of meal offerings were listed, including uncooked flour. It is specified here that, from this flour, after separating and burning the “handful,” unleavened cakes are to be baked in the sacred precinct, only in the courtyard of the Temple.

**(10) It shall not be baked with leaven. I have given it as their portion from My offerings by fire:** In this case, the priests’ food is regarded as part of the “food of the altar,” and consequently, the prohibition of leaven applies to it as well.

**(11) Any male among Aaron’s descendants may eat of it, from the Lord’s offerings by fire:** Even priests with physical blemishes, who were not allowed to participate in the service (see below, 21:16), could eat it.

**Whatever touches these shall become holy:** This applies only to other types of food. If they come into contact with the meal offering, they also acquire the status of holiness and may be eaten only by priests in the Temple courtyard.

There are three statuses of objects concerning ritual purity: holy, clean profane, and unclean profane. Holiness, like impurity, can spread to food and other clean profane objects that are susceptible to it. Consequently, any susceptible clean object that comes into contact with an unclean object becomes unclean, while any susceptible clean object that comes into contact with a holy object becomes holy. When holy and unclean profane objects come into contact, the holy object not only loses its holiness but also acquires the status of “defiled holy.” Such an object can no longer be used as sacred or profane and must, therefore, be burned. In other words, there is no such thing as “formerly holy.”

### § 8.3. THE MEAL OFFERING FOR THE PRIEST (6:12-16)

יב וַיְדַבֵּר יְיָ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: יג זֶה קָרְבַּן אֲהָרֹן וּבָנָיו אֲשֶׁר-יִקְרִיבוּ  
 לְיָ בַיּוֹם הַמָּשָׁח אֹתוֹ עֲשִׂירֵת הָאֵפֶה סֵלֹת מִנֻּחָה תִמְיֵד מִחֲצִיתָהּ בַּבֶּקֶר  
 וּמִחֲצִיתָהּ בָּעָרֶב: יד עַל-מִחְבַּת בִּשְׁמֹן בִּשְׁמֹן תַּעֲשֶׂה מִרְפָּכֶת תְּבִיאֲנָהּ  
 תִּפְיִנִי תִּפְיִנִי מִנְּחַת פְּתַיִם תִּקְרִיב רִיחַ-גִּיחָם לְיָ: טו וְהִכֹּתוּ הַמִּשְׁיֵם תַּחְתּוּ

מִבְּנֵי יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָהּ חֶק-עוֹלָם לִי כָּלִיל תִּקְטָר: טז וְכָל-מִנְחַת פֶּהוּ כָּלִיל  
תִּהְיֶה לֹא תֵאָכֵל:

**(12) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:**

**(13) This is the offering that Aaron and his sons shall offer to the LORD on the occasion of his anointment: a tenth of an ephah of choice flour as a continual meal offering, half of it in the morning and half of it in the evening,**

**(14) shall be prepared with oil on a griddle; you shall bring it well soaked, and offer it as a meal offering of baked slices, of pleasing odor to the LORD.**

**(15) And so shall the priest, anointed from among his sons to succeed him, prepare it; it is the LORD's – a law for all time – to be turned entirely into smoke.**

**(16) So, too, every meal offering of a priest shall be a whole offering: it shall not be eaten.**

**(13) On the occasion of his anointment, as a continual meal offering:** The careful reader will notice the apparent contradiction in verse 13, where the priest is commanded to bring a continual (that is, regularly offered) meal sacrifice on the occasion of his anointing. In fact, an ordinary priest does not receive anointing, as he inherits his status by birth. In contrast, the High Priest is anointed, since this status is not inherited by birth. However, the anointing is a one-time event, while the continual offerings are to be practiced daily. The halachic interpretation of this verse is as follows: an ordinary priest offers this sacrifice only once, at the age of twenty when his service in the Temple begins, and this offering effectively validates the anointing he inherited from Aaron. Conversely, the High Priest brings such a meal offering daily. The plain reading of this passage suggests that, ideally, the meal offering commemorating the anointing should be made daily. A regular priest serves in the Temple all his life and thus may begin to view his service as routine – to prevent this, his personal meal offering should remind him daily of the importance of his function in the Temple.

A priest's meal offering is entirely transformed into smoke, which should reflect the priest's self-perception: in their service in the Temple, priests do not belong to themselves but to God.

**(15) And so shall the priest, anointed from among his sons to succeed him:** That is, the High Priest.

**(16) So, too, every meal offering of a priest shall be a whole offering:** This should express the mindset of the priests during their service in the Temple: in that sacred space, they do not belong to themselves.

#### § 8.4. THE SIN OFFERING (6:17-23)

יז וַיְדַבֵּר יְיָ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: יח דַּבֵּר אֶל-אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל-בְּנָיו לֵאמֹר זֹאת תֹּורַת הַחֲטָאֹת בְּמִקְוֹם אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁחֹט הָעֹלָה תִשְׁחֹט הַחֲטָאֹת לִפְנֵי יְיָ קֹדֶשׁ קֹדָשִׁים הוּא: יט הִפְתִּיחֻן הַמִּחְטָא אֹתָהּ יֹאכְלֶנָה בְּמִקְוֹם קֹדֶשׁ תֹּאכְלֶנָה בְּחֹצֵר אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד: כ כֹּל אֲשֶׁר-יִגַּע בְּבִשְׂרָהּ יִקְדָּשׁ וְאֲשֶׁר יִזֶּה מִדְּמָהּ עַל-הַבְּגָד אֲשֶׁר אֲשֶׁר עָלֶיהָ תִּכָּבֵס בְּמִקְוֹם קֹדֶשׁ: כא וְכֹל־יִתְרֹשׁ אֲשֶׁר אֲשֶׁר תִּבְשַׁל-בּוֹ יִשְׁבֵּר וְאִם-בְּכֵלִי נֹחַשֶׁת בִּשְׂלָהּ וּמִרְקַב וּשְׂטָף בְּמַיִם: כב כֹּל-זֶכֶר בְּפִהָגִים יֹאכְל אֹתָהּ קֹדֶשׁ קֹדֶשׁ הַקֹּדָשִׁים הוּא: כג וְכֹל-חֲטָאֹת אֲשֶׁר יֹבֵא מִדְּמָה אֶל-אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לְכַפֵּר בַּקֹּדֶשׁ לֹא תֹאכְל בְּאֵשׁ תִּשְׂרֹף:

**(17) The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:**

**(18) Speak to Aaron and his sons: This is the ritual of the sin offering. The sin offering shall be slaughtered before the Lord, at the spot where the burnt offering is slaughtered: it is most holy.**

**(19) The priest who offers it as a sin offering shall eat of it; it shall be eaten in the sacred precinct, in the enclosure of the Tent of Meeting.**

**(20) Anything that touches its flesh shall become holy; and if any of its blood is spattered on a garment, you shall wash the spattered part in a sacred place.**

**(21) An earthen vessel in which it was boiled shall be broken; if it was boiled in a copper vessel, that shall be scoured and rinsed with water.**

**(22) Only the males in the priestly line may eat of it: it is most holy.**

**(23) But no sin offering may be eaten from which any blood is brought into the Tent of Meeting for expiation in the sanctuary; any such shall be consumed in fire.**

**(19) The priest who offers it as a sin offering shall eat of it:** The priest who presents the sin offering on behalf of another must consume a portion of its meat, thereby establishing a connection with it. This is part of the purification process.

**(20) Anything that touches its flesh shall become holy:** As mentioned earlier (verse 11) about the meal offering.

**and if any of its blood is spattered on a garment, you shall wash the spattered part in a sacred place:** No parts of a sin offering, like all offerings categorized as Most Holy, may be removed from the Temple. This specifically includes blood spatters on garments.

**(21) An earthen vessel in which it was boiled shall be broken:** A vessel made of clay absorbs and retains some of the food boiled in it, which cannot be entirely removed. The residue in the vessel becomes part of the offering not consumed within the prescribed time and must be destroyed.

This law applies to all offerings: an earthen vessel used for boiling them must be broken. As a result, in areas of the Land of Israel where sacrifices were offered for an extended time, numerous fragments of broken clay vessels remain. Archaeologists identify and date these locations based on ceramic shards.

**If it was boiled in a copper vessel, that shall be scoured and rinsed with water:** The walls of a copper vessel do not absorb particles from the food boiled inside; therefore, once it is scoured and rinsed, it is ready for reuse.

**(22) it is most holy:** In the earlier sections of Leviticus, “the section of Moses,” the sin offering was not referred to as “most holy.” This title is only attributed in *Tzav*, “the section of Aaron.” From the offerer’s perspective, this sacrifice does not represent the primary offering for drawing nearer to God. However, from the priests’ viewpoint, the sin offering, serving as a means of purification, stands out as one of the most significant.

**(23) But no sin offering may be eaten from which any blood is brought into the Tent of Meeting for expiation in the sanctuary;**

**any such shall be consumed in fire:** In specific cases of higher-level sin offerings, such as those for the sin of the High Priest, the entire community, or the offering of Yom Kippur, the blood is brought into the Tent of Meeting and sprinkled there, rather than at the outer altar. Sin offerings of this level cannot be “internalized” by the priest; therefore, they are not eaten but burned.

### § 8.5. THE GUILT OFFERING AND THE PRIESTS' PORTIONS (7:1-10)

א וּנְזֹאת תֹורֶת הָאֲשָׁם קֹדֶשׁ קֹדֶשׁ קֹדֶשׁ הַקֹּדְשִׁים הוּא: ב בַּמִּקְוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁחֲטוּ  
אֶת-הָעֹלָה יִשְׁחֲטוּ אֶת-הָאֲשָׁם וְאֶת-דָּמֹו יִזְרֹק עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב: ג וְאֶת  
כָּל-חֲלָבֹו יִקְרִיב מִמֶּנּוּ אֶת הָאֹלֶיָה וְאֶת-הַחֵלֶב הַמְכֻסֶּה אֶת-הַקָּרֵב: ד וְאֶת  
שְׂתֵי שְׂתֵי הַכְּלָיִת וְאֶת-הַחֵלֶב אֲשֶׁר עָלֵיהֶן אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַכֹּסְלִים וְאֶת-הַיִּתְרֹת  
עַל-הַכַּבֵּד עַל-הַכְּלָיִת יִסְרֹגָה: ה וְהִקְטִיר אֹתָם הַפֹּהֵן הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֲשֶׁה לְגִי  
אֲשָׁם הוּא: ו כָּל-זָכָר בְּפִתְגָם יֵאָכְלוּ בַּמִּקְוֹם בַּמִּקְוֹם קְדוֹשׁ יֵאָכֵל קֹדֶשׁ  
קֹדְשִׁים הוּא: ז כַּחֲטָאת כָּאֲשָׁם תֹורָה אַחַת לָהֶם הַכֹּהֵן אֲשֶׁר יִכְפֹר-בֹו לֹו  
יִהְיֶה: ח וְהַפֹּהֵן הַמְקָרִיב אֶת-עֹלֹת אִישׁ עֹזֵר הָעֹלָה אֲשֶׁר הַקָּרִיב לַפֹּהֵן לֹו  
יִהְיֶה: ט וְכָל-מִנְחָה אֲשֶׁר תֵאָפֵה בַתָּוִר וְכָל-בְּעֻשָׁה בַמִּרְחֶשֶׁת וְעַל-מִחְבַּת  
לַפֹּהֵן הַמְקָרִיב אֹתָהּ לֹו תִהְיֶה: י וְכָל-מִנְחָה בְלוֹלָה-בְּשֶׁמֶן וְחִרְבָּה לְכָל-בְּגִי  
אֲהָרֹן תִהְיֶה אִישׁ כְּאֲחֵיו:

- (1) This is the ritual of the guilt offering: it is most holy.
- (2) The guilt offering shall be slaughtered at the spot where the burnt offering is slaughtered, and its blood shall be dashed on all sides of the altar.
- (3) All its fat shall be offered: the broad tail; the fat that covers the entrails;
- (4) the two kidneys and the fat that is on them at the loins; and the protuberance on the liver, which shall be removed with the kidneys.
- (5) The priest shall turn them into smoke on the altar as an offering by fire to the LORD; it is a guilt offering.
- (6) Only the males in the priestly line may eat of it; it shall be eaten in the sacred precinct; it is most holy.

**(7) The guilt offering is like the sin offering, there is the same ritual for them: it shall belong to the priest who makes expiation thereby.**

**(8) So, too, the priest who offers a man's burnt offering shall keep the skin of the burnt offering that he offered.**

**(9) Further, all meal offerings that are baked in the oven and all that are prepared in a pan or on a griddle shall belong to the priest who offers them;**

**(10) but every other meal offering, with oil mixed in or dry, shall be shared equally among all the sons of Aaron.**

**(1) This is the ritual of the guilt offering: it is most holy:** The *asham*, or guilt offering, is similar in many ways to the sin offering (*hatat*) and also has the status of Most Holy.

**(2) and its blood shall be dashed on all sides of the altar:** This refers to the outer altar of burnt offering, located in the Temple courtyard. However, unlike the sin offering, for which the priest applied the blood to the horns of the altar, the blood of the guilt offering was merely dashed on the walls of the altar, below its middle section. This distinction reflects that the transgressions for which the guilt offering was brought caused less harm to the Temple, meaning the overall sanctity required a lower level of atonement.

**(7) The guilt offering is like the sin offering, there is the same ritual for them:** The rules governing these offerings are the same, but their purposes, although related, are different.

**(8) So, too, the priest who offers a man's burnt offering shall keep the skin of the burnt offering that he offered:** Earlier (1:6), it was stated that the skin of the burnt offering is removed, symbolizing that not everything in the world can be elevated. Here, it is clarified that the skin is given to the priest. Even elements that cannot be elevated can still be utilized properly.

**(9) Further, all meal offerings that are baked in the oven and all that are prepared in a pan or on a griddle shall belong to the priest who offers them:** The priest performing the atonement is required to eat from the offering, thus personally participating

in the process of atonement. Other priests may also eat from this offering.

**(10) But every other meal offering, with oil mixed in or dry, shall be shared equally among all the sons of Aaron:** The priests function as a united congregation, and these offerings are shared equally among them.

#### § 8.6. THE PEACE OFFERING (7:11-21)

יא וְנָתַת תּוֹבַח תּוֹבַח זָבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים הַשְּׁלָמִים אֲשֶׁר יִקְרִיב לַיְי: יב אֶל-עַל-תּוֹדָה יִקְרִיבוּ וְהִקְרִיב | על-זָבַח הַתּוֹדָה חֲלֹת מִצּוֹת בְּלוּלֹת בְּשֶׁמֶן וְרִקְיָקִי מִצּוֹת מִשְׁחִים בְּשֶׁמֶן וְכֹלֹת מִרְפֻּכַת חֲלֹת בְּלוּלֹת בְּשֶׁמֶן: יג על-חֲלֹת לֶחֶם חֶמֶץ יִקְרִיב קָרְבָּנוֹ עַל-זָבַח תּוֹבַח שְׁלָמִיו: יד וְהִקְרִיב מִמֶּנּוּ אֶחָד מִכָּל-קָרְבָּנוֹ תְּרוּמָה לַיְי לַכֹּהֵן הַזֶּכֶּה אֶת-דָּם הַשְּׁלָמִים לוֹ יִהְיֶה: טו וּבִשֹׁר זָבַח תּוֹבַח שְׁלָמִיו בְּיוֹם קָרְבָּנוֹ יֵאָכֵל לֹא-נֵצִיחַ מִמֶּנּוּ עַד-בֶּקֶר: טז וְאִם-גֵּדָר | אִו נִדְבָּה זָבַח קָרְבָּנוֹ בְּיוֹם הִקְרִיבוֹ אֶת-זָבָחוֹ יֵאָכֵל וּמִמְחֲרָת וְהִנּוֹתָר מִמֶּנּוּ יֵאָכֵל: יז וְהִנּוֹתָר מִבִּשֹׁר הַזָּבַח בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי בָּאֵשׁ יִשְׂרָף: יח וְאִם הָאָכֵל יֵאָכֵל מִבִּשֹׁר-זָבַח שְׁלָמִיו בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי לֹא יִרְצָה הַמִּקְרִיב אֹתוֹ לֹא יִחָשֵׁב לוֹ כְּזֹל יִהְיֶה וְהִנְפֹּשׁ הָאֲכֵלֹת מִמֶּנּוּ עֹגָה תִּשָּׂא: יט וְהִבְשִׁיר אֲשֶׁר-יִגַּע בְּכָל-טָמֵא לֹא יֵאָכֵל בָּאֵשׁ יִשְׂרָף וְהִבְשִׁיר כָּל-טְהוֹר יֵאָכֵל בְּשֹׁר: כ וְהִנְפֹּשׁ אֲשֶׁר-תֵּאָכֵל בִּשֹׁר מִזָּבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים אֲשֶׁר לַיְי וְטָמְאָתוֹ עָלְיוֹ וְנִכְרְתָה הַנְּפֹשׁ הַהוּא מֵעַמִּיהֶ: כא וְנָפֵשׁ כִּי-תִגַּע בְּכָל-טָמֵא בְּטָמְאָת אָדָם אִו | בְּבִהֵמָה טָמְאָה אִו בְּכָל-שִׂקָץ טָמֵא וְאָכֵל מִבִּשֹׁר-זָבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים אֲשֶׁר לַיְי וְנִכְרְתָה הַנְּפֹשׁ הַהוּא מֵעַמִּיהֶ:

**(11) This is the ritual of the sacrifice of well-being that one may offer to the LORD:**

**(12) If he offers it for thanksgiving, he shall offer together with the sacrifice of thanksgiving unleavened cakes with oil mixed in, unleavened wafers spread with oil, and cakes of choice flour with oil mixed in, well soaked.**

**(13) This offering, with cakes of leavened bread added, he shall offer along with his thanksgiving sacrifice of well-being.**

(14) Out of this he shall offer one of each kind as a gift to the LORD; it shall go to the priest who dashes the blood of the offering of well-being.

(15) And the flesh of his thanksgiving sacrifice of well-being shall be eaten on the day that it is offered; none of it shall be set aside until morning.

(16) If, however, the sacrifice he offers is a votive or a freewill offering, it shall be eaten on the day that he offers his sacrifice, and what is left of it shall be eaten on the morrow.

(17) What is then left of the flesh of the sacrifice shall be consumed in fire on the third day.

(18) If any of the flesh of his sacrifice of well-being is eaten on the third day, it shall not be acceptable; it shall not count for the one who offered it. It shall be considered an offensive thing, and the person who eats of it shall bear his guilt.

(19) Flesh that touches anything unclean shall not be eaten; it shall be consumed in fire. As for other flesh, only he who is clean may eat such flesh.

(20) But the person who, in a state of uncleanness, eats flesh from the LORD's sacrifice of well-being, that person shall be cut off from his kin.

(21) When a person touches anything unclean, be it human uncleanness or an unclean animal or any unclean creature, and eats flesh from the LORD's sacrifice of well-being, that person shall be cut off from his kin.

(11) **This is the ritual of the sacrifice of well-being:** This section discusses two types of well-being sacrifices, each with different rules for offering and consumption: *todah*, the thanksgiving offering; *neder*, the votive offering, and *nedavah*, the freewill offering.

(12) **If he offers it for thanksgiving:** Such sacrifices were primarily offered in gratitude for being saved from danger.

**he shall offer together with the sacrifice of thanksgiving unleavened cakes with oil mixed in, unleavened wafers spread**

**with oil, and cakes of choice flour with oil mixed in, well soaked:** These are various types of unleavened bread, each with distinct flavors – some are similar to bread, while others resemble pies – because variety is important at a festive meal.

**(13) This offering, with cakes of leavened bread added, he shall offer along with his thanksgiving sacrifice of well-being:** This is the fourth type of bread included in the thanksgiving offering. Leavened bread, generally more delicious than unleavened bread, brings greater joy, which is essential for a family celebration. Leavened bread is permitted because these breads were not placed on the altar but were given to priests for consumption.

**(14) Out of this he shall offer one of each kind as a gift to the LORD; it shall go to the priest who dashes the blood of the offering of well-being:** A total of forty loaves were baked, ten of each kind. One from each group was given to the priest as a representative of the Divine, while the remaining nine were used for the offerer's festive meal with his guests.

**(15) And the flesh of his thanksgiving sacrifice of well-being shall be eaten on the day that it is offered; none of it shall be set aside until morning:** The meat and thirty-six loaves must be consumed in one day. To achieve this, the offerer would gather relatives and friends to organize a large celebration. Gratitude should be expressed promptly and abundantly, without delay.

**(16) If, however, the sacrifice he offers is a votive or a freewill offering, it shall be eaten on the day that he offers his sacrifice, and what is left of it shall be eaten on the morrow:** In the case of a votive or freewill offering – typically associated with a family celebration – the ritual does not need to be as intense. Fewer loaves are required, and the extended timeframe for consumption allows for a more relaxed and private gathering, aligning with the nature of such celebrations.

**(17) What is then left of the flesh of the sacrifice shall be consumed in fire on the third day:** This applies to all sacrifices: any remains not consumed within the designated time must be burned.

**(18) If any of the flesh of his sacrifice of well-being is eaten on the third day, it shall not be acceptable:** Prolonging the consumption of sacrificial meat into a routine undermines the spiritual intention of the offering.

**the person who eats of it shall bear his guilt:** The Temple is a place of profound spiritual intensity. It fosters closeness to God, but inappropriate conduct there results in serious consequences.

**(19) Flesh that touches anything unclean shall not be eaten; it shall be consumed in fire:** If something holy comes into contact with impurity, it becomes profaned holiness, disqualifying it from being eaten and requiring it to be burned.

**he who is clean may eat such flesh:** Any Israelite may eat the meat of well-being sacrifices, provided he has not become defiled and remains ritually clean.

**(20) But the person who, in a state of uncleanness, eats flesh from the LORD's sacrifice of well-being, that person shall be cut off from his kin:** Participating in the festive meal of a sacrificial offering reflects the Jewish people's role as the "kingdom of priests for humanity." Neglecting the rules required for priests leads to being cut off from the priestly nation.

#### § 8.7. THE PROHIBITION AGAINST EATING FAT AND BLOOD (7:22-27)

כב וַיְדַבֵּר יְיָ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: כג דַּבַּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר כֹּל-חֵלֶב  
שׁוֹר וְכֶשֶׂב וְעִז לֹא תֹאכְלוּ: כד וְחֵלֶב בְּבִלְהָ וְחֵלֶב טְרֵפָה יַעֲשֶׂה לְכֹל-  
מְלֹאכָה וְאָכַל לֹא תֹאכְלֶהּ: כה כִּי כֹל-אֲכָל חֵלֶב מִן-הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר יִקְרִיב  
מִמֶּנָּה אִשָּׁה לִגִּי וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הָאֹכֶלֶת הָאֹכֶלֶת מֵעַמִּי: כו וְכֹל-דָּם לֹא  
תֹאכְלוּ בְּכֹל מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם לְעֹרֹף וּלְבִהֶמָה: כז כֹּל-גֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר-תֹאכַל כָּל-דָּם  
וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא מֵעַמִּי:

**(22) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:**

**(23) Speak to the Israelite people thus: You shall eat no fat of ox or sheep or goat.**

**(24) Fat from animals that died or were torn by beasts may be put to any use, but you must not eat it.**

**(25) If anyone eats the fat of animals from which offerings by fire may be made to the LORD, the person who eats it shall be cut off from his kin.**

**(26) And you must not consume any blood, either of bird or of animal, in any of your settlements.**

**(27) Anyone who eats blood shall be cut off from his kin.**

**(23) You shall eat no fat of ox or sheep or goat:** This prohibition was mentioned earlier (3:17) and is related to the fact that fat and blood are offered on the altar. In Tzav, where the laws regarding the consumption of sacrificial offerings are detailed, the prohibitions against eating fat and blood are also clarified.

**(24) Fat from animals that died** refers to an animal that died of natural causes.

**or were torn by beasts** refers to an animal that has been killed by a predator or slaughtered improperly.

**may be put to any use, but you must not eat it:** It has already been stated that such animals are prohibited as food. Here, the emphasis is on their internal fat. Since fat has a unique status and these animals are unsuitable for sacrifice, one might mistakenly believe their fat loses its sacred status and is permissible for consumption. To counter this, the Torah reiterates the prohibition.

**(25) If anyone eats the fat of animals from which offerings by fire may be made to the LORD, the person who eats it shall be cut off from his kin:** When an animal is offered as a sacrifice, with its fat intended to be burned on the altar, the penalty for violating this prohibition increases significantly.

**(26) And you must not consume any blood, either of bird or of animal, in any of your settlements:** Previously (3:17), a general prohibition against consuming blood was given. Here, it is specified that this prohibition applies particularly to birds and livestock but does not extend to fish.

**(27) Anyone who eats blood shall be cut off from his kin:** The severe penalty highlights the significance of this prohibition,

emphasizing the sacredness of blood as a symbol of life and its exclusive dedication to God.

§ 8.8. THE PRIESTS' SHARE OF THE WELL-BEING  
OFFERINGS (7:28-38)

כח וינדבֵר יי אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: כט דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר המִקְרִיב אֶת-זֶבַח שְׁלָמָיו לְיֵי יְבִיא אֶת-קָרְבָּנוֹ לְיֵי מִזְבַּח שְׁלָמָיו: ל יִדְרוּ תְּבִיאֵינָה אֶת אֲשֵׁי יֵי אֶת-הַחֶלֶב עַל-הַחֹזֶה יְבִיאֵנוּ אֶת הַחֹזֶה לְהַגִּיף אִתּוֹ תְּנוּפָה לְפָנֵי יֵי: לא וְהִקְטִיר הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-הַחֶלֶב הַמְזֻבָּח הַמְזֻבָּח וְהִיָּה הַחֹזֶה לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו: לב וְאֵת שׁוֹק הַיָּמִין תִּתְּנוּ תִתְּנוּ תְּרוּמָה לְכֹהֵן מִזְבְּחֵי שְׁלָמֵיכֶם: לג הַמִּקְרִיב אֶת-דָּם הַשְּׁלָמִים וְאֶת-הַחֶלֶב מִבְּנֵי אֶהְרֹן לֹ תִהְיֶה שׁוֹק הַיָּמִין לְמִנְחָה: לד כִּי אֶת-חֹזֶה הַתְּנוּפָה וְאֵת ׀ שׁוֹק הַתְּרוּמָה לְקַחְתִּיל מֵאֵת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִזְבְּחֵי שְׁלָמֵיהֶם וְאִתָּם אִתָּם לְאַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן וּלְבָנָיו לְחֶק-עוֹלָם מֵאֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: לה זֹאת מִשְׁחַת אֶהְרֹן וּמִשְׁחַת בְּנָיו מֵאֲשֵׁי יֵי בְיוֹם הַקָּרִיב אִתָּם לְכַהֵן לְיֵי: לו אֲשֶׁר צָנָה יֵי לְתֵת לָהֶם בְּיוֹם מִשְׁחָן אִתָּם מֵאֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל חֶקֶת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתָם: לז זֹאת הַתּוֹרָה לַעֲלֹה לְמִנְחָה וְלַחֲטָאת וְלֶאֱשִׁים וְלַמְלוּאִים וּלְזֶבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים: לח אֲשֶׁר צָנָה יֵי אֶת-מִשְׁחָה בְּהָרֶם סִינַי בְּיוֹם בְּרִית צוּרָתוֹ אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַקְרִיב אֶת-קָרְבָּנֵיהֶם לְיֵי בַּמִּדְבָּר סִינַי:

**(28) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:**

**(29) Speak to the Israelite people thus: The offering to the LORD from a sacrifice of well-being must be presented by the one who offers his sacrifice of well-being to the LORD:**

**(30) His own hands shall present the LORD's offerings by fire: he shall present the fat with the breast, the breast to be elevated as an elevation offering before the LORD.**

**(31) The priest shall turn the fat into smoke on the altar, and the breast shall go to Aaron and his sons.**

**(32) And the right thigh from your sacrifices of well-being you shall give to the priest as a gift;**

**(33) he from among Aaron's sons who offers the blood and the fat of the offering of well-being shall get the right thigh as his portion.**

**(34) For I have taken the breast of elevation offering and the thigh of gift offering from the Israelites, from their sacrifices of well-being, and given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons, as their due from the Israelites for all time.**

**(35) Those shall be the perquisites of Aaron and the perquisites of his sons from the LORD's offerings by fire, once they have been inducted to serve the LORD as priests;**

**(36) these the LORD commanded to be given them, once they had been anointed, as a due from the Israelites for all time throughout the ages.**

**(37) Such are the rituals of the burnt offering, the meal offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the offering of ordination, and the sacrifice of well-being,**

**(38) with which the LORD charged Moses on Mount Sinai, when He commanded that the Israelites present their offerings to the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai.**

**(29) The offering to the LORD from a sacrifice of well-being must be presented by the one who offers his sacrifice of well-being to the LORD:** The offerer of the well-being sacrifice personally separated the portions designated for the altar and the priest. This ensured that he was not just handing over the animal to the Temple but was actively participating in the offering process.

**(30) His own hands shall present the LORD's offerings by fire: he shall present the fat with the breast, the breast to be elevated as an elevation offering before the LORD:** The breast, referred to as the "breast of elevation," symbolizes human thoughts and aspirations. The offerer would symbolically raise these parts and hand them to the priest.

**(32) And the right thigh from your sacrifices of well-being you shall give to the priest as a gift:** Known as the "thigh of offering," this represents physical strength and forward thrust. Thus, the priest received two parts of the animal: the breast, which remained on the altar as an elevation offering and symbolized the

---

priest's connection to the Divine, and the thigh, which was a gift directly from the offerer and symbolized the priest's connection to the people. The rest of the meat from the well-being offering served as a festive meal for the offerer and his guests.

**(33) He from among Aaron's sons who offers the blood and the fat of the offering of well-being shall get the right thigh as his portion:** This emphasizes the unique bond between the priest conducting the ritual and the offerer.

**(34) For I have taken the breast of elevation offering and the thigh of gift offering from the Israelites, from their sacrifices of well-being, and given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons:** The offerings intended for the priests were not specified in *Vayikra*, which emphasizes the offerer. In *Tzav*, however, where the focus shifts to the priests, these provisions are thoroughly detailed.

**(35) Those shall be the perquisites of Aaron and the perquisites of his sons from the LORD's offerings by fire, once they have been inducted to serve the LORD as priests:** Priests can perform their duties only when the people acknowledge and reaffirm their connection to them.

**(37-38) Such are the rituals of the burnt offering ... with which the LORD charged Moses on Mount Sinai:** The commandments regarding sacrifices, given in the Tabernacle "in the wilderness of Sinai," parallel those received on Mount Sinai itself.

## § 9. THE CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS

### § 9.1. THE VESTMENTS OF THE PRIESTS (8:1-13)

א וינדבֹר יי אל-מִשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ב קח אֶת-אֶהֱרֹן וְאֶת-בְּנָיו אִתּוֹ וְאֵת הַבְּגָדִים וְאֵת שְׁמֹן הַמִּשְׁחָה וְאֵת אֶל-פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד: ד וַיַּעַשׂ מִשֶׁה מִשֶׁה כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יי אֹתוֹ וַתִּקְהַל הָעֵדָה אֶל-פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד: ה וַיֹּאמֶר מִשֶׁה אֶל-הָעֵדָה זֶה זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּה יי לַעֲשׂוֹת: ו וַיִּקְרַב וַיִּקְרַב מִשֶׁה אֶת-אֶהֱרֹן וְאֶת-בְּנָיו וַיִּרְחֹץ אֹתָם בַּמַּיִם: ז וַיִּתֵּן עֲלֵיו אֶת-הַכֹּהֲנֹת וַיַּחְגֵּר אֹתוֹ בְּאַבְנֹת וַיִּלְבַּשׂ אֹתוֹ אֶת-הַמַּעֲלִיל וַיִּתֵּן עֲלָיו אֶת-הָאֶפֶד וַיַּחְגֵּר אֹתוֹ בְּחֹשֶׁב הָאֶפֶד וַיֹּאפֶד לוֹ בּוֹ: ח וַיִּשֶׂם עָלָיו אֶת-הַחֹשֶׁן וַיִּתֵּן אֶל-הַחֹשֶׁן אֶת-הָאוּרִים וְאֶת-הַתְּמִים: ט וַיִּשֶׂם אֶת-הַמִּצְנֶפֶת עַל-רֹאשׁוֹ וַיִּשֶׂם עַל-הַמִּצְנֶפֶת אֶל-מִוֵּל פָּנָיו אֵת צִיץ הַזָּהָב גִּזְרֵה הַקֹּדֶשׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יי אֶת-מִשֶׁה: י וַיִּקַּח מִשֶׁה אֶת-שְׁמֹן הַמִּשְׁחָה וַיִּמְשַׁח אֶת-הַמִּשְׁפָּחָה וְאֶת-הַמִּשְׁפָּחָה וְאֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ וַיִּקְדָּשׁ אֹתָם: יא וַיִּזְזוּ מִמֶּנּוּ עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ שְׁבַע פַּעַמִּים וַיִּמְשַׁח אֶת-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְאֶת-כָּל-כְּלָיו וְאֶת-הַכֹּהֲנִים וְאֶת-כָּנּוֹ לְקַדְּשָׁם: יב וַיִּצַק מִשְׁמֵן הַמִּשְׁחָה עַל רֹאשׁ אֶהֱרֹן וַיִּמְשַׁח אֹתוֹ לְקַדְּשׁוֹ: יג וַיִּקְרַב מִשֶׁה אֶת-בְּנָי אֶהֱרֹן וַיִּלְבָּשֵׁם כִּתְנֹת וַיַּחְגֵּר אֹתָם אַבְנֹת וַיִּחְבֹּשׁ לָהֶם מַגְבְּעוֹת כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יי אֶת-מִשֶׁה:

**(1) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:**

**(2) Take Aaron along with his sons, and the vestments, the anointing oil, the bull of sin offering, the two rams, and the basket of unleavened bread;**

**(3) and assemble the whole community at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.**

- (4) Moses did as the LORD commanded him. And when the community was assembled at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting,
- (5) Moses said to the community: “This is what the LORD has commanded to be done.”
- (6) Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons forward and washed them with water.
- (7) He put the tunic on him, girded him with the sash, clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod on him, girding him with the decorated band with which he tied it to him.
- (8) He put the breastpiece on him, and put into the breastpiece the Urim and Thummim.
- (9) And he set the headdress on his head, and on the headdress, in front, he put the gold frontlet, the holy diadem – as the LORD had commanded Moses.
- (10) Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the Tabernacle and all that was in it, thus consecrating them.
- (11) He sprinkled some of it on the altar seven times, anointing the altar, all its utensils, and the laver with its stand, to consecrate them.
- (12) He poured some of the anointing oil upon Aaron’s head and anointed him, to consecrate him.
- (13) Moses then brought Aaron’s sons forward, clothed them in tunics, girded them with sashes, and wound turbans upon them, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

As noted earlier, the Book of Leviticus is divided into three parts: sacrifices, purification from impurity, and holiness. Each part begins with laws and is followed by narratives. *Vayikra* and the first half of *Tzav* focus on the laws of sacrifices. The second half of *Tzav* and *Shemini* describe the events – the induction of the priests and the tragic deaths of Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu.

(2) **Take Aaron along with his sons:** The instructions for anointing the priests were already provided in the Book of Exodus

(*Tetzaveh* 29 and beyond). Here, they are reiterated with additional details and an emphasis on their execution. Chronologically, these events should have taken place before the construction of the Tabernacle (Exodus 40). However, the Torah's narrative is not strictly chronological but rather associative, placing the detailed account of the sanctification of the Tabernacle and the related tragic events in Leviticus after describing the details of the sacrificial ritual.

**take Aaron:** This highlights Moses as the source of the priests' authority and the organizer of the Tabernacle service. Moses commands and acts, while Aaron is depicted as dependent and, like the Tabernacle's vessels, consecrated for service. As we will see later, the moment Aaron's sons act independently, they make a critical mistake.

**(3) And assemble the whole community at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting:** The people regard the priests as their representatives before the Divine, thereby defining their status.

**(5) Moses said to the community: "This is what the LORD has commanded to be done":** Moses emphasizes that he merely executes God's instructions.

**(6) Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons forward:** The Hebrew verb *karav* can also mean "transformed into an offering." As noted earlier, during the service, Aaron and the priests lose their autonomy and become an integral part of the Tabernacle.

**and washed them with water:** This refers to immersion in a *mikveh*.

**(7) He put the tunic on him, girded him with the sash, clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod on him, girding him with the decorated band with which he tied it to him:** These are the garments worn by the High Priest as described in Exodus 28.

**(10) Moses took the anointing oil:** The Tabernacle is a source of light, and thus all anointing is performed with olive oil, which in ancient times was primarily used for illumination.

**and anointed the Tabernacle and all that was in it, thus consecrating them:** The priests and the Tabernacle were sanctified at the same time.

**(12) He poured some of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head and anointed him, to consecrate him:** In the future, all High Priests will be anointed in the same manner.

**(13) Moses then brought Aaron's sons forward, clothed them in tunics, girded them with sashes, and wound turbans upon them, as the LORD had commanded Moses:** These are the garments worn by ordinary priests. Moses personally prepared Aaron's sons, serving as the High Priest, with Aaron acting as his deputy. Furthermore, it was Moses, not Aaron, who offered the initial sacrifices for purification and to induct Aaron into his role.

#### § 9.2. THE CONSECRATION PROCEDURE (8:14-36)

יד ויגֹשׁ אֶת פֶּרֶק הַסִּטָּאת הַחֲטָאת וַיִּסְמֹךְ אֹהֶרֶן וַיִּבְנוֹ אֶת-יְדֵיהֶם עַל-רֹאשׁ פֶּרֶק הַסִּטָּאת: טו וַיִּשְׁחֹט וַיִּקַּח מִשֶּׁה אֶת-הַדָּם וַיִּתֵּן עַל-קַרְנוֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ וַיִּחַטֵּא אֶת-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְאֶת-הַדָּם יִצַק אֶל-יְסוּד הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וַיִּקְדָּשֵׁהוּ וַיִּקְדָּשֵׁהוּ לַכֹּהֵן עָלָיו: טז וַיִּקַּח אֶת-כָּל-הַחֲלָב אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַקֶּרֶב וְאֵת יִתְרַת הַכֹּהֵן וְאֶת-שְׁתֵּי הַכְּלִיֹּת וְאֶת-חֲלִבֵּהוּ וַיִּקְטֹר מִשֶּׁה הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: יז וְאֶת-הַפֶּר וְאֶת-עֵרוֹ וְאֶת-בִּשְׂרוֹ וְאֶת-פְּרִשׁוֹ שֶׁנָּרַף בְּאֵשׁ מִחוּץ לַמִּחֲנֶה כְּאֲשֶׁר פָּאָשֶׁר צִנָּה יְיָ אֶת-מִשֶּׁה: יח וַיִּקְרָב אֶת אֵיל הָעֹלָה וַיִּסְמְכוּ אֹהֶרֶן וַיִּבְנוּ אֶת-יְדֵיהֶם עַל-רֹאשׁ הָאֵיל: יט וַיִּשְׁחֹט וַיִּזְרַק מִשֶּׁה אֶת-הַדָּם עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב: כ וְאֶת-הָאֵיל נָתַח לְנִתְחָיו וַיִּקְטֹר מִשֶּׁה אֶת-הָרֹאשׁ וְאֶת-הַנְּתָחִים וְאֶת-הַפְּדֵר: כא וְאֶת-הַקֶּרֶב וְאֶת-הַכְּרָעִים רָתַץ בַּמַּיִם וַיִּקְטֹר מִשֶּׁה אֶת-כָּל-הָאֵיל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ עֲלֶיהָ הוּא לְרִיחַ-נִיחֹחַ אֲשֶׁה הוּא לְיְיָ כְּאֲשֶׁר צִנָּה יְיָ אֶת-מִשֶּׁה: כב וַיִּקְרָב אֶת-הָאֵיל הַשְּׂנִי אֵיל הַמִּלְאִים וַיִּסְמְכוּ אֹהֶרֶן וַיִּבְנוּ אֶת-יְדֵיהֶם עַל-רֹאשׁ הָאֵיל: כג וַיִּשְׁחֹט וַיִּקַּח מִשֶּׁה מִדְּמֹו וַיִּתֵּן עַל-תְּנוּפֵה אֲזוֹ-אֹהֶרֶן הַיְמָנִית וְעַל-בֶּהֱוֹ יְדוֹ הַיְמָנִית וְעַל-בֶּהֱוֹ רֵגְלוֹ הַיְמָנִית: כד וַיִּקְרָב אֶת-בְּנֵי אֹהֶרֶן וַיִּתֵּן מִשֶּׁה מִן-הַדָּם עַל-תְּנוּפֵה אֲזַנָּם הַיְמָנִית וְעַל-בֶּהֱוֹ יְדָם הַיְמָנִית וְעַל-בֶּהֱוֹ רֵגְלָם הַיְמָנִית וַיִּזְרַק מִשֶּׁה אֶת-הַדָּם עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב: כה וַיִּקַּח אֶת-הַחֲלָב וְאֶת-הָאֵלֶּיָה וְאֶת-כָּל-הַחֲלָב אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַקֶּרֶב וְאֵת יִתְרַת הַכֹּהֵן וְאֶת-שְׁתֵּי הַכְּלִיֹּת וְאֶת-חֲלִבֵּהוּ וְאֵת שׂוֹק הַיְמָיִן: כו וּמִסֵּל הַמִּצָּוֹת אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי יְיָ לְקַח חֵלֶת מִצֶּה אַחַת וְחֵלֶת לֶחֶם שֶׁמֶן אַחַת וַרְקִיק אֶחָד וַיִּשֶׂם עַל-הַחֲלָבִים וְעַל שׂוֹק הַיְמָיִן: כז וַיִּתֵּן אֶת-הַכֹּל עַל כַּפֵּי אֹהֶרֶן וְעַל כַּפֵּי בְנָיו וַיִּנָּר אֲתָם תְּנוּפֵה תְנוּפֵה לִפְנֵי יְיָ: כח וַיִּקַּח מִשֶּׁה אֲתָם מֵעַל

כפי־הם וניקטו המזבחה על-העלִה מלאים הם לְרִיחַ נִיחֹם אִשָּׁה הוּא לְיִי:  
 כט וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת-הַחֹזֶה וַיִּנְיֶהוּ תְנוּפָה לִפְנֵי לִפְנֵי יְיָ מֵאֵיל הַמִּלְאִים  
 לַמִּשָּׁה הַזֶּה לַמִּנְחָה כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְיָ אֶת-מֹשֶׁה: ל וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה מִשְׁמֵן הַמִּשְׁחָה  
 וּמִן-הַדָּם אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְיַז עַל-אֹהֲרֹן עַל-בְּגָדָיו וְעַל-בְּגָדָיו וְעַל-בְּגָדֵי  
 בָנָיו אֹתוֹ וַיִּקְדֹּשׁ אֶת-אֹהֲרֹן אֶת-בְּגָדָיו וְאֶת-בְּגָדֵי וְאֶת-בְּגָדֵי בָנָיו אֹתוֹ: לא  
 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אֹהֲרֹן וְאֶל-בְּנָיו בְּשָׁלוֹ אֶת-הַבָּשָׂר פָּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְשֵׁם  
 תֹּאכְלוּ אֹתוֹ וְאֶת-הַלֶּחֶם אֲשֶׁר בְּסֵל הַמִּלְאִים כְּאֲשֶׁר כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי לֵאמֹר  
 אֹהֲרֹן וּבָנָיו יֹאכְלֶהוּ: לב וְהַנּוֹתָר בַּבָּשָׂר וּבַלֶּחֶם בְּאֵשׁ תִּשְׂרָפוּ: לג וּמִפֶּתַח  
 אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֹא תִצְאוּ שְׂבַעַת יָמִים עַד יוֹם מְלֵאת יָמֵי מִלְאִיכֶם כִּי שְׂבַעַת  
 יָמִים יִמְלֵא אֶת-יְדְכֶם: לד כְּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הַזֶּה צִוָּה יְיָ לַעֲשׂוֹת לְכַפֵּר  
 עֲלֵיכֶם: לה וּפֶתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד תִּשְׁבּוּ יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה שְׂבַעַת יָמִים וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם  
 אֶת-מִשְׁמַרְתּוֹ יְיָ וְלֹא תָמוּתוּ כִּי-כֵן צִוִּיתִי: לו וַיַּעַשׂ אֹהֲרֹן אֹהֲרֹן וּבָנָיו אֶת  
 כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּה יְיָ בְּיַד-מֹשֶׁה:

**(14) He brought forward the bull of sin offering. Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the bull of sin offering,**

**(15) and it was slaughtered. Moses took the blood and with his finger put some on each of the horns of the altar, purifying the altar. Then he poured out the blood at the base of the altar. Thus he consecrated it, to make expiation upon it.**

**(16) Moses then took all the fat that was on the entrails, and the protuberance of the liver, and the two kidneys and their fat, and turned them into smoke on the altar.**

**(17) The rest of the bull, its hide, its flesh, and its dung, he put to the fire outside the camp – as the LORD had commanded Moses.**

**(18) Then he brought forward the ram of burnt offering. Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the ram's head,**

**(19) and it was slaughtered. Moses dashed the blood against all sides of the altar.**

**(20) The ram was cut up into sections, and Moses turned the head, the sections, and the suet into smoke on the altar;**

(21) Moses washed the entrails and the legs with water and turned all of the ram into smoke on the altar. It was a burnt offering for a pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the LORD – as the LORD had commanded Moses.

(22) Then he brought forward the second ram, the ram of ordination. Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the ram's head,

(23) and it was slaughtered. Moses took some of its blood and put it on the ridge of Aaron's right ear and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot.

(24) Moses then brought forward the sons of Aaron, and put some of the blood on the ridges of their right ears and on the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet; and Moses dashed the rest of the blood against every side of the altar.

(25) He took the fat – the broad tail, all the fat that was about the entrails, the protuberance of the liver, and the two kidneys and their fat – and the right thigh.

(26) From the basket of unleavened bread that was before the LORD, he took one cake of unleavened bread, one cake of oil bread, and one wafer, and placed them on the fat parts and on the right thigh.

(27) He placed all these on the palms of Aaron and on the palms of his sons, and elevated them as an elevation offering before the LORD.

(28) Then Moses took them from their hands and turned them into smoke on the altar with the burnt offering. This was an ordination offering for a pleasing odor; it was an offering by fire to the LORD.

(29) Moses took the breast and elevated it as an elevation offering before the LORD; it was Moses' portion of the ram of ordination – as the LORD had commanded Moses.

(30) And Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood that was on the altar and sprinkled it upon Aaron and upon his vestments, and also upon his sons

**and upon their vestments. Thus he consecrated Aaron and his vestments, and also his sons and their vestments.**

**(31) Moses said to Aaron and his sons, “Boil the flesh at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and eat it there with the bread that is in the basket of ordination – as I commanded: Aaron and his sons shall eat it;**

**(32) and what is left over of the flesh and the bread you shall consume in fire.**

**(33) You shall not go outside the entrance of the Tent of Meeting for seven days, until the day that your period of ordination is completed. For your ordination will require seven days.**

**(34) Everything done today, the LORD has commanded to be done [seven days], to make expiation for you.**

**(35) You shall remain at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting day and night for seven days, keeping the LORD’s charge – that you may not die – for so I have been commanded.”**

**(36) And Aaron and his sons did all the things that the LORD had commanded through Moses.**

**(14-15) He brought forward the bull of sin offering... Moses took the blood and with his finger put some on each of the horns of the altar:** The service in the Tabernacle originates with Moses, who serves as the first High Priest and later transfers authority to Aaron, his deputy.

**(23) Moses took some of its blood and put it on the ridge of Aaron’s right ear:** When Moses purifies and sanctifies the altar, he applies the blood of the sacrificial animal to its horns. Next, Moses moves to Aaron and applies blood to the lobe of Aaron’s right ear, the thumb of his right hand, and the big toe of his right foot, symbolizing that these body parts correspond to the horns of the altar. The ear represents thoughts, the thumb represents actions, and the big toe represents movement. Aaron, like the altar, is part of the Temple service.

**right ear... right hand... right foot:** The right side represents the enhancement of *chesed* (kindness).

---

**(31) Moses said to Aaron and his sons, “Boil the flesh at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting and eat it there with the bread”:** Initially, Moses served as the priest. Now, with the ordination of Aaron and his sons nearly complete, they are beginning to take on the role of priests themselves.

**(33) “You shall not go outside the entrance of the Tent of Meeting for seven days, until the day that your period of ordination is completed”:** The ordination process had to last seven days, symbolizing the completion of the natural cycle of the world.

**(34) “Everything done today, the LORD has commanded to be done [seven days], to make expiation for you”:** Earlier (verse 31), Moses says, “as I commanded,” but here the phrasing changes to, “the LORD has commanded to be done.” Commentators suggest that this shift reflects growing tension between Moses and Aaron’s sons, who felt uneasy with Moses taking on priestly functions and imposing his will in what they regarded as their domain. To alleviate this, Moses emphasizes, “This is not my decision; it is a command from Above.”

**(35) “You shall remain at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting day and night for seven days, keeping the LORD’s charge – that you may not die – for so I have been commanded”:** Moses reiterates, “This is a divine command, not my own initiative.”

**(36) And Aaron and his sons did all the things that the LORD had commanded through Moses:** Commentators observe that the verb “did” is in the singular, implying that only Aaron fully complied willingly. His sons, however, followed the command unwillingly. This tension likely contributed to the later independent actions of Nadab and Abihu, which can be interpreted as a rebellion against Moses.

**WEEKLY  
PORTION 3**

**SHMINI**

## § 10. THE BEGINNING OF THE SERVICE

### § 10.1. THE FIRST OFFERINGS (9:1-24)

א ויהי ביום השמיני קרא משה לאהרן ולבניו ולזקני ישראל: ב ויאמר אל-אהרן קח-לך עגל בן-בקר לסטאת ואיל לעלה תמימם והקרב לפניי: ג ואל-בני ישראל ישראל תדבר לאמר קחו שעיר-עזים לסטאת ועגל וכבש בני-שנה תמימם לעלה: ד ושור ואיל לשלמים לזבח לפניי יי ומנחה בלולה בשמן כי היום יי נראה אליכם: ה ויקחו את אשר צוה משה אל-פני אהל מועד ויקרבו כל-העדה ויעמדו לפניי: ו ויאמר משה וזה הדבר אשר-צוה יי תעשו וירא אליכם כבוד יי: ז ויאמר משה אל-אהרן קרב אל-המזבח ונעשה את-סטאתך ואת-עלתך וכפר בעדך ובעד העם ונעשה את-קרבו העם וכפר בעדם כאשר צוה יי: ח ויקרב אהרן אל-המזבח וישתט את-עגל הסטאת אשר-לו: ט ויקרבו בני אהרן את-הדם אליו ויטבל אצבעו בדם ויתן על-קרנות המזבח ואת-הדם יצק אל-יסוד המזבח: י ואת-החלב ואת-הכלית ואת-היתרת מן-הכבד מן-הסטאת הקטיר המזבחה כאשר צוה יי את-משה: יא ואת-הבשר ואת-העור שרף באש מחוץ למחנה: יב וישחט את-העלה וימצאו בני אהרן את-הדם ויזרקוהו על-המזבח סביב: יג ואת-העלה המציאו אליו לנתתיה ואת-הראש ויקטר על-המזבח: יד וירתץ את-הקרב ואת-הפריעים ויקטר על-העלה המזבחה: טו ויקרב את קרבו העם וילח את-שעיר הסטאת אשר לעם וישחטוהו ויטטאוהו פראשון: טז ויקרב את-העלה ויעשה כמשפט: יז ויקרב את-המנחה וימלא כפר מנחה ויקטר על-המזבח מלבד עלת הבקר: יח וישחט את-השור ואת-האיל ויבש השלמים אשר לעם וימצאו בני אהרן את-הדם אליו ויזרקוהו על-המזבח סביב: יט ואת-החלבים מן-השור ומן-האיל האליה והמכסה והכלית ויתרת הכבד: כ וישומו את-החלבים על-החזות ויקטר החלבים המזבחה: כא ואת החזות ואת שוק הימין הגיף אהרן תנופה לפניי יי כאשר צוה צוה משה: כב וישא

אָהֲרֹן אֶת-יָדוֹ אֶל-הָעָם וַיְבָרְכֵם וַיֵּרֶד מֵעֲשֹׂת הַחֹטְאֹת וְהַעֲלָה וְהִשְׁלָמִים:  
 כַּג וַיָּבֵא מִשֶּׁה וְאֶהֱרֹן אֶל-אֶהֱל מוֹעֵד וַיִּצְאֻ וַיְבָרְכוּ אֶת-הָעָם וַיֵּרָא כְבוֹד-  
 יְיָ אֶל-כָּל-הָעָם: כֹּד וַתִּצֵּא אִשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי יְיָ וַתֹּאכֵל עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֶת-הַעֲלָה  
 וְאֶת-הַחֲלָבִים וַיֵּרָא כָּל-הָעָם וַיִּרְגְּזוּ וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל-פְּנֵיהֶם:

**(1) On the eighth day Moses called Aaron and his sons, and the elders of Israel.**

**(2) He said to Aaron: “Take a bull calf for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering, without blemish, and bring them before the LORD.**

**(3) And speak to the Israelites, saying: Take a he-goat for a sin offering; a calf and a lamb, yearlings without blemish, for a burnt offering;**

**(4) and an ox and a ram for an offering of well-being to sacrifice before the LORD; and a meal offering with oil mixed in. For today the LORD will appear to you.”**

**(5) They brought to the front of the Tent of Meeting the things that Moses had commanded, and the whole community came forward and stood before the LORD.**

**(6) Moses said: “This is what the LORD has commanded that you do, that the Presence of the LORD may appear to you.”**

**(7) Then Moses said to Aaron: “Come forward to the altar and sacrifice your sin offering and your burnt offering, making expiation for yourself and for the people; and sacrifice the people’s offering and make expiation for them, as the LORD has commanded.”**

**(8) Aaron came forward to the altar and slaughtered his calf of sin offering.**

**(9) Aaron’s sons brought the blood to him; he dipped his finger in the blood and put it on the horns of the altar, and he poured out the blood at the base of the altar.**

**(10) The fat, the kidneys, and the protuberance of the liver from the sin offering he turned into smoke on the altar – as the LORD had commanded Moses;**

(11) and the flesh and the skin were consumed in fire outside the camp.

(12) Then he slaughtered the burnt offering. Aaron's sons passed the blood to him, and he dashed it against all sides of the altar.

(13) They passed the burnt offering to him in sections, along with the head, and he turned it into smoke on the altar.

(14) He washed the entrails and the legs and turned them into smoke on the altar with the burnt offering.

(15) Next he brought forward the people's offering. He took the goat for the people's sin offering, slaughtered it, and offered it as a sin offering like the first.

(16) He brought forward the burnt offering and sacrificed it according to regulation.

(17) He then brought forward the meal offering, took a handful of it, and turned it into smoke on the altar – in addition to the burnt offering of the morning.

(18) He slaughtered the ox and the ram, the people's sacrifice of well-being. Aaron's sons passed the blood to him (which he dashed against every side of the altar),

(19) and the fat parts of the ox and of the ram – the broad tail, the covering fat, the kidneys, and the protuberance of the liver.

(20) They laid these fat parts over the breasts; and Aaron turned the fat parts into smoke on the altar.

(21) Aaron elevated the breasts and the right thigh as an elevation offering before the LORD – as Moses had commanded.

(22) Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them; and he stepped down after sacrificing the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the offering of well-being.

(23) Moses and Aaron then went inside the Tent of Meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people; and the Presence of the LORD appeared to all the people.

**(24) Fire came forth from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat parts on the altar. And all the people saw, and shouted, and fell on their faces.**

**(1) On the eighth day:** This marked the conclusion of seven days of preparation, with the eighth day symbolizing transcendence beyond the natural cycle.

In Kabbalah, the “eighth day” echoes the eighth day of Creation – the World to Come – which will follow the metaphorical “Sabbath of God,” the unfinished seventh day of Creation. The Tabernacle, representing the World to Come within this world, could only be entered on the eighth day.

**Moses called Aaron and his sons:** For seven days, Moses carried out the priestly duties. On the eighth day, Aaron completely took on these responsibilities.

**and the elders of Israel:** Service in the Tabernacle is not just the responsibility of the priests; the entire nation must participate.

**(2) He said to Aaron: “Take a bull calf for a sin offering”:** Aaron commenced his service in the Tabernacle by making a sin offering for himself and the people. The Midrash suggests that this was part of atoning for the sin of the Golden Calf.

**(6) Moses said: “This is what the LORD has commanded that you do, that the Presence of the LORD may appear to you”:** The Divine Presence would visibly manifest as fire consuming the offerings.

**(7) Then Moses said to Aaron: “Come forward to the altar”:** This verse appears redundant – why would Moses need to instruct Aaron to approach the altar? The Midrash explains that Aaron, feeling guilty about the Golden Calf, was hesitant and confused about starting the service. Moses said to him, “Why are you hesitating? You were chosen for this!” This underscores that Aaron’s role was divinely appointed, regardless of his feelings of unworthiness. This principle applies to all priests and the Jewish people as a “nation of priests” for humanity.

**(22) Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them; and he stepped down after sacrificing the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the offering of well-being:** Aaron

fulfilled all that was required. However, the heavenly fire had not yet manifested.

**(23-24) Moses and Aaron then went inside the Tent of Meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people; and the Presence of the LORD appeared to all the people. Fire came forth from before the LORD:** The Midrash explains that, after all actions were completed and the *Shekhinah* (the divine presence of God in the world) had not yet descended, Aaron grew despondent and said, “As I feared, God is angry with me and does not wish to accept my service.” Only when Moses entered the Tabernacle with Aaron did the *Shekhinah* manifest.

It was previously noted that Moses represents the aspect of Revelation, while Aaron embodies the aspect of Atonement. The Temple can only function when these two aspects unite – when Moses and Aaron enter the Tent of Meeting together.

**(24) Fire came forth from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat parts on the altar:** The fire either originated in the Holy of Holies or descended from Heaven.

#### § 10.2. THE DEATH OF AARON'S SONS (10:1-7)

א ויקחו בני-אֵהָרֹן נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא אִישׁ מִחַתָּתוֹ וַיִּתְּנוּ בְהֵן אֵשׁ וַיִּשְׂמוּ עָלֶיהָ  
 קִטְוֶרֶת וַיִּקְרִיבוּ לִפְנֵי יי אֵשׁ זָרָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוָּה אֲתֶם: ב וַתִּצָּא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי יי  
 וַתֹּאכַל אוֹתָם וַיִּמְתּוּ לִפְנֵי יי: ג וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אֵהָרֹן הוּא אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר יי |  
 לֵאמֹר בְּקִרְבִי אֶקְדָּשׁ וְעַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָעַם אֶפְבֹּד וַיִּדַם אֵהָרֹן: ד וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה  
 אֶל-מִישָׁאֵל וְאֶל אֶלְצָפָן בְּנֵי עֲזִיזָאֵל דָּד אֵהָרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם קְרַבּוּ שָׂאוּ אֶת-  
 אֲחֵיכֶם מֵאֵת פְּנֵי-הַקֹּדֶשׁ אֶל-מַחֲוִיץ לַמַּחֲנֶה: ה וַיִּקְרָבוּ וַיִּשָּׂאֵם בְּכַתְּנֹתָם  
 אֶל-מַחֲוִיץ לַמַּחֲנֶה כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה: ו וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אֵהָרֹן וּלְאֶלְעָזָר  
 וּלְאִיתָמָר | בְּנֵי רְאִשֵׁיכֶם אֶל-תִּפְרְעוּ | וּבְגִדֵיכֶם לֹא-תִפְרְמוּ וְלֹא תִמְתּוּ  
 וְעַל כָּל-הָעֵדָה יִקְצָף וְאֲחֵיכֶם כָּל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל יִכְפוּ אֶת-הַשָּׂרֵפָה אֲשֶׁר  
 שָׂרַף יי: ז וּמִפְתַּח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֹא תִצָּאוּ פֶן-תִּמְתּוּ כִּי-שָׂמַן מִשְׁחַת יי  
 עֲלֵיכֶם וַיַּעֲשׂוּ כַדְּבַר מֹשֶׁה:

**(1) Now Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu each took his fire pan, put fire in it, and laid incense on it; and they offered**

**before the LORD alien fire, which He had not enjoined upon them.**

**(2) And fire came forth from the LORD and consumed them; thus they died at the instance of the LORD.**

**(3) Then Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the LORD meant when He said: Through those near to Me I show Myself holy, And gain glory before all the people.” And Aaron was silent.**

**(4) Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Aaron’s uncle Uzziel, and said to them, “Come forward and carry your kinsmen away from the front of the sanctuary to a place outside the camp.”**

**(5) They came forward and carried them out of the camp by their tunics, as Moses had ordered.**

**(6) And Moses said to Aaron and to his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, “Do not bare your heads and do not rend your clothes, lest you die and anger strike the whole community. But your kinsmen, all the house of Israel, shall bewail the burning that the LORD has wrought.**

**(7) And so do not go outside the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, lest you die, for the LORD’s anointing oil is upon you.” And they did as Moses had bidden.**

**(1) Now Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu:** Nadab, Aaron’s firstborn and heir, was the potential next High Priest, while Abihu was his second son (Exodus 24:1, 9). The conflict here is not between Moses and Aaron, but between Moses and Aaron’s sons.

**each took his fire pan:** Aaron’s sons did not follow Moses’ instructions and tried to act independently.

**and put fire in it and laid incense on it:** Despite the divine fire already burning on the altar, they considered it inadequate and sought to bring their own fire.

**and they offered before the LORD alien fire:** The term *alien* (*zar*) signifies “additional,” as they used coals not from the altar but from a common source. They aimed to combine earthly fire with the heavenly fire.

**which He had not enjoined upon them:** Although not explicitly prohibited, their actions exceeded what was commanded.

Integrating human initiative with Divine service is appropriate in the right context, as merging God-given fire with human fire can enhance the manifestation of the Divine. However, this should take place outside the Temple, where human and Divine elements can blend in daily life. Within the Temple – a space of intense Divine presence – only prescribed actions are permitted.

The Temple is a “domain of high intensity,” where even minor deviations can lead to immediate consequences. Nadab and Abihu’s decision to act independently resulted in their tragic demise.

Certain “threshold” entities bridge the heavens and earth – such as the Sabbath (representing time), the Temple (representing space), and the Jewish people (representing humanity). These hold a sacred status and are bound by specific Divine guidelines that must be followed.

**(2) And fire came forth from the LORD and consumed them:**

This phrase mirrors 9:24, where the fire consumed the sacrifices of Israel. However, the inappropriate “alien fire” brought by Aaron’s sons caused a “correction” from God’s fire that consumed them.

**thus they died at the instance of the LORD:** The fire consumed them from within, leaving their bodies and clothing unscathed. Their death was not a punishment but direct consequences of their profound closeness to God. While it originated from an error, it was also an act of self-sacrifice.

**(3) Then Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the LORD meant: Through those near to Me I show Myself holy, and gain glory before all the people.”** Moses does not condemn Nadab and Abihu’s actions but acknowledges their intentions. They sought to sanctify not only what was commanded but the entire world, even though they took on more than they could bear. The Midrash describes their motivation: “In their joy at the descent of fire on the altar, a manifestation of Divine love, they wished to add their own love and unite it with God’s.” Their error lay in their approach, not in their effort.

**and Aaron was silent:** At first glance, Aaron’s silence may seem to reflect his shock and grief over his sons’ sudden death. However, on a deeper level, Aaron’s silence is due to his inability to articulate and interpret Moses’ words. As a mediator of Moses’ teachings to the people, Aaron’s silence here signals that Moses’ explanation – that Nadab and Abihu’s actions glorified God – was beyond the people’s comprehension. For the nation, this event needed to serve

as a cautionary lesson about the importance of strict adherence to Divine commandments within the Temple.

**(4) Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel:** These were Levites from the Kohath family, cousins of Moses and Aaron, but not priests.

**and said to them, "Come forward and carry your kinsmen away from the front of the sanctuary to a place outside the camp":** Aaron and his remaining sons could not touch the bodies, as this would make them ritually impure and prevent them from continuing their service.

**(5) They came forward and carried them out of the camp by their tunics, as Moses had ordered:** Nadab and Abihu were not burned in the usual way – the fire consumed them from within, leaving their bodies and clothing intact.

**(6) Moses said to Aaron and his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not bare your heads and do not rend your clothes":** These were common mourning practices: allowing hair to grow uncut and tearing garments.

**lest you die, and anger strike the whole community:** Moses prohibited family mourning to guarantee the continuity of the Tabernacle service.

**But your kinsmen, all the house of Israel, shall bewail the burning that the LORD has wrought:** Family mourning gave way to national mourning as the entire nation grieved the loss of two remarkable individuals.

**(7) And they did as Moses had bidden:** Here, both Aaron and his remaining sons recognized Moses' leadership. This signifies a moment of unity but also hints at the tension that may have influenced Nadab and Abihu's independent actions.

### § 10.3. THE PROHIBITION AGAINST DRINKING WINE DURING SERVICE (10:8-11)

ח וַיְדַבֵּר יְיָ אֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: ט גִּינוּ וְשָׁכַר אֶל-תְּשׁוּתָא | אַתְּהָ | וּבְגִידֶיךָ אֲתִידָּבֶר  
בְּבָאֲכֶם אֶל-אַהֲלֵךְ מוֹעֵד וְלֹא תִמְתּוּ חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם: י וְלֹהֲבִדִּיל בֵּין

הַקֹּדֶשׁ הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבֵינָם הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבֵינָם הַשְּׂמֵאָה וּבֵינָם הַשְּׂמֵאָה: יֵאָדָּר וּלְהוֹרֹת אֶת-בְּנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵת כָּל-הַחֻקִּים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם בְּיַד-מֹשֶׁה:

**(8) And the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying:**

**(9) Drink no wine or other intoxicant, you or your sons, when you enter the Tent of Meeting, that you may not die. This is a law for all time throughout the ages.**

**(10) For you must distinguish between the sacred and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean;**

**(11) and you must teach the Israelites all the laws which the LORD has imparted to them through Moses.**

**(8) And the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying:** Amid this profound crisis and tragedy, it was essential to affirm Aaron's status rather than emphasize his subordination to Moses. By addressing Aaron directly, God reinforced that his role remained unshaken. This moment also highlights that part of the Torah was revealed to Aaron independently of Moses, signifying that the Torah's completeness arises from their combined contributions.

**(9) Drink no wine or other intoxicant when you enter the Tent of Meeting:** The prohibition on drinking wine applies to priests only while they are in service. At other times, it is permitted.

**(10) That you may distinguish between the sacred and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean:** Intoxication clouds judgment, preventing priests from distinguishing between the sacred and the profane. The service of the Temple and the Jewish path to holiness require mental clarity, not ecstatic states.

**(11) And you must teach the Israelites all the laws which the LORD has imparted to them through Moses:** Alongside their Temple duties, priests were responsible for teaching the Torah and answering ritual questions, including those about purification and recovery from *tzaraat* ("leprosy" – discussed below). This required a sober and focused mindset.

This passage, included in the story of Nadab and Abihu, serves not only as a commandment but also as an explanation of their mistake.

On a simple level, it suggests that they consumed wine, which impaired their judgment. According to the Midrash, they entered the Sanctuary intoxicated and perished. After their deaths, God warned the remaining priests not to enter the Temple under the influence of alcohol.

On a deeper level, the connection between wine and the deaths of Nadab and Abihu reflects the nature of intoxication itself. Alcohol suppresses reason, leaving a person driven by emotion and instinct. Aaron's sons, seeking to sanctify the world, acted with passion but without rational restraint. True service to God requires the integration of heart and mind. Therefore, substances that induce emotional excess are forbidden in Temple service because they undermine intellectual clarity. Without clear thinking, true service, prayer, and Torah study become impossible.

Pagan rituals were often performed in a state of ecstasy, induced or enhanced by substances, where the emotional side of the personality completely dominated the intellectual side. Judaism ultimately ended these practices for good.

#### § 10.4. THE SYNTHESIS OF MOSES' AND AARON'S APPROACHES (10:12-20)

יב וַיִּדְבֹר מִשֵּׁה אֶל-אֶהָרֹן וְאֶל אֶלְעָזָר וְאֶל-אִיתָמָר | בְּנֵי הַגֹּזְתָּרִים  
הַגֹּזְתָּרִים קָחוּ אֶת-הַמִּנְחָה הַנּוֹתֶרֶת מֵאֲשֵׁי יִי וְאֶכְלוּהָ מִצֹּאת אֶצֶל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ  
כִּי קֹדֶשׁ קֹדְשִׁים הִוא: יג וְאֶכְלָתֶם אֹתָהּ בְּמָקוֹם קָדוֹשׁ כִּי חֻקָּה וְחֻק-בְּנֵי־יְהוָה  
הִוא מֵאֲשֵׁי יִי כִּי-כֵן צִוִּיתִי: יד וְאֵת חֲזֵה הַתְּנוּפָה וְאֵת | שׂוֹק הַתְּרוּמָה  
תֹּאכְלוּ בְּמָקוֹם טְהוֹר אֹתָהּ וּבְגֵיְהָ וּבְנִתֵיהָ אֹתָהּ כִּי-חֻקָּה וְחֻק-בְּנֵי־יְהוָה  
נִתְּנָו מִזִּבְחֵי שְׁלָמֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: טו שׂוֹק הַתְּרוּמָה וְחֲזֵה הַתְּנוּפָה עַל אֲשֵׁי  
הַחֲלָבִים יָבִיאוּ לְהִגִּיף תְּנוּפָה לִפְנֵי יְיָ וְהִיָּה לָהּ וּלְבְנֵיהָ אֹתָהּ לְחֻק-עוֹלָם  
כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְיָ: טז וְאֵת | שְׁעִיר הַחַטָּאת דָּרֹשׁ דָּרֹשׁ מִשֵּׁה וְהֵנָּה שְׂרָף וְיִקְצֹף  
עַל-אֶלְעָזָר וְעַל-אִיתָמָר בְּנֵי אֶהָרֹן אֶהָרֹן הַגֹּזְתָּרִים לֵאמֹר: יז מִדּוּעַ לֹא-  
אֶכְלָתֶם אֶת-הַחַטָּאת בְּמָקוֹם הַקֹּדֶשׁ כִּי קֹדֶשׁ קֹדְשִׁים הִוא וְאֹתָהּ | וְנָתַן לָכֶם  
לְשֹׂאת אֶת-עוֹן הָעֵדָה לְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיהֶם לִפְנֵי יְיָ: יח הֵן לֹא-הוּבָא אֶת-דָּמָהּ  
אֶל-הַקֹּדֶשׁ פְּגִימָה אֲכֹל תֹּאכְלוּ אֹתָהּ בַּקֹּדֶשׁ כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי: יט וַיִּדְבֹר אֶהָרֹן  
אֶל-מִשֵּׁה הֵן הַיּוֹם הַקָּרִיבוּ אֶת-חַטָּאתֶם וְאֶת-עֲלֹתֶם לִפְנֵי יְיָ וְתִקְרָאנָה אֹתִי  
כְּאֵלֶּה וְאֶכְלָתִי חַטָּאת הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה כְּעִיָּב כְּעִיָּב יְיָ: כ וַיִּשְׁמַע מִשֵּׁה וַיִּיטֵב בְּעֵינָיו:

(12) Moses spoke to Aaron and to his remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar: “Take the meal offering that is left over from the LORD’s offerings by fire and eat it unleavened beside the altar, for it is most holy.

(13) You shall eat it in the sacred precinct, inasmuch as it is your due, and that of your sons, from the LORD’s offerings by fire; for so I have been commanded.

(14) But the breast of elevation offering and the thigh of gift offering you and your sons and daughters may eat in any clean place; for they have been assigned as a due to you and your children, from the Israelites’ sacrifices of well-being.

(15) Together with the fat of fire offering, they must present the thigh of gift offering and the breast of elevation offering, which are to be elevated as an elevation offering before the LORD; and which are to be your due and that of your children with you for all time – as the LORD has commanded.”

(16) Then Moses inquired, inquired about the goat of sin offering, and it had already been burned. He was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron’s remaining sons, and said,

(17) “Why did you not eat the sin offering in the sacred area? For it is most holy, and He has given it to you to remove the guilt of the community and to make expiation for them before the LORD.

(18) Since its blood was not brought inside the sanctuary, you should certainly have eaten it in the sanctuary, as I commanded.”

(19) And Aaron spoke to Moses, “See, this day they brought their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD, and such things have befallen me! Had I eaten sin offering today, would the LORD have approved?”

(20) And when Moses heard this, he approved.

(12) Moses spoke to Aaron and to his remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar: “Take the meal offering... and eat it in the sacred

**precinct.”:** This command signified that Aaron and his sons continued to represent God before the people. Since the community mourned on their behalf, they were expected to set aside their personal grief and fulfill their priestly duties by consuming the offering.

**(16) Then Moses inquired, inquired about the goat of the sin offering:** The repetition of “inquired” emphasizes Moses’ persistent search for clarity. Notably, this verse marks the midpoint of the Torah in terms of word count, symbolizing Moses’ ongoing quest for understanding. In this pivotal event, Moses’ interpretation of the Torah is challenged and corrected by Aaron.

**and it had already been burned. And he was angry:** Anger often arises from an internal sense of personal failure. Moses’ frustration likely stemmed from a feeling that he had not communicated instructions clearly to Aaron and his sons.

**at Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron’s remaining sons:** Although Aaron was the main figure responsible, Moses chose not to direct his anger at him, as Aaron had always fully accepted Moses’ guidance. Rather, Moses directed his frustration toward Eleazar and Ithamar.

**(17) “Why did you not eat the sin offering in the sacred area? For it is most holy:”** Consuming part of the sin offering was essential for the sacrifice to be accepted and for atonement to be granted.

**(18) “Since its blood was not brought inside the sanctuary, you should certainly have eaten it in the sanctuary, as I commanded:”** Offerings brought into the sanctuary with blood were to be burned (6:23), but because this goat’s blood was not taken inside, the priests were required to eat its meat.

**(19) And Aaron spoke to Moses:** Initially, Aaron hid his grief and refrained from openly discussing his refusal to eat the offering, choosing instead to have the goat burned. However, circumstances ultimately compelled him to explain his actions to Moses. This interaction underscores an important lesson: One should not assume that others will understand your actions or intentions without explicit communication – they must be conveyed clearly.

**“Had I eaten the sin offering today, would the LORD have approved?”** While Aaron performed his public priestly duties

---

despite his personal sorrow, he could not bring himself to eat the offering under such circumstances, as he believed it would be inappropriate in God's eyes.

**(20) And when Moses heard this, he approved:** Although Moses followed the Divine command, this situation revealed that applying the Torah in real-life contexts requires both flexibility and dialogue. It highlights a crucial aspect of the Torah: Moses provides the Written Torah, rooted in ideal principles, while Aaron represents the Oral Torah, which interprets and applies those principles with sensitivity to human circumstances.

Moses, being closer to God, receives the laws and conveys the ideals. However, his initial "speech difficulty" (Exodus 4:10) highlights his challenge in translating these ideals into practical realities. Aaron, more attuned to the people, bridges this gap by interpreting Moses' words in a manner that resonates with their lived experiences. This dynamic between Moses and Aaron mirrors the relationship between the Written Torah and the Oral Torah: one defines the ideal, while the other adapts it to the complexities of human life.

Aaron's refusal to eat the offering was not merely personal; it reflected his understanding that, given the tragic circumstances, such an act would not align with God's will. His perspective demonstrated that implementing the Torah requires considering human emotions and circumstances rather than merely adhering to abstract principles.

Moses ultimately accepted Aaron's reasoning, acknowledging the validity of his approach. This moment was not just a concession to Aaron's specific action but a recognition of the necessity to balance national responsibility with individual sensitivity. True Torah integrates these elements, harmonizing the ideal with the practical to form a living, holistic expression of Divine law.

## § 11. THE CLEAN AND UNCLEAN ANIMALS

### § 11.1. THE CONCEPTS OF CLEANLINESS AND UNCLEANLINESS

As mentioned in the introduction to Leviticus, this book comprises three parts: sacrifices, ritual purity and impurity, and holiness. Each part begins with an examination of the laws, followed by a discussion of related events.

The previous chapter concluded the first part of Leviticus, which focuses on sacrifices. Now, the Torah transitions to the second part, which addresses the themes of purity and impurity, laying the groundwork for holiness.

In the second part, purity and impurity are examined in relation to animals and, subsequently, to humans. The discussion goes beyond the Temple to describe the general laws governing the people's daily lives. This sequence suggests that holiness is initially concentrated in the Temple and then radiates into all aspects of life.

We have already noted that the terms *tahor* (clean) and *tamei* (unclean) refer to purity and impurity in spiritual or ritual contexts rather than physical filth.

The state of impurity arises from a "diminished life" resulting from contact with death. While this is, to some extent, a consequence of a person's wrongdoing, it is primarily a result of the world's imperfect order following the expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

The Torah does not prohibit contact with impurity. On the contrary, in certain situations, it is required as a commandment; for instance, arranging a funeral is a *mitzvah*. There is nothing unusual about an ordinary person becoming ritually impure.

However, in a state of impurity, it is strictly forbidden to enter the Temple or participate in a sacrificial meal, as this is the place where

---

the Divine Presence is revealed. A person must be ritually clean there, meaning they should not come into contact with the source of impurity.

Therefore, a priest must be cautious not to become impure. Accordingly, he refrains from attending funerals except in cases where the deceased is a close relative. However, the High Priest cannot even attend the funeral of his parents! Priests are dedicated to the Temple, a realm of absolute purity and the source of holiness.

Holiness extends solely to the pure aspects of everyday life. The Temple tolerates no impurity. Outside the Temple, however, impurity frequently manifests as part of life and is not deemed evil. It simply hinders the pursuit of holiness, which is why individuals must periodically undergo purification. This purification is always localized and temporary. Complete purification from ritual impurity will occur only with the transition to the world to come, a realm of direct connection with God.

In this section, the Torah lists clean and unclean animals. As with any commandment in the Torah, the prohibition against eating unclean animals must be observed regardless of whether we understand the reason behind it or not. However, this does not negate the possibility, and even the necessity, of seeking the meaning of this commandment.

Typically, the laws regarding clean and unclean animals are explained symbolically: the forbidden animals exhibit negative behaviors (such as preying on other animals or scavenging), and to avoid adopting these traits, Jews must refrain from using these animals for food. Alternatively, the mystical explanation suggests that the meat of these animals is detrimental to the Jewish soul.

However, the Torah does not impose such dietary restrictions on people from other nations, including the righteous among them. This is because the laws of impurity have a priestly aspect. The first time the concept of unclean animals appears in the Torah is in the story of Noah (Genesis 7:2, 8:20), where they are forbidden only for the altar but may be consumed as food. However, the Jewish people are regarded as a nation of priests (Exodus 19:6), and their table is likened to an altar – which is why unclean animals are forbidden as food for Jews.

Three weekly portions of Leviticus focus on ritual impurity: *Shemini*, *Tazria*, and *Metzora*. *Shemini* discusses how impurity affects a healthy individual, stemming from external impure sources, such

as forbidden foods. *Tazria* addresses purification after childbirth, emphasizing a natural, “part of life” ritual impurity that is not a disease in any sense. *Metzora* deals with internal impurity connected to mental or physical illness.

Impurity arises where life ceases. The greater the life that has ended on the human-animal scale, the greater the impurity. Thus, the body of a deceased person becomes the primary source of impurity. Discharges from the reproductive organs are also seen as a loss of life potential and, therefore, create impurity.

Purification is achieved through immersion in the waters of a *mikveh*, a reservoir where water has naturally accumulated from a river, sea, lake, or well. An artificial reservoir or pool may also qualify, provided the water enters naturally, such as from a spring or rainwater; if the water is poured or pumped in, it does not constitute a *mikveh*. Such a natural water reservoir is considered part of the “world ocean,” and immersion in it symbolizes a “new birth” that purifies one from the impurity caused by contact with death.

Often, an additional requirement for purification is the arrival of evening, when a new calendar day begins according to Jewish tradition.

For particularly severe cases of impurity, such as *tzaraat*, a specific purification procedure is prescribed.

Since the laws of ritual purity can only be realized in connection with the Temple, their practical significance diminished after its destruction. However, the study of these laws remains relevant as they help us understand the world through the lens of the Torah. The only laws with practical application today are those of *niddah* (the laws of family purity), which we will discuss in the following section.

## § 11.2. THE LAND ANIMALS (11:1-8)

א וַיְדַבֵּר יְיָ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר אֲלֵהֶם: ב דַּבְּרוּ אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 לֵאמֹר זֹאת הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר תֹּאכְלוּ מִכָּל-הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר עַל-הָאָרֶץ: ג כֹּל א  
 מִפְּרִסֹת פְּרִסָּה וְשִׁסְעַת שִׁסְעַל פְּרִסֹת מְעַלְת גְּרָה בְּבִהֶמָה אֲתָה תֹאכְלוּ: ד  
 אֲךָ אֵת-זֶה לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִמֵּעַלֵי הַגְּרָה וּמִמְּפֹרְסֵי הַפְּרִסָּה אֵת-הַגְּמֹל כִּי-מֵעַלָּה

גְּרֵה הָיָה וּפְרֹסָה אֵינָנּוּ מִפְּרִיִּים טָמֵא הוּא לָכֶם: ה וְאֵת-הַשָּׁפָן כִּי-מֵעֵלָה  
 גְּרֵה הָיָה וּפְרֹסָה לֹא יִפְגְּרִים טָמֵא הוּא לָכֶם: ו וְאֵת-הָאֲרָנָה כִּי-מֵעֵלָה גְּרֵה  
 הָיָה וּפְרֹסָה לֹא הִפְרִיטָה טָמְאָה הוּא לָכֶם: ז וְאֵת-הַחֲזִיר כִּי-מִפְּרִיִּים פְּרֹטָה  
 הָיָה וְשֹׁטֵעַ שֹׁטֵעַ פְּרֹטָה וְהוּא גְּרֵה לֹא-יֵגֵר טָמֵא הוּא לָכֶם: ח מִבְּשָׂרָם לֹא  
 תֹאכְלוּ וּבְנִבְלָתָם לֹא תִגְעוּ טָמְאִים הֵם לָכֶם:

**(1) The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying to them:**

**(2) Speak to the Israelite people thus: These are the creatures that you may eat from among all the land animals:**

**(3) Any animal that has true hoofs, with clefts through the hoofs, and that chews the cud – such you may eat.**

**(4) But the following, among those that chew the cud or have true hoofs, you shall not eat: the camel – although it chews the cud, it has no true hoofs: it is unclean for you;**

**(5) the daman – although it chews the cud, it has no true hoofs: it is unclean for you;**

**(6) the hare – although it chews the cud, it has no true hoofs: it is unclean for you;**

**(7) and the swine – although it has true hoofs, with the hoofs cleft through, it does not chew the cud: it is unclean for you.**

**(8) You shall not eat of their flesh or touch their carcasses; they are unclean for you.**

**(1) The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron:** God speaks to both Moses and Aaron, emphasizing that the laws of purity and impurity apply to Israel as a nation of priests.

**(2) Speak to the Israelite people thus:** Both Moses and Aaron are instructed to convey the message, highlighting the combination of “Moses’ Torah” and “Aaron’s Torah” in communicating Divine law.

**(3) ...true hoofs, with clefts through the hoofs:** The requirement for fully split hooves excludes animals with divided hooves that are

not completely split. Hooves elevate the animal above the ground, symbolically raising the creature above its natural state. Similarly, humans must transcend their natural instincts to fulfill their spiritual role. Since the hoof is also a tool of violence, its splitting symbolizes a reduction in natural aggressiveness.

While these symbolic interpretations provide valuable insights, they do not entirely clarify the commandments. Many animals without split hooves are less aggressive than some that have split hooves. These explanations act as broad reflections on the values that underpin the commandments.

**that chews the cud:** These animals regurgitate and chew their food multiple times, symbolizing a “softening of natural greed.” Unlike predators that quickly devour their prey, cud-chewing signifies deliberation and restraint.

Once more, this symbolic explanation has its limitations, as some cud-chewing animals may display traits that contradict this symbolism. The commandment is not restricted to physical characteristics but conveys a broader moral lesson.

**(4) But the following, among those that chew the cud or have true hoofs, you shall not eat:** The text identifies animals that satisfy only one of the two required criteria. It mentions only animals found in the Land of Israel.

**(6) The hare – although it chews the cud, it has no true hoofs:** Hares are not physiologically ruminants like cows; however, their constant jaw movement gives the impression of chewing cud. The Torah’s emphasis aligns with human perception rather than scientific accuracy.

**(7) And the swine – although it has true hoofs, with the hoofs cleft through, it does not chew the cud:** From the perspective of the Torah’s laws, a pig is no more unkosher than other unclean animals. However, because surrounding nations, especially the Greeks, widely consumed pork and, during the Hellenistic period, demanded that Jews sacrifice pigs to Greek deities, the pig became a symbol of particularly abhorrent unkosher animals in Jewish tradition.

**(8) You shall not eat of their flesh or touch their carcasses; they are unclean for you:** The impurity described here applies

specifically to the meat and does not extend to other parts of the animal, such as hides, horns, bones, sinews, or hooves, which may be used for practical purposes like crafting leather goods, brushes, or similar items.

The prohibition against contact with the carcasses of non-kosher animals primarily affects priests. Ordinary Jews are permitted to handle them but must recognize that such contact renders them ritually impure and requires purification.

This passage conveys a broader principle: as a nation of priests, Israel is called to distance itself from ritual impurity.

### § 11.3. THE AQUATIC ANIMALS (11:9-12)

ט אַת-זֶה תֹאכְלוּ מִכֹּל מִכֹּל אֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם כֹּל אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ סַנְפִיר וְקַשְׂקֶשֶׁת  
 בַּמַּיִם בַּיַּמִּים וּבַנְּחָלִים אֹתָם תֹאכְלוּ: י וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר אֵין-לוֹ סַנְפִיר וְקַשְׂקֶשֶׁת  
 בַּיַּמִּים וּבַנְּחָלִים מִכֹּל שְׂרָץ הַמַּיִם וּמִכֹּל גִּפְשׁ הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם שְׂקִיז הֵם  
 לָכֶם: יא וְשְׂקִיז יִהְיוּ לָכֶם מִבְּשָׂרָם לֹא תֹאכְלוּ וְאֵת-נִבְלָתָם תִּשְׂקִצוּ: יב כֹּל  
 אֲשֶׁר אֵין-לוֹ סַנְפִיר וְקַשְׂקֶשֶׁת בַּמַּיִם שְׂקִיז הוּא לָכֶם:

**(9) These you may eat of all that live in water: anything in water, whether in the seas or in the streams, that has fins and scales – these you may eat.**

**(10) But anything in the seas or in the streams that has no fins and scales, among all the swarming things of the water and among all the other living creatures that are in the water – they are an abomination for you**

**(11) and an abomination for you they shall remain: you shall not eat of their flesh and you shall abominate their carcasses.**

**(12) Everything in water that has no fins and scales shall be an abomination for you.**

**(9) ...whether in the seas or in the streams, that has fins and scales – these you may eat:** Symbolically, fins represent freedom, allowing fish to swim swiftly, while scales act as a barrier, separating the fish from its natural environment – much like hooves separate land animals from the ground.

This commandment also prohibits the consumption of marine mammals, such as whales and dolphins, which inhabit water but are not classified as fish.

**(10) But anything in the seas or in the streams that has no fins and scales, among all the swarming things of the water and among all the other living creatures that are in the water – they are an abomination for you:** The flesh of such creatures should elicit a sense of revulsion, reinforcing the prohibition.

**(11) And an abomination for you they shall remain: you shall not eat of their flesh and you shall abominate their carcasses:** However, these creatures are not classified as ritually unclean. Non-kosher sea creatures are prohibited for consumption but do not transmit impurity. This distinction highlights that dietary restrictions and laws of impurity are not entirely aligned. The prohibition against eating certain creatures does not automatically imply that they are a source of ritual impurity.

Later, the Torah notes that while there are many non-kosher “small animals,” only eight are explicitly listed as unclean. Additionally, when kosher animals are inadequately slaughtered, their meat becomes both non-kosher and a source of impurity.

#### § 11.4. THE FLYING ANIMALS (11:13-22)

יג וְאֵת-אֵלֶּה תִּשְׁקָצוּ מִן-הָעוֹף לֹא יֵאָכְלוּ יֵאָכְלוּ שְׂקֵץ הֵם אֵת-הַנְּשֹׁר וְאֵת-הַפֶּרֶס וְאֵת הָעֲזוּנָה: יד וְאֵת-הַדָּאָה וְאֵת-הָאֵיָה לְמִינָהּ: טו אֵת כָּל-עֶרְב לְמִינֹ: טז וְאֵת בֵּת הַיַּעֲנָה וְאֵת-הַתַּחֲמָס וְאֵת-הַשֹּׁחַף וְאֵת-הַנֶּזֶק לְמִינָהּ: יז וְאֵת-הַכּוֹס וְאֵת-הַשִּׁלָּף וְאֵת-הַיַּנְשׁוּף: יח וְאֵת-הַתְּנַשְׂמֹת וְאֵת-הַקָּאֵת וְאֵת-הַרְחָם: יט וְאֵת הַחֲסִידָה הָאֲנַפָּה לְמִינָהּ וְאֵת-הַדּוֹכִיפֹת וְאֵת-הָעֵטְלָף: כ כ כָּל שְׂרִץ הָעוֹף הַהֹלֵךְ עַל-אֲרָבַע שְׂקֵץ הוּא לָכֶם: כא אֶף אֵת-זֶה תֹאכְלוּ מִכָּל שְׂרִץ הָעוֹף הַהֹלֵךְ עַל-אֲרָבַע אֲשֶׁר-לֹא (לו) כְּרַעֲיִם מִמַּעַל לְרַגְלָיו לִנְתֵר בָּהֶן עַל-הָאָרֶץ: כב אֵת-אֵלֶּה מֵהֶם תֹאכְלוּ אֵת-הָאֲרָבָה לְמִינֹ וְאֵת-הַסֹּלֶעַם לְמִינָהּ וְאֵת-הַחֲרָזֵל לְמִינָהּ וְאֵת-הַחֲגָב לְמִינָהּ:

**(13) The following you shall abominate among the birds – they shall not be eaten; they are an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, and the black vulture;**

- (14) the kite, falcons of every variety;
- (15) all varieties of raven;
- (16) the ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea gull; hawks of every variety;
- (17) the little owl, the cormorant, and the great owl;
- (18) the white owl, the pelican, and the bustard;
- (19) the stork, herons of every variety; the hoopoe, and the bat.
- (20) All winged swarming things that walk on fours shall be an abomination for you.
- (21) But these you may eat among all the winged swarming things that walk on fours: all that have, above their feet, jointed legs to leap with on the ground.
- (22) Of these you may eat the following: locusts of every variety, all varieties of bald locust, crickets of every variety, and all varieties of grasshopper.

**(13) The following you shall abominate among the birds – they shall not be eaten; they are an abomination:** For birds, unlike land animals or fish, no general signs of their kosher status are provided. Instead, a list of prohibited species is given, implying that all other birds are permitted. However, since the exact identification of the forbidden birds listed here is no longer certain, Jewish practice today relies on a small list of “traditionally permitted” birds, and only those are consumed.

All the birds mentioned here are predatory species that are prohibited for consumption, similar to the meat of predatory land animals. Yet, predatory birds are not considered ritually impure.

**(19) The bat:** This list includes not only birds but also all flying creatures, similar to earlier references to “all water animals.” The Torah’s classification of animals is based on their observable characteristics as perceived by humans, rather than on the taxonomic system utilized in modern biology to categorize the animal kingdom.

**(20) All winged swarming things that walk on fours shall be an abomination for you:** Although insects have six legs, the phrase “walk on fours” describes their method of movement. These insects appear to walk rather than jump, symbolizing a state of enslavement or an inability to transcend their natural condition.

**(21) But these you may eat among all the winged swarming things that walk on fours: all that have, above their feet, jointed legs to leap with on the ground:** Creatures that can leap are seen as symbols of freedom, similar to the fins of fish, which allow them to swim freely.

**(22) Of these you may eat the following: locusts of every variety, all varieties of bald locust, crickets of every variety, and all varieties of grasshopper:** These specific types of insects are considered kosher. Until recently, Yemenite communities could distinguish between permitted and forbidden insects of this kind. However, today, no Jewish community consumes insects as food.

#### § 11.5. DEFILEMENT FROM CONTACT WITH UNCLEAN ANIMALS (11:23-43)

כג וכל־שָׂרִיץ הָעוֹף אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ אַרְבַּע רַגְלַיִם שֹׁקֵץ הוּא לָכֶם: כד וּלְאֵלֶּהָ תִטְמָאוּ כָּל-הַנִּגְעָה בְּנֹבְלֹתֵיכֶם יִטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: כה וְכֹל-הַנִּזְשָׂא מִנֹּבְלֹתֵיכֶם יִכָּבֵס בַּגְּדֵי וִטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: כו לְכֹל-הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר הוּא מִפְּרוֹסֹת פְּרוֹסָה וְשֹׁסֵעַ אִינְנָה שׁוֹסַעַת וְגֵרָה אִינְנָה מְעֹלָה טְמֵאִים הֵם לָכֶם כָּל-הַנִּגְעָה בָּהֶם יִטְמָא: כז וְכָל אֲשֶׁר הוֹלֵךְ עַל-כַּפָּיו בְּכָל-הַחַיָּה הַהֹלֶכֶת עַל-אַרְבַּע טְמֵאִים הֵם לָכֶם כָּל-הַנִּגְעָה בְּנֹבְלֹתֵיכֶם בְּנֹבְלֹתֵיכֶם יִטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: כח וְהַנִּזְשָׂא אֶת-נֹבְלֹתֵיכֶם יִכָּבֵס בַּגְּדֵי וִטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב טְמֵאִים הֵמָּה לָכֶם: כט וְזֶה לָכֶם הַטְּמָא בְּשָׂרֵי הַשָּׂרִיץ עַל-הָאָרֶץ הַחַלְדִּי וְהַעֲכָבֵר וְהַצִּבּוֹר לְמִיגוֹה: ל וְהָאֲנָקָה וְהַפֶּחַח וְהַלְטָאָה וְהַחֲמַט וְהַתְּנַשְׂמַת: לא אֵלֶּה הַטְּמֵאִים לָכֶם בְּכָל-הַשָּׂרִיץ כָּל-הַנִּגְעָה בָּהֶם בְּמַתָּם יִטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: לב וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-יִפֹּל-עָלָיו מֵהֶם אִם בְּמַתָּם יִטְמָא מִכָּל-כְּלִי-עֵץ אִם בַּגָּד אוֹ-עוֹר אִם שֹׁקֵץ כָּל-כְּלִי אֲשֶׁר-יַעֲשֶׂה מְלֹאכָה בָּהֶם בְּמַתָּם יִטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב וְטָהֵר: לג וְכָל-כְּלִי-חֶרֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר-יִפֹּל מֵהֶם אֶל-תּוֹכּוֹ כָּל אֲשֶׁר תּוֹכּוֹ יִטְמָא וְאִתּוֹ תִשְׁבְּרוּ: לד מִכָּל-הָאֲכָל אֲשֶׁר יֵאָכֵל אֲשֶׁר יֵאָכֵל אֲשֶׁר יָבֹא עָלָיו מֵיָם יִטְמָא וְכָל-מִשְׁקָה אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁתֶּה בְּכָל-כְּלִי יִטְמָא: לה וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-יִפֹּל מִנֹּבְלֹתֵיכֶם אִם

עָלְיוֹ יִטְמָא תַנּוּר וְכִיּוּרִים יִתֵּץ טְמֵאִים הֵם וְטְמֵאִים יִהְיוּ לָכֶם: לוֹ אֵף מֵעֵנָה  
 וְכוּר מִקּוּה-מַיִם יִהְיֶה טְהוֹר וְנִגַּע בְּנִבְלָתָם יִטְמָא: לוֹ וְכִי יִפֹּל מִנִּבְלָתָם  
 עַל-כָּל-יָרֵע זָרֵע אֲשֶׁר יִזְרַע טְהוֹר הוּא: לֹח וְכִי יִתֵּן-מַיִם עַל-יָרֵע וְנִפֹּל  
 מִנִּבְלָתָם עָלָיו טְמָא הוּא לָכֶם:

לֹט וְכִי יָמוּת מִן-הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר-הִיא לָכֶם לְאֻכְלָהּ הִנֵּגַע בְּנִבְלָתָהּ יִטְמָא  
 עַד-הָעֶרֶב: מִוְהָאֵכֶל מִנִּבְלָתָהּ יִכַּסּ בְּגָדָיו וְטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב וְהִנְשֵׂא אֶת-  
 נִבְלָתָהּ יִכַּסּ בְּגָדָיו וְטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: מֵא וְכָל-הַשָּׂרִץ הַשָּׂרִץ עַל-הָאָרֶץ  
 שֶׁקֶץ הוּא לֹא יֵאָכֵל: מִב כָּל הוֹלֵךְ עַל-גְּאוֹן וְכָל ׀ הוֹלֵךְ עַל-אַרְבַּע עַד  
 כָּל-מִרְבָּה רִגְלָיִם לְכָל-הַשָּׂרִץ הַשָּׂרִץ עַל-הָאָרֶץ לֹא תֹאכְלוּם כִּי-שֶׁקֶץ  
 הֵם: מִג אֶל-תִּשְׁקְצוּ אֶת-נִפְשֵׁיכֶם בְּכָל-הַשָּׂרִץ הַשָּׂרִץ וְלֹא תִטְמְאוּ בָהֶם  
 וְנִטְמְתֶם בָּם:

**(23) But all other winged swarming things that have four legs shall be an abomination for you.**

**(24) And the following shall make you unclean – whoever touches their carcasses shall be unclean until evening,**

**(25) and whoever carries the carcasses of any of them shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening –**

**(26) every animal that has true hoofs, but without clefts through the hoofs, or that does not chew the cud – they are unclean for you; whoever touches them shall be unclean.**

**(27) Also all animals that walk on paws, among those that walk on fours, are unclean for you; whoever touches their carcasses shall be unclean until evening.**

**(28) And anyone who carries their carcasses shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening; they are unclean for you.**

**(29) The following shall be unclean for you from among the swarming things that swarm on the earth: the mole, the mouse, and great lizards of every variety;**

**(30) the gecko, the land crocodile, the lizard, the sand lizard, and the chameleon.**

**(31) Those are for you the unclean among all the swarming things; whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until evening.**

**(32) And anything on which one of them falls when dead shall be unclean: be it any article of wood or cloth or skin or sack – any such article that can be put to use – it shall be dipped in water, and it shall be unclean until evening, then it shall be clean.**

**(33) And if any of those falls into any earthen vessel, everything inside it shall be unclean and you shall break the vessel.**

**(34) All food that may be eaten [and that has come in contact] with water shall be unclean; and all liquid that may be drunk in any such vessel shall be unclean.**

**(35) Everything on which the carcass of any of them falls shall be unclean; an oven or stove shall be smashed; they are unclean, and they shall be unclean for you.**

**(36) However, a spring or a cistern in which water is collected shall be clean; but whoever touches such a carcass shall be unclean.**

**(37) If such a carcass falls upon seed grain that is to be sown, it is clean;**

**(38) but if water is put on the seed and any part of a carcass falls upon it, it shall be unclean for you.**

**(39) If an animal that you may eat has died, anyone who touches its carcass shall be unclean until evening.**

**(40) Anyone who eats of its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening; and anyone who carries its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening.**

**(41) All the things that swarm upon the earth are an abomination; they shall not be eaten.**

**(42) You shall not eat among all things that swarm upon the earth anything that crawls on its belly, or anything that walks on fours, or anything that has many legs; for they are an abomination.**

**(43) You shall not draw abomination upon yourselves through anything that swarms; you shall not make yourselves unclean therewith and thus become unclean.**

**(23-24) ...abomination for you... make you unclean:** These insects are not only banned as food but also act as a source of impurity.

**(25) And whoever carries the carcasses of any of them shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening:** This form of impurity applies even if the person does not come into direct contact with the insect (for example, if it is carried on a stick or wrapped in cloth). Carrying a carcass entails prolonged contact with impurity, unlike a brief touch. As a result, purification requires not only waiting until evening but also washing one's garments.

**shall wash his clothes:** According to Jewish law, this phrase mandates immersion in a *mikveh*.

**and shall be unclean until evening:** Even after immersion, one must wait for sunset to be fully purified. Since the Torah counts days from evening, the arrival of a new day marks the completion of the purification process. This ceremony emphasizes the significance of impurity and fosters awareness of its consequences.

**(26) Every animal that has true hoofs, but without clefts through the hoofs, or that does not chew the cud – they are unclean for you:** This refers to animals with partially split hooves, such as camels and donkeys.

**whoever touches them shall be unclean:** In all these cases, impurity arises from the carcass, not from the living animal. Live animals do not constitute a source of impurity, meaning they can be utilized for work and kept in homes.

**(27) Also all animals that walk on paws, among those that walk on fours, are unclean for you:** Animals without hooves symbolically remain connected to the earth, reflecting an attachment to raw nature. Consequently, they are deemed impure (see 11:3).

**(31) These are for you the unclean among all the swarming things; whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until evening:** Living reptiles and amphibians do not transmit impurities; only their carcasses do.

**(32) And anything on which one of them falls when dead shall be unclean:** The impurity of these animals extends beyond

direct contact with humans; it also affects objects such as clothing and other items utensils.

**any article of wood or cloth or skin or sack – any such article that can be put to use – it shall be dipped in water, and it shall be unclean until evening, then it shall be clean:** Items made from these materials can be purified by immersion.

**(33) And if any of those falls into any earthen vessel, everything inside it shall be unclean and you shall break the vessel:** Clay is porous and absorbs impurities, which makes its purification impossible. Furthermore, once a clay vessel becomes contaminated, it spreads impurities to its contents.

**(34) All food that may be eaten [and that has come in contact] with water shall be unclean; and all liquid that may be drunk in any such vessel shall be unclean:** Water heightens vulnerability to impurities. However, this impurity pertains specifically to food, not to other materials.

**(35) ...an oven or stove shall be smashed:** Since ovens and stoves are used for food preparation, they are also susceptible to impurity.

**they shall be unclean for you:** This refers to a portable stove with an internal chamber for burning coals, where a cooking pot is placed on top. According to Jewish law, impurity laws apply only in contexts related to the Temple or sacred objects. For everyday use, vessels and stoves remain permissible even if they are impure. However, the straightforward reading of the Torah suggests that their use is best avoided.

**(36) ...a spring or a cistern in which water is collected shall be clean:** This refers to natural water sources, such as rivers and wells, which hold the status of a *mikveh*. As part of the “world’s primordial waters,” they are not only impervious to impurity but also have the power to purify those who immerse in them, symbolizing a form of spiritual rebirth.

**but whoever touches such a carcass shall be unclean:** The *mikveh* removes impurity from people and objects but does not purify the source of impurity itself. Even if immersed, the carcass continues to transmit impurity.

**(37) If such a carcass falls upon seed grain that is to be sown, it is clean:** Dry seeds intended for planting are not regarded as food but as raw material, so they do not absorb impurities.

**(38) But if water is put on the seed and any part of a carcass falls upon it, it shall be unclean for you:** Water transforms seeds into food, making them susceptible to impurity. Even if the water dries up later, the seeds maintain their new status as food and remain impure.

**(39) If an animal that you may eat has died, anyone who touches its carcass shall be unclean until evening:** This applies not only when an animal dies naturally, but also when it is improperly slaughtered. Even permitted animals can become a source of impurity if they are not slaughtered correctly.

**(42) Anything that crawls on its belly:** This refers to snakes. The word *gichon* (belly) appears here with an enlarged letter *vav* in a Torah scroll, marking the exact midpoint of the Pentateuch in terms of letters.

**(43) You shall not draw abomination upon yourselves through anything that swarms; you shall not make yourselves unclean therewith and thus become unclean:** Consuming these creatures not only causes ritual impurity but also brings spiritual corruption.

#### § 11.6. RITUAL IMPURITY IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE PURSUIT OF HOLINESS (11:44-47)

מד פי אָנִי ייִ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְהִתְקַדְּשִׁתֶּם וְהִיִּיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים פִּי קְדוֹשׁ אָנִי וְלֹא תִטְמְאוּ אֶת-נַפְשׁוֹתֵיכֶם בְּכָל-הַשָּׂרֵץ הָרָמַשׁ עַל-הָאָרֶץ: מֵה פִּי אָנִי ייִ הַמְעֵלָה אֶתְכֶם מֵאָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְהִזַּת לְכֶם לְאֱלֹהִים וְהִיִּיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים פִּי קְדוֹשׁ אָנִי: מו זֹאת תּוֹרַת הַבְּהֵמָה הַבְּהֵמָה וְהַעוֹף וְכָל-גִּפְשׁ הַסִּזְיָה הָרַמְשׂוֹת בְּמִים וְלִכְל-גִּפְשׁ הַשָּׂרָצָת עַל-הָאָרֶץ: מוּ לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַטְּמֵא וּבֵין הַטְּהוֹר וּבֵין הַסִּזְיָה הַנְּצַלְלָת וּבֵין הַסִּזְיָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא תִאָּכַל:

**(44) For I the LORD am your God: you shall sanctify yourselves and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not make**

**yourselves unclean through any swarming thing that moves upon the earth.**

**(45) For I the LORD am He who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God: you shall be holy, for I am holy.**

**(46) These are the instructions concerning animals, birds, all living creatures that move in water, and all creatures that swarm on earth,**

**(47) for distinguishing between the unclean and the clean, between the living creatures that may be eaten and the living creatures that may not be eaten.**

**(44) For I the LORD am your God: you shall sanctify yourselves and be holy, for I am holy.** Holiness is achieved by drawing closer to God through the imitation of His ways, whereas impurity is a barrier to this spiritual ascent.

**You shall not make yourselves unclean:** Defilement is forbidden precisely because it hinders the progression toward holiness.

**(45) For I the LORD am He who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God: you shall be holy, for I am holy:** Egypt symbolizes impurity, and true holiness requires separation from it. Therefore, redemption from Egypt is not just an act of liberation but a journey toward holiness.

**(47) For distinguishing between the unclean and the clean, between the living creatures that may be eaten and the living creatures that may not be eaten:** The distinction between clean and unclean animals is not entirely consistent with the distinction between permitted and forbidden foods, highlighting that purity laws extend beyond dietary restrictions.

**WEEKLY  
PORTION 4**

**TAZRIA**

## § 12. THE PURIFICATION AFTER CHILDBIRTH

### § 12.1. THE PERIODS OF PURIFICATION AFTER CHILDBIRTH (12:1-5)

א ויִדְבַר יי אֵל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ב דִּבֶּר אֵל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אִשָּׁה כִּי תִרְיַע וְגִלְדָּה זָכָר וְטָמְאָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כִּימֵי נֹדַת דְּוֹתָהּ דְּוֹתָהּ תִּטְמָא: ג וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בָּשָׂר עֶרְלָתּוֹ: ד וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם וּשְׁלֹשַׁת יָמִים תֵּשֵׁב בְּדָמֵי טְהָרָה בְּכָל-קִדְשׁ לֹא-תִגַּע וְאֵל-הַמִּקְדָּשׁ לֹא תָבֹא עַד-מִלְאֵת יָמֵי טְהָרָה: ה וְאִם-נִקְבְּהָ תֵלֵד וְטָמְאָה שִׁבְעַיִם כַּנִּדְתָּהּ וּשְׁשִׁים יוֹם וּשְׁשַׁת יָמִים תֵּשֵׁב עַל-דָּמֵי טְהָרָה:

(1) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

(2) Speak to the Israelite people thus: When a woman conceives and gives birth a male, she shall be unclean seven days; she shall be unclean as at the time of her menstrual infirmity.

(3) On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

(4) She shall remain in a state of blood purification for thirty-three days: she shall not touch any consecrated thing, nor enter the sanctuary until her period of purification is completed.

(5) If she bears a female, she shall be unclean two weeks as during her menstruation, and she shall remain in a state of blood purification for sixty-six days.

**(1) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:** The previous section addressed ritual impurity resulting from human actions, such as consuming forbidden foods. This section deals with “natural” impurity, not associated with wrongdoing.

**(2) Speak to the Israelite people thus: When a woman conceives and gives birth...:** Conception is emphasized as the emergence of a new entity, a new life. It is the departure of this life from the woman’s body through childbirth that renders her ritually impure.

**she shall be unclean seven days:** Seven days represent the complete cycle of the natural world.

**she shall be unclean as at the time of her menstrual infirmity:** This refers to the period of *niddah* during which intimate relations are forbidden. In Temple times, it also meant social separation, as contact with a woman in this state would render others impure, preventing them from entering the Temple, handling offerings, or participating in sacrificial meals. In modern practice, *niddah* restrictions apply only to intimate relationships without wider social restrictions.

**(3) On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised:** Circumcision was first mentioned in Genesis 17:10 as a command to Abraham. In the covenant of the Patriarchs, circumcision symbolizes the divine covenant. Here, within the context of the Sinai covenant, it is established as a commandment. (For more on the difference between the Patriarchal Covenant and the Sinai Covenant, see the commentary on Exodus, Essay I.4).

**on the eighth day:** In the commandment of circumcision, the word “eighth” is specifically emphasized with a definite article. Halachically, this serves as the basis for performing circumcision even on Shabbat. If the circumcision is postponed due to the child’s illness or for some other reason, it is not performed on another Shabbat since it is no longer the commanded “eighth day.” From the plain reading of the Torah, circumcision on the eighth day occurs after the seven-day period during which the mother remains impure and separated from the community. The community waits for these days to pass so that the mother can join in the celebration. This also suggests a connection between circumcision and the “eighth day of Creation” (see the commentary on verse 9:1 above).

**(4) She shall remain in a state of blood purification for thirty-three days:** After seven days of impurity, an additional thirty-three days of purification follow.

**in a state of blood purification:** Literally, “in purification from blood,” meaning that even if she continues to bleed, she remains ritually pure. After the first seven days, she immerses in a *mikveh* (a ritual bath), allowing her to resume relations with her husband, even if bleeding continues. (Later tradition equated different types of uterine bleeding, leading to the modern practice of abstaining from intimacy during any such occurrence.) Throughout this period, she may not handle sacrificial offerings or enter the Temple. This implies a certain level of social withdrawal, allowing the woman to recover from childbirth.

**(5) If she bears a female, she shall be unclean two weeks as during her menstruation, and she shall remain in a state of blood purification for sixty-six days:** When a girl is born, the period of ritual impurity is doubled, she remains in this state for fourteen days and is then further separated from society for sixty-six days. This has nothing to do with a “higher degree of impurity” in a newborn girl. On the contrary, the “life value” of a newborn girl is greater than that of a boy because she has the potential to bear children. This, in turn, leads to a greater “loss of life” for the mother, who remains impure for twice as long.

#### § 12.2. THE OFFERING AFTER CHILDBIRTH (12:6-8)

וּבמִלֵּאת | יְמֵי טְהוֹרָה לְבִן אִוּ לְבַת תְּבִיא כֶּבֶשׂ בֶּן-שָׁנָתוֹ לְעֹלָה וּבֶן-יוֹנָה  
 אוֹ-תֵר לְחִטָּאת אֶל-פֶּתַח אֹהֶל-מוֹעֵד אֶל-הַפֶּהּ: ז וְהִקְרִיבֹ לְפָנַי יֵי וְכֹפֶר  
 עֲלֶיהָ וְטָהַר מִמָּקָר דָּמֶיהָ זֹאת תֹּוֹרַת הַיִּלְדוֹת הַיִּלְדוֹת לְזָכָר אִו לְנִקְבָּה:  
 ח וְאִם-לֹא תִמָּצֵא יְדֶהָ דֵי שֶׁהָ וְלִקְחָהּ שְׁתֵי-תְרִים אִו שְׁנֵי בְּנֵי יוֹנָה אֶתְד  
 לְעֹלָה וְאֶתְד לְחִטָּאת וְכֹפֶר עֲלֶיהָ הַפֶּהּ וְטָהַר:

**(6) When her period of purification is completed, for either a son or a daughter, she shall bring to the priest, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, a lamb in its first year for a burnt offering and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering.**

**(7) He shall offer it before the LORD and make expiation on her behalf; she shall then be clean from her flow of blood. Such are the rituals concerning her who bears a child, male or female.**

**(8) If, however, her means do not suffice for a sheep, she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. The priest shall make expiation on her behalf, and she shall be clean.**

**(6) When her period of purification is completed, for either a son or a daughter, she shall bring to the priest, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting:** Until the woman brings her offering, she remains ritually impure and is not permitted to enter the Temple. Therefore, she presents her offering at the entrance rather than inside.

**a lamb in its first year for a burnt offering:** The purpose of this burnt offering is to mark the return to normal life after childbirth.

**and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering:** After childbirth, women often experience emotional difficulties – feelings of inadequacy and concerns about not giving enough attention to the newborn, her husband, or older children. The sin offering serves to alleviate these feelings.

Another interpretation of this purification offering relates to Adam and Eve's sin, as the pain of childbirth results from their expulsion from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:16). This does not refer to sin in the typical sense, but rather to the inherent human condition.

**(7) He shall offer it before the LORD and make expiation on her behalf; she shall then be clean from her flow of blood:** This ritual enables her to reintegrate into society.

**(8) If, however, her means do not suffice for a sheep, she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons:** As in other cases, the Torah establishes a tiered system that allows each person to offer according to their financial means. The atonement is not linked to the monetary value of the offering but rather to the sincerity and intent behind the sacrifice.

## § 13. TZARAAT

### § 13.1. TZARAAT AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO LEPROSY

The second topic of the *Tazria* portion is a specific disease called *tzaraat*. When the Torah was translated into Greek, *tzaraat* was translated as “leprosy” (in ancient times, this term referred to several different skin diseases). As a result, in the European context, *tzaraat* was identified with leprosy. However, the disease of *tzaraat*<sup>1</sup> described in the Tanakh is unrelated to leprosy in the European sense of the word.

A comparison of the key differences between *tzaraat* and leprosy highlights their distinct characteristics.

The progression of *tzaraat* is reassessed one week after the initial symptoms appear to determine if any changes have occurred. In contrast, leprosy advances so gradually that a week is insufficient to observe noticeable differences, rendering such a short-term evaluation unnecessary.

Although leprosy remained incurable until recent times, *tzaraat* could disappear completely without medical intervention.

All descriptions of *tzaraat* in the Tanakh indicate that a person experiences no physical deterioration during the condition. In the Book of Kings II, Chapter 5, the Aramean commander Naaman, although described as “leprous,” continued to serve his king with full strength. In *tzaraat*, the body’s organs remain unaffected; only the skin whitens, a condition that disappears without a trace upon “recovery.”

---

<sup>1</sup> The terms *tzaraat* and, later in the text, *metzora* are central to this section of the book. After their initial introduction, they will not be italicized to reflect their importance and frequent usage.

Many infectious diseases, including dermatological ones, were known in ancient times. However, the Torah does not mandate the isolation of individuals with diseases other than tzaraat. This does not mean that the Torah is opposed to isolation; rather, it indicates that the Torah does not provide purely medical instructions. The responsibility for medical treatment rested with physicians, not priests, who dealt specifically with the “non-medical” cases of tzaraat.

If tzaraat were an infectious disease, immediate isolation of the afflicted person would be necessary. However, the Torah mandates isolation only after a priest has examined the affected areas and declared the person unclean. Only then do the laws requiring the removal of the affected person from the community come into effect.

It is also incorrect to interpret the Torah’s requirement to isolate someone with tzaraat as a quarantine measure akin to those for infectious diseases. This interpretation contradicts the fact that, according to the Oral Torah, during large festive events or weddings, the status of tzaraat was not determined even if someone displayed symptoms of the disease so as not to disrupt the celebration. If tzaraat were leprosy, the affected individual would have been isolated promptly, especially due to the large number of people present.

Thus, tzaraat is a unique condition with no modern equivalent. Medically speaking, it is not classified as a disease but rather a spiritual affliction. Tzaraat disappeared following the destruction of the Temple, along with prophecy and open miracles. When the Shekhinah – the Divine Presence – was openly manifest, many sins had visible consequences, including tzaraat. However, as God’s presence became less apparent, such direct manifestations of divine justice also came to an end.

Therefore, the translation of the word tzaraat as “leprosy” is incorrect. Nevertheless, due to established linguistic traditions, this translation is also found in traditional Jewish commentaries, with clarification, of course. It remains a source of misunderstanding regarding the nature of tzaraat. To avoid confusion, we will use the original Torah term, “tzaraat.” Similarly, we will not refer to a person afflicted with this condition as a leper but by the Torah term “metzora” (the etymology of the word metzora will be discussed below).

Tzaraat is regarded as a severe form of ritual impurity. The metzora is not only prohibited from entering the Sanctuary (as is the case with any other impure person) but also from leaving the camp, which means being separated from the community. The afflicted individual cannot live among others and must wear torn clothing, effectively becoming a living dead, a symbolic reminder of death.

Whenever he or she encounters another person, the metzora must cry out, “I am unclean,” constantly reminding themselves of their condition. Isolation from society aims to encourage self-reflection and repentance. Only through such penance can one be cured of tzaraat.

### § 13.2. THE CAUSE AND MEANING OF TZARAAT

One classic explanation for the meaning of tzaraat is that the disease serves as a punishment for gossiping, for misusing the gift of speech to slander and deceive. The term “metzora,” used in the Tanakh to describe a person afflicted with tzaraat, is related to the phrase *motzi shem ra*, meaning “one who brings a bad name.” For instance, the tzaraat of Miriam (Numbers 12:10) follows her unjust accusation of Moses. Since those who misuse the gift of speech for malevolent purposes do so skillfully and subtly, tzaraat makes their crime visible. When such a person is isolated and even forbidden from speaking, it encourages them to reflect and repent.

This explanation clarifies the meaning of tzaraat, but it is not exhaustive. The Tanakh recounts other instances of this condition not associated with slander. For example, King Uzziah (II Chronicles 26:16-21), the commander Naaman, and the servant Gehazi (II Kings 5) all suffered from tzaraat. In Miriam’s case, it wasn’t merely slander – she didn’t intend to gossip about Moses. These situations involve undermining significant hierarchical structures and intruding into domains where one does not belong. In such instances, the punishment of tzaraat serves to remedy the transgression and restore order. (Of course, this does not imply that all hierarchies must remain unchanged indefinitely. They may evolve, but not arbitrarily.)

Thus, the general cause of tzaraat can be described as an attempt to disrupt the structures of human relationships, both vertical and lateral.

---

Often, this relates to the status of an individual who represents a connection to God for the people: the purpose of tzaraat is either to preserve and strengthen that status or to punish those who undermine it.

Here are some examples:

- Pharaoh in the story of Abraham (Genesis 12:17, though the text does not explicitly state that it was tzaraat, it does mention that God struck Pharaoh with “plagues”): This was done not only to save Sarah from Pharaoh but also to reinforce the authority of Abraham and Sarah.
- Moses (Exodus 4:6): To strengthen his leadership confidence.
- Miriam (Numbers 12:10): To highlight Moses’ exceptional prophetic status, as other prophets, including Miriam and Aaron, cannot compare to him.
- The commander Naaman (II Kings 5): The king of Aram appealed to the king of Israel and then to the prophet Elisha, who healed Naaman, to elevate the status of Israel’s prophets among the nations.
- Gehazi, Elisha’s servant (II Kings 5): To establish proper subordination and restore Elisha’s status, Gehazi portrayed him as a paid healer. This misrepresentation caused significant harm to both Elisha and the status of God he represented, necessitating a public correction.
- The Four Metzoras (II Kings 7): During the siege, when the people lost faith in the prophet, the four afflicted with tzaraat brought word of the siege’s end, thereby enhancing the prophet’s standing in the eyes of the people.
- King Uzziah (II Chronicles 26:18): When he went to burn incense in the Temple and became angry with the priests, “tzaraat appeared on his forehead.” This punishment was not for the act of burning incense but for undermining the authority of the priests. Since the king became a metzora, he could no longer claim the right to serve in the Temple, was separated from the people by living alone in the palace, and lost the ability to rule the land.

The primary sign of tzaraat is the whitening of the skin and hair, with the spot appearing bright and “snow-white” (Exodus

4:6, Numbers 12:10). This serves as a conspicuous mark, as the person sought to stand out, and they certainly did. Conversely, the whiteness of the skin resembles the color of death – for the metzora, having been cast out of the community, is as if he had died to society.

In this context, Deuteronomy 24:8, “In cases of a skin affection, be most careful to do exactly as the priests instruct you. Take care to follow the commands I have given them,” serves not merely as a reminder but as an explanation of the nature of tzaraat. The priests’ role concerning tzaraat is unusual. The priest does not simply diagnose tzaraat; instead, he officially determines the status of the metzora. Even if all the signs are present, an individual does not become a metzora and is not considered ritually impure until the priest declares it. When a person approaches the priest to have their status assessed, this act itself signifies the establishment of subordination and contributes to the process of correction.

### § 13.3. THE EARLY SIGNS OF TZARAAT (13:1-8)

א וַיְדַבֵּר יְיָ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: ב אָדָם כִּי-יִהְיֶה בְעוֹר-בְּשָׂרוֹ שָׂאֵת אוֹ-סִפְחַת אוֹ בְהִרְתּוֹ וְהָיָה בְעוֹר-בְּשָׂרוֹ לִנְגַע צָרְעַת וְהוּבָא אֶל-אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן אוֹ אֶל-אַחַד מִבְּנָיֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים: ג וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-הַנְּגַע בְּעוֹר-הַבְּשָׂר וְשִׁעָר בַּנְּגַע הַקֹּדֶף | לָבֹן וּמְרָאָה הַנְּגַע עֲמֹל מֵעוֹר בְּשָׂרוֹ | נְגַע צָרְעַת הוּא וְרָאָהּ הַכֹּהֵן וְטָמֵא אֹתוֹ: ד וְאִם-בְּהִרְתּוֹ לְבָנָה הוּא בְעוֹר בְּשָׂרוֹ וְעֲמֹל אִין-מְרָאָה מִן-הָעוֹר וְשִׁעָרָה לֹא-הָקֹדֶף לָבֹן וְהִסְגִּיר הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-הַנְּגַע שְׁבַעֶת יָמִים: ה וְרָאָהּ הַכֹּהֵן בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי וְהָיָה וְהָיָה הַנְּגַע עֲמֵד בְּעֵינָיו לֹא-פָשָׂה הַנְּגַע בְּעוֹר וְהִסְגִּירוֹ הַכֹּהֵן שְׁבַעֶת יָמִים שְׁנִית: ו וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אֹתוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי שְׁנִית וְהָיָה כִּהְיָה הַנְּגַע וְלֹא-פָשָׂה הַנְּגַע בְּעוֹר וְטָהֲרוּ הַכֹּהֵן מִסִּפְחַת הוּא וְכִבֵּס בַּגָּדָיו וְטָהֲרוּ: ז וְאִם-פָּשָׂה תִפְשָׂה הַמִּסִּפְחַת בְּעוֹר אַחֲרֵי הָרְאִיתוֹ אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן לְטָהֲרָתוֹ וְנִרְאָה שְׁנִית אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן: ח וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהָיָה כְּשִׁתָּהּ הַמִּסִּפְחַת בְּעוֹר וְטָמֵא הַכֹּהֵן צָרְעַת הוּא:

**(1) The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:**

**(2) When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling, a rash, or a discoloration, and it develops into a scaly affection on the skin of his body, it shall be reported to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons, the priests.**

(3) **The priest shall examine the affection on the skin of his body: if hair in the affected patch has turned white and the affection appears to be deeper than the skin of the body, it is a tzaraat affection; when the priest sees it, he shall pronounce him unclean.**

(4) **But if it is a white discoloration on the skin of his body which does not appear to be deeper than the skin and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest shall isolate the affected person for seven days.**

(5) **On the seventh day the priest shall examine him, and if the affection has remained unchanged in color and the disease has not spread on the skin, the priest shall isolate him for another seven days.**

(6) **On the seventh day the priest shall examine him again: if the affection has faded and has not spread on the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is a rash. He shall wash his clothes, and he shall be clean.**

(7) **But if the rash should spread on the skin after he has presented himself to the priest and been pronounced clean, he shall present himself again to the priest.**

(8) **And if the priest sees that the rash has spread on the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is tzaraat.**

(1) **The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:** Aaron also receives this prophecy, as the matter of tzaraat is determined by the priests.

(2) **When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling:** This is the first instance of tzaraat. The verse first mentions the person, and only afterward the affliction, indicating that, at the initial stage of wrongdoing, the person remains central while the affliction is secondary. However, as the process continues, this relationship may shift.

**on the skin:** This condition specifically affects the skin; it does not impact the internal organs.

**and it develops into a scaly affection on the skin of his body:** A white spot appears.

**it shall be reported to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons, the priests:** The command to bring the afflicted person to a priest instead of a physician highlights the spiritual nature of the affliction over the physical.

**(3) The priest shall examine the affection on the skin of his body. If hair in the affected patch has turned white:** The whitening of both the skin and the hair is an unusual phenomenon.

**and the affection appears to be deeper than the skin of the body:** The verse does not claim that the affliction is truly deeper, but rather that it seems deeper. There are several possible interpretations of this phrase: (1) The bright whiteness creates the impression of being sunken in comparison to the darker surrounding skin. (2) The spot may seem more transparent than normal skin, giving it a recessed appearance. (3) It sharply contrasts with the surrounding skin. (4) It seems to penetrate the skin.

**when the priest sees it, he shall pronounce him unclean:** Literally, “he shall make him unclean.” This is not merely an objective diagnosis of tzaraat; rather, the priest’s ruling itself determines the person’s state of impurity.

**(4) But if it is a white discoloration on the skin of his body which does not appear to be deeper than the skin:** That is, it does not seem to have penetrated the skin or to be strikingly bright.

**and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest shall isolate the affected person for seven days:** The phrase “shall isolate” applies both to the person and to the affliction: the priest must mark its boundaries to monitor its spread. This is not merely an observation period but a form of treatment: the person is left alone for seven days to reflect on his situation.

**(5) On the seventh day the priest shall examine him, and if the affection has remained unchanged in color and the disease has not spread on the skin, the priest shall isolate him for another seven days:** If the affliction has not spread but also has not disappeared, it indicates that the person is making efforts to correct his ways, but they are not yet sufficient. Therefore, he is given additional time.

**(6) On the seventh day the priest shall examine him again: if the affection has faded and has not spread on the skin:** The spot has darkened, indicating that the intensity of the problem has diminished and is no longer worsening.

**the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is a rash:** The issue has shifted from a spiritual problem to a strictly medical condition.

**He shall wash his clothes, and he shall be clean:** Since the person in quarantine was potentially deemed impure, he must now undergo purification by washing his clothes.

**(7) But if the rash should spread on the skin after he has presented himself to the priest and been pronounced clean, he shall present himself again to the priest:** This person assumed the issue was resolved and resumed his behavior, but it became worse.

**(8) And if the priest sees that the rash has spread on the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is tzaraat:** As the individual did not heed the warning, stronger corrective measures are required.

This segment describes a relatively mild case: the issue can be resolved through repentance and self-correction.

#### § 13.4. TZARAAT CHANGES BETWEEN AFFLICTED AND NORMAL SKIN AND VICE VERSA (13:9-17)

ט גַּע צָרַעַת כִּי תִהְיֶה בְּאָדָם וְהוּבָא אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן: י וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה שְׂאֵת-  
 לְבָנָה בְּעוֹר וְהָיָא הַפֶּקֶה שְׁעָר לִבָּן וּמְתַנֵּת בְּשׂוֹר חֵי בִשְׂאֵת: יא צָרַעַת  
 נוֹשְׁנֵת הוּא בְּעוֹר בְּשׂוֹרוֹ וְטִמְאָו הַכֹּהֵן לֹא יִסְגְּרוּ כִּי טִמְאָ הוּא: יב וְאִם-  
 פָּרוּחַ תִּפְרָח הַצָּרַעַת בְּעוֹר וְכִסְתָּהּ הַצָּרַעַת אֵת כָּל-עוֹר הַגֹּעַגְעֵי מִרְאֵשׁוֹ  
 וְעַד-רִגְלָיו לְכָל-מְרֹאֵה עֵינָיו הַכֹּהֵן: יג וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה כִסְתָּהּ הַצָּרַעַת  
 אֵת-כָּל-בְּשׂוֹרוֹ וְטִמְאָר אֵת-הַגֹּעַגְעֵי כִּלּוֹ הַפֶּד לִבָּן טְהוֹר הוּא: יד וּבַיּוֹם הָרְאִיתָ  
 כִּי בְּשׂוֹר חֵי יִטְמָא: טו וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אֵת-הַבְּשׂוֹר חֵי וְטִמְאָו הַבְּשׂוֹר חֵי טִמְאָ  
 הוּא צָרַעַת הוּא: טז אִם כִּי יָשׁוּב הַבְּשׂוֹר חֵי וְנִהְפָּד לִלְבָן וּבָא אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן:  
 יז וְרָאָהוּ הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה נִהְפָּד הַגֹּעַגְעֵי לִלְבָן וְטִמְאָר אֵת-הַגֹּעַגְעֵי טְהוֹר הוּא:

**(9) When a person has a scaly affection, it shall be reported to the priest.**

**(10) The priest shall examine him, and if it has turned white and the hair in the affected patch has turned white, and there is quick raw flesh in the patch,**

**(11) it is a chronic scaly affection on the skin of his body, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean; he need not isolate him, for he is unclean.**

**(12) If the eruption spreads out over the skin so that it covers all the skin of the affected person from head to foot, wherever the priest can see,**

**(13) if the priest sees that the eruption has covered the whole body, he shall pronounce the affected person clean; he is clean, for he has turned all white.**

**(14) But as soon as raw flesh appears in it, he shall be unclean;**

**(15) when the priest sees the raw flesh, he shall pronounce him unclean; the raw flesh is unclean, it is a scaly affection.**

**(16) If the raw flesh again turns white, he shall come to the priest,**

**(17) and the priest shall examine him; if the affected patch has turned white, the priest shall pronounce the affected person clean; he is clean.**

**(9) When a person has a scaly affection:** The second case is more severe: unlike what was described earlier in verse 2, here the scaly affection is mentioned first – it takes precedence, while the person is mentioned afterward, making him secondary.

**(10) The priest shall examine him, and if it has turned white and the hair in the affected patch has turned white, and there is quick raw flesh in the patch:** The presence of healthy flesh indicates that the person is not beyond hope; there is an internal conflict within him. However, the scaly affection surrounding this healthy area shows that he cannot resolve the issue alone.

**(11) It is a chronic scaly affection on the skin of his body:** This is an old, unresolved issue.

**and the priest shall pronounce him unclean:** In this more serious case, stricter measures must be implemented immediately.

**(12-13) If the eruption... covers all the skin of the affected person from head to foot...the affected person...is clean, for he has turned all white:** A paradoxical situation arises: if there is a patch of healthy skin, the person is considered unclean and must be separated from society; however, if tzaraat covers his entire body, he remains clean, and there is no need to isolate him! The reason for this inconsistency is that the purpose of isolation is to prompt the afflicted person to reflect and correct his behavior. However, if he is completely covered in tzaraat – which indicates he is utterly immersed in wrongdoing – he is incapable of recognizing his own mistakes. Therefore, he does not need to be separated; a different treatment is required. He must be presented to the public in his full condition so everyone sees that he is afflicted with tzaraat. The resulting conflict with society may lead him toward self-improvement. In such a case, the person may choose to isolate himself and avoid social interaction, but this would be his own decision rather than a priestly decree. This approach would have a stronger impact on him.

**(14) But as soon as raw flesh appears in it, he shall be unclean:** The appearance of healthy flesh offers hope for natural healing, so now he must be isolated.

**(16) If the raw flesh again turns white, he shall come to the priest:** This does not indicate recovery. On the contrary, it signifies regression, meaning that natural healing is no longer possible. The only hope is that the person's evident conflict with society will enable his change.

#### § 13.5. TZARAAT AT THE LOCATION OF HEALED INFLAMMATION (13:18-23)

יח ובשֹׁר כִּי-יִהְיֶה בוֹ-בְעֵרוֹ שְׁתִּין וְנִרְפָּא: יט וְהָיָה בְּמָקוֹם הַשְּׁחִין שְׂאֵת שְׂאֵת לְבָנָה אֹו בְהֶרֶת לְבָנָה אִדְמַדְמַת וְנִרְאָה וְנִרְאָה אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן: כ וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהָנָה מִרְאָהּ שְׁפֵל מִן-הָעוֹר וּשְׁעָרָה הַקֹּד לָבוֹ וְטִמְאֹו הַכֹּהֵן גָּגַע-צָרַעַת הוּא בְשִׁתִּין פְּרָחָה: כא וְאִם ׀ רָאָנָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהָנָה אִין-בָּהּ שְׁעָר

לְבוֹ וּשְׂפֵלָה אֵינְנָה מִן-הָעוֹר וְהָיָא כְּהָה וְהִסְגִּירוּ הַפֶּהוּ שְׁבַעַת יָמִים: כֹּב  
 וְאִם-פֶּשֶׁה תִּפְשֶׁה בְּעוֹר וְטִמָּא הַפֶּהוּ אִתּוֹ גָּגַע הוּא: כִּג וְאִם-תַּחֲתִיָּה תִעְמָד  
 הַבְּהֵרֶת לֹא פִשְׁתָּה צָרַכַת הַשְּׁחִין הוּא וְטִהְרוּ הַפֶּהוּ:

**(18) If a person has on the skin of his body an inflammation that has healed,**

**(19) and in the place where the inflammation was, there is a white swelling or a white discoloration streaked with red, it shall be shown to the priest.**

**(20) The priest shall examine it, and if it appears lower than the skin and its hair has turned white, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a scaly affection that has broken out in the inflammation.**

**(21) But if the priest finds that there is no white hair in it and it is not lower than the skin, but is faded, the priest shall isolate him for seven days.**

**(22) If it should spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an affection.**

**(23) But if the discoloration remains stationary and does not spread, it is the scar of the inflammation; the priest shall pronounce him clean.**

**(18) If a person has on the skin of his body:** This is the third case. Here, the person is referred to as *basar*, “flesh, body.” He is now merely “flesh”; his personality is no longer dominant, and he is close to destruction.

**an inflammation that has healed, and in the place where the inflammation was, there is a white swelling:** The inflammation has healed, but a lesion has developed in its place. This describes a situation in which a person ignored the illness and failed to recognize it as a warning. Consequently, even in the area where the inflammation healed, *tzaraat* can emerge.

Every illness serves as a warning for a person to turn to God. This never implied that one should avoid seeking medical treatment – on the contrary, the Torah holds a positive view of medicine. However, both processes should occur simultaneously: the doctor must address the illness while the patient turns to God.

**(19) and in the place where the inflammation was, there is a white swelling or a white discoloration streaked with red, it shall be shown to the priest:** White still dominates, but red has also emerged. White symbolizes mercy, while red represents severity and judgment. Initially, tzaraat is white, indicating that God seeks not to punish but to correct and heal. The presence of a white patch compels a person to approach the priest. However, if he fails to do so and does not change his behavior, red – the color of judgment – appears on the lesion.

**(20) The priest shall examine it, and if it appears lower than the skin and its hair has turned white, the priest shall pronounce him unclean:** This person was declared unclean immediately, without the prior isolation period.

**it is a scaly affection that has broken out in the inflammation:** Neglecting the spiritual aspect of illness has resulted in complications.

**(21) But if the priest finds that there is no white hair in it and it is not lower than the skin, but is faded, the priest shall isolate him for seven days:** Even a long-time offender has a chance to repent.

**(22) If it should spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an affection:** If a week of isolation did not result in repentance, stricter measures must be implemented.

**(23) But if the discoloration remains stationary and does not spread, it is the scar of the inflammation; the priest shall pronounce him clean:** If the individual repented, then addressing the consequences becomes solely a medical issue.

#### § 13.6. TZARAAT AT THE SITE OF A HEALED BURN (13:24-28)

כד או בִּשָׁר פִּי־יְהִיגָה בְּעָרוֹ מְכוּת־אֵשׁ וְהִיטָה מְחִינָת הַמְּכוּה בַּהֲרַת לְבָנָה  
אֲדַמָּה־מֵת אוֹ לְבָנָה: כה וְרָאָה אֹתָהּ הַכֹּהֵן וְהִגִּיהָ נֶהֱפֹךְ שֵׁעָר לָכֵן בַּבְּהֲרַת  
וּמְרָאָה עֵמֶק מִן־הָעוֹר צָרַעַת הִוא בַּמְּכוּה פְּרִיחָה וְטִמְאָ אֹתוֹ הַכֹּהֵן גִּיגַע  
צָרַעַת הִוא: כו וְאָם | וְרָאָהּ הַכֹּהֵן וְהִגִּיהָ אִיו־בַּבְּהֲרַת שֵׁעָר לָכֵן וּשְׁפֹלָה

אִיגָנָה מִן־הָעוֹר וְהוּא כְהָה וְהִסְגִּירוּ הַכֹּהֵן שְׂבַעַת יָמִים: כִּז וְרָאָהּ הַכֹּהֵן  
 בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי אִם־פָּשָׂה תִפְשָׂה בְעוֹר וְטָמֵא הַכֹּהֵן אִתּוֹ גָּנַע צָרַעַת הוּא:  
 כִּז וְאִם־תִּחַתֵּיךְ תַעֲמֹד הַבְהִירַת לֹא־פָשְׂתָה בְעוֹר וְהוּא כְהָה שְׂאֵת הַמַּכּוּה  
 הוּא וְטָהֵר הַכֹּהֵן כִּי־צָרַבַת הַמַּכּוּה הוּא:

**(24) When the body sustains a burn by fire, and the patch from the burn becomes a discoloration, either white streaked with red, or white,**

**(25) the priest shall examine it. If the hair in the discoloration has turned white, and it appears to be deeper than the skin, it is tzaraat that has broken out in the burn; the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a tzaraat affection.**

**(26) But if the priest finds that there is no white hair in the discoloration, and it is not lower than the skin, and is faded, the priest shall isolate him for seven days.**

**(27) On the seventh day the priest shall examine him; if it has spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is tzaraat.**

**(28) But if the discoloration remains stationary and has not spread on the skin, and it is faded, it is the scar of the burn; the priest shall pronounce him clean, for it is the scar of the burn.**

**(24) When the body sustains a burn by fire:** This is the fourth case. Similar to the third case, the description begins with the word “body” instead of “person, “ indicating that, in this situation as well, the individual’s personality no longer dominates.

**and the patch from the burn becomes a discoloration, either white streaked with red, or white:** Previously (verse 19, the third case), the discoloration was described as “white or white streaked with red,” but here it is “white streaked with red or white” – meaning that red, the color of judgment, has become dominant. This continues to depict the individual’s progressive moral decline.

**(25) ... it is tzaraat that has broken out in the burn:** Tzaraat can arise from either inflammation (“an internal fire,” as mentioned in the previous case) or a burn (“an external fire,” as in this situation).

**(26) the priest shall isolate him for seven days:** The individual is presented with a chance to amend his behavior.

**(28) But if the discoloration remains stationary and has not spread on the skin, and it is faded, it is the scar of the burn; the priest shall pronounce him clean:** If the person has taken advantage of this opportunity and expressed remorse, the issue is resolved, leaving only the medical treatment for the physical consequences.

§ 13.7. THE AFFLICTION ON THE HEAD OR  
IN THE BEARD (13:29-37)

כט ואיש או אשה כי-יהיה בו גגע בראש או בגזן: ל וראה הפהן את-  
הגגע והנה מראהו עמק מן-העור ובו שער צהב דק וטמא אתו הפהן  
נתק הוא צרעת הראש או הזקן הוא: לא וכי-יראה הפהן את-גגע  
הנתק והנה איו-מראהו עמק מן-העור ושער שחר אין בו והסגיר הפהן  
את-גגע הנתק שבעת ימים: לב וראה הפהן את-הגגע ביום השביעי  
והנה לא-פשה הנתק ולא-הנה בו שער צהב ומראה הנתק אין עמק  
מן-העור: לג והתגלח ואת-הנתק לא יגלם והסגיר הפהן את-הנתק  
שבעת ימים שנית: לד וראה הפהן את-הנתק ביום השביעי והנה לא-  
פשה הנתק בעור ומראהו איננו עמק מן-העור וטהר אתו הפהן וכבס  
בגדיו וטהר: לה ואם-פשה יפשה הנתק בעור אחר טהרתו: לו וראהו  
הפהן והנה פשה הנתק בעור לא-יבקר הפהן לשער הצהב טמא הוא:  
לז ואם-בעיניו עמד הנתק ושער שחר צמח-בו נרפא הנתק טהור הוא  
וטהרו הפהן:

**(29) If a man or a woman has an affliction on the head or in the beard,**

**(30) the priest shall examine the affliction. If it appears to be deeper than the skin and there is thin yellow hair in it, the priest shall pronounce the person unclean; it is a tzaraat of the head or beard.**

**(31) But if the priest examines the tzaraat affliction and it does not appear to be deeper than the skin, and there**

**is no black hair in it, the priest shall isolate the person with the affliction for seven days.**

**(32) On the seventh day the priest shall examine the affliction; if the tzaraat has not spread and no yellow hair has appeared in it, and the affliction does not appear to be deeper than the skin,**

**(33) the person shall shave himself, but he shall not shave the affliction; the priest shall then isolate the person for another seven days.**

**(34) On the seventh day the priest shall examine the tzaraat again; if it has not spread on the skin and does not appear to be deeper than the skin, the priest shall pronounce the person clean. The person shall wash his clothes, and he shall be clean.**

**(35) But if the tzaraat spreads on the skin after the person has been pronounced clean,**

**(36) the priest shall examine him; if the tzaraat has spread, the priest need not look for the yellow hair; the person is unclean.**

**(37) But if the tzaraat has remained unchanged and black hair has grown in it, the affliction has healed; the person is clean, and the priest shall pronounce him clean.**

**(29) If a man or a woman:** This is the fifth case of tzaraat. However, it describes a milder condition; therefore, those affected are referred to as “a man or a woman,” indicating that individuality remains the primary factor.

**has an affliction on the head or in the beard:** The head (hair) and beard symbolize the realm of consciousness and thought. If an affliction arises in this area, it indicates deep-seated damage within this domain.

**(30) and there is thin yellow hair in it:** A sign of tzaraat always indicates an abnormality in the affliction. Previously, for bodily afflictions, the sign was the whitening of the hair. However, on the head or beard, an unnatural color appears as yellowing of the hair, since white hair can occur naturally due to aging.

**(31) But if the priest examines the tzaraat affliction and it does not appear to be deeper than the skin, and there is no black hair in it:** If a person has black hair (a normal, natural color), they are considered clean. Conversely, if a person has blond or red hair, these unusual hair colors serve as the defining sign of tzaraat.

**(31-32) the priest shall isolate the person with the affliction for seven days. On the seventh day the priest shall examine the affliction; if the tzaraat has not spread and no yellow hair has appeared in it, and the affliction does not appear to be deeper than the skin:** That is, no additional negative signs have appeared.

**(33) the person shall shave himself, but he shall not shave the affliction:** The person must focus on his problem.

**the priest shall then isolate the person for another seven days:** Unlike previous cases described, the person is not immediately declared free of infection after the first isolation period; instead, a second examination is conducted. If the issue is intellectual in nature, two full quarantine periods are necessary for purification.

**(34) On the seventh day the priest shall examine the tzaraat again; if it has not spread on the skin:** Although full rectification has not yet occurred, the individual has managed to regain self-control and stop progression.

**The person shall wash his clothes, and he shall be clean:** As in other cases of initial signs of tzaraat, purification is still necessary.

**(35) But if the tzaraat spreads on the skin after the person has been pronounced clean, the priest need not look for the yellow hair; the person is unclean:** The spread represents the breadth of the error, while yellow hair signifies its depth. If an intellectual mistake is extensive enough, its depth becomes irrelevant – it is tzaraat.

**(37) But if the tzaraat has remained unchanged and black hair has grown in it, the affliction has healed:** The return of black (i.e., normal) hair on the head and in the beard signifies a person's return to intellectual soundness.

## § 13.8. THE FADED WHITE SPOTS (13:38-39)

לח ואיש או-אשה כי-יהנה בעור-בשָׁרָם בְּהִרְתּוֹ בְּהִרְתּוֹ לְבָנֹת: לט וְרָאָה  
הַכֹּהֵן וְהֵנָּה בְּעוֹר-בְּשָׂרָם בְּהִרְתּוֹ בְּהִרְתּוֹ לְבָנֹת בְּהִרְתּוֹ הוּא פָּרַח בְּעוֹר טְהוֹר  
טְהוֹר הוּא:

**(38) If a man or a woman has white discolorations on the skin of the body,**

**(39) and the priest sees that the discolorations on the skin of the body are of a dull white, it is a tetter that has broken out on the skin; the person is clean.**

**(38) If a man or a woman has white discolorations on the skin of the body:** This raises suspicion of tzaraat.

**(39) and the priest sees that the discolorations on the skin of the body are of a dull white:** If they are dull white instead of bright white, as described earlier (13:2), they are not considered signs of tzaraat, and the color of the hair in these areas does not need to be examined.

**it is a tetter that has broken out on the skin; the person is clean:** This is yet another indication that it could be tzaraat, but it serves merely as a warning.

## § 13.9. TZARAAT ON A BALD HEAD OR FOREHEAD (13:40-44)

מ ואיש כי ימרט ראשו קרח הוא טְהוֹר הוּא: מא ואם מפֹּאֵת פָּנָיו ימרט  
ראשו גִּבַּח הוא טְהוֹר הוּא: מב וכי-יהנה בקרחת או בגבחת נגע נגע  
לְבָן אֲדָמָדִם צָרַעַת פְּרִיחַת הוּא בְּקִרְחָתוֹ אוּ בְּגִבְחָתוֹ: מג וְרָאָה אֹתוֹ הַכֹּהֵן  
וְהֵנָּה שְׂאֵת-הַנֶּגַע לְבָנָה אֲדָמָדִם בְּקִרְחָתוֹ אוּ בְּגִבְחָתוֹ כְּמִרְאֵה צָרַעַת עוֹר  
בְּשָׂר: מד איש-צָרוּעַ הוּא טָמֵא טָמֵא הוּא טָמֵא טָמֵא יִטְמָאָנוּ הַכֹּהֵן בְּרֹאשׁוֹ  
נִגְעוֹ:

**(40) If a man loses the hair of his head and becomes bald, he is clean.**

**(41) If he loses the hair on the front part of his head and becomes bald at the forehead, he is clean.**

**(42) But if there is a reddish-white affection on the bald part in the front or at the back of his head, it is a tzaraat breaking out on his bald spot or his bald forehead.**

**(43) The priest shall examine him: if the swelling of the affection on his bald spot or his bald forehead is reddish-white, like the appearance of tzaraat on the skin of the body,**

**(44) the man is tzaraat-stricken; he is unclean. The priest shall pronounce him unclean; the affliction is on his head.**

**(40) If a man loses the hair of his head and becomes bald, he is clean:** This is the sixth case of tzaraat affecting the skin of the head.

**loses the hair of his head:** All issues related to hair are discussed separately, as hair plays an important role in diagnosing tzaraat.

**he is clean:** Since it is explicitly stated that a bald person is clean (while other ordinary instances of purity are not separately mentioned), this also conveys a figurative meaning. The top of the head symbolizes “elevated thoughts.” Some individuals are deeply immersed in intellectual contemplation and show little interest in real life. Although this is not ideal, such individuals are still regarded as pure.

**(41) If he loses the hair on the front part of his head and becomes bald at the forehead, he is clean:** This also carries symbolic meaning. A receding hairline enlarges the forehead, which symbolizes arrogance. While this trait is undesirable, it does not render a person impure in the context of tzaraat.

**(42) But if there is a reddish-white affection on the bald part in the front or at the back of his head, it is a tzaraat breaking out on his bald spot or his bald forehead:** A skin affliction on the head signifies the destruction of a person’s higher understanding. Here, red immediately appears – the color of judgment and accusation.

**(44) the man is tzaraat-stricken; he is unclean. The priest shall pronounce him unclean; the affliction is on his head:** Such

a person is not isolated for the usual seven days of observation; the problem is evidently serious, and the affected individual is declared unclean.

### § 13.10. THE CONDUCT OF THE METZORA (13:45-46)

מה והצָרוע אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ הִנָּגַע בְּגָדָיו יִהְיוּ פְרָמִים וְרֹאשׁוֹ יִהְיֶה פְרוּעַ וְעַל-  
שָׁפֵם יַעֲטֶה וְטָמֵא | טָמֵא יִקְרָא: מוֹ כָּל-יָמָיו אֲשֶׁר הִנָּגַע בּוֹ בּוֹ יִטָּמֵא טָמֵא  
הוּא בְּדָד יֵשֵׁב מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה מוֹשָׁבוֹ:

**(45) As for the person with a tzaraat affliction, his clothes shall be rent, his head shall be left bare, and he shall cover over his upper lip; and he shall call out, “Unclean! Unclean!”**

**(46) He shall be unclean as long as the disease is on him. Being unclean, he shall dwell apart; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.**

**(45) As for the person with a tzaraat affliction:** After describing the various types of tzaraat, guidance is now provided regarding the behavior of the afflicted person.

**his clothes shall be rent:** Like someone in mourning. A person with tzaraat is compared to the dead – he mourns for himself.

**his head shall be left bare:** This, too, is a sign of mourning. A person with tzaraat is forbidden to cut his hair until he becomes clean.

**he shall cover over his upper lip:** Another symbol of mourning, contrary to the mistaken belief that it is intended to prevent contagion, since tzaraat is not an infectious disease.

All of these expressions of mourning are found in other parts of the Tanakh. Moses instructs Aaron not to behave in this manner while mourning for his deceased sons (Leviticus 10:6). It is also referenced in the laws that prohibit the High Priest from defiling himself through contact with the dead (Leviticus 21:10). Covering the face up to the mustache is noted in the Book of Ezekiel when God forbids him to mourn for his dead wife (24:16-17).

**and he shall call out, “Unclean! Unclean!”:** The person with tzaraat warns others to keep their distance, as his affliction reflects

issues in human relationships. He constantly reminds himself of his condition, as though he is in perpetual contact with death – his own. He must symbolize his demise and mourn for himself. This “shock therapy” is a vital part of his journey toward correction.

**(46) He shall be unclean as long as the disease is on him:** The word “as long as” emphasizes that this state is temporary – tzaraat can be cured.

**Being unclean, he shall dwell apart; his dwelling shall be outside the camp:** Isolation is the most profound aspect of death. For a person with tzaraat, this solitude is essential for correction; he is cast out from the society whose relationships he sought to undermine.

#### § 13.11. TZARAAT ON CLOTHING (13:47-59)

מז והבגד כי-יהיה בו נגע צרעת בבגד צמר או בבגד פשתים: מח או בשתי או בערב לפשתים ולצמר או בעור או בכל-מלאכת עור: מט והיה הנגע ירקרק ו או אדמדם בבגד או בעור או-בשתי או-בערב או בכל-פלי-עור נגע צרעת הוא והראה את-הפקה: נ וראה הפהן את-הנגע והסגיר את-הנגע שבעת ימים: ימים: נא וראה את-הנגע ביום השביעי כי-פשה הנגע בבגד או-בשתי או-בערב או בעור לכל אשר-יעשה העור למלאכה צרעת ממארת ממארת הנגע טמא הוא: נב ושׂרף את-הבגד או את-השתי ו או את-הערב בצמר או בפשתים או את-כל-פלי העור אשר-יהיה בו הנגע כי-צרעת ממארת הוא באש תשרף: נג ואם יראה הפהן והנה לא-פשה הנגע בבגד או בשתי או בערב או בכל-פלי-עור: נד וצוה הפהן וכבסו את אשר-בו הנגע והסגירו שבעת-ימים שנית: נה וראה הפהן אחרי ו הפכס את-הנגע והנה לא-הפך הנגע את-עינו והנגע לא-פשה טמא הוא באש תשרפנו פחתת הוא בקרחתו או בגבחתו: נו ואם ראה הפהן והנה כהה הנגע אחרי הככס אתו וקרע אתו מן-הבגד או מן-העור או מן-השתי או מן-הערב: נז ואם-תראה עוד בבגד או-בשתי או-בערב או בכל-פלי-עור פחתת הוא באש תשרפנו את אשר-בו הנגע: נח והבגד או-השתי או-הערב או-כל-פלי העור אשר תככס תככס וסר מהם הנגע וככס שנית וטהר: נט זאת תורת נגע-צרעת בגד הצמר ו או הפשתים או השתי או הערב או כל-פלי-עור לטהרו או לטמאו:

**(47) When an affliction of tzaraat occurs in a garment, in a woolen or linen garment,**

**(48) in the warp or woof of linen or wool, or in a skin or in anything made of skin;**

**(49) if the affliction in the garment or in the skin, in the warp or in the woof, or in any article of skin is streaky green or red, it is an affliction of tzaraat and shall be shown to the priest.**

**(50) The priest shall examine the affliction and isolate the article that has the affliction for seven days.**

**(51) On the seventh day he shall examine the affliction; if the affliction has spread in the garment, in the warp or in the woof, or in the skin, whatever be the use of the skin, the affliction is a malignant tzaraat; it is unclean.**

**(52) The garment, or the warp or woof, or any article of skin in which the affliction is found shall be burned, for it is a malignant tzaraat; it shall be consumed in fire.**

**(53) But if the priest finds that the affliction in the garment, or in the warp or woof, or in any article of skin has not spread,**

**(54) the priest shall order that the affected article be washed, and he shall isolate it for another seven days.**

**(55) And if, after the affected article has been washed, the priest sees that the affliction has not changed color, even though the affliction has not spread, it is unclean; it shall be consumed in fire; it is a fret, whether on its inner side or on its outer side.**

**(56) But if the priest finds that the affected part, after it has been washed, is faded, he shall tear it out from the garment or the skin, whether from the warp or from the woof.**

**(57) And if it again appears in the garment, in the warp or in the woof, or in any article of skin, it is a wild growth; the article affected shall be consumed in fire.**

**(58) If, however, the affliction disappears from the garment, warp or woof, or from any article of skin that**

has been washed, it shall be washed again, and it shall be clean.

**(59) Such is the ritual for an affliction of tzaraat in a garment of wool or linen, in warp or woof, or in any article of skin, for pronouncing it clean or unclean.**

**(47) When an affliction of tzaraat occurs in a garment, in a woolen or linen garment:** The Midrash teaches that before punishing a person directly, God first afflicts his possessions. If stains resembling tzaraat appear on clothing or the walls of a house, this serves as a warning. If the person repents, he will avoid the disease.

**(48) in the warp or woof of linen or wool:** This pertains to the threads prepared for fabric production.

**or in a skin or in anything made of skin:** Likewise, this pertains to leather prepared for processing or to a finished product.

**(49) if the affliction in the garment or in the skin, in the warp or in the woof, or in any article of skin is streaky green or red:** Literally, it means “green from the greens” and “red from the reds,” which refers to a bright, vivid color. Tzaraat must be highly noticeable.

**(50) The priest shall examine the affliction and isolate the article that has the affliction for seven days:** The affected garment is isolated. This serves as a warning to the owner: he should have been isolated himself, but for now, he is only receiving a hint.

**(52) The garment ... in which the affliction is found shall be burned:** All of this serves as an instructive hint to the garment’s owner.

**(55) it is a fret, whether on its inner side or on its outer side:** Literally, “on its bald spot or on its bald forehead,” referring to the back or front of the garment. The use of human imagery to describe the garment aims to shame its owner.

**(56) But if the priest finds that the affected part, after it has been washed, is faded, he shall tear it out from the garment or**

**the skin:** The owner of the item has not only ceased his wrongdoing but has also improved himself.

**(57) And if it again appears in the garment ... the article affected shall be consumed in fire:** If, after correction, a person reverts to improper behavior, he is now considered unclean without further examination. The garment is no longer isolated, and its owner is not granted additional time to repent – he has lost control over himself.

**(58) If, however, the affliction disappears from the garment, warp or woof, or from any article of skin that has been washed, it shall be washed again, and it shall be clean:** If the person has successfully corrected himself, as indicated by the disappearance of the affliction after washing, additional purification is required to solidify his recovery, after which he is considered clean.

**(59) Such is the ritual for an affliction of tzaraat in a garment of wool or linen, in warp or woof, or in any article of skin, for pronouncing it clean or unclean:** This entire process serves as a lesson for an individual, illustrating the potential consequences of neglecting his own behavior.

**WEEKLY  
PORTION 5**

**METZORA**

## § 14. PURIFICATION FROM TZARAAT

### § 14.1. THE PROCEDURE FOR PURIFYING THE METZORA (14:1-20)

א וַיִּדְבֹר יי אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ב זֹאת תְּהִיָּה תוֹרַת הַמְצֻרָע הַמְצֻרָע בְּיוֹם טְהַרְתּוֹ וְהוֹבֵא אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן: ג וַיֵּצֵא הַכֹּהֵן אֶל-מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהָיָה גֵרָפָא גַע-הַצָּרְעַת מִן-הַצָּרוּעַ: ד וְצִוְּהָ הַכֹּהֵן וְלָקַח וְלָקַח לַמַּטְהָר שְׁתֵּי-צִפְרִים חַיֹּת טְהוֹרוֹת וְעֵץ אֲרָז וְשִׁנֵּי תוֹלַעַת וְאַזְבִּ: ה וְצִוְּהָ הַכֹּהֵן וְשָׂחַט אֶת-הַצִּפּוֹר הָאֶחָת אֶל-כְּלֵי-חֶרֶשׁ עַל-מַיִם חַיִּים: ו אֶת-הַצִּפּוֹר הַחַיָּה יִקַּח אֹתָהּ וְאֶת-עֵץ הָאֲרָז וְאֶת-שִׁנֵּי הַתּוֹלַעַת וְאֶת-הָאֲזָב וְטָבַל אוֹתָם וְאֶת הַצִּפּוֹר הַחַיָּה בְּדַם הַצִּפּוֹר הַשָּׁחֻטָה עַל הַמַּיִם הַחַיִּים: ז וְהָזָה עַל הַמַּטְהָר מִן-הַצָּרְעַת שִׁבְעַת פְּעֻמִּים וְטָהֲרוּ וְשָׂחַט אֶת-הַצִּפּוֹר הַחַיָּה עַל-פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה: ח וְכַבֵּס הַמַּטְהָר אֶת-בְּגָדָיו וְגִלְחָ אֶת-כָּל-שְׁעָרוֹ וְרַחֵץ בַּמַּיִם וְטָהֵר וְאַחַר יָבֹא אֶל-הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיֵּשֶׁב מַחוּץ לְאֹהֶל שִׁבְעַת יָמִים: ט וְהָיָה בְּיוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי יִגְלַח אֶת-כָּל-שְׁעָרוֹ אֶת-רֹאשׁוֹ וְאֶת-זָקְנוֹ וְאֶת גְּבִת עֵינָיו וְאֶת-כָּל-שְׁעָרוֹ יִגְלַח וְכַבֵּס אֶת-בְּגָדָיו וְרַחֵץ אֶת-בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם וְטָהֵר: י וּבְיוֹם הַשְּׂמִינִי יִקַּח שְׁנֵי-כִבְשִׂים תְּמִימִים וְכִבְשָׂה אֶחָת בַּת-שְׁנַתָּה תְּמִימָה וְשִׁלְשָׂה עֶשְׂרִינָיִם סֶלֶת מִנְחָה מִנְחָה בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן וְלֶג אֶחָד שֶׁמֶן: יא וְהִעָמִיד הַכֹּהֵן הַמַּטְהָר אֶת הָאִישׁ הַמַּטְהָר וְאֹתָם לִפְנֵי יי פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד: יב וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-הַכֹּפֶשׁ הָאֶחָד וְהִקְרִיב אֹתוֹ לְאַשֵׁם וְאֶת-לֶג הַשֶּׁמֶן וְהִגִּיף אֹתָם תְּנוּפָה לִפְנֵי יי: יג וְשָׂחַט אֶת-הַכֹּפֶשׁ בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִשָּׂחַט אֶת-הַחֹטָאָת וְאֶת-הַעֲלֵהּ בְּמָקוֹם הַקָּדָשׁ כִּי כֹחַטָאָת הָאִשָּׁם הוּא לִכְפֹּר לִכְפֹּר קָדָשׁ קָדָשִׁים הוּא: יד וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן מִדָּם הָאֲשֵׁם וְנָתַן הַכֹּהֵן עַל-תְּנוּפָה אֲזַן הַמַּטְהָר הַיְמָנִית וְעַל-בֵּהָן יְדוֹ הַיְמָנִית וְעַל-בֵּהָן רִגְלוֹ רִגְלוֹ הַיְמָנִית: טו וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן מִלֶּג הַשֶּׁמֶן הַשֶּׁמֶן וַיִּצַק עַל-כַּף הַכֹּהֵן הַשְּׂמָאלִית: טז וְטָבַל הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-אֶצְבָּעוֹ הַיְמָנִית

מִן-הַשֵּׁמֶן אֲשֶׁר עַל-כַּפּוֹ הַשִּׁמְאֹלִית וְהִזָּה מִן-הַשֵּׁמֶן בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ שֶׁבַע שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים לִפְנֵי יי: יז וּמִלֶּחֶר הַשֵּׁמֶן אֲשֶׁר עַל-כַּפּוֹ יִתֵּן יָתֵן הַכֹּהֵן עַל-תְּנוּפֵהוּ אֲזֶנֶן הַמִּטְהָר הַיְמָנִית וְעַל-בְּהֵן יָדוֹ הַיְמָנִית וְעַל-בְּהֵן רִגְלוֹ הַיְמָנִית עַל דָּם הָאֵשֶׁם: יח וְהַנּוֹחֵר בַּשֵּׁמֶן אֲשֶׁר עַל-כַּף הַכֹּהֵן הַכֹּהֵן יִתֵּן עַל-רֹאשׁ הַמִּטְהָר וּכְפָר עָלָיו הַפָּהוּ לִפְנֵי יי: יט וְעָשָׂה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-הַקְּטָטָת וְכִפָּר עַל-הַמִּטְהָר מִטְּמֵאָתוֹ וְאַחֵר יִשְׁחַט אֶת-הָעֵלָה: כ וְהֵעֵלָה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-הָעֵלָה וְאֶת-הַמִּנְחָה הַמִּזְבֵּחַה וּכְפָר עָלָיו הַפָּהוּ וְטָהַר:

- (1) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
- (2) This shall be the ritual for a metzora at the time that he is to be cleansed. When it has been reported to the priest,
- (3) the priest shall go outside the camp. If the priest sees that the metzora has been healed of his tzaraat affliction,
- (4) the priest shall order two live clean birds, cedar wood, crimson stuff, and hyssop to be brought for the one to be cleansed.
- (5) The priest shall order one of the birds slaughtered over fresh water in an earthen vessel.
- (6) Taking the live bird with the cedar wood, the crimson stuff, and the hyssop, the priest shall dip them together with the live bird in the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the fresh water.
- (7) He shall then sprinkle it seven times on the one to be cleansed of the tzaraat affliction and pronounce him clean. The live bird shall be set free in the open country.
- (8) The one to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and bathe in water; then he shall be clean. After that he may enter the camp, but he must remain outside his tent for seven days.
- (9) On the seventh day he shall shave off all his hair – of head, beard, and eyebrows. Having shaved off all his hair, he shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water; then he shall be clean.
- (10) On the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, one ewe lamb in its first year without

**blemish, three-tenths of a measure of choice flour with oil mixed in for a meal offering, and one log of oil.**

**(11) The priest who performs the cleansing shall place the man who is to be cleansed, together with these offerings, before the LORD at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.**

**(12) The priest shall take one of the male lambs and offer it as a guilt offering, along with the log of oil, and he shall elevate them as an elevation offering before the LORD.**

**(13) The lamb shall be slaughtered in the sacred area where the sin offering and the burnt offering are slaughtered. For the guilt offering, like the sin offering, goes to the priest; it is most holy.**

**(14) The priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering, and the priest shall put it on the ridge of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot.**

**(15) The priest shall then take some of the log of oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand.**

**(16) And the priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that is in the palm of his left hand and sprinkle some of the oil with his finger seven times before the LORD.**

**(17) Some of the remaining oil in his palm shall be put by the priest on the ridge of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot – over the blood of the guilt offering.**

**(18) The rest of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one to be cleansed. Thus the priest shall make expiation for him before the LORD.**

**(19) The priest shall then offer the sin offering and make expiation for the one to be cleansed of his uncleanness. Last, the burnt offering shall be slaughtered.**

**(20) The priest shall offer the burnt offering and the meal offering on the altar. The priest shall make expiation for him, and he shall be clean.**

**(1) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:** Here, God addresses only Moses, without including Aaron.

When establishing the laws of tzaraat, God speaks to both Moses and Aaron (13:1, 14:33) because the priests have a special role in determining cases of tzaraat.

However, regarding the purification process from tzaraat, the priests may face a challenge: the healed person rises to a higher status, becoming, in a sense, a quasi-priest (see below). This diminishes the role of Aaron and his descendants, which could be perceived as a threat. Therefore, God gives the instructions for purification only to Moses, who then relays them to the priests, placing them in a subordinate role and fostering greater readiness to accept the purified individuals.

**(2) This shall be the ritual for a metzora at the time that he is to be cleansed:** The law of the metzora primarily addresses his purification. This process is fundamentally different from ordinary purification from impurity, which typically involves immersion in a mikveh and waiting until evening. The metzora's purification is far more complex and even includes an element of anointing. It resembles the consecration of priests, indicating that one who is purified from tzaraat attains a status higher than that of an ordinary person, acquiring a priest-like aspect. (A similar idea is evident in the status of a nazir, who in some ways parallels the priests – see Numbers 6.)

Previously, we noted that the cause of tzaraat lies in a person's disruption of societal structure. As a consequence, God punishes the individual, and he is expelled from the community. Since a metzora is likened to the dead, the details of his purification process symbolically restore him to life – he experiences a kind of resurrection and returns to society at an elevated level.

The reason for this elevated status, and the quasi-priestly anointing of the purified metzora (see verse 18 below), is his profound spiritual and social impact. He has provided a living example of the power of self-correction, demonstrating through his own efforts that change is possible – an extraordinarily significant role.

The purification process of the metzora consists of three stages:

1. (Verses 2–7) Removal of the status of metzora – returning to life
2. (Verse 8) Reintegration into society
3. (Verses 9–20) Purification and anointing in the Temple

The first stage (verses 2–7) is the encounter with the priest outside the city (camp), where the status of metzora is removed.

**at the time that he is to be cleansed:** The purification process must occur during the day, as it is not only a ritual act but also a public, social event. Everyone knew that the metzora had been expelled from society – now, everyone must witness his return.

**(3) the priest shall go outside the camp:** The metzora cannot enter the city. Although his symptoms have disappeared, his status remains until the purification process is completed. Therefore, the priest goes out to meet him beyond the camp.

When symptoms first appeared, the afflicted person had to go to the priest – but now, for purification, the priest comes to him, as if welcoming him back.

**If the priest sees that the metzora has been healed of his tzaraat affliction:** The priest must confirm that all signs of the disease have disappeared.

**(4) the priest shall order two live clean birds, cedar wood, crimson stuff, and hyssop to be brought for the one to be cleansed:** These birds are not considered a sacrifice. The ceremony takes place outside the camp, and no parts of the birds are burned on the altar.

The symbols used in this purification process emphasize returning to life after the metzora has existed in a state resembling death. The bird represents life.

**cedar wood:** A small piece, a splinter of cedar wood. The cedar is one of the tallest and most powerful trees.

**crimson stuff:** A thread dyed with red pigment obtained from the cochineal insect.

**hyssop:** A type of plant. The use of both the cedar tree (a mighty tree) and hyssop (a small plant) symbolizes the vast diversity of plant life (see I Kings 5:13: “from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall”).

Similarly, the combination of a flying, singing bird with a crawling, silent insect represents the full range of the animal world.

For the “resurrection” of the metzora, the entire plant and animal world is symbolically united. This reflects the hierarchy within nature, which remains unified despite its differences. The purified person now becomes part of this world.

**(5) The priest shall order one of the birds slaughtered over fresh water in an earthen vessel:** The priest does not slaughter the bird himself – he orders it to be slaughtered – so that his actions do not resemble a sacrifice.

**over fresh water in an earthen vessel:** “Living water” refers to spring water that flows naturally and is considered “alive.”

An earthen vessel filled with living water represents a human being who is “made of clay” yet contains a living soul.

The slaughtered bird symbolizes the hopeless state from which the metzora has now been delivered.

**(6) Taking the live bird with the cedar wood, the crimson stuff, and the hyssop, the priest shall dip them together with the live bird in the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the fresh water:** Everything is immersed in the vessel, blending the water and blood from the slaughtered bird.

**(7) He shall then sprinkle it seven times on the one to be cleansed of the tzaraat affliction and pronounce him clean:** Seven symbolizes the natural cycle. The sevenfold sprinkling restores a person to the world.

The live bird shall be released in the open country: The purified individual experiences a symbolic death through the slaughtered bird, yet he remains alive and is set free.

**(8) The one to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and bathe in water; then he shall be clean:** The second stage (verse 8) is reentry into society, from which the metzora had been expelled. This reintegration is also gradual.

**and shave off all his hair:** Hair is a part of a person that extends outward. The cause of tzaraat was attempting to extend into areas beyond one’s rightful domain. By shaving, the person symbolically renounces such attempts.

**After that he may enter the camp, but he must remain outside his tent for seven days:** Reentry into society occurs in phases. He can now interact with people and his family, but he cannot yet live in a home.

**(9) On the seventh day:** The third stage (verses 9–20) involves purification in the Temple.

As before, seven days mark the completion of a natural cycle. On this day, the purified person can return to his home, meaning his social rehabilitation is now complete.

**He shall shave off all his hair – of head, beard, and eyebrows. Having shaved off all his hair, he shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water; then he shall be clean:** He must shave again. Just as he has renounced overreaching in society, he must also renounce overstepping spiritual boundaries.

**(10) On the eighth day:** Eight symbolizes the transcendence of nature through Temple purification. This is aligned with the initiation of priestly service, which also commences on the eighth day (see 9:1 and its commentary). The purified individual participates in a Temple ritual that resembles the consecration of priests.

**(11) The priest who performs the cleansing shall place the man who is to be cleansed, together with these offerings, before the LORD at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting:** Now, the former metzora is referred to as *ish* (man) instead of merely “the one being cleansed.” His identity is completely restored.

**(12) The priest shall take one of the male lambs and offer it as a guilt offering, along with the log of oil, and he shall elevate them as an elevation offering before the LORD:** This is a special guilt offering that functions as a sin offering. The reason for specifically bringing a guilt offering (*asham*) is that it is offered in complex, borderline cases. This is precisely such a case: the metzora had previously acted wrongly but has now attained purification, demonstrating his high potential despite past misdeeds.

**(13) The lamb shall be slaughtered in the sacred area where the sin offering and the burnt offering are slaughtered. For the guilt offering, like the sin offering, goes to the priest; it is most holy:** The guilt offering is treated similarly to a sin offering, reinforcing its role in the purification process.

**(14) The priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering, and the priest shall put it on the ridge of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot:** This parallels the consecration of priests (see 8:24), further highlighting the metzora's elevated spiritual status.

**(15) The priest shall then take some of the log of oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand:** The left side always symbolizes judgment (*din*).

**(16) And the priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that is in the palm of his left hand and sprinkle some of the oil with his finger seven times before the LORD:** The transfer of oil from the left hand to the right represents a transition from judgment to mercy (*chesed*). The priest sprinkles the oil with his right hand (symbolizing mercy) in the direction of the Holy of Holies, the innermost chamber of the Sanctuary, where the Ark of the Covenant is kept.

**(18) The rest of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one to be cleansed. Thus the priest shall make expiation for him before the LORD:** There is an association here with the anointing of priests and even the High Priest, though in that case, olive oil is poured on the head (see 8:12, 18), whereas here, the priest merely applies a small amount of oil.

Nevertheless, this highlights the elevated status of the purified metzora, making him a kind of quasi-priest.

As noted earlier, the reason for this unique status is the spiritual and social impact of the metzora's transformation. He has shown the ability to overcome his moral failings, serving as a living example of personal correction – a role of immense significance.

**(19) ... the burnt offering shall be slaughtered:** The burnt offering (*olah*) is presented to uphold the cosmic order, reinforcing the proper structure and hierarchy of the world.

**(20) The priest shall offer the burnt offering and the meal offering on the altar:** The meal offering (*mincha*) is the final offering,

completing the process. The individual who has been purified from tzaraat presents this offering as a gesture of gratitude to God.

**and he shall be clean:** Now, he is completely purified – not only within society but also regarding Divine service.

#### § 14.2. THE PURIFICATION OF A POOR METZORA (14:21-32)

כא ואם-דל הוא ואין ידו משגת וְלָקַח כֶּבֶשׂ אֶתֵד אֲשֶׁם לְתוּנּוּפָה לְכַפֵּר  
לְכַפֵּר עָלָיו וְעִשְׂרוֹן וְעִשְׂרוֹן סֹלֶת אֶתֵד בְּלוּל בְּלוּל בְּשֶׁמֶן לְמִנְחָה וְלֶגַע  
שֶׁמֶן: כב וּשְׁתֵי תְרִים אֹ אוֹ שְׁנֵי בְּנֵי יוֹנָה אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׂיֵג יָדוֹ וְהִיָּה אֶחָד חֲטָאָת  
וְהָאֶתֵד עֲלָה: כג וְהִבִּיא אֲתָם בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׂמִינִי לְטַהֲרָתוֹ אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן אֶל-פְּתַח  
אֹהֶל-מוֹעֵד לְפָנַי יִי: כד וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-כֶּבֶשׂ הָאֲשֶׁם וְאֶת-לֶגַע הַשֶּׁמֶן וְהִנְיִף  
אֲתָם הַכֹּהֵן תְּנוּפָה לְפָנַי יִי: כה וְשִׁחַט אֶת-כֶּבֶשׂ הָאֲשֶׁם וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן מִדָּם  
הָאֲשֶׁם וְנָתַן עַל-תְּנוּפָה אֵזוֹן-הַמִּטְהָר הַיְמָנִית וְעַל-בֵּהוּ יָדוֹ הַיְמָנִית וְעַל-  
בֵּהוּ רֵגְלוֹ הַיְמָנִית: כו וּמִן-הַשֶּׁמֶן יִצַק הַכֹּהֵן עַל-כַּף הַכֹּהֵן הַשְּׂמָאֵלִית: כז  
וְהִזָּה הַכֹּהֵן בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ הַיְמָנִית מִן-הַשֶּׁמֶן אֲשֶׁר עַל-כַּפוֹ הַשְּׂמָאֵלִית שְׁבַע  
פְּעֻמִּים לְפָנַי יִי: כח וְנָתַן הַכֹּהֵן מִן-הַשֶּׁמֶן אֶתֵד אֶל-כַּפוֹ עַל-תְּנוּפָה אֵזוֹן  
הַמִּטְהָר הַיְמָנִית וְעַל-בֵּהוּ יָדוֹ הַיְמָנִית וְעַל-בֵּהוּ רֵגְלוֹ הַיְמָנִית עַל-  
מְקוֹם דָּם הָאֲשֶׁם: כט וְהִנּוֹתָר מִן-הַשֶּׁמֶן אֲשֶׁר עַל-כַּף הַכֹּהֵן יָתַן עַל-רֵאשׁ  
הַמִּטְהָר הַמִּטְהָר לְכַפֵּר עָלָיו לְפָנַי יִי: ל וְעִשָׂה אֶת-הָאֶתֵד מִן-הַתְרִים אֹ  
מִן-בְּנֵי הַיּוֹנָה מֵאֲשֶׁר תִּשְׂיֵג יָדוֹ: לא אֶת אֶת-הָאֶתֵד חֲטָאָת  
וְאֶת-הָאֶתֵד עֲלָה עַל-הַמִּנְחָה וְכַפֵּר הַכֹּהֵן עַל הַמִּטְהָר לְפָנַי יִי: לב זָאת  
תּוֹרַת אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ גִּגַע צָרַעַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תִשְׂיֵג יָדוֹ בְּטַהֲרָתוֹ:

**(21) But if he is poor and his means are insufficient, he shall take one male lamb for a guilt offering, to be elevated in expiation for him, one-tenth of a measure of choice flour with oil mixed in for a meal offering, and a log of oil;**

**(22) and two turtledoves or two pigeons, depending on his means, one to be the sin offering and the other the burnt offering.**

**(23) On the eighth day of his cleansing he shall bring them to the priest at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, before the LORD.**

(24) The priest shall take the lamb of the guilt offering and the log of oil, and the priest shall elevate them as an elevation offering before the LORD.

(25) The lamb of the guilt offering shall be slaughtered, and the priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on the ridge of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot.

(26) The priest shall then pour some of the oil into the palm of his own left hand,

(27) and with his right finger the priest shall sprinkle some of the oil that is in his left palm seven times before the LORD.

(28) The priest shall put some of the oil that is in his palm on the ridge of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, over the blood of the guilt offering.

(29) The rest of the oil in the priest's palm shall be put on the head of the one to be cleansed, to make expiation for him before the LORD.

(30) He shall then offer one of the turtledoves or pigeons, depending on his means –

(31) whichever he can afford – one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, together with the meal offering; and the priest shall make expiation before the LORD for the one being cleansed.

(32) This is the ritual for the metzora who is in straitened circumstances when he is to be cleansed of his tzaraat.

(21) But if he is poor and his means are insufficient: For the cleansing of a poor person, there is a separate description indicating that he can spend less on offerings, though the procedure itself remains the same. This special outline is not merely the Torah's aim to make the process equally accessible to all, regardless of wealth. Even when the rich and poor share the same cleansing steps, everything is spelled out again in detail when a simple "then the

same follows” would suffice. The repetition seems to stem from tzaraat arising in a poor person for reasons different from those affecting a rich individual.

Later, the Torah states (19:15) “You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor show deference to the great; with justice you shall judge your neighbor”: This rule stands out among human moral-legal codes. The rich and powerful can sway justice with their resources, and warnings against this are common. Yet the Torah stresses that the poor can also influence it, excusing their sins by pleading hardship. The Torah suggests that a poor person’s attempt to claim a social rank not rightfully theirs, defying the order, might result in tzaraat. That’s why the cleansing of the poor has its own section.

**(21-22) ...he shall take one male lamb... and two turtledoves or two pigeons, depending on his means:** If the person being cleansed cannot afford two male lambs and one ewe lamb, as required for an individual of average means (14:10), they take one male lamb and two birds instead, which are much less expensive. Otherwise, the expiation process remains the same for both the poor and the rich.

#### § 14.3. TZARAAT ON THE HOUSE WALLS (14:33-57)

לג וַיְדַבֵּר יי אֵל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: לֹד כִּי תִבְאוּ אֶל-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר  
אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם לְאֶחְזָוָה וְנִמְתְּלִי גִגַע צְרַעַת בְּבַיִת אֶרֶץ אֶחְזָוָתְכֶם: לֵה וּבֵא  
אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ הַבַּיִת וְהִגִּיד לַפֶּהוּ לֵאמֹר כִּגָּע נִרְאָה לִי בַבַּיִת: לוֹ וּצְנֹה הַפֶּהוּ וּפְנֹו  
אֶת-הַבַּיִת בְּטָרִם יָבֵא הַפֶּהוּ לְרֵאוֹת אֶת-הַגָּע וְלֹא יִטְמָא כָּל-אֲשֶׁר בַּבַּיִת  
וְאַחֵר כֹּן יָבֵא הַפֶּהוּ לְרֵאוֹת אֶת-הַבַּיִת: לוֹ וְרֵאָה אֶת-הַגָּע וְהִנֵּה הַגָּע  
בְּקִירַת הַבַּיִת שְׁקַעְרוּרֹת יִרְקַרְקַת אוֹ אִדְמָדַמְתִּים וּמְרֵאִיהֶן שֶׁפֶל מִן-הַקִּיר:  
לֵח וַיֵּצֵא הַפֶּהוּ מִן-הַבַּיִת אֶל-פֶּתַח הַבַּיִת וְהִסְגִּיר אֶת-הַבַּיִת שְׁבַעַת שְׁבַעַת  
יָמִים: לט וְשָׁב הַפֶּהוּ בַיּוֹם בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְרֵאָה וְהִנֵּה פֶשֶׁה הַגָּע בְּקִירַת  
הַבַּיִת: מ וּצְנֹה הַפֶּהוּ וְחִלְצוּ אֶת-הָאֲבָנִים אֲשֶׁר בָּהֶן בָּהֶן הַגָּע וְהִשְׁלִיכוּ  
אֶתְהֶן אֶל-מַחְוֵץ לְעִיר אֶל-מְקוֹם טָמֵא: מא וְאֶת-הַבַּיִת יִקְצַע מִבַּיִת סָבִיב  
וְשִׁפְכוּ וְשָׁפְכוּ אֶת-הַעֶפֶר אֲשֶׁר הִקְצֹו אֶל-מַחְוֵץ לְעִיר אֶל-מְקוֹם טָמֵא:

מב וְלַקְּחוּ אֲבָנִים אַחֲרוֹת וְהִבְיֵאוּ אֶל-תַּחַת הָאֲבָנִים וְעָפָר אֶתֶר יָקָח וְטָח אֶת-הַבֵּית: מִגּוֹ אִם-יָשׁוּב הִנָּגַע וּפְרַח בַּבַּיִת אַחֲרֵי חֲלִין אֶת-הָאֲבָנִים וְאַחֲרֵי הַקִּצּוֹת אֶת-הַבֵּית וְאַחֲרֵי הַטּוֹחַ: מִדּוּ וּבֹא הַכֹּהֵן וְרָאָה וְהִנֵּה פֶשֶׁה הִנָּגַע בַּבַּיִת צָרַעַת מִמֵּאֲרַת הוּא בַּבַּיִת טָמֵא הוּא: מִה וְנִתֵּן אֶת-הַבֵּית אֶת-אֲבָנָיו וְאֶת-עֲצָיו וְאֵת כָּל-עֹפֶר הַבַּיִת וְהוֹצִיא אֶל-מִחוּץ לְעִיר אֶל-מְקוֹם טָמֵא: מִזוּ וְהִבָּא אֶל-הַבַּיִת כָּל-יְמֵי הַסָּגִיר הַסָּגִיר אִתּוֹ יְטָמֵא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: מִזוּ וְהִשְׁכַּב בַּבַּיִת יְכַסֵּס אֶת-בְּגָדָיו וְהֵאֱכַל בַּבַּיִת יְכַסֵּס אֶת-בְּגָדָיו: מִח וְאִם-יָבֵא הַכֹּהֵן וְרָאָה וְהִנֵּה לֹא-פֶשֶׁה הִנָּגַע בַּבַּיִת אַחֲרֵי הַטּוֹחַ אֶת-הַבַּיִת וְטָהַר הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-הַבַּיִת כִּי נִרְפָּא הִנָּגַע: מִטּוּ וְלַקְּחָה לְחֹטֵא אֶת-הַבַּיִת שְׁתֵּי צַפְרָיִם וְעֵץ אֲרָז וּשְׁנֵי תוֹלַעַת וְאֲזֹב: וְשִׁחַט אֶת-הַצֹּפֶר הָאֶחָד אֶל-כָּל-חֲרָשׁ עַל-מֵי חַיִּים: נֹא וְלַקְּחָה אֶת-עֵץ-הָאֲרָז וְאֶת-הָאֲזֹב וְאֵת שְׁנֵי הַתּוֹלַעַת וְאֵת הַצֹּפֶר הַחַיִּה וְטָבַל וְטָבַל אִתָּם בְּדַם הַצֹּפֶר הַשְּׁחוּטָה וּבְמַיִם חַיִּים וְהִנֵּה אֶל-הַבַּיִת שִׁבַע פְּעָמִים: נֹב וְחֹטֵא אֶת-הַבַּיִת בְּדַם הַצֹּפֶר וּבְמַיִם וּבְמַיִם חַיִּים וּבְצֹפֶר הַחַיִּה הַחַיִּה וּבְעֵץ הָאֲרָז וּבְאֲזֹב וּבְשְׁנֵי הַתּוֹלַעַת: נֹג וְשִׁלַּח אֶת-הַצֹּפֶר הַחַיִּה אֶל-מִחוּץ לְעִיר אֶל-פְּנֵי הַשַּׁעַר וְכֹפֶר עַל-הַבַּיִת וְטָהַר: נֹד זֹאת הַתּוֹרָה לְכָל-גִּגַע הַצָּרַעַת וְלִנְתֻק: נֹה וְלַצָּרַעַת הַבְּגָד וְלַבַּיִת: נֹו וְלִשְׂאֵת וְלִסְפֹּחַת וְלִבְהָרַת: נֹז לְהוֹרֹת בְּיוֹם הַטָּמֵא וּבְיוֹם הַטָּהָר זֹאת תּוֹרַת הַצָּרַעַת:

**(33) The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:**

**(34) When you enter the land of Canaan that I give you as a possession, and I inflict a tzaraat upon a house in the land you possess,**

**(35) the owner of the house shall come and tell the priest, saying, "Something like a tzaraat has appeared upon my house."**

**(36) The priest shall order the house cleared before the priest enters to examine the tzaraat, so that nothing in the house may become unclean; after that the priest shall enter to examine the house.**

**(37) If, when he examines the tzaraat, the tzaraat in the walls of the house is found to consist of greenish or reddish streaks that appear to go deep into the wall,**

**(38) the priest shall come out of the house to the entrance of the house, and close up the house for seven days.**

**(39) On the seventh day the priest shall return. If he sees that the tzaraat has spread on the walls of the house,**

**(40) the priest shall order the stones with the tzaraat in them to be pulled out and cast outside the city in an unclean place.**

**(41) The house shall be scraped inside all around, and the coating that is scraped off shall be dumped outside the city in an unclean place.**

**(42) They shall then take other stones and replace those stones with them, and take other coating and replaster the house.**

**(43) If the tzaraat breaks out again in the house after the stones have been pulled out and the house has been scraped and replastered,**

**(44) the priest shall come and examine it. If the tzaraat has spread in the house, it is a malignant tzaraat in the house; it is unclean.**

**(45) The house shall be torn down – its stones and timber and all the coating on the house – and taken to an unclean place outside the city.**

**(46) Whoever enters the house while it is closed up shall be unclean until evening.**

**(47) Whoever sleeps in the house must wash his clothes, and whoever eats in the house must wash his clothes.**

**(48) If, however, the priest comes and sees that the tzaraat has not spread in the house after the house was replastered, the priest shall pronounce the house clean, for the tzaraat has healed.**

**(49) To purge the house, he shall take two birds, cedar wood, crimson stuff, and hyssop.**

**(50) He shall slaughter one bird over fresh water in an earthen vessel.**

**(51) He shall take the cedar wood, the hyssop, the crimson stuff, and the live bird, and dip them in the blood of the**

**slaughtered bird and in the fresh water, and sprinkle the house seven times.**

**(52) Having purged the house with the blood of the bird, the fresh water, the live bird, the cedar wood, the hyssop, and the crimson stuff,**

**(53) he shall set the live bird free outside the city in the open country. Thus he shall make expiation for the house, and it shall be clean.**

**(54) Such is the ritual for every tzaraat affection – for scalls,**

**(55) for tzaraat of garments and houses,**

**(56) for swellings, for rashes, and for discolorations –**

**(57) to determine when they are unclean and when they are clean. Such is the ritual concerning tzaraat.**

**(33) The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron:** Since Aaron and his descendants must identify tzaraat, the revelation is given to both Moses and Aaron (see commentary to 14:1 above).

**(34) When you enter the land of Canaan that I give you as a possession, and I inflict a tzaraat upon a house:** The phrase begins with the joy of gaining the Land, then shifts to tzaraat's negativity. This suggests a positive side: the Land of Israel is so alive, so connected to its people's morals, that tzaraat can afflict homes. Only a Divine land can do this. Living there is challenging, but the potential is greater.

**(35) The owner of the house shall come and tell the priest:** Recognizing tzaraat on a house and cleansing it is akin to purifying a metzora.

**Something like a tzaraat has appeared upon my house:** Only a priest, rather than the owner, can confirm tzaraat.

**(36) The priest shall order the house cleared before the priest enters to examine the tzaraat, so that nothing in the house may become unclean:** Tzaraat begins when the priest declares it; before that, the house is not considered unclean. Items are removed

to prevent impurity, demonstrating care for the owner's possessions. This indicates that tzaraat is not a medical infection; otherwise, the items would already be tainted, and removing them would not be necessary help.

**(37) If, when he examines the tzaraat, the tzaraat in the walls of the house is found to consist of greenish or reddish streaks:** These are bright green or red marks on the stones.

**that appear to go deep into the wall:** Similar to tzaraat on a person.

**(38) The priest shall come out of the house to the entrance:** He leaves before declaring tzaraat, thus avoiding impurity. Remaining near the house indicates that it is still connected to holiness. The owner sees him there and realizes that there is hope for a return to his house.

**and close up the house for seven days:** Like a metzora, the house undergoes a seven-day quarantine. During this time, the owner – not the house – must change.

**(39) On the seventh day the priest shall return. If he sees that the tzaraat has spread on the walls of the house:** If it spreads, the affected stones are removed. The Torah doesn't specify what happens if it doesn't spread, but the order implies those stones can remain. If the owner improves within that week and tzaraat stops, it's just a warning.

**(40) The priest shall order the stones with the tzaraat in them to be pulled out and cast outside the city in an unclean place:** They initially attempt to "repair" it locally.

**(41) The house shall be scraped inside all around:** Not just in suspect areas but everywhere. A problem in one spot indicates the whole needs attention.

**(42) They shall then take other stones and replace those stones with them, and take other coating and replaster the house:** This resolves the issue without dismantling the house. The owner's correction should begin similarly, avoiding a complete breakdown. (Later demonstrates if this works.)

**(43) If the tzaraat breaks out again in the house after the stones have been pulled out and the house has been scraped and replastered:** If the owner continues his behavior, tzaraat will return even after repairs. The issue is worse than it appears.

**(44) The priest shall come and examine it. If the tzaraat has spread in the house, it is a malignant tzaraat in the house; it is unclean:** The owner's spiritual flaw has taken over, and this is reflected in the house.

**(45) The house shall be torn down – its stones and timber and all the coating on the house – and taken to an unclean place outside the city:** With a wooden frame and stone fill, everything must go – for a person, it's like remaking his entire self.

**(46-47) Whoever enters the house while it is closed up shall be unclean until evening. Whoever sleeps in the house must wash his clothes, and whoever eats in the house must wash his clothes:** Entering makes a person unclean. Sleeping or eating there deepens the state of uncleanliness, requiring washing to remedy it.

**(48) If, however, the priest comes and sees that the tzaraat has not spread in the house after the house was replastered, the priest shall pronounce the house clean, for the tzaraat has healed:** No spread after repairs indicates that the owner has made fixes himself.

**(49) To purge the house, he shall take two birds, cedar wood, crimson stuff, and hyssop:** Similar to cleansing a metzora.

**(52) Having purged the house:** With this completeness process.

**(53) He shall set the live bird free outside the city in the open country. Thus he shall make expiation for the house, and it shall be clean:** Like a metzora's rite, the house "dies" and is resurrected clean.

## § 15. BODILY DISCHARGES

### § 15.1. THE NON-SEMINAL FLUID DISCHARGE (15:1-15)

א ויִדְבֹר יְיָ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: לֵאמֹר: ב דַּבְּרוּ אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתֶּם אֲלֵהֶם אִישׁ אִישׁ כִּי יִהְיֶה זָב מִבְּשָׂרוֹ זֹבֵב טָמֵא הוּא: ג וְזֹאת תִּהְיֶה טְמֵאתוֹ בְּזֹבֵבוֹ רָר בְּשָׂרוֹ אֶת-זֹבֵבוֹ אוֹ-הַחֲתִים בְּשָׂרוֹ בְּשָׂרוֹ מִזֹּבֵבוֹ טְמֵאתוֹ הוּא: ד כָּל-הַמְשָׁכָב אִשָּׁר יִשְׁכַּב עָלָיו הַזֵּב יִטְמָא וְכָל-הַכְּלִי אֲשֶׁר-יֵשֵׁב עָלָיו עָלָיו יִטְמָא: ה וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִגַּע בְּמִשְׁכָּבוֹ יִכָּסֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרִתֵּץ בְּמַיִם בְּמַיִם וְטָמֵא עַד-הָעֶרְב: ו וְהִישָׁב עַל-הַכְּלִי אֲשֶׁר-יֵשֵׁב עָלָיו הַזֵּב יִכָּסֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרִתֵּץ בְּמַיִם וְטָמֵא עַד-הָעֶרְב: ז וְהִנְגַּע בְּבִשָּׂר הַזֵּב יִכָּסֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרִתֵּץ בְּמַיִם וְטָמֵא עַד-הָעֶרְב: ח וְכִי-יִלֶּךְ הַזֵּב בְּטָהוֹר וְכָסֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרִתֵּץ בְּמַיִם וְטָמֵא עַד-הָעֶרְב: ט וְכָל-הַמְרָכָב אֲשֶׁר יִרְכַּב עָלָיו הַזֵּב יִטְמָא: י וְכָל-הַנִּגָּע בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה תַחְתָּיו יִטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרְב וְהַנּוֹשֵׂא אוֹתָם יִכָּסֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרִתֵּץ בְּמַיִם וְטָמֵא עַד-הָעֶרְב: יא וְכִל אֲשֶׁר יִגַּע-בוֹ הַזֵּב וַיִּדְּיו לֹא-שָׁטַף בְּמַיִם בְּמַיִם וְכָסֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרִתֵּץ בְּמַיִם וְטָמֵא עַד-הָעֶרְב: יב וְכִלִּי-תַרְשׁ אֲשֶׁר-יִגַּע-בּוֹ הַזֵּב יִשְׁבֹּר וְכָל-כְּלִי-עֵץ יִשְׁטַף בְּמַיִם: יג וְכִי-יִטְהַר הַזֵּב הַזֵּב מִזֹּבֵבוֹ וְסָפַר לוֹ שְׁבַעַת יָמִים לְטָהֲרָתוֹ וְכָסֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרִתֵּץ בְּשָׂרוֹ בְּמַיִם חַיִּים חַיִּים וְטָהַר: יד וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִקַּח-לוֹ שְׁתֵּי תְרִים אוֹו שְׁנֵי בָנֵי יוֹנָה וְכֹא ו לִפְנֵי יְיָ אֶל-פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וּנְתַנֵּם אֶל-הַפֶּה: טו וְעָשָׂה אֹתָם הַכֹּהֵן אֶחָד חֲטָאת וְהָאֶחָד עֹלָה וְכָפַר עָלָיו הַפֶּה לִפְנֵי יְיָ מִזֹּבֵבוֹ:

**(1) The Lord spoke to Moshe and Aharon, and said:**

**(2) Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, If a man has a purulent discharge from his body, that discharge is unclean.**

- (3) He becomes unclean whether the purulent discharge oozes out of the flesh or is partially retained in the flesh – in all cases it is unclean.
- (4) The bed on which he that hath expiation shall lie down, and the thing on which he shall sit, shall become unclean.
- (5) Whoever touches his bed shall wash his clothes and wash himself with water, and he shall be unclean until evening.
- (6) And he who sits on the thing on which the one who had expiation sat shall wash his clothes and wash himself with water, and he shall be unclean until evening.
- (7) And he who touches the body of one who has expiation shall wash his clothes and wash himself with water, and he shall be unclean until evening.
- (8) And if he that hath an effusion shall spit upon him that is clean, he shall wash his clothes and wash himself with water, and he shall be unclean until evening.
- (9) And every saddle on which he who had an expiation rode is unclean.
- (10) And anyone who touches anything that was under it shall be unclean until evening, and he who carries it shall wash his clothes and wash himself with water, and shall be unclean until evening.
- (11) And whosoever touches anyone who has an effusion, without washing his hands with water, shall wash his clothes and wash himself with water, and shall be unclean until evening.
- (12) And the earthen vessel which he that hath an effusion shall touch shall be broken, and every wooden vessel shall be washed in water.
- (13) And when the expiration ceases, let him count out seven days, and wash his garments, and wash his body in living water, and he shall be clean.
- (14) And on the eighth day let him take two turtledoves or two young pigeons and come before the Lord, to the

**entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and give them to the priest.**

**(15) And the priest shall offer one of them as a purification sacrifice for sin, and the other as a burnt offering, and the priest shall make atonement for him before the Lord for his expiation.**

**(2) Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: When any man has a discharge issuing from his flesh:** Here, “discharge issuing from his flesh” refers to the genitals. As noted earlier, a loss of vitality results in impurity. The sexual sphere is directly linked to life’s core – childbirth – therefore, errors and sins in this area lead to ritual impurity.

**discharge:** in this case, a non-seminal fluid. Such a person is called a *zav*, meaning “one with a discharge.” The symptoms partially resemble gonorrhea but do not completely match it. Tradition views this as a unique illness sent for unworthy acts in the sexual realm. Like *tzaraat*, it is believed to have vanished after the Temple’s destruction, when God’s presence became concealed.

**that discharge is unclean:** One with this discharge is so ritually impure that the objects he sits or lies on become sources of impurity, capable of “infecting” others.

**(3) This shall be his uncleanness in his discharge: whether his flesh runs with the discharge or his flesh is stopped up so that there is no discharge:** The discharge can manifest in two forms: it either flows as a liquid or hardens, obstructing the genital area passages.

**(5-7) Anyone who touches his bedding... who sits on an object... who touches the body of one with a discharge – shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain unclean until evening:** The impurity of a *zav* is less severe than that of a *metzora* (who must leave populated areas), but physical contact with him is nearly impossible, creating a zone of isolation. It is less strict than a *metzora*’s yet still serious.

**(8) If one with a discharge spits on one who is clean, the latter shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain unclean**

**until evening:** This highlights the impure person's desire to spread his impurity to others.

**(9) Any means for riding that one with a discharge has mounted shall be unclean:** Although it has been stated that any object he sits on is impure, the "means of riding" – the saddle – is specifically highlighted. This also carries an allegory: impure becomes "one who follows the *zav* in life."

**(11) If one with a discharge, without rinsing his hands in water, touches another person:** Hands serve as the primary tool for engaging physically with the world. This hints at the impure person's desire to grasp others, thereby spreading impurity.

**(12) An earthen vessel that one with a discharge touches shall be broken; and any wooden implement shall be rinsed with water:** This echoes earlier rules regarding vessels (6:21 and 11:32). Clay absorbs impurity and cannot be cleansed, while wood does not absorb it, allowing it to be purified.

**(13) When one with a discharge becomes clean of his discharge, he shall count off seven days:** He remains impure for a week after the discharge ends – a time for reflection on its cause.

**and bathe his body in fresh water:** Other impurities say "bathe in water," but here it's "fresh water." A *zav*'s impurity is stronger, requiring immersion in "living water" – a spring, river, or sea, not a standard *mikveh*.

**then he shall be clean:** The cleansing for discharges is simpler than for *tzaraat*.

**(14) On the eighth day he shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and come before the LORD at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and give them to the priest:** After seven days of inner reflection, a final atonement is needed.

**(15) The priest shall offer them, one as a sin offering:** To cleanse the sin that caused the discharge.

**and the other as a burnt offering:** In thanks for healing.

## § 15.2. THE DISCHARGE OF SEMINAL FLUID (15:16-18)

טז וְאִישׁ כִּי-תִצָּא מִמֶּנּוּ שְׁכַבַּת-זָרָע וְרִתֵּץ בְּמַיִם אֶת-כָּל-בְּשָׂרוֹ וְטָמֵא עַד-  
הָעֶרֶב: יז וְכָל-בְּגָד וְכָל-לְוֹר אֲשֶׁר-יְהִי עָלָיו שְׁכַבַּת-זָרָע וְכַפֵּס בְּמַיִם  
בְּמַיִם וְטָמֵא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: יח וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב אִישׁ אִתָּהּ שְׁכַבַּת-זָרָע  
וְרִחֲצוּ בְמַיִם וְטָמְאוּ עַד-הָעֶרֶב:

**(16) When a man has an emission of semen, he shall bathe his whole body in water and remain unclean until evening.**

**(17) All cloth or leather on which semen falls shall be washed in water and remain unclean until evening.**

**(18) And if a man has carnal relations with a woman, they shall bathe in water and remain unclean until evening.**

**(16) When a man has an emission of semen:** This applies to both involuntary nocturnal emissions and intimacy.

**he shall bathe his whole body in water and remain unclean until evening:** As noted earlier, every natural source of impurity reveals that its root lies not only in human misdeeds but also in the world’s inherent flaws, linked to the imperfection of intimacy and childbirth following Adam’s expulsion from Eden (see commentary on Genesis, Chapter 3). Though intimacy isn’t inherently negative – indeed, it fulfills the commandment – for a man, it can bring impurity. The release of semen briefly “lessens vitality,” leading to short-term impurity.

**(18) And if a man has carnal relations with a woman:** In intimacy, both men and women become impure.

**they shall bathe in water and remain unclean until evening:** The reason is that impure individuals cannot enter the Temple, where the focus must be exclusively on God. Intimacy conflicts with that focus. Likewise, at the giving of the Torah on Sinai, it was stated: “And Moses said to the people, ‘Be ready by the third day; do not approach a woman’” (Exodus 19:15). This doesn’t imply that sexuality is sinful per se, but rather that during specific ritual moments, it must be restrained. Similarly, one must limit sexual impulses before entering the Temple. Entry is forbidden on a day

of intimacy, allowing a shift from sexual emotions to devotion in the Temple.

### § 15.3. MENSTRUAL BLEEDING (15:19-24)

יט ואִשָּׁה כִּי-תִהְיֶה זָכוּהָ דָם יִהְיֶה זָכוּהָ בְּבִשְׂרָהּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תִּהְיֶה בְּנִדְתָּהּ וְכָל-הַנִּגְעָה בָּהּ יִטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: כ וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁקַב עָלָיו בְּנִדְתָּהּ יִטְמָא וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר-תִּשָּׁב עָלָיו יִטְמָא: כא וְכָל-הַנִּגְעָה בְּמִשְׁכַּבָּהּ יִכָּפֵס בְּגָדָיו וְרַתֵּץ בְּמַיִם וְטָמֵא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: כב וְכָל-הַנִּגְעָה בְּכָל־כְּלִי אֲשֶׁר-תִּשָּׁב עָלָיו עָלָיו יִכָּפֵס בְּגָדָיו וְרַתֵּץ בְּמַיִם וְטָמֵא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: כג וְאִם עַל-הַמִּשְׁכָּב הוּא אֹזֶן עַל-הַכְּלִי אֲשֶׁר-הוּא יִשְׁבֶּת-עָלָיו בְּנִגְעוֹ-בּוֹ יִטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: כד וְאִם שָׁכַב יִשְׁכַּב אִישׁ אִתָּהּ וְתָהִי נִדְתָּהּ נִדְתָּהּ עָלָיו וְטָמֵא שִׁבְעַת יָמִים וְכָל-הַמִּשְׁקָב אֲשֶׁר-יִשְׁכַּב עָלָיו יִטְמָא:

**(19) When a woman has a discharge, her discharge being blood from her body, she shall remain in her impurity seven days; whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening.**

**(20) Anything that she lies on during her impurity shall be unclean; and anything that she sits on shall be unclean.**

**(21) Anyone who touches her bed shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain unclean until evening.**

**(22) Whoever touches any object on which she has sat shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain unclean until evening.**

**(23) Be it the bed or any other object on which she has sat, on touching it he shall be unclean until evening.**

**(24) And if a man lies with her, her impurity is communicated to him; he shall be unclean seven days, and any bed on which he lies shall become unclean.**

**(19) When a woman has a discharge, her discharge being blood from her body:** This is also a natural impurity, not linked to any fault, but reflecting the world's imperfection.

**she shall remain in her impurity:** This state is called *niddah*, meaning “separation, rejection, and avoidance.” In Temple times, it also signified social isolation for a woman, as touching her would cause defilement (which barred entry to the Temple, handling offerings, or joining sacrificial meals). Today, during *niddah*, only intimate relations between spouses are forbidden; the other aspects of this status do not apply.

**seven days:** On the night of the eighth day, she immerses herself in a *mikveh*. Although this isn’t mentioned here, immersion is necessary for cleansing any impurity, including menstrual discharge. After immersion, spouses may resume their intimate relationship.

**(21-22) Anyone who touches her bed... Whoever touches any object on which she has sat shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain unclean until evening:** These rules aim to prevent physical or intimate contact with her husband during this time, as indicated by the term *niddah*.

**(23) Be it the bed or any other object on which she has sat, on touching it he shall be unclean until evening:** This is a less severe, secondary level of impurity.

**(24) And if a man lies with her, her impurity is communicated to him; he shall be unclean seven days, and any bed on which he lies shall become unclean:** Intimacy during menstruation is strictly forbidden (18:19, 20:18). Here, the focus is on impurity: if they do not abstain, her impurity transfers to him.

#### § 15.4. BLEEDING OUTSIDE THE REGULAR MENSTRUAL PERIOD (15:25-30)

כה ואִשָּׁה כִּי-יִזוּב זֹבֵב דָּמָה יָמִים רַבִּים בְּלֹא-עֵת-נִדְתָּהּ אֹו כִּי-תִזוּב עַל-  
נִדְתָּהּ כָּל-יָמֵי זֹבֵב טְמֵאֹתָהּ כִּי־יָמִי נִדְתָּהּ תִּהְיֶה טְמֵאָה הָיָא: כּו כָּל-הַמְשָׁכָב  
אִשָּׁר-תִּשְׁכַּב עָלָיו כָּל-יָמֵי זֹבֵבָה כְּמִשְׁכַּב נִדְתָּהּ יִהְיֶה-לָּהּ וְכָל-הַכֹּפֶלִי אִשָּׁר  
תִּשָּׁב עָלָיו טְמֵא יִהְיֶה כְּטִמְאֹת נִדְתָּהּ: כִּז וְכָל-הַנּוֹגֵעַ בָּם יִטְמָא וְכֹסֶס בְּגָדָיו  
וְרִתֹּץ בְּמַיִם וְטֵמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: כח וְאִם-טְהַרָה מִזֹּבֵבָה מִזֹּבֵבָה וְסִפְרָה לָּהּ  
שְׁבַעַת יָמִים וְאִתֵּר תִּטְהַר: כט וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי תִקַּח-לָּהּ שְׁתֵּי תְרִים אֹו  
שְׁנֵי בָּנֵי יוֹגָה וְהִבִּיאָה אוֹתָם אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן אֶל-פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד: ל וְעָשָׂה

הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-הַאֲזָקָה שְׁמֵאת וְאֶת-הַאֲזָקָה עֲלֶיהָ וְכִפֶּר עָלֶיהָ הַכֹּהֵן לְפָנַי יי מְזוֹב  
טְמֵאָה:

**(25) When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her impurity, or when she has a discharge beyond her period of impurity, she shall be unclean, as though at the time of her impurity, as long as her discharge lasts.**

**(26) Any bed she lies on while her discharge lasts shall be for her like the bed of her impurity; and any object she sits on shall become unclean, as in her impurity:**

**(27) Whoever touches them shall be unclean; he shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain unclean until evening.**

**(28) When she becomes clean of her discharge, she shall count off seven days, and after that she shall be clean.**

**(29) On the eighth day she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and bring them to the priest at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.**

**(30) The priest shall offer the one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering; and the priest shall make expiation on her behalf, for her unclean discharge, before the Lord.**

**(25) When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her impurity:** Uterine bleeding that lasts longer than normal menstruation or occurs at an atypical time is referred to as *zavah*. Therefore, there are two distinct terms: *niddah*, meaning “normal bleeding,” and *zavah*, meaning “unusual bleeding.”

**(28) When she becomes clean of her discharge, she shall count off seven days, and after that she shall be clean:** The end of the impurity period varies: for *niddah*, it lasts seven days from the start of bleeding, followed by immersion in a *mikveh*; for *zavah*, she counts seven “clean” days after the bleeding stops. However, in practical Halakha, even since Talmudic times, distinguishing between *niddah* and *zavah* has proven challenging, so they have been combined, treating any uterine bleeding as both. As a result,

a woman is prohibited from her husband during menstruation, which lasts at least five days, plus an additional seven days without bleeding. Consequently, a Torah-observant couple is separated for a minimum of twelve days each month.

**(30) The priest shall offer the one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering; and the priest shall make expiation on her behalf, for her unclean discharge, before the LORD:** The prolonged bleeding mentioned here is regarded as an illness-punishment. Therefore, they present a sin offering (for the sin that led to the illness) and a burnt offering in gratitude for healing.

#### § 15.5. PURIFICATION FROM IMPURITY DUE TO DISCHARGES (15:31-33)

לא והזרתם את-בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִטְּמֵאתָם וְלֹא יִמְתּוּ בְּטִמְאָתָם בְּטִמְאָם אֶת-  
מִשְׁפְּנֵי אֲשֶׁר בְּתוֹכָם: לֵב נְזֹאת תִּזְרַת הַזָּב וְאֲשֶׁר הַזָּב תֵּצֵא מִמֶּנּוּ שְׂכַבְתָּ-  
זָרַע לְטִמְאָה-בָּהּ: לֵג וְהִדְנָה בְּנִדְתָּהּ וְהַזָּב אֶת-זוּבוֹ לְזָכָר וְלְנִקְבָּהּ וְלֹא־יִשׂ  
אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב עִם-טִמְאָה:

**(31) You shall put the Israelites on guard against their impurity, lest they die through their impurity by defiling My Tabernacle which is among them.**

**(32) This is the ritual concerning one who has a discharge: one who has an emission of semen and becomes unclean thereby;**

**(33) also concerning her who is in her infirmity; and concerning one who has a discharge, male or female, and concerning a man who lies with an unclean woman.**

**(31) ... lest they die through their impurity by defiling My Tabernacle which is among them:** In all states of impurity, entering the Temple is forbidden. Those who defile the Sanctuary face excision, death at the hand of Heaven. Overall, the texts of *Tazria* and *Metzora* serve as an extension of the story of Aaron's sons, explaining how NOT to enter the Temple.

**WEEKLY  
PORTION 6**

**ACHREI MOT**

## § 16. THE YOM KIPPUR SERVICE AND THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

### § 16.1. STRUCTURE OF *ACHREI MOT*

The three middle portions of the Book of Leviticus – (4) *Tazria*, (5) *Metzora*, and (6) *Achrei Mot* – are devoted to the laws of purity and impurity. These laws serve as a prelude to the principles of holiness that are introduced in the next portion, (7) *Kedoshim*.

*Achrei Mot* deals with three main topics:

1. The Yom Kippur service, the central moment of national atonement
2. The prohibition against the improper slaughter of animals
3. The prohibition of improper sexual relations

### § 16.2. THE HIGH PRIEST ENTERS THE HOLY OF HOLIES ONLY ON YOM KIPPUR (16:1-4)

א וַיִּדְבֹר יי אֶל-מֹשֶׁה אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְנֵי אֶהֱרֹן בְּקִרְבָּתָם לִפְנֵי-יי וַיִּמְתּוּ:  
 ב וַיֹּאמֶר יי אֶל-מֹשֶׁה דַּבֵּר אֶל-אַהֲרֹן אַחֲרֵי וְאֵל-יִבְיָא בְּכָל-עֵת אֶל-הַקֹּדֶשׁ  
 מִבַּיִת לַפָּרֹכֶת אֶל-פְּנֵי הַכַּפֹּרֶת הַכַּפֹּרֶת אֲשֶׁר עַל-הָאֹרֹן וְלֹא יָמוּת כִּי בְעֵינָן  
 אֲרָאָה עַל-הַכַּפֹּרֶת: ג בְּנֹאֵת יִבְיָא אֶהֱרֹן אֶל-הַקֹּדֶשׁ בַּפֶּר כּוֹן-בְּקֹר לְחַטָּאת  
 וְאַיִל לְעֹלָה: ד כְּתֻבָּת-בֵּד קֹדֶשׁ יִלְבָּשׁ וּמְכַנְסֵי-בֵד יִהְיוּ עַל-בְּשָׂרוֹ וּבִאֲבָגָט  
 בֵּד יַחְזֵר וּבְמִצְנָפֶת בֵּד יִצְנֹף בְּגָדֵי-קֹדֶשׁ הֵם וְרַתֵּץ בְּמִים אֶת-בְּשָׂרוֹ  
 וּלְבָשָׁם:

**(1) The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they drew too close to the presence of the LORD.**

**(2) The LORD said to Moses: Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come at will into the Shrine behind the curtain, in front of the cover that is upon the Ark, lest he die; for I appear in the cloud over the cover.**

**(3) Thus only shall Aaron enter the Shrine: with a bull of the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.**

**(4) He shall be dressed in a sacral linen tunic, with linen breeches next to his flesh, and be girt with a linen sash, and he shall wear a linen turban. They are sacral vestments; he shall bathe his body in water and then put them on.**

**(1) The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they drew too close to the presence of the LORD:** God gives Moses, not Aaron, instructions regarding the Day of Atonement service. This highlights that Aaron's Temple, the "Temple of Atonement," is subordinate to Moses' Temple, the "Temple of Revelation."

**after the death of Aaron's two sons, when they drew near to the LORD and perished:** Religious experience has two sides – the passion to approach holiness and the necessity to keep a distance from it. These two sides must be balanced. Aaron's sons upset this delicate balance; they died precisely because they came too close to holiness, and now equilibrium must be restored. First, in prior sections, the principles of distance – impurity laws – are explained; now, the order of approach, the High Priest's entry into the Holy of Holies, is detailed.

**(2) The LORD said to Moses: Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come at will into the Shrine behind the curtain:** As noted earlier, the Temple divides into the "hall" (*heikhal*, the first chamber, "holy," containing the incense altar, lampstand, and table) and the "Holy of Holies" (which houses the Ark). The curtain separated the Holy of Holies from the hall (Exodus 26:33). Priests regularly entered the hall to place bread on the table, light the lampstand, and

occasionally sprinkle blood on the altar. However, into the Holy of Holies, behind the curtain to the Ark, Aaron, the High Priest, could only go on the Day of Atonement, while Moses could enter at any time. On that day, God appeared to the High Priest between the two cherubim “in the cloud over the cover” – the “cloud of Divine Presence,” also known as the “cloud of incense.” Aaron could enter only with incense, requiring this veil over God’s manifestation; without it, he risked death from seeing God directly. Moses, having direct contact with God, required no image or veil.

**(4) He shall be dressed in a sacral linen tunic:** The garments that Aaron is instructed to wear consist of the four white linen garments of an ordinary priest, rather than the usual golden attire of the High Priest – any hint of personal glorification is inappropriate for the Holy of Holies.

#### § 16.3. THE DAY OF ATONEMENT OFFERINGS: THE SCAPEGOAT (16:5-28)

ה ומאת עדת בני ישראל ישראל יקח שני-שעירי עזים לחטאת ואיל  
 אחד לעלה: ו והקריב אהרן את-פר החטאת אשר-לו וכפר בעדו ובעד  
 ביתו: ז ולקח את-שני השעירים השעירם והעמיד אתם לפני יי פתח אהל  
 מועד: ח ונתן אהרן על-שני השעירים גרלות גרל גרל אחד ליי וגרל  
 אחד לעזאזל: ט והקריב אהרן את-השעיר אשר עלה עליו הגרל ליי  
 ועשהו חטאת: י והשעיר אשר עלה עליו הגרל לעזאזל יעמד-תי לפני  
 יי לכפר עליו לשלח אתו לעזאזל המדברה: יא והקריב אהרן את-פר  
 החטאת אשר-לו וכפר וכפר בעדו ובעד ביתו ושתט את-פר החטאת  
 אשר-לו: יב ולקח מלא-המחטה גחלי-אש מעל המזבח מלפני יי ומלא  
 קנפיו קטרת סמים דקה והביא מבית לפרכת: יג ונתן את-הקטרת על-  
 האש לפני יי וכסה ו ענן הקטרת את-הכפרת אשר על-העדות ולא  
 ימות: יד ולקח מדם הפר והזה באצבעו על-פני הכפרת קדמה ולפני  
 הכפרת וזה שבע-פעמים מן-הדם באצבעו: טו ושחט את-השעיר החטאת  
 אשר לעזם והביא את-דמו אל-מבית לפרכת ועשה את-דמו כאשר עשה  
 לדם הפר הפר והזה אתו על-הכפרת ולפני הכפרת: טז וכפר על-הקדש  
 מטמאת בני ישראל ומפשעיהם לכל-חטאתם וכן יעשה לאהל מועד  
 השכן אתם בתוך טמאתם: יז וכל-אדם לא-יהיה ו באהל מועד בבאז

לכפר בקדוש עד-צאתו וכפר בעדו ובעד ביתו ובעד כל-קהל ישראל: יח  
 ויצא אל-המזבח אשר לפני-י' וכפר עליו ולקח מדם הפך ומדם השעיר  
 ונתן על-קרנות המזבח המזבח סביב: יט והנה עליו מן-הדם באצבעו  
 באצבעו שבע פעמים וטהרו וקדשו מטמאת בני ישראל: כ וכלה מכפר  
 את-הקדש ואת-אהל מועד ואת-המזבח והקריב את-השעיר הצי: כא  
 וסמך אהרן את-שתי ידו על ראש השעיר הסל והתנדף עליו את-כל-  
 עונת בני ישראל ואת-כל-פשעיהם לכל-חטאתם ונתן אתם על-ראש  
 השעיר ושלח ביד-איש עתי המדברה: כב ונשא השעיר עליו את-כל-  
 עונתם אל-ארץ גזרה ושלח את-השעיר במדבר: כג ובא אהרן אל-אהל-  
 מועד ופשט את-בגדיו הוד אשר לבש בבאו אל-הקדש והניחם שם: כד  
 ורחץ את-בשרו במים במקום קדוש ולבש את-בגדיו ויצא ויצא ועשה  
 את-עלתו ואת-עלת העם וכפר בעדו ובעד העם: כה ואת תלב החטאת  
 יקטיר המזבחה: כו והמשלח את-השעיר לעזאזל יכבס בגדיו ורתח  
 את-בשרו במים במים ואחרי-כן יבוא אל-המחנה: כז ואת פר החטאת  
 ואת שעיר החטאת החטאת אשר הובא את-דמם לכפר בקדש ויצא  
 אל-מחויץ למחנה ושרפו באש את-ערתם ואת-בשרם ואת-פרשם: כח  
 והשרף אתם יכבס בגדיו ורתח את-בשרו במים במים ואחרי-כן יבוא  
 אל-המחנה:

**(5) And from the Israelite community he shall take two he-goats for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.**

**(6) Aaron is to offer his own bull of sin offering, to make expiation for himself and for his household.**

**(7) Aaron shall take the two he-goats and let them stand before the Lord at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting;**

**(8) and he shall place lots upon the two goats, one marked for the Lord and the other marked for Azazel.**

**(9) Aaron shall bring forward the goat designated by lot for the Lord, which he is to offer as a sin offering;**

**(10) while the goat designated by lot for Azazel shall be left standing alive before the Lord, to make expiation with it and to send it off to the wilderness for Azazel.**

**(11) Aaron shall then offer his bull of sin offering, to make expiation for himself and his household. He shall slaughter his bull of sin offering,**

**(12) and he shall take a panful of glowing coals scooped from the altar before the Lord, and two handfuls of finely ground aromatic incense, and bring this behind the curtain.**

**(13) He shall put the incense on the fire before the Lord, so that the cloud from the incense screens the cover that is over the Ark of the Pact, lest he die.**

**(14) He shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger over the cover on the east side, and in front of the cover he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.**

**(15) He shall then slaughter the people's goat of sin offering, bring its blood behind the curtain, and do with its blood as he has done with the blood of the bull: he shall sprinkle it over the cover and in front of the cover.**

**(16) Thus he shall purge the Shrine of the uncleanness and transgression of the Israelites, whatever their sins; and he shall do the same for the Tent of Meeting, which abides with them in the midst of their uncleanness.**

**(17) When he goes in to make expiation in the Shrine, nobody else shall be in the Tent of Meeting until he comes out. When he has made expiation for himself and his household, and for the whole congregation of Israel,**

**(18) he shall go out to the altar that is before the Lord and purge it: he shall take some of the blood of the bull and of the goat and apply it to each of the horns of the altar;**

**(19) and the rest of the blood he shall sprinkle on it with his finger seven times. Thus he shall purify it of the uncleanness of the Israelites and consecrate it.**

**(20) When he has finished purging the Shrine, the Tent of Meeting, and the altar, the live goat shall be brought forward.**

**(21) Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat and confess over it all the iniquities and transgressions of the Israelites, whatever their sins,**

putting them on the head of the goat; and it shall be sent off to the wilderness through a designated man.

(22) Thus the goat shall carry on it all their iniquities to an inaccessible region; and the goat shall be set free in the wilderness.

(23) And Aaron shall go into the Tent of Meeting, take off the linen vestments that he put on when he entered the Shrine, and leave them there.

(24) He shall bathe his body in water in a sacred place and put on his vestments; then he shall go out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, making expiation for himself and for the people.

(25) The fat of the sin offering he shall turn into smoke on the altar.

(26) He who set the goat free for Azazel shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water; after that he may reenter the camp.

(27) The bull of sin offering and the goat of sin offering, whose blood was brought in to purge the Shrine, shall be taken outside the camp; and their hides, flesh, and dung shall be consumed in fire.

(28) He who burned them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water; after that he may reenter the camp.

(5) **And from the Israelite community he shall take two he-goats for a sin offering:** Both goats are offered to God, although in different ways

(8) **And he shall place lots upon the two goats:** Before the High Priest stood a box containing two tablets – one inscribed “for the LORD” and the other “for Azazel.” He reached in with both hands, retrieved the tablets, and placed them on the goats, one on his right and the other on his left.

(9) **Aaron shall bring forward the goat designated by lot for the Lord, which he is to offer as a sin offering:** One goat, designated “for the LORD,” was sacrificed on the altar.

**(10) While the goat designated by lot for Azazel shall be left standing alive before the Lord, to make expiation with it and to send it off to the wilderness for Azazel:** The second goat faced death in the wilderness. Of it, verse 22 says: “Thus the goat shall carry on it all their iniquities to an inaccessible region.” “Inaccessible” can also mean “rugged”: the escort cast the goat off a cliff into an abyss, though this isn’t stated outright. Casting lots symbolizes life’s uncertainty. We seek God’s forgiveness because, like these goats, we are subject to unpredictable chance and often feel powerless over events.

**for Azazel:** Azazel personifies evil, representing “the side opposite holiness.” Its name may mean “steep flinty cliff, high peak” (where the goat is cast). Sending the goat to Azazel is seen as “feeding the opposing side.” The world cannot run on good alone; some concession to evil is necessary. God commands this goat for Azazel, demonstrating that evil, like good, derives its power from Him and serves Him – a key aspect of monotheism. Evil is not comprised of “fallen angels”; angels lack free will and always fulfill God’s assigned roles. Satan (literally “hinderer, accuser, hater”) is not God’s foe or a fallen angel but a servant angel tasked by God to obstruct and accuse man (Job, Chapter 1). The concept of the scapegoat, a “bribe to Satan,” suggests that in key moments, the progress of creation requires some flaw – a “concession to evil forces.” God made the world and man with negative aspects, vital for civilization’s growth yet also causing evil. Blocking these forces entirely risks an explosion that could shatter the system. By design, good and evil must be balanced in this world for humans to exercise free will, nudging the world towards good. The goat sent to Azazel symbolizes the “fuel” (energy, power) God sends to His subordinate evil forces for the world’s proper functioning.

**(12-13) And he shall take a panful of glowing coals scooped from the altar before the Lord... He shall put the incense on the fire before the Lord, so that the cloud from the incense screens the cover that is over the Ark of the Pact, lest he die:** Coals came from the outer altar in the courtyard. The High Priest entered the Holy of Holies, placed the coals between the poles of the Ark, and poured incense over them. The rising smoke filled the space, veiling the Ark’s cover. This cloud of incense evoked the one that hovered

over Sinai during the giving of the Torah. It demonstrates that divine essence cannot be approached or understood clearly. Not only is God Himself unseen and unknowable, but even His manifestations elude full human comprehension. This forms part of the plea for forgiveness, a process of atonement. Thus, Yom Kippur's wordless plea has two components: (1) casting lots, emphasizing chance, and sending the goat to Azazel, and (2) incense, illustrating our inability to fully see or comprehend.

**(14) He shall take some of the blood of the bull.** The High Priest brought a vessel of sacrificial blood into the Holy of Holies, sprinkling it once on the cover of the Ark and seven times between its poles. Seven marks the natural cycle; eight, its transcendence. The Yom Kippur bull was the highest sin-cleansing offering, its blood entering the Holy of Holies (unlike other major sin offerings, which were sprinkled only on the golden altar in the hall). This symbolized cleansing on both immanent and transcendent levels – toward “Divinity within creation” (the hall's lampstand, table, and incense altar, representing wisdom, prosperity, and gratitude) and “Divinity beyond creation” (the Ark behind the curtain).

**(15) He shall then slaughter the people's goat of sin offering, bring its blood behind the curtain, and do with its blood as he has done with the blood of the bull: he shall sprinkle it over the cover and in front of the cover:** Next, Aaron killed the goat marked “for the LORD” by lot and brought its blood behind the curtain for sprinkling. This represented two atonements for the Temple: one for the sins of the priests and another for the sins of the people. (Refer to the similar Temple atonement for the grave sins of priests and people, 4:1 and 4:13.) Purging the Sanctuary signified that God's presence could remain among Israel despite human flaws and impurity. The Temple and altar are cleansed of the harm human sins inflict, restoring Israel's – and humanity's – connection to God.

**(17) When he goes in to make expiation in the Shrine, nobody else shall be in the Tent of Meeting until he comes out:** The High Priest represented all of Israel, so no one else – not even another priest – could be in the Temple at that time.

## § 16.4. THE FAST OF THE DAY OF ATONEMENT (16:29-31)

כט וְהִיְתָה לָכֶם לְחֻקַּת עוֹלָם בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּעֶשְׂרֵי לַחֹדֶשׁ תַּעֲנֹוּ אֶת-  
 נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם וְכָל-מְלָאכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ הָאֲזִיָּח וְהִגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכְכֶם: לְכִי-בַיּוֹם  
 הַזֶּה יִכְפָּר עֲלֵיכֶם לְטָהָר אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל חַטָּאתֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי יְיָ תִטְהָרוּ: לֹא שִׁבַּת  
 שְׁבֻתוֹן הִיא לָכֶם וְעֲנִיתֶם אֶת-נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם חֻקַּת עוֹלָם:

**(29) And this shall be to you a law for all time: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall practice self-denial; and you shall do no manner of work, neither the citizen nor the alien who resides among you.**

**(30) For on this day atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you of all your sins; you shall be clean before the LORD.**

**(31) It shall be a sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall practice self-denial; it is a law for all time.**

**(29) In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month:** The months of the Hebrew calendar are counted from the Exodus, which occurred in the spring. The seventh month, occurring in the fall, was later named Tishrei.

**you shall practice self-denial:** Essentially, “afflict yourselves, torment your souls.” This encompasses fasting, refraining from washing, anointing with oil, engaging in sexual relations, and wearing leather shoes.

**(30) You shall be cleansed before the LORD:** You will be cleansed before God, but not yet before people. If a person has committed a crime against another, it is not forgiven until the victim forgives the offender.

**(31) It shall be a sabbath of complete rest for you:** A “special Sabbath,” a Sabbath of Sabbaths, exists outside the seven-day cycle. Its rules are stricter than those of a regular Sabbath.

§ 16.5. ONLY THE HIGH PRIEST CONDUCTS THE DAY OF  
ATONEMENT SERVICE (16:32-34)

לב וכפר הכהן אֲשֶׁר-יִמָּשַׁח אֹתוֹ וְאֲשֶׁר יִמְלֵא אֶת-יָדוֹ לְכַהֵן תַּחַת אֲבִיו  
וְלִגְבוֹשׁ אֶת-בְּגָדָי הַבָּד בְּגָדֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ: לֵג וְכֹפֶר אֶת-מִקְדָּשׁ הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְאֶת-  
אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְאֶת-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ יְכַפֵּר וְעַל הַכֹּהֲנִים וְעַל-כָּל-עַם הַקֹּהֵל יְכַפֵּר: לַד  
וְהִיְתָה-זֵאת לְכֹם לְחֻקֹּת עוֹלָם לְכַפֵּר עַל-בְּגָדֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכָּל-חַטָּאתֶם אַחַת  
בְּשָׁנָה וַיַּעַשׂ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְיָ אֶת-מֹשֶׁה:

**(32) The priest who has been anointed and ordained to serve as priest in place of his father shall make expiation; he shall put on the linen vestments, the sacred vestments.**

**(33) He shall purge the innermost Shrine; he shall purge the Tent of Meeting and the altar; and he shall make expiation for the priests and for all the people of the congregation.**

**(34) This shall be to you a law for all time: to make expiation for the Israelites for all their sins once a year. And Moses did as the LORD had commanded him.**

**(32) The priest who has been anointed and ordained to serve as priest in place of his father shall make expiation:** What was said above about Aaron applies to all later High Priests.

**he shall put on the linen vestments, the sacred vestments:** A plain reading suggests High Priesthood passes directly through the male line. However, according to Halakha, this is merely a preference – any priest can be appointed High Priest. Since all priests descended from Aaron, any could technically serve “in place of his forefather” (though in practice, changing the High Priest dynasty was avoided except in extreme cases).

**(34) This shall be to you a law for all time: to make expiation for the Israelites for all their sins once a year. And Moses did as the LORD had commanded him:** This verse summarizes the chapter. Aaron, unlike Nadab and Abihu, followed Moses’ instructions exactly. Priests must grasp they’re not the Temple’s central figures. Their work, Atonement, is secondary to Moses’ Revelation. Nadab and Abihu misjudged this balance and burned. The Yom Kippur service

rules set needed limits on priests, who now see the Divine dimly themselves. Only when Aaron fully accepted Moses' authority, even in matters of service, could he and his sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, serve God rightly.

## § 17. THE PROHIBITION OF IMPROPER SLAUGHTER

### § 17.1. THE PROHIBITION OF SLAUGHTERING LIVESTOCK WITHOUT AN OFFERING (17:1-9)

א וַיְדַבֵּר יְיָ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ב דַּבֵּר אֶל-אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל-בָּנָיו וְאֶל כָּל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּה יְיָ לֵאמֹר: ג אִישׁ אִישׁ מִבֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁחַט יִשְׁחַט שׂוֹר אוֹ-כֶשֶׂב אוֹ-עֵז בְּמַחֲנֵה אוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁחַט מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֵה: ד וְאֶל-פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֹא הִבִּיאֹה לְהַקְרִיב קָרְבָן לַיְי לִפְנֵי מִשְׁכַּן יְיָ דָם יִחָשֵׁב לְאִישׁ הַהוּא דָם שִׁפָּךְ וְנִכְרַת הָאִישׁ הַהוּא מִקִּרְב עַמּוֹ: ה לִמְעַן אֲשֶׁר יָבִיאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-זִבְחֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר הֵם זֹבְחִים עַל-פְּנֵי הַשְּׂדֵה וְהִבִּיֵּאֵם לַיְי אֶל-פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד אֶל-הַפֶּה וְזָבְחוּ וְזָבְחוּ זִבְחֵי שְׁלָמִים לַיְי אוֹתָם: ו וְזָרַק הַפֶּה אֶת-הַדָּם עַל-מִזְבֵּחַ יְיָ פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְהִקְטִיר הַחֵלֶב לִרְיֵחַ נִיחֹחַ לַיְי: ז וְלֹא-יִזְבְּחוּ עוֹל אֶת-זִבְחֵיהֶם לְשַׁעֲרֵי־אֲשֶׁר הֵם זֹנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם חֲקַת עוֹלָם תִּהְיֶה-זֹאת לָהֶם לְדֹרֹתָם: ח וְאֵלֵהֶם תֹּאמַר אִישׁ אִישׁ מִבֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִן-הַגֵּר אֲשֶׁר-יִגְוֹר בְּתוֹכְכֶם אֲשֶׁר-יַעֲלֶה עִלָּה אוֹ-זָבַח: ט וְאֶל-פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֹא יָבִיֵּאוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתוֹ לְגִי וְנִכְרַת הָאִישׁ הַהוּא מֵעַמּוֹ:

**(1) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:**

**(2) Speak to Aaron and his sons, and to all the Israelite people, and say to them: This is what the LORD has commanded:**

**(3) If anyone of the house of Israel slaughters an ox or sheep or goat in the camp, or does so outside the camp,**

**(4) and does not bring it to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting to present it as an offering to the LORD, before the LORD's Tabernacle, bloodguilt shall be imputed to**

**that man: he has shed blood; that man shall be cut off from among his people.**

**(5) This is in order that the Israelites may bring the sacrifices which they have been making in the open – so that they may bring them before the LORD, to the priest, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and offer them as sacrifices of well-being to the LORD.**

**(6) The priest shall dash the blood against the altar of the LORD at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and turn the fat into smoke as a pleasing odor to the LORD.**

**(7) And they shall no longer offer their sacrifices to the goat-demons after whom they stray. This shall be to them a law for all time, throughout the ages.**

**(8) Say to them further: If anyone of the house of Israel or of the strangers who reside among them offers a burnt offering or sacrifice,**

**(9) and does not bring it to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting to offer it to the LORD, that person shall be cut off from his people.**

**(1) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:** This chapter represents a direct address from God to Moses. It is divided into five commandments, all related to the slaughtering of animals, blood, and offerings. These commandments expand upon the theme of the Day of Atonement, serving as a prelude to the principles of holiness.

**(3-4) If anyone of the house of Israel slaughters an ox or sheep or goat in the camp, or does so outside the camp, and does not bring it to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting to present it as an offering to the LORD – bloodguilt shall be imputed to that man: he has shed blood; that man shall be cut off from among his people:** After the scapegoat ritual, slaughtering livestock outside Temple service is prohibited. In the wilderness, such slaughter was often linked to serving “surrounding spirits.” Since the High Priest sends a goat to Azazel, or evil forces, people might wrongly think anyone can do the same, “offering to demons.” Therefore, God warns that only the High Priest, once a year and under strict divine rules, can engage with evil forces. For an ordinary person, it’s forbidden.

**(3-5) If anyone of the house of Israel slaughters an ox or sheep or goat in the camp... and does not bring it to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting... that man shall be cut off from among his people. This is in order that the Israelites may bring the sacrifices which they have been making in the open:** Per Halakha, the ban applies only to offerings made outside the Temple, risking dedication to idols. However, a plain reading of the Torah text forbids all livestock slaughter unless it's an offering to God. In the wilderness, people didn't need meat daily; they ate manna, so animals were slaughtered only for family celebrations, such as weddings. For significant events, people craved meat over manna for a more festive meal. Yet in the wilderness, the sense of higher worlds was strong; if an animal wasn't offered to God, it was likely to become a sacrifice to foreign gods or demons. Such slaughter was then viewed as bloodshed and idolatry, hence banned. Later, when the people settled in the land, the Temple grew distant for many. Without allowing slaughter outside it, people couldn't eat meat at all. Therefore, Deuteronomy (12:20) permits slaughter anywhere after crossing the Jordan, without requiring it to be an offering at the Temple.

**(7) And they shall no longer offer their sacrifices to the goat-demons:** Literally “goats.” This term refers to a common pagan cult that involved sacrificing to goat-like deities known as “satyrs.” This practice was widespread across the Near East, including among the Jews (Isaiah 13:21, 34:14). The novelty of this ban is emphasized by the phrase, “no longer offer their sacrifices to the goat-demons.”

#### § 17.2. THE PROHIBITION AGAINST EATING BLOOD (17:10-14)

י ואיש איש מבית ישראל ומן הגר הגר הגר והגר בתוכם אשר יאכל כל-דם ונתתי פני בנפש האכלת את-הדם והכרתי והכרתי אתה מקרב עמה: יא כי נפש הבשר בדם הוא ואני נתתיו לכם על-המזבח לכפר על-נפשותיכם כי-הדם הוא בנפש יכפר: יב על-כן אמרתי לבני ישראל כל-נפש מקם לא-תאכל דם והגר הגר בתוכם לא-יאכל דם: יג ואיש איש מבני ישראל ומן-הגר הגר בתוכם אשר יצוד ציד חיה או-עוף אשר יאכל יאכל ושפד את-דמו וכסהו בעפר: יד כי-נפש כל-בשר דמו דמו בנפשו

הוא יאמר לבני ישראל דם כל-בשר לא תאכלו כי גפוש כל-בשר דמו  
הוא כל-אכליו יפרת:

**(10) And if anyone of the house of Israel or of the strangers who reside among them partakes of any blood, I will set My face against the person who partakes of the blood, and I will cut him off from among his kin.**

**(11) For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have assigned it to you for making expiation for your lives upon the altar; it is the blood, as life, that effects expiation.**

**(12) Therefore I say to the Israelite people: No person among you shall partake of blood, nor shall the stranger who resides among you partake of blood.**

**(13) And anyone, whether citizen or stranger, who hunts down an animal or a bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth.**

**(14) For the life of all flesh – its blood is its life. Therefore I say to the Israelite people: You shall not partake of the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood; anyone who partakes of it shall be cut off.**

The prohibition was already stated (3:17 and 7:26), but it is explained in greater detail here.

**(11) For the life of the flesh is in the blood:** In the Hebrew of the Torah, *nefesh* means “life force, animal soul” rather than “soul” in the modern sense as a separate entity. Thus, “the life of the flesh is in the blood” indicates that the body’s vitality depends on blood – lose it, and a creature dies.

**and I have assigned it to you for making expiation for your lives upon the altar; it is the blood, as life, that effects expiation:** In sacrifices, blood is poured on the altar, deeply affecting the offerer, bringing repentance, and thus providing atonement.

**(12) No person among you shall partake of blood:** Meat is essential for human sustenance, so slaughter is allowed, and animal offerings are vital to Temple service. However, killing animals should not be taken lightly – it’s a forced, unwanted act, and the blood prohibition underscores this.

**nor shall the stranger who resides among you partake of blood:** Since many people see no harm in eating meat with blood, it is emphasized that this ban applies to non-Jewish residents of the Land of Israel too.

**(13) And anyone, whether citizen or stranger, who hunts down an animal or a bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth:** There is a special rule for slaughtering hunted wild animals: sprinkle earth over the spilled blood. Wild animals are not regarded as ordinary food, nor are they part of the everyday order. Killing them should be viewed as more shameful than killing domesticated animals, and covering the blood with earth signifies that shame. This rule also applies to domestic birds, as they are meant to be free.

**(14) You shall not partake of the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood; anyone who partakes of it shall be cut off:** The repeated prohibition (also stated in Deuteronomy 12:23) indicates that consuming blood was common, making it difficult for Jews to break this habit.

#### § 17.3. THE IMPURITY OF CARCASSES AND ANIMALS TORN BY BEASTS (17:15-16)

טו וְכֹל-נֶפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר תֹּאכַל נְבִלָה וְטֶרֶף הַבְּאֲזָרָח וּבִגְדוֹ וְכַסֵּם בְּגָדָיו וְרִתְּמוֹ  
בְּמַיִם וְטִמָּא עַד-הָעֶרֶב וְטָהַר: טז וְאִם לֹא יִכְסֹם וּבִשְׂרוֹ לֹא יִרְתְּמוֹ וְנִשְׂא  
עֲוֹנוֹ:

**(15) Any person, whether citizen or stranger, who eats what has died or has been torn by beasts shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain impure until evening; then he shall be pure.**

**(16) But if he does not wash his clothes and bathe his body, he shall bear his guilt.**

**(15) Any person, whether citizen or stranger, who eats what has died or has been torn by beasts shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain impure until evening:** Once more,

“strangers” are singled out alongside the Israelites because this prohibition is more difficult for them to accept.

**and remain impure until evening:** Carrion or animals that have been torn apart carry impurity because they were not handled properly slaughtered.

**(16) But if he does not wash his clothes and bathe his body, he shall bear his guilt:** According to Halakha, transgression occurs only when an impure person enters the sanctuary or consumes part of an offering. However, a straightforward reading of the Torah indicates that impurity is inherently undesirable and necessitates effort to achieve purification. At times, impurity may be unavoidable, but failure to purify oneself from it becomes one’s own responsibility.

## § 18. FORBIDDEN SEXUAL RELATIONS

### § 18.1. DO NOT FOLLOW THE CUSTOMS OF EGYPT AND CANAAN (18:1-5)

א וַיְדַבֵּר יְיָ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ב דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: ג כַּמַּעֲשֵׂה אֲרֶץ-מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁבַתְּם-בָּהּ לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וְכַמַּעֲשֵׂה אֲרֶץ-כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְבִיא אֲתֶכֶם לְשָׁמָּה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וּבַחֲקֹתֵיהֶם לֹא תֵלְכוּ: ד אֶת-מִשְׁפָּטַי תַעֲשׂוּ וְאֶת-חֻקֹּתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ לְלַקֵּת בָּהֶם אֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: ה וְשִׁמְרַתֶּם אֶת-חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת-מִשְׁפָּטַי מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֲתֶם הָאֲדָמָה וְתִי בָהֶם אֲנִי יְיָ:

**(1) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:**

**(2) Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: I the LORD am your God.**

**(3) You shall not copy the practices of the land of Egypt where you dwelt, or of the land of Canaan to which I am taking you; nor shall you follow their laws.**

**(4) My rules alone shall you observe, and faithfully follow My laws: I the LORD am your God.**

**(5) You shall keep My laws and My rules, by the pursuit of which man shall live: I am the LORD.**

**(3) You shall not copy the practices of the land of Egypt where you dwelt, or of the land of Canaan:** This verse first presents a general principle: to avoid adopting the customs of the Egyptians and Canaanites. It then describes the prevalent corrupt practices among them, especially concerning sexuality. Egypt and Canaan symbolize opposing models of life for the Jewish people. Egypt is often viewed

as a place of low spirituality, whereas Canaan is regarded as a land of high spiritual potential.

Egypt imposes no spiritual demands on its inhabitants. The annual flooding of the Nile is a regular occurrence, so agriculture requires only physical effort. Digging canals to channel the Nile's water to the fields ensures a bountiful harvest. In contrast, Canaan requires a higher level of spirituality from its inhabitants. Lacking a reliable water source, the land is entirely dependent on rainfall. It's not sufficient to simply plant seeds; one must continually look to the heavens, praying for rain and directing petitions to God. The land itself molds its people, endowing them with great spiritual energy. However, despite the Canaanite nations having access to this spiritual potential, they misused it to indulge their desires and became morally corrupt.

Thus, the Torah warns against the customs of both Egypt and Canaan.

**(5) You shall keep My laws and My rules, by the pursuit of which man shall live:** The Oral Torah establishes the principle that commandments must be followed unless doing so would jeopardize one's life. For instance, anything essential for safety is allowed on the Sabbath in military contexts.

However, even in life-threatening circumstances, three prohibitions cannot be violated: idolatry, murder, and adultery.

## § 18.2. FORBIDDEN SEXUAL RELATIONS WITH RELATIVES (18:6-18)

ו אִישׁ אִישׁ אֶל-כָּל-שָׂאֵר בְּשָׂרוֹ לֹא תִקְרְבוּ תִקְרְבוּ לְגִלּוֹת עֲרֻנָּה אָנֹכִי יִי  
 ז עֲרֻנַת אָבִיךָ וְעֲרֻנַת אִמְּךָ לֹא תִגְלֶה אִמְּךָ הוּא לֹא תִגְלֶה עֲרֻנָּתָה: ח עֲרֻנַת  
 אֲשֶׁת-אָבִיךָ לֹא תִגְלֶה עֲרֻנַת אָבִיךָ הוּא: ט עֲרֻנַת אֶחָוִתְךָ בֵּת-אָבִיךָ אוֹ  
 בֵּת-אִמְּךָ מוֹלְדֵת מוֹלְדֵת בֵּית אוֹ מוֹלְדֵת חוּץ לֹא תִגְלֶה עֲרֻנָּתוֹ: י עֲרֻנַת  
 בֵּת-בְּנֵךְ אוֹ בֵּת-בִּתְּךָ לֹא תִגְלֶה תִגְלֶה עֲרֻנָּתוֹ כִּי עֲרֻנָּתְךָ הִנֵּה: יא עֲרֻנַת  
 בֵּת-אֲשֶׁת אָבִיךָ מוֹלְדֵת אָבִיךָ אֶחָוִתְךָ הוּא לֹא תִגְלֶה עֲרֻנָּתָה: יב עֲרֻנַת  
 אֶחָוִת-אָבִיךָ לֹא תִגְלֶה שָׂאֵר אָבִיךָ אָבִיךָ הוּא: יג עֲרֻנַת אֶחָוִת-אִמְּךָ לֹא  
 תִגְלֶה כִּי-שָׂאֵר אִמְּךָ הוּא: יד עֲרֻנַת אֶחָי-אָבִיךָ לֹא תִגְלֶה אֶל-אֲשֶׁתוֹ לֹא  
 לֹא תִקְרָב תִקְרָב דְּדָתְךָ הוּא: טו עֲרֻנַת כֹּלְתְךָ לֹא תִגְלֶה אֲשֶׁת בְּנֵךְ הוּא לֹא  
 תִגְלֶה עֲרֻנָּתָה: עֲרֻנָּתְךָ: טז עֲרֻנַת אֲשֶׁת-אֶחָיךָ לֹא תִגְלֶה עֲרֻנַת אֶחָיךָ הוּא:

יִזְעֲרוֹת אִשָּׁה וּבִתָּהּ לֹא תִגְלֶה אֶת-בֵּית-בְּנֵיהָ וְאֶת-בֵּית-בָּתְּהָ לֹא תִקְחֵהּ לְגִלּוֹת  
 עֲרוֹתֶיהָ לְשֹׂאֲרֵהָ הַגֵּבָה וְזָמָה הוּא: יִחַ וְאִשָּׁה אֶל-אֲחֻתָּהּ לֹא תִקְחֵהּ לְצִרָר לְגִלּוֹת  
 עֲרוֹתֶיהָ עָלֶיהָ בְּסוּיָהּ:

- (6) None of you shall come near anyone of his own flesh to uncover nakedness: I am the LORD.
- (7) Your father's nakedness, that is, the nakedness of your mother, you shall not uncover; she is your mother – you shall not uncover her nakedness.
- (8) Do not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is the nakedness of your father.
- (9) The nakedness of your sister – your father's daughter or your mother's, whether born into the household or outside – do not uncover their nakedness.
- (10) The nakedness of your son's daughter or of your daughter's daughter – do not uncover their nakedness; for their nakedness is yours.
- (11) The nakedness of your father's wife's daughter, who was born into your father's household – she is your sister; do not uncover her nakedness.
- (12) Do not uncover the nakedness of your father's sister; she is your father's flesh.
- (13) Do not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister; for she is your mother's flesh.
- (14) Do not uncover the nakedness of your father's brother: do not approach his wife; she is your aunt.
- (15) Do not uncover the nakedness of your daughter-in-law: she is your son's wife – you shall not uncover her nakedness.
- (16) Do not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is the nakedness of your brother.
- (17) Do not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter; nor shall you marry her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter and uncover her nakedness: they are kindred; it is depravity.

**(18) Do not marry a woman as a rival to her sister and uncover her nakedness in the other's lifetime.**

The prohibition against sexual relations with relatives encompasses two categories: a) with close relatives and b) with the wives of close relatives or close relatives of a wife (marriage is so binding that a spouse's direct relatives are considered blood relatives). Therefore, it is less concerned with genetics (or the fear of degeneration) and more about maintaining a proper family structure. Intimacy with relatives is deemed *arayot*, meaning "shameful." Such unions are not recognized as marriage, and the offspring are referred to as *mamzer*, meaning "defective offspring." Consequently, a *mamzer* cannot marry an ordinary Jew (only another *mamzer* or a convert to Judaism). This strictness serves to deter illicit unions and their repercussions; however, *mamzers* face no other social restrictions. A child born out of wedlock, but not from these forbidden unions, is not considered a *mamzer* and faces no restrictions. (Thus, it is incorrect to translate *mamzer* as "illegitimate.")

**(6) None of you shall come near anyone of his own flesh to uncover nakedness:** Marriage must extend a person beyond their birth family. In a patriarchal culture, remaining within one's family feels natural. However, prohibiting intimacy with relatives compels a person to break away and marry someone from another family with different views – a necessary step for personal growth.

All prohibitions regarding a relative's wife assume that the relative is deceased or divorced (i.e., she is free to marry). During an active marriage, the 6th of the Ten Commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," applies. An exception is levirate marriage, which involves marrying the widow of a childless relative brother.

**(8) Do not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife:** Ancient peoples had the custom of allowing an heir to the throne to marry his father's widow, as long as she was not the heir's mother. We see an echo of this in I Kings 2:17, when Adonijah sought out Abishag, David's widow. However, the Torah flatly forbids this.

**(9) The nakedness of your sister – your father's daughter or your mother's, whether born into the household or outside – do**

**not uncover:** A father's or mother's daughter from another spouse, even if she lives outside the home or is unmarried, is still considered a sister, so intimacy is forbidden.

**(10) For their nakedness is yours:** Close relatives are akin to parts of yourself body.

**(16) Do not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife:** The prohibition against marrying a dead brother's widow has one exception: if he died childless (and only then!), levirate marriage applies; in this case, one must marry her (see Deuteronomy 25:5). Here, a man "takes his brother's place," and future children are counted as the deceased's – similar to modern sperm donation for a dead brother. However, today (unlike in ancient times), a man can hardly feel that he is his brother – levirate marriage is simply marrying the widow – so later Jewish tradition almost outlawed it. If the deceased had (or once had) children, marrying his widow is completely forbidden.

**(17) Do not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter:** Polygamy is not forbidden in the Torah, although it is not encouraged. However, it is strictly prohibited for a man to marry a woman and her daughter.

**(18) Do not marry a woman as a rival to her sister and uncover her nakedness in the other's lifetime:** Marriage between a man and two sisters is also forbidden because it creates significant family conflicts, as seen in the case of Jacob's marriage to Rachel Leah.

**In the other's lifetime:** Even after divorcing his wife, a man cannot marry her sister as long as the ex-wife is alive. However, if she dies, it is permitted, and the sages looked favorably upon a widower marrying his deceased wife's sister, as she would best care for the motherless orphans.

A common question arises: If the Torah forbids marrying sisters, why did Jacob do it? The answer is: (1) The patriarchs prophetically anticipated the Torah's commandments before Sinai and sought to follow them. However, they were only bound by the Seven Noahide Laws, which permit marrying sisters. When Laban tricked Jacob into marrying his older daughter, rejecting Rachel would have caused more harm, including to the future of the nation of Israel, than

disregarding a future commandment. (2) The Torah operates on two levels: laws and stories. The stories reveal and explain the laws. Jacob's story illustrates why it is forbidden to marry one's wife's sister – his experience gave rise to this commandment. The essence of the Torah predates creation, but this commandment emerged through his experience.

### § 18.3. OTHER FORBIDDEN SEXUAL RELATIONS (18:19-23)

יט וְאֵל-אִשָּׁה בְּנִדְתָּ טְמֵאָתָהּ לֹא תִקְרָב לְגִלּוֹת עֲרוֹנָתָהּ: כ וְאֵל-אִשָּׁת עַמִּיתָךְ  
 לֹא-תִתֵּן שְׂכֵבֶתְךָ לְזָרַע לְטִמְאָה-בָּהּ: כא וּמִזֹּרְעֶיךָ לֹא-תִתֵּן לְהַעֲבִיר לְמִלְדָּה  
 וְלֹא תִחַלֵּל אֶת-שֵׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲנִי יי: כב וְאֶת-זָכָר לֹא תִשָּׁכַב מִשְׁכַּבִּי אִשָּׁה  
 תּוֹעֵבָה הוּא: כג וּבְכָל-בְּהֵמָה לֹא-תִתֵּן שְׂכֵבֶתְךָ לְטִמְאָה-בָּהּ וְאִשָּׁה לֹא-  
 תַעֲמֹד לְפָנַי בְּהֵמָה לְרִבְעָה תִבֹּל הוּא:

**(19) Do not approach a woman in her time of uncleanness to uncover her nakedness.**

**(20) Do not have carnal relations with your neighbor's wife and defile yourself with her.**

**(21) Do not allow any of your offspring to be offered up to Molech, and do not profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.**

**(22) Do not lie with a male as one lies with a woman; it is an abomination.**

**(23) Do not have carnal relations with any beast and defile yourself thereby. And let no woman lend herself to a beast to mate with it; it is perversion.**

**(19) Do not approach a woman in her time of uncleanness to uncover her nakedness:** Although the prohibition against intimacy with a wife during her *niddah* state, specifically during menstruation, was noted earlier, it is reiterated here under forbidden practices relations.

**(20) Do not have carnal relations with your neighbor's wife and defile yourself with her:** The prohibition against relations with

one's neighbor's wife is stated in the Ten Commandments (Do not commit adultery) and is reiterated here under forbidden relations.

**(21) Do not allow any of your offspring to be offered up to Molech:** Here, the Torah mentions for the first time the worship of the Ammonite deity, which was common among the surrounding nations. The worship of Molech worked as follows: a father would give his child to idolatrous priests, who lit two great fires and made the child pass between them. This “trial by fire” often resulted in the child's death – a form of human sacrifice. The worship of Molech held some appeal; the sacrifice of children deeply influenced and tempted other nations. Therefore, the Torah often repeats this prohibition.

**(22) Do not lie with a male as one lies with a woman; it is an abomination:** The Torah explicitly forbids male homosexuality. While lesbian relationships are not directly mentioned, tradition also prohibits them.

#### § 18.4. THE HOLY LAND DOES NOT TOLERATE TRANSGRESSIONS (18:24-30)

כד אל-תטמאו בכל-אֵלֶּהָ כִּי בְּכָל-אֵלֶּהָ נִטְמָאוּ הַגּוֹיִם: אֲשֶׁר-אֲנִי מְשַׁלֵּחַ  
מִפְּנֵיכֶם: כֹּה וַתִּטְמָא הָאָרֶץ וְאֶפְקֹד וְאֶפְקֹד עֲוֹנָהּ עָלֶיהָ וַתִּקַּא הָאָרֶץ  
אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל: כֹּה וַיִּשְׁמְרֶתֶם אֹתָם אֶת-חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת-מִשְׁפָּטַי וְלֹא תַעֲשׂוּ מִכָּל  
הַתּוֹעֵבֹת הָאֵלֶּה הָאֲזוּרֹת וְהַגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכְכֶם: כֹּה כִּי אֶת-כָּל-הַתּוֹעֵבֹת הָאֵל  
עֲשׂוּ אֲנִישֵׁי-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵיכֶם וַתִּטְמָא הָאָרֶץ: כֹּחַ וְלֹא-תִקְיֵא הָאָרֶץ  
אֹתְכֶם בְּטִמְאַכֶּם אֲתָהּ כְּאֲשֶׁר קָאָה אֶת-הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵיכֶם: כֹּחַ כִּי כָל-  
אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה מִכָּל הַתּוֹעֵבֹת הַתּוֹעֵבֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְנִכְרַתוּ הַגְּפָשׁוֹת הַעֲשׂוֹת  
מִקְרָב עִמָּם: לֹא וַיִּשְׁמְרֶתֶם אֶת-מִשְׁמְרֹתַי לְבִלְתִּי עֲשׂוֹת מִחֻקֹּת הַתּוֹעֵבֹת  
אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשׂוּ לִפְנֵיכֶם וְלֹא תִטְמָאוּ בָהֶם אֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

**(24) Do not defile yourselves in any of those ways, for it is by such that the nations that I am casting out before you defiled themselves.**

**(25) Thus the land became defiled; and I called it to account for its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.**

**(26) But you must keep My laws and My rules, and you must not do any of those abhorrent things, neither the citizen nor the stranger who resides among you;**

**(27) for all those abhorrent things were done by the people who were in the land before you, and the land became defiled.**

**(28) So let not the land vomit you out for defiling it, as it vomited out the nation that came before you.**

**(29) All who do any of those abhorrent things – such persons shall be cut off from their people.**

**(30) You shall keep My charge not to engage in any of the abhorrent practices that were carried on before you, and you shall not defile yourselves through them: I the LORD am your God.**

**(24) Do not defile yourselves in any of those ways. For it is by such that the nations that I am casting out before you defiled themselves:** This address concludes what began earlier (in verse 3): “You shall not follow the practices of the land of Egypt where you dwelt, nor shall you follow the practices of the land of Canaan to which I am taking you.” Here, the expulsion of the Canaanite nations is attributed to forbidden sexual relations. Elsewhere in the Torah, however, other reasons are provided for their expulsion.

**(25) Thus the land became defiled; and I called it to account for its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants:** This is the Holy Land – when its people act unworthily, the Land expels them, not just the individual offenders but the entire nation.

**(29) All who do any of those abhorrent things – such persons shall be cut off from their people:** Thus, the punishment operates on two levels: (1) the offenders are isolated from society, and (2) if the offenders become numerous, the entire nation is affected.

**(30) You shall keep My charge not to engage in any of the abhorrent practices:** A further repetition to stress the prohibition, considering its significant importance.

**WEEKLY  
PORTION 7**

# **KEDOSHIM**

## § 19. THE LAWS OF HOLINESS

### § 19.1 HOLINESS AS IMITATION OF GOD (19:1-2)

א וַיְדַבֵּר יְיָ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: לֵאמֹר: ב דַּבֵּר אֶל-כָּל-עַדְוַת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם קְדוֹשִׁים תִּהְיוּ כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

**(1) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:**

**(2) Speak to the whole Israelite community and say to them: You shall be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy.**

The *Kedoshim* weekly portion marks the beginning of the final, third part of Leviticus, which focuses on the concept of holiness. The previous part, which dealt with purity, explored how to act in a way that avoids worsening or defiling the world. Here, a shift begins to a higher stage of human growth – one that improves the world by bringing holiness into it. Thus, the demands on a person increase.

The section's structure is:

1. Principles of holiness
2. Paths to holiness
3. Punishments for crimes against holiness
4. Active pursuit of holiness

**(2) Speak to the whole Israelite community:** To the entire community, not just individuals – here, holiness is connected to society as a whole, to the nation. Holy individuals exist across all faiths. However, the concept of a holy nation that leads ordinary

lives while viewing society's holiness as an ideal is unique to Judaism. The idea of national holiness emerges at the beginning of the Jewish people, with Abraham's call to establish a distinct nation to bring God's teachings to the world (Genesis 12:1). This notion of national holiness then weaves through the Torah and Jewish tradition.

**and say to them: You shall be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy:** This is the principle of *Imitatio Dei*, the imitation of God. Holiness is the ultimate quality of God, so striving for it is the path to approach Him. We've already noted (in comments on Genesis 1:1 and 1:26) that this principle underlies biblical ethics. Since the Torah presents God as the One who created everything and is manifest in every aspect of existence, "God's holiness" represents the fullness of the divine world. Our participation in the fullness of life is how holiness is realized.

#### § 19.2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOLINESS AND OTHER TORAH COMMANDMENTS: THE APPROACHES OF MAIMONIDES AND NACHMANIDES

In Jewish tradition, two perspectives connect the commandment to "be holy" with the other commandments of the Torah.

Maimonides, the ultimate rationalist, interprets "You shall be holy" not as a distinct commandment but as a general principle – an introduction to all the other commandments. Therefore, observing all the other commandments is the path to holiness.

Nachmanides, the great mystic kabbalist, interprets this verse differently. He believes that "You shall be holy" is a distinct commandment, not merely a consequence of adhering to others. Its purpose is to guide all one's actions, including observance of the commandments, towards God. Simply following the rules of the Torah is insufficient for achieving holiness. A person may outwardly observe all the commandments but still treat others poorly. Jewish tradition labels this behavior *naval bi-rshut ha-Torah*, meaning "a person who acts badly, with the full permission of the Torah." For Nachmanides, the "holiness commandment" aims to prevent this behavior.

Moreover, Nachmanides states that the *naval bi-rshut ha-Torah* is difficult to define because it is problematic to pinpoint the exact characteristics of this impropriety; therefore, specifying what is

forbidden becomes impossible. No legal system alone can make a person moral; thus, a separate commandment of holiness is added, urging virtuous behavior.

### § 19.3. HOLINESS AS THE FULLNESS OF BEING

One of the key questions in religion is how it defines holiness. Who is a holy person, and what is the path to holiness? A religion's answer shapes not only its nature but also the civilization built upon it.

In Jewish tradition, the Almighty is the *Living* God. This means that holiness – the imitation of God – is about being fully alive. Such holiness arises only through active engagement in all aspects of life, not through withdrawal from it. This principle applies to both the personal life of the individual and the social and community life of the nation as a whole.

Today, the world often pits scientific and technological progress against religion, a perspective shared by both atheists and many religious individuals. However, the religious-modernist approach, represented by American Modern Orthodox Judaism and Israeli Religious Zionism, views the growth of civilization as a “sacred” process. God didn't merely grant the Torah – He created the universe. Therefore, a genuine dialogue with God, which is a manifestation of holiness, isn't attained through a narrow, purely religious path but rather through a broad, life-encompassing one. Since God created everything, humanity must connect with the Creator through all facets of His Creation. If a positive force in the world isn't integrated into a religion's outlook, that religion's perspective on holiness is incomplete. Only through immersion in the totality of existence can a complete dialogue with God be achieved.

Society's progress toward holiness is not achieved by limiting its scope but by incorporating all facets of civilization into the divine realm – not just ethics (as is often thought) but also art, science, culture, technology, social development, government, work, business, the environment, and more – and viewing their development as part of the path to holiness. No single person can engage in everything; individual capacity is finite. However, society as a whole can. When such a society directs all its facets of life toward God, each person, as a part of it, also participates in that fullness.

### § 19.4. HOLINESS AS AN ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

The words “You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy” lie at the heart of the religious experience. It’s as if God says to humanity: “Right now, I alone am holy here, but I don’t want to be alone. Perhaps you could become holy, too, and then we could connect. Until you are holy, we cannot meet openly, face-to-face, and that’s a pity.” God longs to meet with man, His creation, and this meeting embodies the essence of holiness.

If a person is weak, encountering such powerful holiness can be risky – he might “burn.” However, if he is spiritually advanced, he becomes better prepared for the encounter. The more clearly a man feels engaged in a dialogue with God at a particular moment or place, the stronger the holiness of that moment or place becomes.

For example, during properly observed Shabbat and holidays, a person feels a deeper connection with God than on weekdays – this reflects his holiness. In the Temple, this dialogue was even more intense, not just at an individual level but a national one – this embodies the holiness of the Temple.

The most profound encounter between man and God occurred during the Giving of the Torah at Sinai. Being in the Temple evoked memories of standing at Mount Sinai. From the Temple, holiness was meant to radiate throughout the world.

### § 19.5. INITIAL STEPS TOWARD HOLINESS: PARENTS, SABBATH, AND PROHIBITION OF IDOLATRY (19:3-4)

ג איש אמו ואביו תיראו ואת-שבתתי תשמרו תשמרו אגני יי אלהיכם:  
ד אל-תפנו אל-האילים ואלהי מסכה לא תעשו לכם אגני יי אלהיכם:

**(3) You shall each revere his mother and his father, and keep My sabbaths: I the LORD am your God.**

**(4) Do not turn to idols or make molten gods for yourselves: I the LORD am your God.**

Many of the commandments in this section were previously given in the Torah, but here, they are examined through the perspective

of holiness rather than merely social obligation. This entails more rigorous requirements, along with clarifications and additions.

**(3) You shall each revere his mother and his father:** In the Ten Commandments, it is referred to as honoring parents; here, it is referred to as reverence. Honor and reverence must be balanced.

**You shall each revere his mother and his father, and keep My sabbaths:** A simple reading reveals no conflict between honoring parents and keeping Shabbat – both are paths to God. After the general call to “be holy,” this verse becomes more specific. Halakha, however, treats the two parts as a contrasting clarification: “You must revere your parents, *but* also observe Shabbat.” When they conflict – such as when parents instruct a son to break Shabbat – he should not, as Shabbat takes precedence. Still, sometimes, assisting parents outweighs observance of certain Shabbat rules.

Choosing between parents and commandment details is difficult, so it is addressed in the holiness section (not in the earlier purity section). In such conflicts, one must strive to uphold both commandments as best as possible while simultaneously making every effort to honor one’s parents. There are no easy solutions to these tensions.

**(4) Do not turn to idols:** The prohibition against idolatry was already established, but the phrase “do not turn” here expands it beyond merely “do not worship.”

#### § 19.6. THE PEACE OFFERING MUST BE EATEN WITHOUT DELAY (19:5-8)

ה וְכִי תִזְבְּחוּ זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים לִּי לְרִצּוֹנְכֶם תִּזְבְּחוּ: וּבְיֹם זִבְחֵיכֶם יֵאָכֵל  
וּמִמֶּחֶרֶת וְהַבֹּתֵר עַד-יֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי בָאֵשׁ יִשְׂרָף: ז וְאִם הָאָכַל יֵאָכֵל בְּיֹם  
הַשְּׁלִישִׁי כִּגּוּל הוּא לֹא יִרְצָה: ח וְאִכְלִיוּ עֹנֵוּ יִשָּׂא כִּי-אֵת-קֹדֶשׁ יִי חָלַל  
וּנְכַרְתָּהּ הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא מֵעַמִּיהָ:

**(5) When you sacrifice an offering of well-being to the LORD, sacrifice it so that it may be accepted on your behalf.**

**(6) It shall be eaten on the day you sacrifice it, or on the day following; anything left over until the third day shall be consumed in fire.**

**(7) If it should be eaten on the third day, it is an offensive thing; it will not be acceptable.**

**(8) And he who eats of it shall bear his guilt, for he has profaned what is sacred to the LORD; that person shall be cut off from his kin.**

In the *Kedoshim* section, which addresses the principles of holiness, the focus is primarily on social commandments. As noted above, holiness primarily shines through human relationships and social interactions. Some commandments address other issues, such as the *shelamim* or well-being offerings. However, even these are communal acts: a festive meal shared with God and others, as opposed to other offerings tied to personal relationships with God.

**(5) When you sacrifice an offering of well-being to the LORD, sacrifice it so that it may be accepted on your behalf:** The Talmud interprets this as “to bring it knowingly, with understanding, and with the right intention.” Most commandments are fulfilled simply by observing them, even without a deep intention to serve God – such as keeping Shabbat, observing holidays, and placing a mezuzah. Feeling connected to God through these practices is important, but they remain valid even if that connection is not present. However, offerings are different: the physical act means nothing without the intention to offer it properly, to eat it at the right time, and to connect with God. Without this, the offering has no purpose.

**(6) It shall be eaten on the day you sacrifice it, or on the day following; anything left over until the third day shall be consumed in fire:** The purity of intent in the offering is shown by how quickly it is eaten, highlighting its value. The offering consists of a whole lamb and thirty loaves of bread – too much for a small family to consume in a single day – so relatives and friends join in the meal. This way, the well-being offering reinforces social ties.

**(7) If it should be eaten on the third day, it is an offensive thing; it will not be acceptable:** Lingering over the well-being offering shows a disregard for the sacrifice.

**(8) And he who eats of it shall bear his guilt, for he has profaned what is sacred to the LORD; that person shall be cut off from his kin:** Israel's bond with God is unbreakable; thus, profaning the sacred severs one from the nation.

### § 19.7. SOCIAL JUSTICE (19:9-17)

ט וּבְקַצְרְכֶם אֶת-קְצִיר אֲרֻצְכֶם לֹא תִכְלֶה פָּאֵת שְׂדֵךְ לִקְצֹר וְלִקַּט קְצִירָךְ  
 לֹא תִלְקַט: י וּכְרַמְךָ לֹא תֵעוּלֵל וּפְרֹט כְּרַמְךָ לֹא תִלְקַט לְעֵנִי וּלְגֵר תֵּעֲזֹב  
 אֹתָם אֲנִי יי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: יא לֹא תִגְנְבוּ וְלֹא-תִחַשְׁשׁוּ וְלֹא-תִשְׁקְרוּ אִישׁ  
 בְּעֵמִיתוֹ: יב וְלֹא-תִשְׁבְּעוּ בְשִׁמִּי לְשַׁקֵּר וְחִלַּלְתָּ אֶת-שֵׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲנִי יי:  
 יג לֹא-תַעֲשֶׂק אֶת-רֵעֶךָ וְלֹא תִגְזֹל לֹא-תִלְוֶיךָ פְּעֻלַּת שְׂכִיר אֶתְּךָ עַד-בְּקָר:  
 יד לֹא-תִמְקַל חֵרֶשׁ וְלִפְנֵי עֹזֵר לֹא תִתֵּן מִכְשָׁל וְיִרְאֵת מֵאֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲנִי יי:  
 טו לֹא-תַעֲשׂוּ עֹוֹל בְּמִשְׁפָּט לֹא-תִשָּׂא פְנֵי-דָל וְלֹא תִהְדָּר פְּנֵי גְדוֹל בְּצַדִּיק  
 תִּשְׁפֹּט עֲמִיתְּךָ: טז לֹא-תִלְוֶה רֵכִיל בְּעַמִּיךָ לֹא תַעֲמִיד עַל-דָּם רֵעֶךָ אֲנִי יי: יז  
 לֹא-תִשָּׂא אֶת-אֶחָיִךְ בַּלְבָּבָהּ בַּלְבָּבָהּ הוֹכַח תוֹכִיחַ אֶת-עַמִּיתְּךָ וְלֹא-תִשָּׂא  
 עֲלֶיךָ חָטָא:

**(9) When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest.**

**(10) You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger – I am the LORD your God.**

**(11) You shall not steal; you shall not deal deceitfully or falsely with one another.**

**(12) You shall not swear falsely by My name, profaning the name of your God – I am the LORD.**

**(13) You shall not defraud your fellow. You shall not commit robbery. The wages of a laborer shall not remain with you until morning.**

**(14) You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling block before the blind. You shall fear your God – I am the LORD.**

**(15) You shall not render an unfair decision: do not favor the poor or show deference to the rich; judge your kinsman fairly.**

**(16) You should not be a gossipmonger among your people. Do not stand aside when your fellow’s blood is shed – I am the LORD.**

**(17) You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart. Reprove your kinsman but incur no guilt because of him.**

**(9-10) When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field... You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger:** Supporting those without agricultural fields means providing the poor with opportunities to feed themselves, such as gathering harvest leftovers. It’s not worthwhile for the landowner to collect the leftovers – the workers’ time costs more than the small yield. However, for the poor, who have time but no money, it pays off. This practice integrates the poor into the economy, making the entire system more efficient. The Torah stipulates that the rich must assist the poor, but it doesn’t grant the poor the right to take from the rich.

**you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field:** Edge stalks that are exposed to wind and dust yield lower quality and less grain.

**You shall not pick your vineyard bare:** This refers to partial clusters with a few grapes.

**I am the LORD your God:** Caring for the less fortunate brings you closer to Me.

**(11) You shall not steal:** Theft was previously forbidden in the Torah, but here, it forms part of a complex network of relationships. It’s not merely one person taking from another; it disrupts the social structure and hinders the journey to holiness as a whole.

**You shall not deal deceitfully or falsely with one another:** Do not break agreements or provide false information to your peers.

This pertains only to social and business interactions; it does not necessitate the sharing of personal information.

**(12) You shall not swear falsely by My name, profaning the name of your God – I am the LORD:** False oaths were previously forbidden, but here it is emphasized that they defile God’s name and hinder holiness world.

**(13) You shall not defraud your fellow. You shall not commit robbery:** Not only is outright stealing prohibited, but any form of cheating and exploitative actions, such as forcing a bad deal on someone.

**The wages of a laborer shall not remain with you until morning.** This refers to a laborer hired on a daily basis. For long-term labor agreements, ensure the worker is compensated on time according to the contract. Anyone seeking holiness must be diligent in compensating their workers.

**(14) You shall not insult the deaf:** Don’t curse your fellow, even if he can’t hear you, or it doesn’t affect him. Cursing damages the one who curses.

**or place a stumbling block before the blind:** Don’t hinder not only the physically blind but also those who are intellectually or morally blind. Don’t give bad advice to those who cannot understand the situation.

**You shall fear your God – I am the LORD:** This addition appears in many commandments, especially where motives – not just acts – matter. God knows your true intention, even when it is hidden from others, and judges you accordingly.

**(15) You shall not render an unfair decision:** Courts form the foundation of a just society. A nation cannot function or progress without impartial courts.

**Do not favor the poor or show deference to the rich:** Judge by deeds, not by status. Don’t distort justice for the rich and powerful for personal gain, nor favor the poor out of pity.

**Judge your kinsman fairly:** *Tzedek* can have two seemingly opposite meanings: “fairness” and “mercy” (as in *tzedakah*, charity). In practical judging, it’s “justice with mercy,” much like today’s presumption of innocence. Without proof of guilt, assume the best

in your fellow, not the worst. But don't ignore clear wrongs. This applies to court rulings and the daily judgments of others.

**(16) You should not be a gossipmonger among your people:** Gossip is private, harmful information. Even if it's true, it's forbidden because it corrodes society. Earlier, when the purity laws were discussed, false information and perjury were forbidden. Here, it refers to any damaging information, even if it's true. But this applies only to personal matters. In public affairs, sharing true information to prevent harm, such as warning someone about a dishonest business partner, is allowed. This includes revealing relevant facts about political figures or inferior goods and services. It's forbidden for private matters outside of politics or business.

**Do not stand aside when your fellow's blood is shed:** Rescue your fellow in danger! This is a core Jewish ethic, the root of mutual aid and solidarity.

**(17) You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart:** Earlier sections of the Torah forbid harming one's fellow man. Here, in the holiness section, even bad feelings toward them are condemned.

**Reprove your kinsman but incur no guilt because of him:** This key social rule indicates that you are responsible for those around you. Ignoring nearby wrongdoing makes you complicit in the offender's actions. The verse presents two perspectives: (1) Reprimand your kinsman, but if he doesn't listen, you bear no guilt for him. Always correct wrongdoing. If he continues, you're not responsible. (2) Reprimand your kinsman in a way that does not lead to guilt on your part due to your interference. Address him with tact and courtesy, avoiding the sin of shame. Don't do it publicly or harshly, lest he become even more hardened. Tradition states: "Reproach when your fellow would hear you; don't when he won't."

#### § 19.8. LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF (19:18)

יח לא-תקם וּלֹא-תטֹר אֶת-בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ וְאַהֲבַת לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹד אָנִי יי

**(18) You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen. Love your fellow as yourself: I am the LORD.**

Revenge is the act of inflicting harm on another in retaliation. Bearing a grudge involves reminding someone how badly they acted. Both actions are forbidden toward one's fellow beings.

Ideally, all humanity should be treated as fellow countrymen. However, until that happens, the prohibition of revenge applies only to one's own people and does not extend to international relations. Several reasons support this viewpoint.

Legally, within the nation, there exists a judicial system to which one can appeal. Thus, revenge is unnecessary to restore justice; the court should make the appropriate decision and punish the wrongdoer.

From a national perspective, maintaining unity requires restraining "righteous anger" toward one's fellow countrymen.

Socially, even if a neighbor has acted wrongly, generosity and forgiveness resolve the situation more effectively than resentment and revenge.

Psychologically, resentment is destructive to the soul and primarily hurts the one who harbors it.

In international relations, however, the situation differs. There is no effective body of international justice, and an aggressor who goes unpunished does not repent; instead, they are merely encouraged to repeat their crimes. Therefore, vengeance – or, more accurately, retaliation – often becomes the only means of protecting the nation. (This is why, for example, God instructs Moses to "avenge the Midianites" in Numbers 31:2.) Rejecting retaliation and treating other nations that pose a threat as if we already live in a utopia is not only ineffective in self-defense, but it is also immoral because it encourages evil.

**Love your fellow as yourself:** The Talmud emphasizes that this is the most important commandment in the Torah.

The literal Hebrew implies caring for another person instead of pure love. Thus, the tradition understands the essence of this commandment not as an emotional feeling of love but as concern for the well-being of one's fellow. Indeed, the Torah does not command the impossible, such as feeling the same emotional attachment to others as one feels toward oneself. Rather, it requires acting toward others with a concern for their welfare, just as one would act toward oneself – a very difficult but still possible obligation.

On the level of obligation, this refers to love for one's own people (your fellow is your neighbor, your countryman). However, on the level of the ideal, it represents love for all mankind. Rav Chaim Vital, the renowned Kabbalist, maintained that one must love the entire world and humanity to attain holiness. Nonetheless, one must first fulfill these obligations before discussing the ideal. Therefore, love for one's people comes first; only then can one speak of love for all mankind.

In Judaism, there is no commandment to hate one's enemy, except in the case of Amalek, which is a special circumstance that does not apply today. Conversely, ideally, one should love everyone and even wish well to one's enemies. However, it is very dangerous when a person begins to love his enemies on the same level as he loves his peers. Such an attitude is destructive.

At the same time, loving oneself is part of the commandment. A person who does not love himself cannot love others. A Chassidic tale tells of a wealthy man who came to the Rebbe boasting, "I am rich but very modest. I live on bread and water, sleep on a hard bed, and do not indulge in any kind of pleasure." The Rebbe replied, "You are behaving wrongly. You should live in proper conditions and comfort according to your status and means." When the wealthy man left, the Rebbe explained his advice to his astonished disciples: "If this man does not take care of himself and live comfortably, if he is satisfied only with bread and water, he will soon conclude that his workers can sleep on the ground and survive by eating stones."

### § 19.9. OBSERVE MY STATUTES (19:19-32)

יט אַת-תְּקַח מִי תְּשׁוּמָתוֹ בְּהַמְתִּיךָ לֹא-תִרְבֵּיעַ כְּלָאִים כְּלָאִים שְׂדֵךְ לֹא-תִזְבֹּעַ  
כְּלָאִים וּבְגָד כְּלָאִים שְׂעֻטָּו לֹא יַעֲלֶה עָלֶיךָ: כ וְאִישׁ כִּי-יִשָּׁכַב אֶת-אִשְׁתּוֹ  
שְׂכֵב־תָּוֹרֵעַ וְהוּא שֹׁפֵחַ גְּחִירָפֹת לְאִישׁ וְהַפְדָּה לֹא נִפְדָּתָה אִו חֲפָשָׁה לֹא  
נִתְּנָה לָהּ בְּקִרְתָּ תְּהִינָה לֹא וְיִמְתּוּ כִּי-לֹא חֲפָשָׁה: כֵּא וְהִבִּיא אֶת-אַשְׁמֹו לִי  
אַל-פְּתַח אֶהְל מוֹעֵד אֵיל אֲשָׁם: כֵּב וְכִפֹּר עָלָיו הַפְּלִן בְּאֵיל הָאֲשָׁם לִפְנֵי יי  
עַל-חֲטָאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָטָא וְנִסְלַח לֹו מִחֲטָאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָטָא:  
כג וְכִי-תִבְאוּ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ וְנִטְעַתֶּם כָּל-עֵץ מֵאֲכָל וְעַרְלַתֶּם עַרְלַתוֹ אֶת-פְּרִי  
שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים יִהְיֶה לָכֶם עֲרָלִים לֹא יֵאָכֵל: כד וּבִשְׁנָה הַרְבִּיעִת יִהְיֶה כָּל-  
פְּרִי קֹדֶשׁ הַלְוִיִּם לִי: כה וּבִשְׁנָה הַחֲמִישִׁת וּבִשְׁנָה 1 תֵּאָכְלוּ אֶת-פְּרִיֹו

להוסיף לָכֶם תְּבוּאָתוֹ אֲנִי יי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: כו לא תֹאכְלוּ עַל-הַדָּם לֹא תִגְנְשׁוּ  
 וְלֹא תִעֲוֹנוּ: כז לא תִקְפוּ פֶּאֶת רֵאשֵׁיכֶם וְלֹא וְלֹא תִשְׁחִית אֶת פֶּאֶת זִקְנֹה:  
 כח וְשָׂרֵט לְנֶפֶשׁ לֹא תִתְנוּ בְּבִשְׂרֹכֶם וּכְתַבְתָּ קַעֲקֹעַ לֹא תִתְנוּ בְכֶם אֲנִי יי:  
 כט אֶל-תַּחֲלֵל אֶת-בֵּיתִי לְהִזְנוֹתָהּ וְלֹא-תִזְנוּהָ הָאָרֶץ וּמִלֶּאָה הָאָרֶץ זָמָּה: ל  
 אֶת-שִׁבְתֵּי תִשְׁמְרוּ וּמִקְדָּשֵׁי תִירָאוּ אֲנִי יי: לא אֶל-תִּפְנוּ אֶל-הָאִבְתָּ וְאֶל-  
 הַיְדֻעִים אֶל-תִּבְקֹשׁוּ לְטַמְּאָהּ בָּהֶם אֲנִי יי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: לב מִפְּנֵי שִׁיבָה תִקְוֹם  
 וְהִדְרַת פְּנֵי זָקֵן וְנִרְאֵת מְאֹלְהֵיךָ אֲנִי יי:

**(19) You shall observe My laws. You shall not let your cattle mate with a different kind; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed; and you shall not put on cloth from a mixture of two kinds of material.**

**(20) If a man has carnal relations with a woman who is a slave designated for another man, but who has not been redeemed or given her freedom, there shall be an inquiry; they shall not, however, be put to death, since she has not been freed.**

**(21) But he must bring to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, as his guilt offering to the LORD, a ram of guilt offering.**

**(22) With the ram of guilt offering the priest shall make expiation for him before the LORD for the sin that he committed; and the sin that he committed will be forgiven him.**

**(23) When you enter the land and plant any tree for food, you shall regard its fruit as forbidden. For three years it shall be forbidden for you, not to be eaten.**

**(24) In the fourth year all its fruit shall be set aside for jubilation before the LORD;**

**(25) and only in the fifth year may you use its fruit – that its yield to you may be increased: I the LORD am your God.**

**(26) You shall not eat anything with its blood. You shall not practice divination or soothsaying.**

**(27) You shall not round off the side-growth on your head, or destroy the side-growth of your beard.**

**(28) You shall not make gashes in your flesh for the dead, or incise any marks on yourselves: I am the LORD.**

**(29) Do not degrade your daughter and make her a harlot, lest the land fall into harlotry and the land be filled with depravity.**

**(30) You shall keep My sabbaths and venerate My sanctuary: I am the LORD.**

**(31) Do not turn to ghosts and do not inquire of familiar spirits, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.**

**(32) You shall rise before the aged and show deference to the old; you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.**

**(19) You shall observe My laws:** The theme of holiness continues with the observance of “statutes,” *chukim* – rules without a rational basis.

**You shall not let your cattle mate with a different kind... not sow your field with two kinds of seed; and you shall not put on cloth from a mixture:** These prohibitions against “mixing spices” include crossbreeding livestock (e.g., horse and donkey), sowing mixed grains, or wearing *shatnez* – cloth made of a mixture of wool and linen. Deuteronomy 22:9 provides a rational reason, but here it remains unexplained, tied to the concept of holiness. Perhaps mixing unlike species blurs their distinctiveness, so holiness requires separation. (See the commentary on Deuteronomy for more on this topic.) Remarkably, in the Temple, curtains and priestly garments were wool-linen blends (*shatnez*). Within holiness, the prohibition may mean that such fabrics are reserved for Temple use, not for everyday life. Symbolically, it signifies that what is divided in this world is united in the Temple. We balance the separation of things in our earthly lives while grasping their unity in their divine source.

**(20) If a man has carnal relations with a woman who is a slave designated for another man, but who has not been redeemed or given her freedom:** This refers to a situation in which a female slave is engaged to a man, with the marriage to commence upon her release from servitude, yet she is involved with another man.

**There shall be an inquiry; they shall not, however, be put to death, since she has not been freed:** Had the woman been freed, she would be considered married, and both would face death.

However, since her marriage is not yet fully complete, the guilty party faces a lighter penalty.

**(21) But he must bring to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, as his guilt offering to the LORD:** The Torah emphasizes the man's guilt – he is the one who initiated the offense.

**(23) When you enter the land and plant any tree for food:** The Torah emphasizes the significance of fruit trees. The Midrash examines both their practical and spiritual dimensions, comparing them to God: “Just as God planted a garden in Eden at creation (Genesis 2:8), so you who are entering Israel should plant gardens.”

**You shall regard its fruit as forbidden. For three years it shall be forbidden for you, not to be eaten:** This prohibition symbolically reminds us that while God created the world for humanity, nature should not be viewed merely as an object to exploit. Its value surpasses human needs and urges us to respect its unique place in the divine order.

**(24) In the fourth year all its fruit shall be set aside for jubilation before the LORD:** In the fourth year, the fruit is taken to the Temple and eaten there.

**(25) And only in the fifth year may you use its fruit:** In the Land of Israel, there are three stages of dealing with the fruits of the trees: first, a prohibition against eating; then, holiness; and finally, everyday use. This process teaches farmers the balance of nature, holiness, and routine. The three-year prohibition marks the tree as part of “pre-human nature.” Following this, holiness requires effort – holy fruit demands special conditions. Only then can it be consumed casually. Holiness precedes and shapes the ordinary. The Torah's concept of “the firstborn belongs to God” is expressed in forms such as the dedication of the firstborn or the first fruits of the year; here, it refers to the first yield of a tree.

**that its yield to you may be increased:** When a farmer understands nature, holiness, and routine, God grants abundant harvests free from the corruption of wealth him.

**(26) You shall not eat anything with its blood:** Maimonides connects this to an idolatrous custom: they would slaughter over a

pit, allow the blood to collect, and eat around it to summon spirits for assistance. The Torah forbids such a practice. Halakha interprets it as prohibiting meat with blood, consuming sacrificial meat before sprinkling the altar, or taking meat from a live animal. Rav Kook emphasizes that Torah laws aren't solely about past practices of idolatry – they also look forward. He views the blood prohibition as illustrating that while the shedding of blood for food is permitted, it is not ideal, indicating Judaism's future shift toward vegetarianism.

**You shall not practice divination:** Don't seek the future through omens. Concentrating on predictions weakens clear thinking about the world and obscures life as a dialogue with God.

**or soothsaying:** Avoid trying to predict the future through signs. Relying on oracles can cause individuals to lose their ability to make sound judgments about their surroundings and to overlook their lives as a dialogue with God.

**(27) You shall not round off the side-growth on your head:** This contrasts with the idolatrous custom of shaving temple hair. Some Jews leave long *pe'ot*, while others say that shaving is forbidden but trimming is allowed fine.

**or destroy the side-growth of your beard:** Tradition forbids shaving with a razor but allows the use of scissors. Electric razors, like scissors, are permitted today.

**(28) You shall not make gashes in your flesh for the dead, or incise any marks on yourselves:** Idolaters cut or tattoo themselves in grief, illustrating the endless sorrow and futility of life after loss. The Torah rejects this. Death is difficult, yet the value and meaning of life endure. Tradition emphasizes this: when a wedding and a funeral coincide, the couple goes first – life takes precedence over death.

**(31) Do not turn to ghosts and do not inquire of familiar spirits, to be defiled by them:** Just as touching a corpse defiles the body, calling the dead defiles the soul, distancing it from purity and holiness.

**(32) You shall rise before the aged and show deference to the old:** Tradition views the repetition of “aged” and “old” in this verse as two facets of advanced age worthy of respect: a merely elderly person (“aged”) and a wise and respected figure (“the old”).

## § 19.10. ETHICAL STANDARDS (19:33-37)

לג וכי-יגור אתְךָ גֵר גֵר בְּאַרְצְכֶם לֹא תוֹנוּ אֹתוֹ: לֹד בְּאַזְרוּחַ מִכֶּם יִהְיֶה  
 לְכֶם הַגֵּר | הַגֵּר אִתְּכֶם וְאַהֲבַתְ לֹ כְמוֹד־כִּי-גֵרִים הֵייתֶם בְּאַרְץ מִצְרַיִם  
 אֲנִי יי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: לֹה לֹא-תַעֲשׂוּ עֵגֹל בַּמִּשְׁפָּט בַּמִּדָּה בַּמִּשְׁקָל וּבַמִּשׁוּרָה:  
 לוּ מֵאֲנִי צִדְקָ אֲבִי-צִדְקָ אֵיפֹת צִדְקָ וְהָיוּ צִדְקָ יִהְיֶה לְכֶם אֲנִי יי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם  
 אֲשֶׁר-הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם מִצְרַיִם: לֹז וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת-כָּל-חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת-כָּל-  
 מִשְׁפָּטַי וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אִתָּם אֲנִי יי:

**(33) When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him.**

**(34) The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I the LORD am your God.**

**(35) You shall not falsify measures of length, weight, or capacity.**

**(36) You shall have an honest balance, honest weights, an honest *ephah*, and an honest *hin*: I the LORD am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt.**

**(37) You shall faithfully observe all My laws and all My rules: I am the LORD.**

**(33) When a stranger resides with you in your land:** The Oral Torah and Halakha distinguish two types of strangers: *ger tzedek* (literally, “righteous stranger”), a convert who was born non-Jewish but joins the Israelite nation (today’s *ger* in Jewish terms); and *ger toshav* (literally, “resident stranger”), a non-Jew living in Israel who follows the commandments set for non-Jews, namely the Seven Noahide Laws, including the prohibition against idolatry. The Written Torah, however, does not separate them, using *ger* for both, as it sets forth general principles and leaves specifics to the Oral Torah.

**You shall not wrong him:** Of course, harming a stranger is forbidden, as noted earlier. Within the framework of holiness, however, the emphasis shifts to prohibiting discrimination – ensuring that a stranger isn’t treated less favorably than native citizens.

**(34) The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself:** The Torah mandates that strangers who settle among the Jewish people be treated as part of its social fabric, a concept that was not readily apparent in ancient times and is often neglected today. People are naturally suspicious of outsiders, and this must be overcome. However, this does not mean accepting just anyone into Jewish society; there are also requirements for outsiders, as we'll see below.

**For you were strangers in the land of Egypt:** This reasoning – atypical for Torah commandments – extends the mitzvah of love to *ger toshav*, those who live among Jews but do not join the Jewish nation through conversion. Jews in Egypt did not become Egyptians; they merely lived there.

**I the LORD am your God:** Based on this closing statement, Halacha concludes that the commandment of hospitality applies only to a stranger for whom “the LORD is his God” – one who accepts Israel’s God and Torah, acts honorably, observes relevant laws, and recognizes Jewish authority in Israel. Those who reject these principles have no basis in the Torah to expect to be treated with hospitality.

**(35) You shall not falsify measures of length, weight, or capacity:** Falsifying measurements or weights in trade is equivalent to subverting justice in the courtroom.

**(36) You shall have an honest balance, honest weights:** This also means, figuratively: “Judge others fairly, measure them correctly, weigh their deeds accurately scales.”

**An honest ephah and an honest hin:** These are the most significant volume measures for trade. As mentioned earlier, an *ephah* measures dry goods, approximately 25 liters; a *hin* measures liquids, roughly 5 liters.

**I the LORD am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt:** The purpose of the Exodus is to create a just and righteous society.

## § 20. PUNISHMENT FOR DISREGARDING HOLINESS

### § 20.1. THE PUNISHMENT FOR WORSHIP OF MOLECH (20:1-6)

א וַיְדַבֵּר יְיָ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ב וְאֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל תֹּאמַר אִישׁ אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִן-הַגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יִתֵּן מִזְרְעוֹ לַמֶּלֶךְ מוֹת יוֹמַת עִם הָאָרֶץ יִרְגְּמֵהוּ בָאֲבָן: ג וְאִנִּי אֶתֵּן אֶת-פְּנֵי בְּאִישׁ הַהוּא וְהִכֹּרְתִי אֹתוֹ מִקְרֵב עִמּוֹ כִּי כִי מִזְרְעוֹ נָתַן לַמֶּלֶךְ לְמַעַן טַמְא אֶת-מִקְדָּשִׁי וְלַחֲלֹל אֶת-שְׁמִי קֹדֶשִׁי: ד וְאִם הֵעֵלֵם יַעֲלִימוּ עִם הָאָרֶץ אֶת-עֵינֵיהֶם מִן-הָאִישׁ הַהוּא בְּתֵתוֹ מִזְרְעוֹ לַמֶּלֶךְ לְבִלְתִּי הִמִּית אֹתוֹ: ה וְשָׂמֵתִי אֲנִי אֶת-פְּנֵי בְּאִישׁ הַהוּא וּבְמִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ וְהִכֹּרְתִי אֹתוֹ וְאֵת | כָּל-הַזִּגְיִם אֲחֵרָיו לְזָנוֹת אַחֲרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַמֶּלֶךְ מִקְרֵב מִקְרֵב עִמָּם: ו וְהִנָּפֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר תִּפְגַּע אֶל-הָאִבְתָּ וְאֶל-הַיְדֻעֲנִים לְזָנוֹת אַחֲרֵיהֶם וְנִמְתִּי אֶת-פְּנֵי בְּנָפֵשׁ בְּנָפֵשׁ הַהוּא וְהִכֹּרְתִי אֹתוֹ מִקְרֵב עִמּוֹ:

**(1) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:**

**(2) Say further to the Israelite people: Anyone among the Israelites, or among the strangers residing in Israel, who gives any of his offspring to Molech, shall be put to death; the people of the land shall pelt him with stones.**

**(3) And I will set My face against that man, and I will cut him off from among his people, because he gave of his offspring to Molech and so defiled My sanctuary and profaned My holy name.**

**(4) And if the people of the land should shut their eyes to that man when he gives of his offspring to Molech, and should not put him to death,**

**(5) I Myself will set My face against that man and his kin, and I will cut off from among their people both him and all who follow him in going astray after Molech.**

**(6) And if any person turns to ghosts and familiar spirits and goes astray after them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from among his people.**

The final part of *Kedoshim* addresses the punishments for the crimes mentioned earlier at the end of *Achrei Mot* (18:1-30). These punishments were not elaborated on in *Achrei Mot* because the forbidden acts alone were enough to prevent impurity. However, *Kedoshim* explores how these acts harm holiness, which is why the punishments are so severe. The more spiritually advanced individuals are, the more they are held accountable for their actions.

**(2) Anyone among the Israelites, or among the strangers residing in Israel, who gives any of his offspring to Molech:** Refer to the commentary on 18:21 for the details of this crime. The current verses address the punishment.

**shall be put to death; the people of the land shall pelt him with stones:** It is the community's responsibility to ensure that such things don't happen on their land. If someone is going to sacrifice their child to Molech, the people can't just wait for a court of law – they must step in and stop it.

**(4-5) And if the people of the land should shut their eyes to that man when he gives of his offspring to Molech, and should not put him to death, I Myself will set My face against that man and his kin, and I will cut off from among their people both him and all who follow him:** If the community punishes the wrongdoer, his family and friends may be freed from corrupting influences and saved. However, if the people ignore his actions, those around him are more likely to follow his example. Then God will act, and the wicked man, his relatives, and all those he has influenced will be destroyed together.

**the people of the land:** *Am ha-aretz*. In the Torah, it is a positive term, indicating that the people are connected to their land and responsible for it. Later, beginning in the 1st century CE, when learning became the central focus of Judaism, it acquired a

more negative connotation, referring to those perceived as less knowledgeable compared to scholars.

### § 20.2. SANCTIFY YOURSELVES AND BE HOLY (20:7-8)

ז והתקדשתם והייתם קדושים כי אני יי אלהיכם: ח ושמרתם את-תקלתי  
ועשיתם אתם אני יי מקדשכם:

**(7) You shall sanctify yourselves and be holy, for I the LORD am your God.**

**(8) You shall faithfully observe My laws: I the LORD make you holy.**

**(7) You shall sanctify yourselves:** By actively pursuing holiness, you will become holy.

**(8) You shall faithfully observe My laws:** The path to holiness involves keeping the commandments. However, it does not imply that simply following the commandments is enough to achieve holiness.

### § 20.3. THE PUNISHMENTS FOR FAMILY AND SEXUAL OFFENSES (20:9-21)

ט כּי-איש איש אשר יקלל את-אביו ואת-אמו מות יומת אביו ואמו קלל  
דמיו בו: י ואיש אשר ינאף את-אשת איש אשר ינאף את-אשת רעהו  
מות-יומת הנאף והנאפּת: יא ואיש אשר ישכב את-אשת אביו ערנת אביו  
גלה מות-יומתו שניהם דמיהם בם: יב ואיש אשר ישכב את-כּלֹתו  
מות וּמְתו שניהם תכל עשו דמיהם בם: יג ואיש אשר ישכב את-זכר  
משכּבי אשה תועבה עשו שניהם מות יומתו דמיהם בם: יד ואיש אשר  
יקח את-אשה ואת-אמה זמה הוא באש ישרפו אתו ואתֶהוּ וְלֹא-תהינה  
זמה בתוכם: טו ואיש אשר יתן שכבתו שכבתו בבִּהְמָה מות יומת  
ואת-הבִּהְמָה תהרגו: טז ואשה אשר תקרב אל-כּל-בִּהְמָה לרִבְעָה אֵתָהּ  
והרגת את-האשה ואת-הבִּהְמָה מות יומתו דמיהם בם: יז ואיש אשר-יקח  
את-אחֹתוּ בת-אביו או בת-אמו וְרָאָה וְרָאָה אֵת-עֲרוֹתֶיהָ וְהִיא-תִרְאָה אֵת-  
עֲרוֹתוֹ תּוֹסֵד הוּא וְנִכְרְתוּ לְעֵינָי בְּגַי עַמָּם עֲרוֹת אֲחֹתוֹ גִּלְהָ עוֹנֵוּ יִשָּׂא: יח

וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-יִשְׁכַּב אֶת-אִשְׁתּוֹ דְּבָרָה וְגִלָּה אֶת-עֲרוֹתָהּ אֶת-מִקְרָהּ הֶעֱרָה וְהָיָה גִלְתָּהּ אֶת-מִקְוֹר דְּמֵיהָ וְנִכְרְתוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם מִקְרַב עִמָּם: יֵט וְעֲרוֹת אֲחֹת אִמָּהּ וְאֲחֹת אֲבִיהָ לֹא תִגְלֶה כִּי אֶת-שְׂאֵרוֹ הֶעֱרָה עִוָּנָם יִשְׂאוּ: כ וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב אֶת-בְּדַתּוֹ עֲרוֹת דָּדוֹ גִּלָּה חֲטָאָם יִשְׂאוּ עֲרֵירִים יִמְתּוּ: כֹּא וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִקַּח אֶת-אִשְׁתּוֹ אֲחִיו נָדָה הִוא עֲרוֹת אֲחִיו גִּלָּה עֲרֵירִים יִהְיוּ:

**(9) If anyone insults his father or his mother, he shall be put to death; he has insulted his father and his mother – his bloodguilt is upon him.**

**(10) If a man commits adultery with a married woman, committing adultery with another man's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death.**

**(11) If a man lies with his father's wife, he has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall be put to death – their bloodguilt is upon them.**

**(12) If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall be put to death; they have committed incest – their bloodguilt is upon them.**

**(13) If a man lies with a male as one lies with a woman, the two of them have done an abhorrent thing; they shall be put to death – their bloodguilt is upon them.**

**(14) If a man marries a woman and her mother, it is depravity; both he and they shall be put to the fire, that there be no depravity among you.**

**(15) If a man has carnal relations with a beast, he shall be put to death; and you shall kill the beast.**

**(16) If a woman approaches any beast to mate with it, you shall kill the woman and the beast; they shall be put to death – their bloodguilt is upon them.**

**(17) If a man marries his sister, the daughter of either his father or his mother, and they have carnal relations, it is a disgrace; they shall be cut off in the sight of their kinsfolk. He has uncovered his sister's nakedness – he shall bear his guilt.**

**(18) If a man lies with a woman during her menstrual period and uncovers her nakedness, he has laid bare her**

**flow, and she has laid bare her flow of blood; both of them shall be cut off from among their people.**

**(19) You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister or of your father's sister, for that is laying bare one's own flesh; they shall bear their guilt.**

**(20) If a man lies with his uncle's wife, he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness; they shall bear their guilt – they shall die childless.**

**(21) If a man marries his brother's wife, it is indecency; he has uncovered his brother's nakedness – they shall be childless.**

This passage addresses the punishments for sexual transgressions. As mentioned earlier, the forbidden acts are listed in *Achrei Mot*, while the corresponding punishments are presented here. As the nation's holiness necessitates a higher level of spiritual and social responsibility, the punishments become more severe.

**(9) If anyone insults his father or his mother, he shall be put to death:** Cursing one's parents is punishable by death, even if the parents are unaware of the curse or after they have passed away. The prohibition concerns not harming the parents but the corruption of the curser's soul. By dishonoring his parents, he undermines the very root of his existence.

**(10) If a man commits adultery with a married woman:** In *Achrei Mot*, crimes were categorized by kinship, ranging from close relatives to broader social ties. Consequently, relations with one's parents were prioritized, while another man's wife was placed last, as marriage constitutes a social contract rather than a blood relationship. Here, the order changes – the punishments reflect the severity of the crime. Adultery with a married woman is listed first because it is the gravest offense from the Ten Commandments. It is followed by other capital crimes and then the lesser offenses.

**(15) If a man has carnal relations with a beast, he shall be put to death; and you shall kill the beast:** In cases of bestiality, both the perpetrator and the animal face death. While the animal is not "guilty," its presence could be psychologically unbearable for people.

**(18) If a man lies with a woman during her menstrual period and uncovers her nakedness... both of them shall be cut off from among their people:** This addresses intimacy with one's wife during her *niddah* state – her “separation” during menstruation. The consequence is being cut off from the community. Socially, there is no crime; it is a transgression solely in relation to God. Therefore, no court intervenes; the consequence arises from God alone. As in all such cases, this punishment (*karet*, “cutting off”) applies only if the transgressors were aware of the prohibition and knowingly violated it.

§ 20.4. HOLINESS OF THE PEOPLE AND  
THE LAND OF ISRAEL (20:22-27)

כב וישמר אתם את-כל-חקתי ואת-כל-משפטי ועשיתם אתם ולא-תקיא אתכם הארץ אשר אני מביא אתכם שמה לשבת בה: כג ולא תלכו בחקת הגוי אשר-אני משלח מפניכם כי את-כל-אלה עשו וארץ בם: כד ואמר לכם אתם תירשו את-אדמתם ואני אתנגה לכם לרשת אתה ארץ זבת חלב ודבש אני יי אלהיכם אשר-הבדלתי אתכם מן-העמים: כה והבדלתם בין-הבהמה הטהרה לטהמא ובין-העוף הטמא לטהר ולא-תשקצו את-נפשתיכם בבהמה ובעוף ובכל אשר תרמש האדמה אשר-הבדלתי לכם לטמא: כו והייתם לי קדושים כי קדוש אני יי ואבדל אתכם מן-העמים להיות להיות לי: כז ואיש או-אשה כי-הלה בהם אוב או ידעני מות ימתו באבן ירגמו אתם דמיהם בם:

**(22) You shall faithfully observe all My laws and all My rules, that the land to which I bring you to settle may not vomit you out.**

**(23) You shall not follow the practices of the nation that I am driving out before you, for it is because they did all these things that I abhorred them.**

**(24) But I have said to you: You shall possess their land, for I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey. I the LORD am your God who has set you apart from other peoples.**

**(25) So you shall set apart the clean beast from the unclean, the unclean bird from the clean. You shall not draw abomination upon yourselves through beast or bird or anything with which the ground is teeming, which I have set apart for you to treat as unclean.**

**(26) You shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy, and I have set you apart from other peoples to be Mine.**

**(27) A man or a woman who has a ghost or a familiar spirit shall be put to death; they shall be pelted with stones – their bloodguilt shall be upon them.**

**(22) You shall faithfully observe all My laws and all My rules, that the land to which I bring you to settle may not vomit you out:** Violation of these prohibitions carries serious consequences for the entire nation and could lead to its expulsion, as was the case with the Canaanite nations. In other words, this isn't just an individual matter. The Holy Land has a unique status, unlike any other place on earth. If the people of Israel are to inherit it, they must maintain their purity and strive for holiness.

**(27) A man or a woman who has a ghost or a familiar spirit shall be put to death:** The prohibition against consulting spirit summoners appears three times in *Kedoshim*, underscoring its seriousness. As one's connection to God strengthens and one's spiritual sensitivity increases, there is a greater risk that the urge to connect with higher realms may be exploited by sorcerers. This is why this prohibition is repeated and emphasized in the final verse.

**WEEKLY  
PORTION 8**

**EMOR**

## § 21. THE LAWS CONCERNING THE PRIESTS

### § 21.1. THE LAWS CONCERNING THE ORDINARY PRIESTS (21:1-9)

א וַיֹּאמֶר יי אֵל-מִשֶׁה אָמַר אֶל-הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם לִגְפֹשׁ  
 לֹא-יִטְמָא בְּעַמּוּיוֹ: ב כִּי אִם-לְשֹׂארוֹ הַקָּרֵב אֵלָיו לְאִמּוֹ וּלְאָבִיו וּלְבִנוֹ  
 וּלְבִתּוֹ וּלְאֶחָיו: ג וְלִאֲחָתּוֹ הַבְּתוּלָה הַקְּרוּבָה אֵלָיו אֲשֶׁר לֹא-הֵיְתָה לְאִישׁ  
 לָהּ? טִמָּא: ד לֹא יִטְמָא בְּעַל בְּעַמּוּיוֹ לְהַסְלוֹ: ה לֹא-יִקְרַחַהּ (יִקְרַחַהּ) קְרֻחָהּ  
 בְּרֵאשִׁים וּפְאֵת זָקָנָם לֹא יִגְלַחוּ וּבְבִשְׂרָם לֹא יִשְׂרְטוּ שְׂרָטָת: ו קְדוּשִׁים  
 יִהְיוּ לֹאֲלֹהֵיהֶם וְלֹא יִסְלְלוּ שֵׁם אֱלֹהֵיהֶם כִּי-אֶת-אִשִּׁי יי לָחֵם אֱלֹהֵיהֶם הֵם  
 מִקְרִיבָם וְהָיוּ קְדוּשׁ: ז אִשָּׁה זְנוּהָ וְחֻלְלָהּ לֹא יִקְחוּ וְאִשָּׁה גְרוּשָׁה מְאִישָׁה לֹא  
 יִקְחוּ כִּי-קְדוֹשׁ הוּא לְאֹלֵהֶיו: ח וְקִדְשָׁתוּ כִּי-אֶת-לֶחֶם אֱלֹהֵיךָ הוּא מִקְרִיב  
 קְדוֹשׁ יִהְיֶה-לָּךְ כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אָנֹכִי יי מִמִּדְּשֻׁכֶם: ט וּבֵת אִישׁ פֹּהֵן כִּי תַחַל לְזַנּוֹת  
 אֶת-אֲבִיהָ הִיא מְחֻלָּלַת בְּאֵשׁ תִּשְׂרָף:

- (1) The LORD said to Moses: Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: None shall defile himself for any [dead] person among his kin,
- (2) except for the relatives that are closest to him: his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, and his brother;
- (3) also for a virgin sister, close to him because she has not married, for her he may defile himself.
- (4) But he shall not defile himself as a kinsman by marriage, and so profane himself.
- (5) They shall not shave smooth any part of their heads, or cut the side-growth of their beards, or make gashes in their flesh.

(6) **They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God; for they offer the LORD's offerings by fire, the food of their God, and so must be holy.**

(7) **They shall not marry a harlot and a defiled woman, nor shall they marry one divorced from her husband; for they are holy to their God.**

(8) **You shall treat them as holy, since they offer the food of your God; they shall be holy to you, for I the LORD who sanctify you am holy.**

(9) **When the daughter of a priest profanes herself through harlotry, it is her father whom she profanes; she shall be put to the fire.**

(1) **The LORD said to Moses: Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: None shall defile himself for any [dead] person among his kin:** The previous portion, *Kedoshim*, addresses holiness as it pertains to each individual; this is the “Torah of Moses.” The portion of *Emor* focuses on the priests, and this is the “Torah of Aaron.”

Moses conveys instructions to the priests, establishing the hierarchy essential for Temple matters. The priests must not mistakenly assume they are the source of holiness for the people. They must recognize that the true source of holiness is the Revelation that comes through Moses, not the Service that comes through Aaron.

The priests are set apart from ordinary life. They serve in the Temple, an embassy of the Higher World in this world. A priest does not lead an ordinary life; he is connected to the Higher World and, through this connection, helps to elevate others.

Therefore, priests have restrictions regarding mourning; they generally do not come into contact with death and are not invited to funerals. (This is where Jewish tradition diverges from the customs of other nations, which invite priests to the dying to ease their transition to the next world). Priests are not concerned with earning a living. They receive their portion from the offerings brought to the Temple. Priests do not marry women with problematic family statuses, such as divorcees.

**so that they not defile themselves by contact with the dead among their people:** The priest may not become impure for “the dead among the people,” meaning for the general public. However,

he may attend the funerals of his immediate family members. There is also an exception for those who die without anyone to bury them, known as a *met mitzvah*, which translates to “a dead person for whom there is a commandment.” In such cases, the priest must bury the person, even though doing so renders him impure.

**(3) also for a virgin sister, close to him because she has not married, for her he may defile himself:** An unmarried girl retains the status of “member of the priest’s household” (she may partake of the offerings, etc.). Upon marriage, she joins her husband’s family and is no longer regarded as part of her father’s household.

**(5) They shall not shave smooth any part of their heads, or cut the side-growth of their beards, or make gashes in their flesh:** These restrictions pertain to the prohibition of associating with death. The shaving of the head was linked to pagan mourning rituals. Earlier (19:27), this commandment was given to the entire nation as part of the prohibition against adopting pagan customs. Here, it is reiterated specifically for the priests because, in essence, the prohibition is primarily intended for them and is then extended to the entire nation as “a kingdom of priests.” Similarly, the prohibitions against shaving the beard and making cuts in the flesh were previously directed at the entire people, described as “a nation of priests,” and are now reiterated for Aaron’s descendants. The basis of the prohibition is that a priest may not serve in the Temple if he has a physical blemish – thus, he is forbidden to disfigure his body.

**(7) They shall not marry a harlot and a defiled woman, nor shall they marry one divorced from her husband:** Since the status of a priest is hereditary, marriage laws for priests include specific restrictions. According to Halakhah, the term *zonah* (harlot) refers to a woman who has had a forbidden sexual relationship with a Jew or who was born from such a union. A “defiled woman,” *chalahah*, is a woman who either entered into a union forbidden to a priest (21:15) or was born from such a union. Additionally, a priest may not marry a divorced woman, as she carries the emotional residue of a broken family life.

**(9) When the daughter of a priest profanes herself through harlotry, it is her father whom she profanes:** Even after marrying

and joining another family, a woman is still publicly known as “the daughter of a priest.” As in other similar cases, the death penalty was never actually carried out, as the halachic standards for such a sentence are virtually impossible to meet. Nevertheless, the description of the punishment is instructive; it emphasizes that the entire priestly family bears a heightened responsibility for the public’s perception of the Temple.

§ 21.2. THE LAWS CONCERNING  
THE HIGH PRIEST (21:10-15)

י והפכהו הגדול מאחיו אשר-יוצק על-ראשו | שמן המשחה ומלא את-ידו  
ללבוש את-הבגדים את-ראשו לא יפרע ובגדיו לא יפרם: יא ועל כל-  
נפשות מת לא יבא לאביו ולאמו לא ישמא: יב ומן-המקדש לא יצא ולא  
יחלל את מקדש אלהיו כי יזר שמן משחת אלהיו עליו אגני יי: יג והוא  
אשה בבתוליה יקח: יד אלמנה וגרושה וחללה זנה את-אלה לא יקח פי  
אם-בתולה מעמיו יקח אשה: טו ולא-יחלל ורעו ורעו בעמיו פי אגני יי מקדשו:

**(10) The priest who is exalted above his fellows, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured and who has been ordained to wear the vestments, shall not bare his head or rend his garments.**

**(11) He shall not go in where there is any dead body; he shall not defile himself even for his father or mother.**

**(12) He shall not go outside the sanctuary and profane the sanctuary of his God, for upon him is the distinction of the anointing oil of his God, Mine the LORD’s.**

**(13) He shall marry only a woman who is a virgin.**

**(14) A widow, or a divorced woman, or one who is profaned, or a harlot – such he may not marry. Only a virgin of his own kin may he take to wife –**

**(15) that he may not profane his offspring among his kin: for I am the LORD who sanctify him.**

**(10) The priest who is exalted above his fellows, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured and who has been**

**ordained to wear the vestments, shall not bare his head or rend his garments:** The High Priest is subject to even more stringent restrictions. The existence of the High Priesthood depends on the existence of the Temple, whereas the status of common priests does not. Regular priests inherit their roles by birth, but the High Priest is selected from among them. In the absence of the Temple, as has been the case for the past two thousand years, no High Priest is appointed.

**(11) He shall not go in where there is any dead body; he shall not defile himself even for his father or mother:** Regardless of who dies, the High Priest does not partake in mourning rituals. He symbolizes the nation and, therefore, “knows no death.”

**(12) He shall not go outside the sanctuary and profane the sanctuary of his God, for upon him is the distinction of the anointing oil of his God, Mine the LORD’s:** He may not leave the sanctuary for funerals. Of course, the High Priest resides in his own home, not in the Temple, and may come and go as necessary. Earlier, when Aaron’s two sons died (10:6), Moses instructed Aaron and his sons not to observe public mourning. This ruling is now formalized here as a permanent law for the High Priest. However, the Halacha adds (also based on Aaron’s behavior after the death of his sons) that in the event of the death of a close relative, the High Priest may observe private mourning as long as it is not displayed publicly. For example, he may abstain from eating sacrificial meals, as they are typically consumed in a state of joy. Public expressions of grief, however, are forbidden to the High Priest.

**(14) A widow, or a divorced woman, or one who is profaned, or a harlot – such he may not marry. Only a virgin of his own kin may he take to wife – :** He may not marry a widow, even though this is permitted for a regular priest. In other words, the marriage laws for the High Priest are stricter than those for other priests.

**a virgin of his own kin** means one of his own people by birth; he may not marry a convert.

Regular priests are also prohibited from marrying converts. However, the prohibition is stated in terms of the High Priest, because while other priests can be replaced, a High Priest without suitable descendants poses a problem for the entire community.

Although, as noted earlier (see 16:32), the position of High Priest is not necessarily hereditary and a priest from a different priestly family can be appointed, such a shift in dynasty creates instability that impacts the Temple itself. Therefore, such transitions were made only in exceptional cases.

**(15) that he may not profane his offspring among his kin: for I am the LORD who sanctify him:** He is responsible not only for himself but also for his descendants, as his children are expected to serve in the Temple. This principle also applies to regular priests; for instance, a regular priest is also prohibited from marrying a convert. Nevertheless, it is emphasized here concerning the High Priest because regular priests can be replaced. In contrast, if the High Priest lacks worthy descendants, it becomes a concern not only for him but for the entire nation. Moreover, as mentioned earlier (16:32), the position of High Priest is not necessarily hereditary, and a priest from another priestly family may be appointed. However, any change of dynasty created instability that impacted the Temple itself. Therefore, such transitions occurred only in exceptional cases.

### § 21.3. A PRIEST WITH A BLEMISH (21:16-24)

טז וַיְדַבֵּר יי אֱלֹהִים מִשָּׁמַיִם לְאַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: יז דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר אִישׁ מִזֶּרְעֶךָ  
 לְדֹרֹתֶם אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בּוֹ מוֹם לֹא יִקְרָב לְהִקְרִיב לֶחֶם אֱלֹהֵינוּ: יח כִּי כָל־  
 אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ מוֹם לֹא יִקְרָב אִישׁ עֹזֵל אוֹ פֶסֶחַ פֶּסֶחַ אוֹ חֲרָם אוֹ שְׂרֹעַ:  
 יט אוֹ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־יִהְיֶה בּוֹ שֹׁבֵר רֶגֶל אוֹ שֹׁבֵר יָד: כ אוֹ־גִבֵּן אוֹ־לֵק אוֹ  
 תְּבַלְבֵּל בְּעֵינָיו אוֹ גֵרֵב אוֹ יִלְפַת אוֹ מְרוֹחַ אֲשָׁד: כא כָּל־אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ מוֹם  
 מִזֶּרַע אֱהָרֹן הַכֹּהֵן לֹא יֵגֵשׁ לְהִקְרִיב אֶת־אֲשֵׁי יי מוֹם בּוֹ אֵת לֶחֶם אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
 לֹא יֵגֵשׁ לְהִקְרִיב: כב לֶחֶם אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִקְדָּשֵׁי מִקְדָּשֵׁי הַקֹּדֶשִׁים וּמִן־הַקֹּדֶשִׁים  
 יֵאָכֵל: כג אֲךָ אֶל־הַפְּרֻכָּת לֹא יֵבֵא וְאֶל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לֹא יֵגֵשׁ כִּי־מוֹם בּוֹ וְלֹא  
 יִחַלֵּל אֶת־מִקְדָּשֵׁי כִּי אֲנִי יי מְקַדְּשִׁים: כד וַיְדַבֵּר מִשָּׁמַיִם אֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל־בְּנָיו  
 וְאֶל־כָּל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

**(16) The LORD spoke further to Moses:**

**(17) Speak to Aaron and say: No man of your offspring throughout the ages who has a defect shall be qualified to offer the food of his God.**

**(18) No one at all who has a defect shall be qualified: no man who is blind, or lame, or has a limb too short or too long,**

**(19) no man who has a broken leg or a broken arm,**

**(20) or who is a hunchback, or a dwarf, or who has a growth in his eye, or who has a boil-scar, or scurvy, or crushed testes.**

**(21) No man among the offspring of Aaron the priest who has a defect shall be qualified to offer the LORD's offering by fire; having a defect, he shall not be qualified to offer the food of his God.**

**(22) He may eat of the food of his God, of the most holy as well as of the holy;**

**(23) but he shall not enter behind the curtain or come near the altar, for he has a defect; he shall not profane these places sacred to Me, for I the LORD have sanctified them.**

**(24) Thus Moses spoke to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites.**

**(21, 23) No man among the offspring of Aaron the priest who has a defect shall be qualified to offer the LORD's offering by fire... he has a defect; he shall not profane these places sacred to Me:** A priest must be perfect in every respect, including their physical appearance. A physical defect – whether congenital or acquired – disqualifies an individual from the Temple service. Disfigurement in the context of holiness is seen as a desecration. However, if the priest is healed, he may serve.

**(22) He may eat of the food of his God, of the most holy as well as of the holy:** A priest with physical defects may participate in the consumption of sacrificial offerings. Temple worship is a public ritual, and its aesthetic quality is crucial – everything must appear visually appealing. However, the eating of the offerings is not public, and in this regard, a priest with a defect is considered equal to the other priests. He may also perform auxiliary tasks, such as preparing wood for the altar, as this is not a public act.

## § 21.4. AN IMPURE PRIEST CANNOT SERVE (22:1-9)

א וַיְדַבֵּר יי אֵל-מֹשֶׁה לְאֹמֶר: ב דַּבֵּר אֶל-אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל-בָּנָיו וַיִּנְזְרוּ מִקִּדְשֵׁי  
 בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא יִסְלְלוּ אֶת-שֵׁם קִדְשֵׁי קִדְשֵׁי אֲשֶׁר הֵם מִקְדָּשִׁים לִי אֲנִי יי:  
 ג אֲמַר אֲלֵהֶם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם כָּל-אִישׁ | אֲשֶׁר-יִקְרַב מִכָּל-זֶרְעֵכֶם אֶל-הַקִּדְשִׁים  
 אֲשֶׁר יִקְדָּשׁוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לִי וְטִמְאַתּוּ עָלָיו וְנִכְרַתָּה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא  
 מִלִּפְנֵי אֲנִי יי: ד אִישׁ אִישׁ מִזֶּרַע אַהֲרֹן וְהוּא צְרוּעַ אִו יָב בַּקִּדְשִׁים לֹא  
 יֹאכַל עַד אֲשֶׁר יִטְהַר וְהִנְגַּע בְּכָל-טִמְאָה-נֶפֶשׁ אִו אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-תִּצָּא מִמֶּנּוּ  
 שִׁכְבַּת-זָרַע: ה או-אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִזַּע בְּכָל-שָׁרְץ אֲשֶׁר יִטְמָא-לוֹ אִו בְּאֲדָם  
 אֲשֶׁר יִטְמָא-לוֹ לְכָל טִמְאָתּוֹ: ו וַיִּגַּשׁ אֲשֶׁר תִּגַּע-בּוֹ וְטִמְאַה עַד-הָעֶרֶב וְלֹא  
 יֹאכַל מִן-הַקִּדְשִׁים כִּי אִם-רִתֵּץ בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם: ז וַיִּבֹא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וְטִהַר וְאִסַּח  
 יֹאכַל מִן-הַקִּדְשִׁים כִּי לַחֲמוֹ הוּא: ח נִבְלָה וְטִרְפָּה לֹא יֹאכַל לְטִמְאַה-בָּהּ  
 אֲנִי יי: ט וְשִׁמְרוּ אֶת-מִשְׁמַרְתִּי וְלֹא-יִשְׂאוּ עָלָיו חֲטָא וּמִתּוֹ כּוֹ כִּי יִסְלְלוּהוּ  
 אֲנִי יי מִקְדָּשִׁים:

(1) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

(2) Instruct Aaron and his sons to be scrupulous about the sacred donations that the Israelites consecrate to Me, lest they profane My holy name; I am the LORD.

(3) Say to them: Throughout the ages, if any man among your offspring, while in a state of impurity, draws near to the sacred donations that the Israelites consecrate to the LORD, that person shall be cut off from before Me: I am the LORD.

(4) No man of Aaron's offspring who has an eruption or a discharge shall eat of the sacred donations until he is pure. If one touches anything made unclean by a corpse, or if a man has an emission of semen,

(5) or if a man touches any swarming thing by which he is made unclean or any person by whom he is made unclean, whatever his uncleanness –

(6) the person who touches such shall be unclean until evening and shall not eat of the sacred donations unless he has washed his body in water.

**(7) As soon as the sun sets, he shall be clean; and afterward, he may eat of the sacred donations, for they are his food.**

**(8) He shall not eat anything that died or was torn by beasts, thereby becoming unclean: I am the LORD.**

**(9) They shall keep My charge, lest they incur guilt thereby and die for it, having profaned it: I am the LORD who sanctifies them.**

**(1) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:** Following the laws for priests, the regulations for the appropriate conduct of the service are outlined.

**(2) Instruct Aaron and his sons to be scrupulous about the sacred donations that the Israelites consecrate to Me:** Priests must strictly observe the prohibition against eating from the sacred offerings while in a state of impurity.

**lest they profane My holy name; I am the LORD:** Careless handling of offerings dishonors the name of God.

**(3) Say to them: Throughout the ages, if any man among your offspring, while in a state of impurity, draws near to the sacred donations that the Israelites consecrate to the LORD:** Earlier, in *Tazria*, all these forms of impurity were discussed concerning ordinary individuals. Here, they are reiterated in relation to priests because they hold a higher level of responsibility. There is also a contrast with the previous section: a priest with a defect may eat from the sacrifices, but an impure priest may not.

**(8) He shall not eat anything that died or was torn by beasts, thereby becoming unclean:** This prohibition was previously addressed to the entire population, but here it is reiterated specifically as a warning to the priests.

**(9) They shall keep My charge, lest they incur guilt thereby and die for it, having profaned it:** The priests have a greater responsibility than the rest of the Israelites. Therefore, they are held to a stricter standard; violating the rules of the Temple service can lead to death.

§ 21.5. A LAYPERSON CANNOT PARTAKE IN  
THE HOLY OFFERINGS (22:10-16)

י וְכֹל-זָר לֹא-יֵאָכֵל קֹדֶשׁ תּוֹשֵׁב פְּהֵן וְשֹׁכֵר לֹא-יֵאָכֵל קֹדֶשׁ: יֵא וְכֹהֵן  
כִּי-יִקְנֶה נָפֶשׁ קִנְיָן כִּסְפוֹ הוּא יֵאָכֵל בּוֹ וַיֵּלֵד בֵּיתוֹ הֵם יֵאָכְלוּ בְּלִחְמוֹ: יב  
וּבֵת-פֹּהֵן כִּי תִהְיֶה לְאִישׁ לְאִישׁ זָר הוּא בְּתֵרוּמַת בְּתֵרוּמַת הַקֹּדְשִׁים לֹא  
תֵאָכֵל: יג וּבֵת-פֹּהֵן כִּי תִהְיֶה אֶלְמָנָה וּגְרוּשָׁה וְזָרַע אִין לָהּ וְשָׂבָה אֶל-בֵּית  
אָבִיהָ כַּנְעוּרֶיהָ מִלְחָם מִלְחָם אָבִיהָ תֵאָכֵל וְכֹל-זָר לֹא-יֵאָכֵל בּוֹ: יד וְאִישׁ  
כִּי-יֵאָכֵל קֹדֶשׁ בְּשֹׁגְגָה וַיִּסַּף תְּמַשִּׁיתוּ עָלָיו וַנִּתֵּן לַפֹּהֵן אֶת-הַקֹּדֶשׁ: טו וְלֹא  
יִסְלְלוּ אֶת-קֹדְשֵׁי בְּנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת אֲשֶׁר-יִרְיֻמוּ לֵיהֶם: טז וְהִשָּׂאוּ אוֹתָם  
עֵינָם אֲשֶׁמָּה בְּאָכְלָם אֶת-קֹדְשֵׁיהֶם כִּי אָגִי יִי מִקֹּדְשָׁם:

**(10) No lay person shall eat of the sacred donations; no bound or hired laborer of a priest shall eat of the sacred donations.**

**(11) But if a priest acquires anyone by purchase, such person may eat of them; and those that are born into his household may eat of his food.**

**(12) If a priest's daughter is married to a layman, she may no longer eat of the sacred donations.**

**(13) But if the priest's daughter is widowed or divorced and without offspring, and is back in her father's house as in her youth, she may eat of her father's food; no lay person may eat of it.**

**(14) If a man eats of a sacred donation unwittingly, he shall pay the priest for the sacred donation, adding one-fifth of its value.**

**(15) And the priests must not allow the sacred donations of the Israelites, which they set aside for the LORD, to be profaned.**

**(16) Or else they will bear guilt requiring a penalty payment, having eaten their sacred donations: for I am the LORD who sanctifies them.**

**(10) No lay person shall eat of the sacred donations; no bound or hired laborer of a priest shall eat of the sacred donations:** This refers to offerings of “lesser sanctity” that can be consumed outside the Temple, but only by priests and their families.

Since a priest may bring these offerings home, the Torah specifically notes that not everyone living in the house may eat them: a guest or hired worker is not regarded as part of the family.

**(11) But if a priest acquires anyone by purchase, such person may eat of them; and those that are born into his household may eat of his food:** Gentile slaves (*eved kenaani*) purchased by the priest or born into his household belonged to their Jewish master and were thus considered members of the family entitled to eat from the sacred offerings. These slaves underwent a form of conversion and participated in family life, including events such as the Passover Seder. When they were freed, they became regular Jews. However, a Hebrew slave is treated like a hired worker – his master owns only his labor, not the individual. Therefore, a Hebrew slave in a priest’s household is not permitted to eat from the sacred offerings.

**(12) If a priest’s daughter is married to a layman, she may no longer eat of the sacred donations:** A daughter who marries becomes a member of another family. Thus, if a priest’s daughter marries a “layman” (i.e., someone who is not a priest), she loses the right to eat from the sacred offerings – even when visiting her parents’ home. If she becomes widowed or divorced and is childless, she no longer retains any family ties to her husband’s household. Upon returning to her father’s home, she regains her status as a member of the priest’s family and may again eat of the sacred food. However, if she has children, she remains connected to her former husband’s family and cannot regain the status of a priest’s household member.

**(16) Or else they will bear guilt requiring a penalty payment, having eaten their sacred donations:** This is addressed to the priests, instructing them to guard the sacred offerings in their homes so that outsiders do not inadvertently eat of this meat.

§ 21.6. ANIMALS WITH A BLEMISH  
CANNOT BE OFFERED (22:17-25)

יז וַיְדַבֵּר יי אֵל-מֹשֶׁה לְאֵמֹר: יח דַּבֵּר אֶל-אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל-בְּנָיו וְאֶל כָּל-בְּנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אִישׁ אִישׁ מִבֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִן-הַגֵּר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר  
יִקְרִיב קָרְבָּנוֹ לְכֹל-גְּדֻרֵיהֶם וּלְכֹל-גְּדֻבוֹתָם אֲשֶׁר-יִקְרִיבוּ לִי לַעֲלֹה: יט  
לְרִצְוֹנְכֶם תָּמִים זָכָר בַּבִּקְּוֹר בְּכַשְׂבִּים וּבַעֲזִים: כ כָּל אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ מוּם לֹא  
תִקְרִיבוּ כִּי-לֹא לְרִצְוֹן יִהְיֶה לָכֶם: כא וְאִישׁ כִּי-יִקְרִיב זֶבַח-שְׁלָמִים לִי  
לִפְלֹא-גִדְּרָאֵל אוֹ לְגִדְּבָה לְגִדְּבָה יִהְיֶה0 אוֹ בְּצֵאֵן תָּמִים יִהְיֶה לְרִצְוֹן כָּל-מוּם  
לֹא יִהְיֶה-בּוֹ: כב עֹרֹתָ אוֹ שְׁבוּרָאֵל אוֹ-תְרוּץ אוֹ-גִבְלֹתָ אוֹ גֵּרֵב אוֹ יִלְפֹת  
לֹא-תִקְרִיבוּ אֵלָה לִי וְאִשָּׁה לֹא-תִתְּנוּ מֵהֶם עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לִי: כג וְשׂוֹר וְשֵׂה  
שָׂרִיעַ וְקִלוֹט גְּדֻבָה תַעֲשֶׂה אֹתוֹ וּלְגִדְּרָאֵל לֹא יִרְצָה: כד וּמַעֲוֹף וְכַתּוֹת וְנִתּוּק  
וְכָרוֹת לֹא תִקְרִיבוּ לִי וּבְאַרְצְכֶם לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: כה וּמִזֵּד בֶּן-גִּזְרָאֵל לֹא תִקְרִיבוּ  
אֶת-גְּלֶחֶם אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִכָּל-אֵלָה כִּי מִשְׁחַתֶּם בָּהֶם מוּם בָּם לֹא יִרְצֹו לָכֶם:

**(17) The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:**

**(18) Speak to Aaron and his sons, and to all the Israelite people, and say to them: When any man of the house of Israel or of the strangers in Israel presents his offering, for any of the votive or any of the freewill offerings that they offer to the Lord as a burnt offering –**

**(19) it must, to be acceptable in your favor, be a male without blemish, from cattle, sheep, or goats.**

**(20) You shall not offer any that has a defect, for it will not be accepted in your favor.**

**(21) And when anyone offers, from the herd or the flock, a sacrifice of well-being to the Lord for an explicit vow or as a freewill offering, it must be without blemish to be acceptable; there must be no defect in it.**

**(22) Anything blind, or injured, or maimed, or with a wen, boil-scar, or scurvy – such you shall not offer to the Lord; you shall not put any of them on the altar as offerings by fire to the Lord.**

**(23) You may, however, present as a freewill offering an ox or a sheep with a limb extended or contracted; but it will not be accepted for a vow.**

**(24) You shall not offer to the Lord anything with its testicles bruised or crushed or torn or cut. You shall not do this in your own land,**

**(25) nor shall you accept such from a foreigner for offering as food for your God; for they are mutilated, they have a defect; they shall not be accepted in your favor.**

**(19) it must, to be acceptable in your favor, be a male without blemish, from cattle, sheep, or goats:** As noted in verses 21:16-24, priests serving in the Temple must have no physical defects. Similarly, it is now stated that the sacrificed animals must also be free of blemishes. The perfection of the sacrifice symbolizes respect for the Sanctuary, although commentators differ on which specific defects are referenced. In any case, an animal with a minor blemish may be donated for the Temple's needs (e.g., sold and the proceeds used for the Temple), but it cannot be brought as a vow offering.

**(24) You shall not offer to the Lord anything with its testicles bruised or crushed or torn or cut. You shall not do this in your own land:** The inability to reproduce is regarded as a significant defect. The Torah forbids the castration of animals.

**(25) nor shall you accept such from a foreigner for offering as food for your God:** The Temple is for all nations – non-Jews may also bring offerings to God there. However, even from the other nations, blemished animals may not be accepted as sacrifices, although standards of blemish may vary among different nations, and a foreigner may not consider some of the above defects to be blemishes.

#### § 21.7. ANIMALS ACCEPTABLE FOR SACRIFICE (22:26-33)

כו וַיְדַבֵּר יְיָ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: כִּזְשׁוֹר אוֹ-בְשׂוֹב אוֹ-עֵז כִּי יוֹלֵד וְהָיָה שְׂבָעַת יָמִים יָמִים תַּחַת אִמּוֹ וּמִיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי וְהִלְאָה גִרְצָהּ לְקַרְבֹּן אִשָּׁה לִּי: כח וְשׁוֹר אוֹ-שָׂה אֲתוּ וְאֵת-בְּנֵוֹ לֹא תִשְׁחֲטוּ בַיּוֹם אֶחָד: כט וְכִי-תִזְבְּחוּ זֶבַח-תּוֹדָה לִּי לְרִצְוֹנְכֶם תִּזְבְּחוּ: ל בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יֵאָכֵל לֹא-תוֹתִירוּ מִמֶּנּוּ עַד-בֹּקֶר אָנֹכִי יִי: לא וּשְׂמֵרְתֶם מִצּוֹתַי וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם אָנֹכִי יִי: לב וְלֹא תִחַלְלוּ אֶת-שְׂמֵ

קדשי ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל לפני יי מקדשכם: לג המוציא אתכם  
מארץ מצרים להיות לכם לאלהים אני יי:

**(26) The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:**

**(27) When an ox or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall remain seven days with its mother, and from the eighth day on it shall be acceptable as an offering by fire to the Lord.**

**(28) However, no animal from the herd or from the flock shall be slaughtered on the same day with its young.**

**(29) When you sacrifice a thanksgiving offering to the Lord, sacrifice it so that it may be acceptable in your favor.**

**(30) It shall be eaten on the same day; you shall not leave any of it until morning: I am the Lord.**

**(31) You shall faithfully observe My commandments: I am the Lord.**

**(32) You shall not profane My holy name, that I may be sanctified in the midst of the Israelite people – I the Lord who sanctify you,**

**(33) I who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God, I the Lord.**

**(27) When an ox or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall remain seven days with its mother:** For seven days, it is not yet considered an independent creature.

**(28) However, no animal from the herd or from the flock shall be slaughtered on the same day with its young:** This prohibition applies not only to sacrificial offerings but also to ordinary slaughter for food. According to some interpretations, these restrictions aim to foster a sense of the fundamental wrongness of slaughtering animals and emphasize that the permission to eat meat is merely a concession to human weakness.

**(29–30) When you sacrifice a thanksgiving offering to the Lord ... you shall not leave any of it until morning:** This law

was previously established as a guideline for those who present the offering; here, it is emphasized for the priests.

**(31) You shall faithfully observe My commandments:** These are the two aspects of every commandment: study and observance.

**(32) You shall not profane My holy name:** This section provides commandments for priests, implying that because people associate priests with the service of God, it is particularly important for them to be meticulous in their conduct to avoid profaning the Divine Name.

**that I may be sanctified in the midst of the Israelite people:** The conduct of priests must aim to sanctify the name of God.

**(33) I who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God:** The Exodus from Egypt aimed to make God known to all humanity through the Jewish people.

## § 22. THE FESTIVAL SYSTEM

### § 22.1. SHABBAT AND FESTIVALS (23:1-3)

א וַיְדַבֵּר יְיָ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ב דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם  
 מוֹעֲדֵי יְיָ אֲשֶׁר-תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֵלֶּה הֵם מוֹעֲדֵי: ג שְׁשֶׁת יָמִים  
 תַּעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָה וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת שַׁבְּתוֹן מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ כָּל-מְלָאכָה לֹא  
 תַעֲשׂוּ שַׁבָּת הוּא לְיְיָ בְּכֹל מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם:

**(1) The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:**

**(2) Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: These are My appointed festivals, the fixed times of the Lord, which you shall proclaim as sacred convocations.**

**(3) For six days you shall work, but on the seventh day there shall be a sabbath of complete rest, a sacred occasion. You shall do no work; it shall be a sabbath of the Lord throughout your settlements.**

Earlier, individual festivals were mentioned, but now they are presented as a unified system. This chapter approaches them from the perspective of Temple service, emphasizing sacrificial offerings.

**(2) These are My appointed festivals, the fixed times of the Lord:** The festivals are called *moadim*, literally meaning “appointed times” or “appointed meetings.” Previously, the Torah described a special place where a person meets with God (*Ohel Moed*, the Tent of Meeting, or the Tabernacle). Now, the Torah focuses on special times when such meetings occur – the festivals.

**which you shall proclaim as sacred convocations:** The meeting with God is seen as a national act, not merely an individual one. Therefore, it is important to avoid celebrating alone.

**(3) For six days you shall work:** This too is a commandment: for six days, you must work and transform the world.

**but on the seventh day there shall be a sabbath of complete rest:** Despite the great importance and religious value of work, a person must not labor without pause. The prohibition of work on Shabbat encourages individuals to dedicate the day to spiritual elevation, which includes reflecting on their work during the six days.

#### § 22.2. PESACH (23:4-8)

ד אלה מועדי יי מקראי מקראי קדש אשר-תקראו אתם במועדים: ה  
 בחודש הראשון בארבעה עשר לחודש בין הערבים פסח פסח ליי: ו  
 ובחמשה עשר יום לחודש הזה תג המצות ליי שבעת ימים מצות תאכלו:  
 ז ביום הראשון מקרא-קדש יהיה לכם כל-מלאכת עבודה לא תעשו: ח  
 והקרבתם אשה ליי שבעת ימים ביום השביעי מקרא-קדש כל-מלאכת  
 עבודה לא תעשו:

**(4) These are the festivals of the Lord, the sacred occasions, which you shall celebrate each at its appointed time:**

**(5) In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, there shall be a Passover offering to the Lord,**

**(6) And on the fifteenth day of that month the Lord's Feast of Unleavened Bread begins; you shall eat unleavened bread seven days.**

**(7) On the first day you shall celebrate a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations.**

**(8) Seven days you shall make offerings by fire to the Lord. The seventh day shall be a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations.**

**(4) These are the festivals of the Lord:** This is a repetition of the introduction to the subject of festival days. It distinguishes Shabbat,

the first of the festivals, from the others because their principles and laws differ.

Shabbat was established at the time of Creation and is counted independently of astronomical or seasonal cycles, meaning it does not rely on human reasoning and decisions. In contrast, the festivals have fixed dates within a given month, and people could somewhat influence when the month began. According to Torah Law, the month begins immediately after the new moon; however, the Sanhedrin, acting on behalf of the people, could delay the month's beginning by one day. It also determined which year would be a leap year, which affects the order of the months. Since twelve lunar months fall short of the solar year by about ten days, a thirteenth month is added approximately every three years. Thus, the festivals are established jointly by God and man.

Additionally, the people, along with the sages, have the authority to create new festivals and confer upon them the status of "festivals of the Lord." In ancient times, such man-introduced festivals included Chanukah and Purim. In our time, there is Israel's Independence Day.

**(5) In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month:** The months in the Torah are counted from the Exodus from Egypt, making Nisan the first month. Accordingly, the list of festivals begins with Passover.

**(5–6) there shall be a Passover offering to the Lord ... and on the fifteenth day of that month the Lord's Feast of Unleavened Bread begins:** The Exodus festival is presented as two distinct celebrations.

- The Festival of the Passover sacrifice begins on the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan, the day before the Exodus, when the Passover lambs are sacrificed. The significance of this festival is "the destruction of the gods of Egypt" (Exodus 12:3).
- The Festival of Matzah begins in the evening, marking the start of the new day, the 15th of Nisan, and is dedicated to the actual Exodus from Egypt. Following the destruction of the Temple and the conclusion of the Passover sacrifice, the Passover holiday came to encompass both aspects.

**you shall eat unleavened bread seven days:** According to Halacha, this verse refers to the duration of the festival and should not be interpreted as a requirement to eat matzah on each of the seven days. Consequently, the Passover sacrifice lasts one day, from the moment it is brought until it is consumed, while the festival of matzah spans seven days. Eating matzah is only obligatory on the first day; on the subsequent days, it is not mandatory, although *chametz* (leavened foods) is prohibited.

**(7) On the first day you shall celebrate a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations:** The wording here differs from what is stated about Shabbat: “You shall do no work” (verse 3). On festivals (unlike Shabbat), cooking is allowed. The reason for this distinction is that the essence of Shabbat is rest and tranquility, whereas festivals emphasize joy – and tradition maintains that only freshly prepared food can be genuinely enjoyable. The contrast between Shabbat and the festivals reflects the different roles of humans in establishing these days. As noted earlier, humans had no role in establishing Shabbat; hence, they refrain from all creative activity on that day. However, people did participate in the Exodus from Egypt, so on Passover and other festivals, the prohibition against work is not absolute, and certain types of work are permitted.

**(8) Seven days you shall make offerings by fire to the Lord:** During festivals, extra offerings were brought to the Temple to highlight the special status of these days.

**The seventh day shall be a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations:** The seventh day of Passover commemorates the crossing of the Reed (Red) Sea and the destruction of the Egyptians, marking the final deliverance from Egypt. Therefore, the first day of Passover is a full festival, and work is forbidden except for food preparation. The second through sixth days hold semi-festival status (*chol ha-moed*, “weekday of the festival,” when work is permitted). The seventh day again returns to being a full festival.

### § 22.3. THE OFFERING OF THE FIRST SHEAF, THE OMER (23:9-14)

ט וַיְדַבֵּר יְיָ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: י דָבַר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם כִּי-  
תָבֹאוּ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אָנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם וְקִצְרְתֶם אֶת-קִצְרֵיהָ וְהִבֵּאתֶם

וְהִבֵּאתֶם אֶת-עֹמֶר רֵאשִׁית קְצִירְכֶם אֶל-הַפֶּהוּ: יֵא וְהִגִּיף אֶת-הָעֹמֶר לִפְנֵי  
 יְיָ לְרִצְוֹנְכֶם מִמִּקְרַת הַשָּׂדֶה יִגִּיפוּ הַפֶּהוּ: יב וְעֲשִׂיתֶם בַּיּוֹם הַגִּיפְכֶם אֶת-  
 הָעֹמֶר כֶּכֶשׁ כֶּכֶשׁ תְּמִים בּוֹ-שָׁנָתוֹ לַעֲלָה לַעֲלָה לִי: יג וּמִנְחָתוֹ שְׁנֵי שְׁנֵי  
 עֶשְׂרֹנִים סֹלֶת בְּלוּלָה בַשֶּׁמֶן אִשָּׁה לִי גֵיס גֵיס נִיחָם וְנִסְפָּה גֵיס רַבִּיעֵת הַקֵּיֹן:  
 יד וְלֶחֶם וְקִלִּי וְכַרְמֶל לֹא תֹאכְלוּ עַד-לְעֹצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה עַד הַבִּיאְכֶם אֶת-  
 קָרְבוֹ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם חֲקַת עוֹלָם לְדֶרֶתִיכֶם בְּכֹל מִשְׁבְּתֵיכֶם:

**(9) The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:**

**(10) Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving to you and you reap its harvest, you shall bring the first sheaf of your harvest to the priest.**

**(11) He shall elevate the sheaf before the Lord for acceptance in your behalf; the priest shall elevate it on the day after the sabbath.**

**(12) On the day that you elevate the sheaf, you shall offer as a burnt offering to the Lord a lamb of the first year without blemish.**

**(13) The meal offering with it shall be two-tenths of a measure of choice flour with oil mixed in, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the Lord; and the libation with it shall be of wine, a quarter of a hin.**

**(14) Until that very day, until you have brought the offering of your God, you shall eat no bread or parched grain or fresh ears; it is a law for all time throughout the ages in all your settlements.**

**(10) When you enter the land that I am giving to you and you reap its harvest:** Passover is associated with the Exodus from Egypt. Later, we will see that, unlike Passover, which has a fixed date reflecting the Israelites' total dependence in the wilderness, the date of the Omer offering is to some extent determined by the people, reflecting independent living in their own land.

**(10–11) you shall bring the first sheaf of your harvest to the priest... He shall elevate the sheaf before the Lord:** The beginning of the harvest is celebrated with the raising of the first sheaf in the Temple; this is a distinct festival.

The word “omer” refers to both a sheaf and a unit of volume, approximately 2.5 liters (the amount of grain that can be milled from one sheaf). In the wilderness, the Israelites were sustained by manna, which fell in the amount of “an omer per person per day” (Exodus 16:16). In memory of that omer of manna, an omer of new grain from the first sheaf is offered. And since the manna began falling after the Exodus, the day of the Omer harvest is tied to Passover, the festival of the Exodus.

After the sheaf is brought, the “counting of the Omer” begins – a period of fifty days from the Omer to the festival of Shavuot, as discussed later.

Although the description of the Omer follows the description of Passover, the Omer here is not associated with Passover but with the harvest. As we will see below, this opens the door to different interpretations of the proper time to bring the Omer.

**(11) the priest shall elevate it on the day after the sabbath:** Halacha interprets this to mean “the day after the festival (Passover).” On the evening following the first day of the festival, a sheaf of new barley is harvested, the grain is ground into flour, and the next morning, a grain offering is presented at the Temple. A small portion of the flour is burned on the altar, while the remainder is consumed by the priests.

However, the wording of the Torah is ambiguous. The phrase *mi-mochorat ha-shabbat*, literally meaning “on the day after the Sabbath/rest,” can be interpreted in two ways: “after the Sabbath” or “after the festival,” as both are days of rest. This ambiguity resulted in a significant controversy during the late Second Temple period (1st century BCE) between the Pharisees (Torah sages) and the Sadducees, as discussed below.

**(14) Until that very day, until you have brought the offering of your God, you shall eat no bread or parched grain or fresh ears:** The Omer sacrifice symbolizes the acknowledgment that the harvest comes from God. After the destruction of the Temple, the Omer sacrifice is no longer offered; however, consuming the new grain remains forbidden “until that day,” the day after Passover.

**throughout the ages in all your settlements:** In the Talmud, there are two approaches to interpreting this phrase. The first interprets it as “wherever you live,” meaning the prohibition against

new grain before Passover applies universally, including outside the Land of Israel. The second interpretation reads the phrase as “after you have taken possession of your settlements” – implying that the commandment regarding new grain did not take effect until the people had conquered the land. This commandment applies only in the Land of Israel because the Omer sacrifice is brought solely there. Ultimately, Halakha adopted the second view. However, some groups within Judaism maintain adherence to stricter interpretations and observe this law even outside the country.

In the Land of Israel, the rule that one should “not eat new grain before the Omer is brought” is natural and easy to observe: grains are sown once a year in the fall, as rains only occur in winter, and the harvest ripens just in time for Passover. However, outside the Land, the timing of the Omer does not align with the agricultural cycle: grains are sown in spring and ripen in fall, meaning this harvest cannot be eaten until the next Passover – approximately six months away. This natural mismatch was one reason Halakhah accepted the second approach, even if it may be less faithful to the literal wording of the Torah.

#### § 22.4. THE DISPUTE BETWEEN THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES CONCERNING THE OMER

As mentioned earlier, “the priest shall elevate it on the day after the Sabbath” (verse 11) was the basis for a significant conflict in Jewish history during the 1st century BCE between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. This disagreement over the interpretation of the verse from the Torah led to differing approaches in structuring the calendar and determining the dates of the holidays, which directly impacted the entire nation.

The Pharisees (the sages of the Talmud) believed that *mimmochorat ha-shabbat*, literally “the day after the sabbath/rest,” referred to the first festival day of Passover (which is also a “day of rest from work”), regardless of which day of the week it fell on. The Sadducees, however, understood the word “sabbath” to mean the regular weekly Sabbath and concluded that the Omer, the offering of the first sheaf, should always be brought after the Sabbath. Therefore, they argued that the calendar should be arranged so that the Passover holiday always fell on a Sabbath.

Jewish tradition presents various approaches to understanding the nature of this dispute, and a fundamental divergence exists between two of the greatest Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages: Maimonides and Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, the author of the seminal work *The Kuzari*.

Maimonides believes that in this verse, “sabbath” has always exclusively referred to the first day of Passover, the 15th of Nisan. The Pharisees adhered to the oral tradition from the time of Moses, whereas the Sadducees rejected the Oral Torah.

Most other authorities share this approach. However, according to Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, the situation is quite different. He believes that in the Revelation received by Moses at Sinai, the date of the Omer was not fixed. Therefore, the Torah deliberately uses an ambiguous formula (“the day after the day of rest,” which can mean “after the Sabbath,” “after Passover,” or even “the day after the rest from the completion of the harvest”). This ambiguity enabled the sages, during different eras, to interpret this verse in varied ways, depending on the specific conditions of their time. Over time, the custom of beginning the count after the first day of Passover was established. It is also possible that, initially, the prevailing opinion was that “the day of rest” referred to the Sabbath, and only later did the Sanhedrin decide to revise its earlier interpretation. The Pharisees adopted this new decision because they considered the Oral Torah as the foundation of Halacha, while the Sadducees maintained established tradition.

This means that the date of the festival of Shavuot, on the fiftieth day after the Omer, could shift significantly in different eras, depending on the decisions of the spiritual leaders of the Jewish people.

Yehuda Halevi clarifies: “Kuzari said: ‘How is this possible? After all, the Torah states, “You shall not add anything to what I command you, or take anything away from it” (Deuteronomy 4:2).’ The Rabbi replied: ‘This is stated for the sake of the common people, so they do not attempt to add to or subtract from the commandments according to their understanding. However, the sages of the Sanhedrin possess the authority to add and subtract.’” Indeed, this approach is reflected in Jewish tradition: establishing the holidays of Purim and Chanukah by the sages, in the commandment to light Shabbat candles, and in many other regulations. All of this has been accepted by the Jewish people.

According to Yehuda Halevi, this is a general principle: only a small portion of the commandments were originally detailed and

transmitted at Mount Sinai in the exact form they are observed today. For most matters, the specific details of the commandments belong to the Oral Torah, which means they have been shaped and developed over centuries – first during the era of the Prophets and later in the era of the Sages, who made various decisions.

The current rules are regarded as “Laws of God and the Torah,” not because they were received in this exact form at Sinai, but because God entrusted the Sanhedrin and the Jewish people with the authority to make rulings on the specifics of the commandments.

For Maimonides, the Law exists because God declared it at Sinai. In contrast, Yehuda Halevi believes the Law exists because the Jewish people, guided by God, chose it, with the Sanhedrin acting as their representative. Halevi emphasizes the people’s influence in shaping Torah law more than Maimonides does.

Of course, for more than two thousand years, *mi-macharat ha-shabbat* has been understood as “the day after the first day of Passover.” However, this does not mean the Sadducees did not know or understand this. They adhered to a different interpretation, initially one of the legitimate possibilities, but it was rejected after the Sanhedrin made its final decision.

Moreover, this indicates that the understanding of the Torah (even regarding *de-Oraita* matters, i.e., commandments directly from the Torah) is not static. In the Torah, the divine and heavenly aspects are dynamically integrated with the human and earthly realms. The Written Torah is an unchanging canonical text, while the Oral Torah is termed “oral” because it can evolve and develop.

This concept, proposed by Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, was never part of mainstream Jewish philosophy. Unlike the works of Maimonides, which have been studied extensively for centuries, *The Kuzari* was not widely known. However, in the early 20th century, Rav Kook, who viewed the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel as a revival of the entire Jewish tradition, incorporated the study of *The Kuzari* into the curriculum of his yeshiva, thereby making Rabbi Yehuda Halevi’s perspective known.

In exile, a truly dynamic understanding of the Torah is impossible. Dynamism is tied to the life of the nation, and when a national body is alive (as with the Jewish people in their own land), it naturally requires growth and evolution, just as any living organism. However, when the national body is lifeless (as it is for the Jewish people in exile), such dynamism becomes dangerous, as attempting

to rearrange its parts could cause it to fall apart. Thus, in exile, Maimonides' approach dominates, while with the return to the land, *The Kuzari* is revived.

As we reflect on this, we must remember that the question, "Who is right, Maimonides or Yehuda Halevi?" is misguided. Both perspectives are equally valid and authoritative. Debates like theirs, as with all disputes among sages, are a natural part of Judaism. Ultimately, it is up to the Jewish people to decide which view to follow in practice.

### § 22.5. THE COUNTING OF THE OMER AND SHAVUOT (23:15-22)

טו וספרתם לָכֶם מִמִּחֶרֶת הַשָּׁבֹת מִיּוֹם הַבְּיָאֹכֶם אֶת-עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה שְׂבֻעַ שְׁבֻתוֹת תְּמִימֹת תִּהְיֶינָה: טז עַד מִמִּחֶרֶת הַשָּׁבֹת הַשְּׂבִיעִית תִּסְפְּרוּ חֲמִשִּׁים יוֹם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה לַיהוָה: יז מִמוֹשְׁבֵיכֶם תְּבִיאֹוּ אֶלְהֶם תְּנוּפָה שְׁתֵּים עָשָׂר אֵשׁרֹנִים סֹלֶת תִּהְיֶינָה חֲמִץ תֹּאֲפִינָה בַּפּוּרִים לַיהוָה: יח וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם עַל-הַלֶּחֶם שְׂבֻעַת כֹּבֵשִׁים תְּמִימִם בְּגִי שְׁנֵה שְׁנֵה וּפָר בֶּן-בְּקָר אֶחָד וְאֵילִם שְׁנַיִם יִהְיוּ עֹלָה לַיהוָה וּמִנְחָתָם וְנִסְפִיָּהֶם אִשָּׁה רֵיח-נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה: יט וְעֲשִׂיתֶם שְׂעִיר-עִזִּים עֶזִים אֶחָד לַחֲטָאת וּשְׁנֵי כֹבֵשִׁים בְּגִי בְּגִי שְׁנֵה לְזֶבַח לְזֶבַח שְׁלָמִים: כ וְהִגִּיר הַכֹּהֵן אֶתְּכֶם אֶתְּכֶם עַל לֶחֶם הַבִּפְרִים תְּנוּפָה לַפָּנִי יְיָ עַל-שְׁנֵי כֹבֵשִׁים קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיוּ לַיהוָה: כא וְקִרְאתֶם בַּעֲצָם אֶת הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כָּל-מְלֶאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ חֲקֹת עוֹלָם בְּכָל-מוֹשְׁבֵיכֶם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם: כב וּבִקְצָרְכֶם אֶת-קִצִּיר אֲרָצְכֶם לֹא-תִכְלֶה פֶּאֶת פֶּאֶת שְׂדֵךְ בִּקְצָרְךָ וְלִקַּט קִצִּירְךָ לֹא תִלְקַט לְעַגִּי לְעַגִּי וְלִגְרֵךְ תַּעֲזֹב אֹתָם אֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

**(15) And from the day on which you bring the sheaf of elevation offering – the day after the sabbath – you shall count off seven weeks; they must be complete.**

**(16) You must count until the day after the seventh week – fifty days; then you shall bring an offering of new grain to the Lord.**

**(17) You shall bring from your settlements two loaves of bread as an elevation offering; each shall be made of two-tenths of a measure of choice flour, baked after leavening, as first fruits to the Lord.**

**(18) With the bread you shall present, as burnt offerings to the Lord, seven yearling lambs without blemish, one bull of the herd, and two rams, with their meal offerings and libations, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the Lord.**

**(19) You shall also offer one he-goat as a sin offering, and two yearling lambs as a sacrifice of well-being.**

**(20) The priest shall elevate these – the two lambs – together with the bread of first fruits as an elevation offering before the Lord; they shall be holy to the Lord, for the priest.**

**(21) On that same day you shall hold a celebration; it shall be a sacred occasion for you; you shall not work at your occupations. This is a law for all time in all your settlements, throughout the ages.**

**(22) And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I the Lord am your God.**

**(15) And from the day on which you bring the sheaf of elevation offering – the day after the sabbath – you shall count off seven weeks; they must be complete:** Agriculturally, the “days of counting the Omer” cover the period from the start of the barley harvest to the commencement of the wheat harvest and the ripening of the first fruits.

Although the Omer sacrifice has not been offered since the destruction of the Temple, the commandment to count the days remains. The “Feast of First Fruits” occurs seven weeks later, on the fiftieth day after Passover. This is why the festival is called Shavuot (Weeks). In the Christian tradition, it is known as Pentecost (“the fifties” in Greek).

Shavuot is regarded as the culmination of Passover, as the counting of the Omer links them into one integrated system.

**(15–16) ...the day after the sabbath – you shall count off seven weeks; they must be complete. You must count until the day after the seventh week – fifty days; then you shall bring an offering**

**of new grain to the Lord:** The starting point for counting days – “the day after the sabbath” – is once again ambiguous, allowing for both Pharisaic and Sadducean interpretations to be reconciled with the text of the Torah. Halacha (which always follows the perspective of the Pharisees) interprets the word “sabbath” here not in its usual sense of “Sabbath” or “festival,” but as “week” – seven days.

**(16–21) then you shall bring an offering of new grain to the Lord ... On that same day you shall hold a celebration:** The Torah does not explicitly link the festival of Shavuot to the giving of the Torah. However, according to Exodus 19:1, approximately fifty days elapsed between the Exodus and the giving of the Torah.

As noted above (see commentary on 9:1), the number seven in the Torah always signifies a natural cycle and purification, while the number eight represents that which transcends nature. Seven periods of seven days (forty-nine days) represent the “complete purification of nature,” and on the fiftieth day, the transcendent Divine presence in the world is revealed – the giving of the Torah.

**(17) You shall bring from your settlements two loaves of bread as an elevation offering ... as first fruits to the Lord:** The offering of *bikkurim*, “first fruits” of the new season, expresses an awareness of God’s role in granting the harvest.

On Shavuot, uniquely, leavened loaves (*chametz*) were brought as first fruits to the Temple. However, these loaves were not burned on the altar but given to the priests, as it says: “No meal offering that you offer to the LORD shall be made with leaven, for you must not turn any leaven or honey into smoke as an offering by fire to the LORD” (2:11). As noted above, *chametz* “puffs up,” symbolizing a sense of self-importance which has no place in offerings. Matzah, by contrast, symbolizes humility. However, *chametz* is acceptable as “bread of the new harvest” (so long as it is not burned on the altar) since a farmer is entitled to be proud of the fruit of his hard work.

**(22) And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger:** This reiterates what was mentioned in verse 19:9. When you present offerings to God, do not overlook your duties to the poor, for without them, your service remains incomplete.

§ 22.6. THE FESTIVAL OF BLOWING  
THE SHOFAR (23:23-25)

כג וַיְדַבֵּר יי אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: כִּד דַּבַּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בְּחֹדֶשׁ  
הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם שַׁבָּתוֹן זָכְרוֹן תְּרוּעָה מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ: כֹּה  
כָּל-מְלֶאכֶת לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אִשָּׁה לַיהוָה:

**(23) The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:**

**(24) Speak to the Israelite people thus: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe complete rest, a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts.**

**(25) You shall not work at your occupations; and you shall bring an offering by fire to the Lord.**

**(24) In the seventh month, on the first day of the month:** All the festivals are spaced from Passover – the day of the Exodus – by seven units of time: the seventh day after Passover is the celebration of the sea crossing, the seventh week after Passover is Shavuot, and the seventh month after Passover is the Festival of blowing the shofar. Thus, the festival cycle begins with the spring festival in the month of Nisan and ends with the fall festivals in the month of Tishrei.

**a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts:** Another example of the Torah’s ambiguity is that it can be understood as “a remembrance by blowing” – God “remembers” you because you blow the shofar (ram’s horn), or as “a remembrance of blowing” – a remembrance of events in which the shofar was sounded blown.

Since the shofar is made from a ram’s horn, tradition links this commemoration to the ram offered in place of Isaac in the story of the Akedah (Genesis 22). In a broader sense, it is a “festival of remembrance” – a moment for renewed connection with God, awakened by the piercing sound of the shofar.

In Biblical times, years were counted from the Exodus from Egypt (I Kings 6:1), with Nisan being the first month of the year. In the Talmudic era, the system shifted to counting years from Creation, making Tishrei, the “seventh month,” the first month of the year. Consequently, the festival of blowing the shofar became known as Rosh HaShanah, the “Beginning of the Year.”

## § 22.7. THE DAY OF ATONEMENT (23:26-32)

כו וַיְדַבֵּר יְיָ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: כֹּז אֲדָר בְּעֶשְׂוֹר לַחֲדָשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי הַזֶּה יוֹם  
 הַכִּפּוּרִים הוּא מְקַרְא-קִדְשׁ יְהִיגָה לְכֶם וְעֲנִיתֶם אֶת-נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם  
 אִשָּׁה לְיִי: כַּח וְכַל-מְלֹאכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ בְּעֶצְמֵם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה כִּי יוֹם כִּפּוּרִים  
 הוּא לְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: כֹּט כִּי כָל-הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תַעֲנֶה  
 בְּעֶצְמֵם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְנִכְרְתָה מֵעַמִּיהָ: ל וְכַל-הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר תַעֲשֶׂה כָל-מְלֹאכָה  
 בְּעֶצְמֵם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְהֶאֱבַדְתִּי אֶת-הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא מְקַרְב מְקַרְב עֲמָה: לֹא כָל-  
 מְלֹאכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ חֲקַת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם בְּכֹל מִשְׁבְּתֵיכֶם: לֵב שְׁבֹת שְׁבֹת  
 שְׁבֹתוֹן הוּא לְכֶם וְעֲנִיתֶם אֶת-נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם בְּתַשְׁעָה בְּתַשְׁעָה לַחֲדָשׁ בְּעָרֵב  
 מְעָרֵב עַד-עָרֵב תִּשְׁבְּתוּ שְׁבֹתֵיכֶם:

**(26) The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:**

**(27) But on the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be a sacred occasion for you: you shall practice self-denial, and you shall bring an offering by fire to the Lord.**

**(28) You shall do no work throughout that day. For it is a Day of Atonement, on which expiation is made on your behalf before the Lord your God.**

**(29) Indeed, any person who does not practice self-denial throughout that day shall be cut off from his kin;**

**(30) and whoever does any work throughout that day, I will cause that person to perish from among his people.**

**(31) Do no work whatever; it is a law for all time, throughout the ages in all your settlements.**

**(32) It shall be a sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall practice self-denial; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall observe this your sabbath.**

The next major day in the calendar is Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

**(27) But the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement:** The introductory word “but” emphasizes the uniqueness of this day. Normally, a festival involves a festive meal and joy- but on this day, one is commanded to practice self-denial, which means suffering and abstaining from food and other bodily pleasures.

**(29) Indeed, any person who does not practice self-denial throughout that day shall be cut off from his kin:** This commandment is expressed in very strong terms. Perhaps this is because the primary emotion associated with the other holidays is joy, while the defining emotion of the Day of Atonement is humility – and this particular type of holiday may be more challenging for a person to accept.

**(30) And whoever does any work throughout that day, I will cause that person to perish from among his people:** In this case, the punishment is imposed by God Himself, not by humans court.

**(32) It shall be a sabbath of complete rest for you:** This designation – “a Sabbath of Sabbaths” – emphasizes the strictness of the prohibition against work.

#### § 22.8. SUKKOT AND SHEMINI ATZERET (23:33-43)

לג וינדבך יי אל-משה לאמר: לד דבַר אל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בְּחַמְשָׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי הַזֶּה תִּגַּ הַסִּפּוֹת שְׁבַעַת יָמִים לַיְי: לה בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ כָּל-מְלֹאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: לו שְׁבַעַת יָמִים תִּקְרִיבוּ אִשָּׁה לַיְי בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אִשָּׁה לַיְי עֲצֵרַת הִוא כָּל-מְלֹאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: לז אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי יְי אֲשֶׁר-תִּקְרְאוּ אִתֶּם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ לְהִקְרִיב אִשָּׁה לַיְי עֲלֶה וּמִנְחָה זָבַח וּנְסֻכִים דְּבַר-יּוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ: לח מִלִּבְד שְׁבַתָּת יְי וּמִלִּבְד מִתְּנוּתֵיכֶם וּמִלִּבְד כָּל-גְּדֻרֵיכֶם וּמִלִּבְד כָּל-נַדְבָתֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר תִּתְּנוּ לַיְי: לט אֵד בְּחַמְשָׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאַסְפְּכֶם אֶת-תְּבוּאֹת הָאָרֶץ תַּחֲגוּ אֶת-חַג-יְי שְׁבַעַת יָמִים בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן שְׁבַתוֹן וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי שְׁבַתוֹן: מ וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן פְּרִי עֵץ הַדֶּרֶךְ תְּמָרִים וְעֵנָף עֵץ-עֲבֹת וְעַרְבֵי-גִּזְעַל וַשְׁמַחְתֶּם לַפְּנֵי יְי אֵלֵהֵיכֶם שְׁבַעַת יָמִים: מא וְחַגְתֶּם אִתּוֹ תִּגַּ לַיְי שְׁבַעַת

יָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה חֲמֵשׁ עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי תִחַגְּוּ אֹתוֹ: מִבַּּסֻּפֹּת  
 תִּשְׁבּוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כָּל-הָאֲזֹרָח בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁבּוּ בַּסֻּפֹּת: מִגַּ לְמַעַן יִדְעוּ  
 לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם כִּי בַּסֻּפֹּת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם  
 מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם: אֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

**(33) The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:**

**(34) Say to the Israelite people: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month there shall be the Feast of Booths to the Lord, [to last] seven days.**

**(35) The first day shall be a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations.**

**(36) Seven days you shall bring offerings by fire to the Lord. On the eighth day you shall observe a sacred occasion and bring an offering by fire to the Lord; it is a solemn gathering: you shall not work at your occupations.**

**(37) Those are the set times of the Lord that you shall celebrate as sacred occasions, bringing offerings by fire to the Lord – burnt offerings, meal offerings, sacrifices, and libations, on each day what is proper to it –**

**(38) apart from the sabbaths of the Lord, and apart from your gifts and from all your votive offerings and from all your freewill offerings that you give to the Lord.**

**(39) Mark, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the yield of your land, you shall observe the festival of the Lord [to last] seven days: a complete rest on the first day and a complete rest on the eighth day.**

**(40) On the first day, you shall take the product of hadar trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.**

**(41) You shall observe it as a festival of the Lord for seven days in the year; you shall observe it in the seventh month as a law for all time, throughout the ages.**

**(42) You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths,**

**(43) in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I am Lord your God.**

The next holiday is the Feast of Booths, Sukkot.

Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot, collectively known as *Shalosh Regalim*, the “Three Pilgrimage Festivals,” were times when the entire nation was expected to come to the Temple.

**(39) A complete rest on the first day and a complete rest on the eighth day:** The structure of Sukkot parallels that of Passover: the first and last days are full festivals, while the intervening days are semi-festive.

**(36) On the eighth day you shall observe a sacred occasion:** The eighth day is called Shemini Atzeret, meaning the “Eighth-Day Assembly.” Although it follows Sukkot, it is no longer considered part of Sukkot; rather, it is a separate holiday that concludes the entire festival cycle, which begins with Passover.

Passover lasts for seven days and concludes with Shavuot, which is celebrated seven weeks later. In contrast, Sukkot symbolizes successful living in the Land of Israel, with its conclusion, Shemini Atzeret, occurring immediately after.

The eighth day symbolizes the “gates of the World to Come,” the ultimate goal of history.

Both Shavuot and Shemini Atzeret celebrate the revelation of the Torah: Shavuot, following Passover, is the festival of the giving of the Torah, while Shemini Atzeret, following Sukkot, is the festival of the Torah study.

The original form of Torah study on Sukkot was *Hakhel*, the “Day of National Assembly” (Deuteronomy 31:13), when the king of Israel publicly read the Torah once every seven years at the end of the Sabbatical Year.

In the land of Israel, a tradition emerged to complete a Torah reading cycle every three and a half years, reading a small portion each Shabbat. But in Babylonia, where there was no *Hakhel*, a different custom emerged: reading the Torah in one year. The beginning and end of the cycle were set on Shemini Atzeret, which became known as Simchat Torah, “Rejoicing of the Torah.” Over time, the Babylonian tradition became the universal one, even in the land of Israel.

**(40) On the first day, you shall take the product of hadar trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook:** Sukkot contains two dimensions: a festival of the fruit harvest and a commemoration of life in the wilderness. The fruit harvest is celebrated with joy, accompanied by the Four Species: the *etrog* (fruit of a beautiful tree), the *lulav* (palm branch), the *hadass* (myrtle), and the *aravah* (willow). This is a nonverbal prayer: the plants require water, and the celebration with them is a plea for rain.

After Sukkot, the rainy season begins in the Land of Israel, and the coming year's crops depend on rain. In ancient and modern times, people relied on stored water from the winter – today, primarily from Lake Kinneret, but increasingly from desalination and wells.

**(42–43) You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths. In order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I am Lord your God:** This commandment commemorates life in the desert. But it's unclear which “booths” the verse refers to – booths are not mentioned in the Book of Exodus during the desert period. One view is that the “booths” are a metaphor for the Clouds of Divine Glory, which sheltered Israel for forty years. Another view is that the booths refer to the place named Sukkot, the first encampment after leaving Egypt, where the Israelites baked matzah: “The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Sukkot” (Exodus 12:37). Thus, the Torah offers a retrospective view, encouraging the nation to reflect and draw conclusions from the Exodus experience.

So the phrase “I made the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt” may refer to that moment of transition – what Sukkot is meant to commemorate. This festival is not celebrated immediately after Passover but at the end of the agricultural year, when one should pause, take stock, and reconsider one's place in the world.

## § 22.9. THE HISTORICAL AND AGRICULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF THE FESTIVALS

In all three *Shalosh Regalim* festivals, the historical and agricultural aspects intertwine. In Pesach, the Exodus from Egypt connects to the

barley harvest; in Shavuot, the giving of the Torah corresponds with the wheat harvest; and in Sukkot, the memory of life in the desert relates to the fruit harvest and the plea for rain in the coming year.

The historical aspect of the festivals – commemorating key events of the past – helps to shape and maintain national identity. The agricultural part, on the other hand, connects these holidays to present life. The festivals unite these two aspects, emphasizing that this year’s harvest marks a new stage in the nation’s historical journey.

#### § 22.10. THE CONCLUSION OF THE HOLIDAY SYSTEM (23:44)

מִדְּוַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶת-מִצְוֵי יְהוָה אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

**(44) So Moses declared to the Israelites the set times of the Lord.**

This concluding verse seems somewhat puzzling. After all, it has already been stated that God gave Moses the commandments concerning the festivals, and it is understood that Moses communicated them to the people. So, what does this verse add?

One way to interpret this is: “And Moses announced to the Israelites how they might henceforth proclaim the festivals of the Lord” – that is, the people were given authority to establish additional feasts on their own. Indeed, the Jewish people later created new festivals, such as Purim and Hanukkah, and Israel’s Independence Day in our time. From this perspective, the closing passages of Emor, which we will examine below, can be seen as alluding to these additional festivals.

## § 23. THE LAMP, THE SHOWBREAD, AND THE STORY OF THE SON OF AN ISRAELITE WOMAN AND AN EGYPTIAN

### § 23.1. THE LAMP (24:1-4)

א וַיְדַבֵּר יְיָ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ב צֹא אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ  
שֶׁמֶן שֶׁמֶן זַיִת וַיִּתְּנֶךָ כֶּתִיב לְמָאֹר לְהַעֲלֹת נֵר תָּמִיד: ג מִחוּץ לַפֶּרֶךְ הָעֵרְתָּ  
בְּאֵהָל מוֹלֵד יִעֲרֹף אֹתוֹ אֶהְרֹן מֵעַרְב עַד-בֹּקֶר לִפְנֵי יְיָ תָּמִיד חֻקַּת עוֹלָם  
לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם: ד עַל הַמְּנֹרֶה הַטְּהַרְהָ יִעֲרֹף אֶת-הַנְּגֹרוֹת לִפְנֵי יְיָ תָּמִיד:

- (1) The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
- (2) Command the Israelite people to bring you clear oil of beaten olives for lighting, for kindling lamps regularly.
- (3) Aaron shall set them up in the Tent of Meeting, outside the curtain of the Pact, [to burn] from evening to morning before the Lord regularly; it is a law for all time throughout the ages.
- (4) He shall set up the lamps on the pure lampstand before the Lord, [to burn] regularly.

Immediately following the listing of the festivals, three passages appear whose placement in this part of Leviticus seems puzzling, as they do not appear to be related to the festivals. The first two deal with the commandments concerning the lamp (menorah) and the showbread, but they add nothing new to what was already mentioned in Exodus (chapters 25 and 27). The third passage recounts the story of “the son of an Israelite woman and an Egyptian,” with no apparent connection to the surrounding context.

Jewish tradition viewed the repetition of the commandments regarding the lamp and the showbread here as a means of integrating them into the context of the festivals. The passage about the menorah is seen as a reference to the future festival of Chanukah, while the passage about the showbread is interpreted as a reference to Purim.

However, the story of the son of an Israelite woman and an Egyptian has remained out of context for a long time. In modern times, however, it has been linked to Israel's Independence Day (details to follow), giving this entire chapter a sense of unity as an extension of the festival system.

**(2) clear oil of beaten olives:** Olive oil is produced in three grades. The first grade is obtained through simple pressing; this is the finest oil, “clear” (without sediment), and it was exclusively used to light the lamp in the Temple. The second grade is produced by more intense pressing, and the third is obtained by crushing the pits, which results in oil of lesser quality.

**for kindling lamps regularly:** The word *tamid*, meaning “regular,” refers to something done regularly, daily or weekly, rather than “without interruption.” The lamp was lit each evening and burned until morning.

**(3) Aaron shall set them up:** While this commandment applies to all priests and not just the High Priest, it is associated with Aaron's name. This references Hanukkah, when the revolt against the Greeks, marked by the miracle of the oil burning in the rededicated Temple, was led by the Hasmonean priests, descendants of Aaron.

**(4) He shall set up the lamps on the pure lampstand before the Lord, [to burn] regularly:** The menorah is referred to as “pure” because it was crafted from pure gold (Exodus 25:31) and because there is a distinct commandment to clean its lamps each morning after they have burned all night, refill them with pure oil, and add new wicks.

## § 23.2. THE SHOWBREAD (24:5-9)

ה וְלִקְחֶתָּהּ סֵלֶת וְאַפִּיֶתָּ אֹתָהּ שֶׁתִּיִּם עֲשֶׂהָ חֲלוֹת שְׁנֵי עֶשְׂרִינָיִם יְהִיֶּה הַחֲלָה  
הָאֶחָד: וּשְׁמֵת אֹתָם שֶׁתִּיִּם מְעֻרְכֹת שֶׁשׁ הַמְעַרְכֶּת עַל הַשְּׁלֶתָּן הַטָּהֳרָה

לפני יי ז ונתת על-המערכת לבנה זכה והיתה ללחם לאזכרה אשה ליי:  
 ח ביום השבת ביום השבת יערכנו לפני יי תמיד מאת בני-ישראל ברית  
 עולם: ט והיתה לאהרון ולבניו ואכלהו במקום קדש כִּי קדש  
 קדשים הוא לו מאשי יי חק-עולם:

**(5) You shall take choice flour and bake of it twelve loaves, two-tenths of a measure for each loaf.**

**(6) Place them on the table of pure gold before the Lord in two rows, six to a row.**

**(7) With each row you shall place pure frankincense, so that it may be a token offering for the bread, as an offering by fire to the Lord.**

**(8) He shall arrange them before the Lord regularly every sabbath day – it is a commitment for all time on the part of the Israelites.**

**(9) They shall belong to Aaron and his sons, who shall eat them in the sacred precinct; for they are most holy to him from the Lord's offerings by fire, a due for all time.**

**(5) Take choice flour and bake of it twelve loaves:** This passage is interpreted as an allusion to Purim – a festival of physical survival in which a festive meal, symbolized by the showbread, plays a central role.

**(6) Place them in two rows, six to a row, on the pure table before the Lord:** In the Temple, the table featured two racks with six shelves each, allowing the loaves to be arranged in two vertical stacks of six.

**(7) With each row, place pure frankincense:** Frankincense, a fragrant resin, was placed in two small bowls beside each other stack.

**(8) He shall arrange them before the Lord every sabbath day:** The bread and incense were changed weekly on Shabbat. The old loaves were replaced with fresh ones baked the day before. As with other meal offerings, the frankincense was burned as a “token portion” (2:2), and the priests ate the bread.

§ 23.3. THE SON OF AN ISRAELITE WOMAN  
AND AN EGYPTIAN (24:10-23)

י וַיֵּצֵא בֶן-אִשָּׁה יִשְׂרָאֵלִית וְהוּא בֶן-אִישׁ מִצְרַיִם בְּתוֹךְ בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וַיִּנְצֹו בְּמַחְנֶה בֶן הַיִּשְׂרָאֵלִית וְאִישׁ הַיִּשְׂרָאֵלִי: יא וַיִּקָּב בֶּן-הָאִשָּׁה  
הַיִּשְׂרָאֵלִית אֶת-הַשֵּׁם וַיִּקְלָל וַיִּקְלָל וַיִּבְיֹאוּ אֹתוֹ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְשָׁם אָמַר אָמַר  
שְׁלֹמִית בַּת-דִּבְרִי לַמִּטֶּה-דָן: יב וַיִּנְיָהוּ בַּמִּשְׁמֶר לִפְרֹשׁ לָהֶם עַל-פִּי יִי:  
יג וַיְדַבֵּר יְיָ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: יד הוֹצֵא אֶת-הַמְּקַלֶּל אֶל-מַחוּזַי לַמַּחְנֶה  
וְסָמְכוּ כָל-הַשְּׂמָעִים אֶת-יְדֵיהֶם עַל-רֹאשׁוֹ וְרָגְמוּ אֹתוֹ כָּל-הָעֵדָה: טו וְאֶל-  
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תְּדַבֵּר תְּדַבֵּר לֵאמֹר אִישׁ אִישׁ כִּי-יִקְלָל אֱלֹהָיו וְנִשְׂא חַטָּאוֹ:  
טז וְנִקָּב שֵׁם-יְיָ מוֹת יוֹמֶת רָגוּם וְרָגְמוּ-בּוֹ כָּל-הָעֵדָה כַּגֵּר כַּאֲזַרְחַ בְּנִקְבוֹ-  
שָׁם יוֹמֶת: יז וְאִישׁ כִּי יִבֶּה כָּל-גִּפְשׁ אָדָם מוֹת יוֹמֶת: יח וּמִכָּה גִפְשׁ-בְּהֵמָה  
יִשְׁלַמְנָה גִפְשׁ תַּחַת גִּפְשׁ: יט וְאִישׁ כִּי-יִתֵּן מוֹם בְּעַמִּיתוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה בֶן  
יַעֲשֶׂה יַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ: כ שָׂבֵר תַּחַת שֵׁבֵר עֵינַי תַּחַת עֵינַי שֵׁן תַּחַת שֵׁן כַּאֲשֶׁר יִתֵּן  
מוֹם בְּאָדָם בֶּן יִנְתֵּן בּוֹ: כא וּמִכָּה בְּהֵמָה יִשְׁלַמְנָה וּמִכָּה אָדָם יוֹמֶת: כב  
מִשְׁפָּט אַחֵד יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כַּגֵּר כַּאֲזַרְחַ יִהְיֶה כִּי אֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: כג וַיְדַבֵּר  
מֹשֶׁה אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיּוֹצִיאוּ אֶת-הַמְּקַלֶּל אֶל-מַחוּזַי לַמַּחְנֶה וַיִּרְגְּמוּ אֹתוֹ  
אָבוֹ וּבְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל עָשׂוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְיָ אֶת-מֹשֶׁה:

(10) There came out among the Israelites one whose mother was Israelite and whose father was Egyptian; and a fight broke out in the camp between that half-Israelite and a certain Israelite.

(11) The son of the Israelite woman pronounced the Name in blasphemy, and he was brought to Moses – now his mother's name was Shelomith, daughter of Dibri of the tribe of Dan –

(12) and he was placed in custody, until the decision of the Lord should be made clear to them.

(13) And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

(14) Take the blasphemer outside the camp; and let all who were within hearing lay their hands upon his head, and let the whole community stone him.

(15) And to the Israelite people speak thus: Anyone who blasphemes his God shall bear his guilt;

**(16) if he also pronounces the name Lord, he shall be put to death. The whole community shall stone him; stranger or citizen, if he has thus pronounced the Name, he shall be put to death.**

**(17) If anyone kills any human being, he shall be put to death.**

**(18) One who kills a beast shall make restitution for it: life for life.**

**(19) If anyone maims his fellow, as he has done so shall it be done to him:**

**(20) fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. The injury he inflicted on another shall be inflicted on him.**

**(21) One who kills a beast shall make restitution for it; but one who kills a human being shall be put to death.**

**(22) You shall have one standard for stranger and citizen alike: for I the Lord am your God.**

**(23) Moses spoke thus to the Israelites; and they took the blasphemer outside the camp and pelted him with stones. The Israelites did as the Lord had commanded Moses.**

As we have noted, this story seems out of place, and its connection to holiness or the festivals is unclear. Below, we will explore one possible explanation.

**(10) There came out among the Israelites one whose mother was Israelite and whose father was Egyptian:** This man is a Jew through his mother and an Egyptian through his father. He is part of the Jewish people (as Jewish identity is inherited through the mother), but he cannot be considered a member of any tribe (since lineage, tribe, and family are passed through the father).

**[He] came out... and a fight broke out in the camp between that half-Israelite and a certain Israelite:** The meaning of “came out” and the phrase “in the camp” are unclear. According to the Midrash, this man wanted to pitch his tent in the camp of the tribe of Dan, from where his mother hailed, but the sons of Dan refused to allow him. He appealed to Moses’ court but was denied because

he could not claim a place in the camp of Dan based on formal tribal criteria. Within this midrashic interpretation, the passage can be understood as: “He came out [of the court of Moses in anger after losing his case], and the fight broke out in the [disputed] camp [area] between the half-Israelite and a certain Israelite.”

The conflict and the blasphemy did not arise from nowhere; they had a significant reason behind them. The man was Jewish by birth but could not join any tribe. This was not merely a practical matter of lacking a place to pitch a tent; it was an issue of self-identification that emphasized a fracture in national identity.

When this man, unable to resolve the conflict on his own, appealed to the highest national authority – the court of Moses – no solution was found either. This revealed a flaw in the national system of government. Not only did the tribe of Dan act poorly by refusing to allow the man to live among them, but the national court also proved ineffective. In other words, the God-ordained system failed to address the problem. As a result, the man began to fight, lashed out at God, and cursed the Divine Name.

Certainly, such behavior is seriously wrong. However, the blame does not rest solely with this’ half-Israelite.” The tribe of Dan, the court, and even Moses share responsibility for this situation.

**(11) his mother’s name was Shelomith, daughter of Dibri of the tribe of Dan:** The name Shelomith is related to the word *shalom* (peace), while Dibri comes from the verb *daber* (to speak). The background of “Shelomith, daughter of Dibri” suggests that she and her son would likely approach the situation with the mindset, “Let’s talk peacefully; through negotiation, we will achieve peace.” However, this approach failed because the troubled man could not obtain permission to pitch his tent through peaceful negotiations, resulting in a crisis in his worldview. (His mother’s name might also imply that she was talkative, and her excessive sociability could have influenced her relationship with the Egyptian man.)

Finally, this crisis occurs within the tribe of Dan, which is known for its tendencies toward anarchism.

**(12) and he was placed in custody, until the decision of the Lord should be made clear to them:** Even Moses was uncertain about how to handle this situation. Strangely, the offender reminded

him of himself; after all, Moses was a Jew by birth but Egyptian by upbringing.

Earlier in the commentary at the start of Exodus, we noted that Moses' dual identity held great potential. If Moses had not been raised as an Egyptian, he would not have gained the understanding of leadership and governance – qualities essential for his mission to lead the Jewish people out of Egypt and guide them for forty years. (Aaron, who possessed solely a Jewish identity, as remarkable as it was, still could not have led the Exodus or guided the people through the wilderness that followed.) However, through the tragic case of Shelomith's son, Moses confronts the harsh reality that a dual identity can also lead to devastating consequences.

**(14) Take the blasphemer outside the camp; and let all who were within hearing lay their hands upon his head, and let the whole community stone him:** God's decree is severe. Every person who heard the blasphemous words must feel responsible for what occurred and for punishing the blasphemer.

Cursing God's name is an attack on the very soul of the nation and is, therefore, punishable by death, just like other forms of murder. No exceptions are made, even for those who may feel genuinely marginalized or vulnerable.

Next, the punishments for murder and injury are outlined. Although these were previously mentioned in the Torah, they are reiterated here to emphasize the hierarchy of offenses, with the most serious being to curse God, as it is the root of all other transgressions. From this crime follows the killing of a human being made in the image of God. Subsequent offenses include killing animals (except for food), injuring a person, and so on.

**(20) ...fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth:** It was noted earlier (Exodus 21:24) that proportionality is the fundamental principle of justice: the offender must suffer the same harm as the victim. In practice, however, the Oral Torah prescribes that instead of physical retribution, the offender must pay monetary compensation to cover medical expenses, loss of livelihood, and other damages. While the principle of monetary compensation is nearly universal, it cannot be applied to the gravest of crimes – murder. Human life cannot be compensated, and the murderer must face execution.

**(23) Moses spoke thus to the Israelites; and they took the blasphemer outside the camp and pelted him with stones. The Israelites did as the Lord had commanded Moses:** The emphasis on “as the Lord commanded Moses” highlights that the people were acting in obedience to a higher authority. After all, the criminal had caused no physical harm or material damage, and it must have been terrible to execute this poor man.

The Torah and Midrash do not indicate whether this event had lasting consequences. Nevertheless, we can imagine that such a harsh response may have been necessary in the early days after the Exodus, during the formative stages of the nation. However, Moses’ inflexibility – his inability to move beyond strict criteria and creatively resolve the non-standard conflict – might have prevented him from entering the Land of Israel. Moses’ leadership style may have been adequate for life in the wilderness, but it was not suited for the typical life of a nation. We will explore this idea further in the Book of Numbers.

#### § 23.4. “THE SON OF AN ISRAELITE WOMAN AND AN EGYPTIAN” IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FESTIVALS: ISRAEL’S INDEPENDENCE DAY

Analyzing this story through the perspective of festivals uncovers its fascinating link to contemporary Jewish history.

Earlier, we discussed how the three final passages of the Emor section might foreshadow holidays that the Jewish people would establish in response to future historical events. In this interpretation, the passages about the menorah and showbread allude to Hanukkah and Purim, respectively. But what future event-turned-holiday could the third passage, concerning the son of an Israelite woman and an Egyptian man, be foretelling?

Let us begin by drawing an analogy between this narrative and the most recent “biblical” event in Jewish history – the establishment of the State of Israel.

The connection lies in the rejection faced by both the half-Israelite/half-Egyptian figure and the political Zionists from “proper” Jews. In the early twentieth century, many rabbis vehemently opposed the predominantly secular Zionist movement, viewing it as alien

and a threat to Jewish tradition. To them, the godless Zionists were Jewish in name only, as they believed that Jewish identity could not coexist with a secular lifestyle and the adoption of cultural traits from host nations. Just as a troubled son from a mixed family might lack legitimacy to belong to a tribe, the early Zionists were seen as illegitimate representatives of the Jewish people by the traditional Jewish establishment, which maintained that Jewish identity could only be religious in nature.

However, it was these “inappropriate” Jews who spearheaded the movement to create the Jewish state. Theodor Herzl epitomized this duality: being an assimilated Jew did not hinder him from striving to “bring the Jewish people out of Egypt.” This duality empowered Herzl to elevate the Zionist movement onto the world stage. Without the combination of these seemingly contradictory traits – being both Jewish and a modern European – the establishment of a Jewish state, which was never merely an internal Jewish issue but a global endeavor, may never have been realized. The “proper” traditional Jews were not equipped to undertake the monumental task of state-building, especially under such adverse circumstances – a distinctly different set of skills and mindset was necessary for that mission. Thus, the “inappropriateness” of the Zionists was not a mere coincidence but a historical necessity.

The same duality characterized Moses – Jewish by birth and Egyptian by upbringing – and was essential to his leadership mission. Strikingly, the son of an Israelite woman and an Egyptian, who found himself at the bottom of the social hierarchy and was eventually cast out, also embodied this duality. This parallel illustrates that while dual identity may present challenges, it also holds great potential. When individuals with dual identities are given their rightful place in society, they can play a vital and transformative role. However, as seen in the story of Shelomith’s son, individuals with dual identities often struggle to find their place in society. The Torah recounts only the conflict between Shelomith’s son and the Israelite man in the camp, but we can use our imagination to reconstruct the preceding events.

This man, traumatized by the uncertainty of his dual identity and prone to confrontation, could not merely request a place to dwell; he felt compelled to demand his rights. Naturally, his combative attitude affected those around him, who, in turn, stood firm on their own rights and refused to yield. Denied what he perceived as his “rightful privileges,” he took the matter to court. However, instead

of calmly presenting his case, he insisted on his entitlement. The court, while theoretically impartial, was swayed by his demeanor and dismissed his claims. Enraged, he left the court and vented his anger on “a certain Israelite,” the first person he encountered.

The son of Shelomith is a complex and somewhat unpleasant character, yet he is not inherently negative. Often, individuals like him, who are controversial, possess untapped potential for good. However, Moses, his judicial system, and the community failed to recognize and nurture this potential. As a result of the bitter conflict, the man curses God and faces the death penalty for his actions.

The reason Moses, who was half-Jewish and half-Egyptian, couldn't find a solution for someone like him lies in the stark contrast between their psychological traits. Moses is characterized by *anavah* (humility), while the defining trait of Shelomith's son is *chutzpah* (audacity).

The contrast between humility and audacity is discussed in detail in our commentary on the Book of Numbers (Chapter 12). Here, *chutzpah* is a central characteristic of the Messiah and the Messianic Redemption, which is inextricably linked to the Jewish people's entry into the Land of Israel – a quality that Moses does not possess. This is precisely why, on a personal level, Moses cannot find a solution for Shelomith's son and, on a broader level, why he cannot lead the people into the Land of Israel.

The task of the Zionist movement, as part of the Messianic process, is to harness the quality of *chutzpah*. In other words, it aims to find the Divine spark even in the “improper” situations that the nation encounters. This presents a main challenge for the religious world regarding the creation of the State of Israel. Many citizens of this state are “improper Jews,” “half-Jews,” or non-Jews, and this diverse community has various religious needs or even a complete lack thereof.

The establishment of a state for such diverse people serves as a practical solution to the issue concerning Shelomith's son. Moses and his governance system could not address this challenge, but the people, through the evolution of the state, can and must. In this endeavor, the role of religious leadership is to transform the Judaism of exile into the Judaism of the Land of Israel, making it capable of solving the problems faced by the “sons of Shelomith.”

Designating Independence Day as a religious holiday is the first step in this direction.

**WEEKLY  
PORTION 9**

**BEHAR**

## § 24. THE SABBATICAL AND JUBILEE YEARS AND THE PROHIBITION AGAINST OPPRESSING ONE'S BROTHER

### § 24.1. THE HOLINESS OF THE PLACE: MOUNT SINAI AND THE LAND OF ISRAEL (25:1)

א וַיְדַבֵּר יי אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי לֵאמֹר:

#### (1) The Lord spoke to Moshe at Mount Sinai:

The overarching theme of *Behar* is liberation from different forms of enslavement and dependency. The following rules aim to achieve this:

- Allow the land to rest.
- Enable those who have sold their land to return to their shares.
- Facilitate the redemption of a sold house.
- Provide a means for the impoverished to escape debt slavery.
- Give slaves the opportunity to redeem themselves.

Many of the commandments mentioned here were introduced earlier in the Book of Exodus; however, the Book of Leviticus presents a different perspective. First, we will examine the narrative of the *Behar* portion and then highlight the differences in how these commandments are approached.

**(1) The Lord spoke on Mount Sinai:** The repeated mention of the Commandments being given on Mount Sinai underscores the significance of the place's sanctity.

As noted above, the latter portions of Leviticus focus on holiness matters. First, *Kedoshim* discusses the holiness of individuals and the nation; then, *Emor* discusses the holiness of the Temple and the priests, followed by the holiness of time and festivals. In *Behar*, the focus shifts to the holiness of the place.

This raises the question of what the world's central place of holiness is: Is it Mount Sinai, where the Torah was given to the Jewish people, or is it the Land of Israel, where the Torah is embodied in life?

If the emphasis is on the Torah's origin from heaven, Mount Sinai becomes the center of holiness for the world. However, if the focus shifts to the Torah's embodiment in daily life, the Land of Israel becomes the global center of holiness.

Therefore, the Torah specifies that the commandments of the Sabbatical and Jubilee Years, which emphasize the holiness of the Land, were also given at Sinai. This indicates that even from the "Sinai perspective," ultimate holiness is centered in the Land of Israel.

Mount Sinai was holy only during the giving of the Torah. After the Jewish people departed, it became an ordinary mountain again; its exact location is unknown.

However, the holiness of the Land of Israel is eternal. Even if the Jewish people temporarily lose control of the Land, its holiness remains unchanged.

The same principle applies to the Temple Mount: even though there is no Temple there today, its holiness remains. Therefore, one cannot ascend the Temple Mount without undergoing purification and following the necessary rules of conduct.

## § 24.2. THE SABBATICAL YEAR (25:2-7)

ב דבֿר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם כִּי תְּבֹאוּ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר  
אָנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם וְשָׁבַתָה הָאָרֶץ שְׁבַת לַיְי: ג שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים תִּזְרַע שְׂדֵה וּשְׁשׁ שָׁנִים  
תִּזְמַר כְּרִמָּה וְאָסַפְתָּ אֶת-תְּבוּאָתָה: ד וּבַשְּׁנָה הַשְּׁבִיעִית שְׁבַת שְׁבַתוֹן יִהְיֶה  
לְאָרֶץ שְׁבַת לַיְי שְׂדֵה לֹא תִזְרַע וְכְרִמָּה לֹא תִזְמַר: ה אֵת סְפִיטֵי קְצִירָהּ  
לֹא תִקְצֹר וְאֶת-עֲנָבֵי נְזִירָהּ לֹא תִבְצֹר שְׁנַת שְׁבַתוֹן יִהְיֶה לְאָרֶץ: ו וְהִיְתָה  
שְׁבַת הָאָרֶץ לָכֶם לֶאֱכֹלָה לָהּ וּלְעֹבְדֶיהָ וּלְאֻמָּתָהּ וּלְשִׁקְרָהּ וּלְתוֹשֵׁבָהּ  
הַגֵּרִים עִמָּךְ: ז וּלְבִהֶמְתֶּךָ וְלַסִּיָּה אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרְצָךָ תִּהְיֶה כָל-תְּבוּאָתָה לְאֹכֶל:

**(2) Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: When you enter the land that I assign to you, the land shall observe a sabbath of the Lord.**

**(3) Six years you may sow your field and six years you may prune your vineyard and gather in the yield.**

**(4) But in the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath of complete rest, a sabbath of the Lord: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard.**

**(5) You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your untrimmed vines; it shall be a year of complete rest for the land.**

**(6) But you may eat whatever the land during its sabbath will produce – you, your male and female slaves, the hired and bound laborers who live with you,**

**(7) and your cattle and the beasts in your land may eat all its yield.**

**(2) the land shall observe a sabbath of the Lord:** The commandment of the Sabbatical Year is mentioned in several places in the Torah: specifically in Exodus (23:10) and Deuteronomy (15:1). These three accounts differ, reflecting the varied contexts and emphases of the respective books.

In Leviticus, the seventh year is “a sabbath of the Lord.” This characterizes the commandment as a matter of holiness. The Land of Israel is sacred and is personified as a living being deserving of rest. The emphasis here is on the sanctity of the land, not on human equality.

In Exodus and Deuteronomy, “sabbath” does not refer to the seventh year. Instead, *shemittah* – meaning “release” or “letting go” – is used, highlighting the cancellation of debt for the poor and the equal status of all inhabitants, thereby underscoring the social aspect of the commandment.

Later, we will discuss a third aspect of the Sabbatical Year: as important as the Land of Israel is, a farmer must not become completely absorbed in it. Periodic detachment from the land is necessary, and the Sabbatical Years fulfill this need.

**(5) You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your untrimmed vines:** The Halacha emphasizes

that it is not the act of reaping or gathering that is prohibited; rather, it is the typical harvest where the owner takes the crop for personal use. However, it is permissible to gather the harvest as common property accessible to all.

**it shall be a year of complete rest for the land:** It does not indicate that this should be a year of rest for the people. People are allowed to work, but they are prohibited from cultivating the land.

**(6) But you may eat whatever the land during its sabbath will produce – you, your male and female slaves, the hired and bound laborers who live with you:** There is no prohibition against using the produce; the only restriction is that it should not be considered personal property. This year, both the wealthy and the poor will have equal access to the harvest. However, in the Book of Exodus (23:11), this harvest is described differently: “Let the needy among your people eat of it,” highlighting that it is food intended for the poor, while the wealthy presumably have reserves. Thus, the Book of Exodus emphasizes the social aspect: providing sustenance for the poor. In contrast, Leviticus focuses on holiness: the land belongs to God, and everyone is equal before Him, making the harvest communal property.

**(7) and your cattle and the beasts in your land may eat all its yield:** Each individual holds a certain degree of responsibility for the whole world, which includes both domestic and wild animals. The land belongs to God, and during the Sabbatical Year, He commands that food be provided for all His creatures.

### § 24.3. THE JUBILEE YEAR (25:8-19)

ח וּסְפַרְתָּ לְךָ שִׁבְעַת שָׁבָע שְׁבַתֹת שָׁנִים שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים שִׁבְעַת פְּעָמִים וְהָיוּ לְךָ  
 יָמֵי שִׁבְעַת שְׁבַתֹת הַשָּׁנִים תִּשַׁע וָאַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה: ט וְהַעֲבַרְתָּ שׁוֹפָר תְּרוּעָה  
 בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּעֶשְׂרֵי לַחֹדֶשׁ בְּיוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים תִּעְבְּרוּ שׁוֹפָר בְּכָל-אַרְצְכֶם:  
 י וְקִדְשְׁתֶּם אֵת שְׁנַת הַחֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה וְקִרְאתֶם דְּרוֹר בְּאַרְצְךָ לְכָל-יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 יוֹבֵל הוּא תִּהְיֶה לְכֶם וְשִׁבְתֶּם אִישׁ אֶל-אַחֲזָתוֹ וְאִישׁ אֶל-מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ תֵּשְׁבוּ:  
 יא יוֹבֵל הוּא שְׁנַת הַחֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה תִּהְיֶה לְכֶם לֹא תִזְרְעוּ וְלֹא תִקְצְרוּ אֶת-  
 סִפְיֹתֶיהָ וְלֹא תִבְצְרוּ אֶת-גְּזָרֶיהָ: יב כִּי יוֹבֵל הוּא קֹדֶשׁ תִּהְיֶה לְכֶם  
 לְכֶם מִן-הַשָּׂדֶה תֹאכְלוּ אֶת-תְּבוּאָתָהּ: יג בַּשְּׁנַת הַיּוֹבֵל הַזֹּאת תֵּשְׁבוּ אִישׁ

אל-אַחַזְזֹתוּ: יד וְכִי-תִמְכְּרוּ מִמֶּכֶר מִמֶּכֶר לְעַמִּיתְךָ אוֹ קָנָה מִיַּד עַמִּיתְךָ  
 אל-תוֹנֶה אִישׁ אֶת-אָחִיו: טו בְּמִסְפַּר שָׁנִים אַחֵר הַיּוֹזֵל תִּקְנֶה מֵאֵת עַמִּיתְךָ  
 בְּמִסְפַּר שָׁנֵי-תְבוּאָת זֶמְכֶר-לָךְ: טז לְפִי וְרַב הַשָּׁנִים תִּרְבֶּה מִקְנָתוֹ וּלְפִי  
 מְעוֹט הַשָּׁנִים תִּמְעָיֵט מִקְנָתוֹ כִּי מִסְפַּר תְּבוּאָת הַיּוֹא מִכֶּר לָךְ: יז וְלֹא תוֹנֶה  
 אִישׁ אֶת-עַמִּיתוֹ וְיִרְאֵת מֵאַלְהֵיךָ כִּי אֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: יח וְעַשִׂיתֶם אֶת-  
 חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת-מִשְׁפָּטַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ תִשְׁמְרוּ וְעַשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם וְיִשְׁבַּתֶּם עַל-הָאָרֶץ  
 לְבַטָּח: יט וְנִתְּנָה הָאָרֶץ פְּרִיָּה וְאֶכְלֶתֶם לְעֹבֵעַ וְיִשְׁבַּתֶּם לְבַטָּח עָלֶיהָ:

**(8) You shall count off seven cycles of sabbatical years – seven times seven years – so that the period of seven cycles shall be for you forty-nine years.**

**(9) Then you shall sound the horn loud; in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month – the Day of Atonement – you shall have the horn sounded throughout your land.**

**(10) And you shall hallow the fiftieth year. You shall proclaim liberty throughout the land for all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: each of you shall return to his holding and each of you shall return to his family.**

**(11) That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you: you shall not sow, neither shall you reap the aftergrowth or harvest the untrimmed vines.**

**(12) For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you: you may only eat the growth direct from the field.**

**(13) In this year of jubilee, each of you shall return to his holding.**

**(14) When you sell property to your neighbor, or buy any from your neighbor, you shall not wrong one another.**

**(15) In buying from your neighbor, you shall deduct only for the number of years since the jubilee; and in selling to you, he shall charge you only for the remaining crop years:**

**(16) the more such years, the higher the price you pay; the fewer such years, the lower the price; for what he is selling you is a number of harvests.**

**(17) Do not wrong one another, but fear your God; for I the Lord am your God.**

**(18) You shall observe My laws and faithfully keep My rules, that you may live upon the land in security;**

**(19) the land shall yield its fruit and you shall eat your fill, and you shall live upon it in security.**

**(8) You shall count off seven cycles of sabbatical years – seven times seven years – so that the period of seven cycles shall be for you forty-nine years:** This commandment requires the nation to count the years in the cycle of Jubilee Years, much like the individual commandment to count the days of the Omer (23:15). According to tradition, the priests performed the ritual of counting the years during an official annual ceremony at the Temple. This public counting enabled people to track the timing for redeeming homes and slaves.

Similar to the counting of the Omer, where both days and weeks are counted, here, both years and seven-year periods are counted. Thus, the Sabbatical and Jubilee Years create a cohesive system. As we will explore below, this is crucial for implementing Sabbatical Years across various periods of Jewish history.

In the Omer count, seven consistently symbolizes a cycle of the natural world:  $7 \times 7 = 49$  signifies a complete natural cycle, whereas  $7 \times 7 + 1 = 50$  denotes a step beyond nature.

**(9–11) Then you shall sound the horn loud ... the fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you:** The sign of the fiftieth year was the sounding of the horn. The ram's horn, known as the shofar, is also referred to as *yovel*, which is the origin of the word "jubilee."

The shofar is blown to greet a king, and its blast during the Jubilee Year symbolizes a person's relationship with God as King. The notion that everything belongs to God frees individuals from being subjected to the lasting authority of another.

**On the tenth day of the seventh month – the Day of Atonement:** During the Jubilee Year, the liberation of slaves and the return of ancestral lands were proclaimed on Yom Kippur. This day of atonement for sins also became a day of release from debt.

**(10–13) You shall proclaim liberty throughout the land for all its inhabitants ... each of you shall return to his holding:** The Midrash emphasizes the link between the word *dror* (“liberty”) and *ladur* (“to dwell”), since liberty includes the ability to choose one’s place of residence freely.

**(11) You shall not sow, neither shall you reap the aftergrowth or harvest the untrimmed vines:** The prohibitions against cultivating the land during the Jubilee Year mirror those of the Sabbatical Year. Since the Jubilee Year is the 50th year, following the 49th Sabbatical Year (7×7), agricultural labor is forbidden for two consecutive years.

From a rational standpoint, such inactivity appears dangerous – lack of food could be catastrophic for the nation. However, the Torah promises that the yield from the sixth year will be sufficient for several years (see below) and states: “You shall observe My laws and faithfully keep My rules ... and you shall live upon the land in security.” Therefore, one should not worry about sustenance in the seventh and Jubilee Years; on the contrary, keeping these commandments ensures prosperity in the Land.

Violating the laws of the Sabbatical Year results in exile (26:34). According to tradition, the seventy years of Babylonian exile were seen as punishment for neglecting to observe seventy Sabbatical Years during the First Temple era (see further commentary to Chapter 26).

**(10) Each of you shall return to his holding, and each of you shall return to his family:** In the Jubilee Year, ancestral land that had been sold was returned to its original owners. This meant that land could not be permanently purchased; any sale was essentially a lease, lasting until the next Jubilee Year (i.e., what was sold was not the land itself, but the right to harvest the land for a specified number of years up to the Jubilee). This prevented individual families from becoming permanent owners of large estates and turning others into wage earners. Such a system served as a social safeguard: impoverished farmers who had sold their land had no reason to revolt because, in the Jubilee Year, they would receive their land back for free.

The return of land in the Jubilee Year had a profound effect on the people’s moral and societal consciousness.

#### § 24.4. STATUS OF THE SABBATICAL AND JUBILEE YEARS IN JEWISH HISTORY

The commandments of the Sabbatical Year and the Jubilee Year form a unified system. Verse (10) – “Each of you shall return to his holding, and each of you shall return to his family” – suggests that the laws of the Jubilee Year can only be applied when the entire Jewish people (or at least a clear majority) are living in the Land of Israel and able to return to their ancestral landholdings.

The Jubilee Year signifies the completion of a cycle of seven Sabbatical Years, emphasizing that the two are integral to a unified mechanism for the renewal of Jewish society. After this cycle, the Jubilee initiates broader transformations: the emancipation of slaves and the restoration of land to its original owners.

Accordingly, Halacha rules that if the majority of Jews do not reside in the Land of Israel, not only do the laws of the Jubilee cease to apply, but even the Sabbatical Year loses its full biblical status. In such times, the Sabbatical Year becomes a rabbinic ordinance – observed as a remembrance of the Torah commandment, but it is no longer binding as a Torah law.

In our time, when the majority (although no longer a significant one) of the Jewish people still reside outside the Land, the Sabbatical Year is seen as a rabbinic obligation. Because Jewish agriculture in the Land of Israel holds such central importance to the Torah, many rabbis – specially those in the Religious Zionist camp – advocate for the use of *heter mechirah*, a legal mechanism that permits the temporary sale of farmland to non-Jews during the Sabbatical Year, along with other Halachic solutions that allow farming and harvesting during this period.

However, when the majority of Jews return to the Land, the Sabbatical Year will regain its status as a Torah commandment, and such legal workarounds will no longer be permitted. We hope that by then, technological and economic solutions – such as hydroponics – will be developed to allow the land to rest in the seventh year without jeopardizing food security or the national economy.

§ 24.5. BETWEEN ATTACHMENT TO AND INDEPENDENCE  
FROM THE LAND: HOW THE SABBATICAL YEAR  
SUSTAINS SPIRITUAL BALANCE

The Torah states that for failing to observe the laws of the Sabbatical Year, the people will be exiled from the Land of Israel: “Then the land shall make up for its sabbath years throughout the time that it is desolate, while you are in the land of your enemies; then the land shall rest and make up for its sabbath years” (26:34).

Why is the violation of this commandment punished so harshly, subjecting the nation to the difficulties of exile and pushing it to the brink of extinction?

A literal reading of the phrase “the land shall make up for its sabbath years” might suggest that the land has the right to rest. Since the people have denied it this right, the land is driving them out to regain its rest. But is the land of Israel a living entity in need of rest? Could the land of Israel be vengeful? And is there a deeper meaning to exile beyond mere punishment?

In our view, this seventh-year separation benefited the people, not the land (although it had ecological advantages), just as the Sabbath serves the people rather than the seventh day itself. Just as it is essential to take a pause from work each week to contemplate the fruits of one’s labor and its spiritual significance, it is vital to step back every seven years and reflect on the land, the people’s ultimate provider.

The connection between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel is profound; without it, their mission in this world cannot be fulfilled. However, this attachment should not restrict the Jewish people spiritually or intellectually. Complete dependence on land can anchor individuals in a manner that diminishes their awareness of the Divine, transforming them from spiritual, moral beings into mere natural “beasts of burden.” (In modern times, the phrase “blood and soil” has come to symbolize dictatorships that glorify a cult of nature, imposing a “natural” order that prioritizes the dominance of the herd over the individual.) Moreover, a fixation on land risks narrowing perspectives and limiting the ability to foster a broader, more universal outlook, which is also essential to the global Jewish mission as a nation.

The tragic story from the dawn of humanity offers insight into this idea. “Cain was a tiller of the soil” (Genesis 4:2), *oved adamah*,

literally “working the land.” A Midrash elaborates that these words can also be read as *eved adamah*, “a slave to the land.” By dedicating all his physical and spiritual resources to the land, the tiller risks becoming enslaved by it, completely subservient to nature and its amoral laws. Thus, the “natural” course of events leads Cain to become his brother’s killer.

The Sabbatical Years, during which land cultivation is forbidden, served as a powerful means of maintaining a healthy degree of independence from the land. Neglecting these mandated agricultural breaks risked the people becoming overly “rooted” in the land, necessitating a corrective period that is proportional in length to the missed Sabbatical Years. This “forced therapy” functioned as a spiritual correction for the people rather than merely a punishment.

It is noteworthy that the priests and Levites, whose primary role was to maintain the nation’s spiritual connection to God, were not allocated land like the other tribes of Israel. Their separation from the land served as a reminder to the entire nation that they should not become enslaved by the land and that a life “beyond the soil” was possible.

This reasoning explains why the commandment to pause land cultivation every seven years carries the full weight of Torah Law only when the majority of the Jewish people reside in the Land of Israel. Under these circumstances, the risk of the entire nation becoming overly dependent on the Land is greater, necessitating periodic separation from it. However, when a significant portion of Jews live outside the Land, this national connection is naturally weakened; people view the Land from a distance, adopting a more universal outlook. In such cases, balance requires strengthening the connection to the Land. Thus, when the majority of the nation lives outside of Israel, observance of the seventh year is “downgraded” from a commandment to a rabbinic decree to preserve national memory. Consequently, some leniencies regarding the prohibitions of the seventh year are permitted, as is the case in Israel today.

#### § 24.6. SUSTENANCE DURING THE SABBATICAL AND JUBILEE YEARS (25:20-22)

כ וכי תאמרו מה-זאכל בשנה בשנה השביעית השביעית הן לא נזרע ולא  
נאסף את-תבואתנו: כא וצויתי את-ברכתי לכם בשנה הששית ועשת

את-התבואה לשלש השנים: כב וזרעֹתֶם את השנה השמינית ואכלתם  
מן-התבואה יִשֹׁן עד | השנה התשיעית עד-בוא תבואתה תאכלו יִשֹׁן:

**(20) And should you ask, “What are we to eat in the seventh year, if we may neither sow nor gather in our crops?”**

**(21) I will ordain My blessing for you in the sixth year, so that it shall yield a crop sufficient for three years.**

**(22) When you sow in the eighth year, you will still be eating old grain of that crop; you will be eating the old until the ninth year, until its crops come in.**

**(21) I will ordain My blessing for you in the sixth year, so that it shall yield a crop sufficient for three years:** The remarkable yield of the sixth year echoes the double portion of manna that fell in the wilderness on the sixth day in preparation for Shabbat (Exodus 16:22).

When the seventh year is followed by a Jubilee Year, which prevents the cultivation of land for two consecutive agricultural seasons, the Torah promises that the harvest of the sixth year will be so abundant that it will sustain the people not only through the eighth year but also into the first half of the ninth year. Without such clear Divine support, surviving a Jubilee Year – when no crops could be harvested for two years – would have been impossible in ancient times.

We have limited information about the observance of the Sabbatical and Jubilee Years during the First Temple period. During the Second Temple period, following the return from the Babylonian exile, as only a portion of the Jewish people resided in the Land of Israel, these laws were regarded as rabbinic decrees rather than Torah laws, allowing for certain leniencies. Nevertheless, many sources confirm that these laws were still faithfully observed.

#### § 24.7 THE REDEMPTION OF LAND AND HOUSES (25:23-28)

כג והארץ לא תמכר לצמחת פי-לי הארץ פי-גרים ותושבים אתם  
עמדי: כד ובכל ארץ ארץ אחזתכם גאלה תתנו לארץ: כה פי-ימוך אחיה  
ומכר מאחזתו ובא גאלו הקרב אליו וגאל את ממכר אחיו: כו ואיש פי

לֹא יִהְיֶה-לוֹ גְּאֻלַּת וְהִשְׁיֵגָה יָדוֹ וּמָצָא כְּדֵי גְּאֻלָּתוֹ: כִּי וְחָשַׁב אֶת-שְׁנֵי מִמְּכָרוֹ  
וְהִשְׁיֵב אֶת-הָעֶדְף לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר מָכַר-לוֹ וְשָׁב לְאַחֲזָתוֹ: כִּי וְאִם לֹא-מִצְאָה  
יָדוֹ דֵּי הַשְׁיֵב לוֹ וְהָיָה מִמְּכָרוֹ בְּיַד הַקֹּנֵה אֹתוֹ עַד שְׁנַת הַיּוֹבֵל וְיָצָא בַּיּוֹבֵל  
וְשָׁב לְאַחֲזָתוֹ:

**(23) But the land must not be sold beyond reclaim, for the land is Mine; you are but strangers resident with Me.**

**(24) Throughout the land that you hold, you must provide for the redemption of the land.**

**(25) If your kinsman is in straits and has to sell part of his holding, his nearest redeemer shall come and redeem what his kinsman has sold.**

**(26) If a man has no one to redeem for him, but prospers and acquires enough to redeem with,**

**(27) he shall compute the years since its sale, refund the difference to the man to whom he sold it, and return to his holding.**

**(28) If he lacks sufficient means to recover it, what he sold shall remain with the purchaser until the jubilee; in the jubilee year it shall be released, and he shall return to his holding.**

The Torah revisits the theme of the Jubilee Year, emphasizing brotherhood throughout the chapter. The laws regarding land redemption and restitution to original owners are not grounded in strict notions of justice; after all, in the context of justice, a sale should not be reversed. Instead, these laws are anchored in ideals of brotherhood and require a level of generosity and compassion that extends far beyond what justice alone would demand.

**(24) Throughout the land that you hold, you must provide for the redemption of the land:** The redemption of the land, akin to the redemption from slavery (as discussed in the following passages), is known as *geulah*. This significant term in Jewish tradition signifies deliverance from bondage or enslavement. It applies both to an individual returning to his land and to the wider context of a nation returning to its homeland, marking the end of exile and the Messianic redemption.

**(25) If your kinsman is in distress and has to sell part of his holding:** The phrase “Part of his holding” suggests that not all

the land is available for sale. The sages infer that even if a person encounters financial hardship and needs to sell his land, he should retain at least a small portion. This maintains their sense of connection to the land.

**(26) If he has no one to redeem for him, but prospers and acquires enough to redeem with:** If there is no one to help him, he must strive to borrow or earn the necessary funds to redeem his field.

**(27) he shall compute the years since its sale, refund the difference to the man to whom he sold it, and return to his holding:** The redemption price decreases relative to the number of years left until the Jubilee Year. As time passes, the cost of redemption becomes easier to manage.

#### § 24.8. A HOUSE WITHIN A WALLED CITY (25:29-34)

כט ואיש כי-ימכר בית-מושב עיר חומה ונהיתה ונהיתה גאלתו עד-תם שנת ממכרו ימים תהיה גאלתו: ל ואם לא-יגאל עד-מלאת לו שנה תמימה וקם הבית אשר-בעיר אשר-לא (לו) חמה לצמיחת לקנה אתו לדרתיו לא יצא ביבל: לא ובתי החצרים החצרים אשר אין-להם חמה סביב על-שדה הארץ יחשב גאלה תהיה-לו וביבל וביבל יצא: לב וערי הלויים בתי ערי ארצותם גאלת עולם תהיה ללויים: לג ואשר יגאל מן-הלויים ויצא ממכר-בית ועיר ארצותו ביבל כי בתי ערי הלויים הוא ארצותם בתוך בני ישראל: לד ושדה מגרש עריהם לא ימכר כי-ארצות עולם הוא להם:

**(29) If a man sells a dwelling house in a walled city, it may be redeemed until a year has elapsed since its sale; the redemption period shall be a year.**

**(30) If it is not redeemed before a full year has elapsed, the house in the walled city shall pass to the purchaser beyond reclaim, throughout the ages; it shall not be released in the jubilee.**

**(31) But houses in villages that have no encircling wall shall be classed as open country; they may be redeemed, and they shall be released through the jubilee.**

**(32) As for the cities of the Levites, the houses in the cities they hold – the Levites shall forever have the right of redemption.**

**(33) Such property as may be redeemed from the Levites – houses sold in a city they hold – shall be released through the jubilee; for the houses in the cities of the Levites are their holding among the Israelites.**

**(34) But the unenclosed land about their cities cannot be sold, for that is their holding for all time.**

**(29) If a man sells a dwelling house in a walled city, it may be redeemed until a year has elapsed since its sale:** A house is a significant asset, allowing the seller to cancel the transaction and reclaim their property within a year. This differs from transactions involving movable property, which take immediate effect and cannot be reversed.

**(30) If it is not redeemed, it shall not be released in the jubilee; they may be redeemed, and they shall be released through the jubilee:** Cities encircled by walls are seen as distinct from the fields. A field represents more than just a means of production; it embodies a connection to the land and to the ancestors who received their portion by lot from God at the time of the land's conquest. While valuable, a city house remains merely a possession.

**(31) But houses in villages that have no encircling wall shall be classed as open country; they may be redeemed and shall be released in the Jubilee:** These houses are regarded as part of the field, serving as an extension of ancestral land. Consequently, the redemption period is unlimited, and they revert during the Jubilee.

**(32) As for the cities of the Levites, the houses in the cities they hold – the Levites shall forever have the right of redemption:** Houses in Levitical cities are equivalent to land. When the land was distributed, the Levites did not receive their own territory; however, forty-eight cities were allocated to them, averaging four in each tribe. The Levites served as guardians and teachers of tradition, receiving sustenance from tithes provided by their surrounding communities. Thus, it was important for the Levites to maintain connections with

---

the tribes they lived with and understand local customs. Therefore, houses in Levitical cities symbolized a connection to ancestors and land allocation, serving as sources of livelihood and effectively functioning as fields for the Levites. Hence, laws pertaining to fields applied to these houses: they could always be redeemed and reverted in the Jubilee.

**(34) But the unenclosed land about their cities cannot be sold, for that is their holding for all time:** These areas can never be sold, even on a temporary basis. They are neither fields nor houses but symbols of the Levitical city itself, and thus, their status cannot be modified.

## § 25. THE PROHIBITION AGAINST OPPRESSING THE POOR AND SLAVES

### § 25.1. THE PROHIBITION OF USURY TOWARDS THE POOR (25:35-38)

לה וכי-ימוך אחיך ומטה ידו עמך והתקת בו גר ותושב ותי עמך: לו  
אל-תקח מאתו גשף ומרבית ונראת מאלהיך ותי אחיך עמך: לו את-  
כסףך לא-תתן לו בגשף ובמרבית לא-תתן אכלך: לח אני יי אלהיכם  
אשר-הוצאתי אתכם מארץ מצרים לתת לכם את-ארץ פנען להיות לכם  
לאלהים:

**(35) If your kinsman, being in straits, comes under your authority – proselyte or resident – you shall strengthen him and let him live by your side.**

**(36) Do not exact from him advance or accrued interest, but fear your God; let him live by your side as your kinsman.**

**(37) Do not lend him your money at interest or give him your food at a profit.**

**(38) I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan, to be your God.**

**(35) If your kinsman, being in straits, comes under your authority – proselyte or resident – you shall strengthen him:** Throughout this chapter, the emphasis is on brotherhood rather than simply justice. You must not allow your brother to fall into extreme poverty; the lower he sinks, the harder it will be to help

him rise again. You should strive to support him as soon as he faces difficulties. A Midrash compares this to a load on a donkey's back: if it begins to slip, one person can steady and reposition it. However, if it falls to the ground, one person alone cannot lift it.

**proselyte or resident:** These are distinct groups of non-native individuals who came from other nations and settled among the Israelites (see further commentary on 19:33). Such individuals are considered part of society, so the command to treat others like brothers applies to them as well, and there is a specific instruction to support them during financial hardship.

**(36) Do not exact from him advance or accrued interest:** In principle, charging interest on a loan is not inherently illegal or immoral. On the contrary, if someone uses another person's money, it is reasonable to pay a "rental fee." However, the principle of brotherhood forbids this.

**(37) Do not lend him your money at interest or give him your food at a profit:** As noted in the commentary to Exodus 22:24, the prohibition of usury is grounded in the borrower's poverty; demanding additional payments from him constitutes oppression. However, if he is not poor and takes a loan to improve his living conditions or expand a business, the reasoning behind the prohibition no longer applies. This issue arose in the 17th century when Europe transitioned from an agrarian to an industrial economy, fundamentally changing the nature of interest-bearing loans, which became essential for economic development. In this context, the rabbis established the *heter iska* – a "permit for a business arrangement" – that allowed interest-bearing loans for such purposes. This will be discussed further in the commentary on Deuteronomy 23:20-21, where the prohibition of interest-bearing loans is explained in more detail.

**(38) I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan, to be your God:** The conclusion of this passage presents two compelling reasons for fostering brotherly relationships – one drawn from the past and the other focused on the future. Learn from your history: Just as God helped you overcome the hardships of slavery in Egypt, you should follow His example by helping others. Focus on the future: God

brought you to the land of Canaan to serve as a model for the world by demonstrating honorable and compassionate treatment of your fellow beings. Those who fail to treat their neighbors with brotherly care are unworthy of dwelling in this land.

### § 25.2. THE PROHIBITION AGAINST ENSLAVING THE ISRAELITES (25:39-46)

לט וְכִי-יָמוּךְ אֶתְּיָדְךָ עִמָּךְ וְנִמְכַר-לְךָ לֹא-תַעֲבֹד בּוֹ עֲבָדָת עֶבֶד: מ כִּשְׂכָר  
 כְּתוֹשֵׁב יִהְיֶה עִמָּךְ עַד-שָׁנַת הַיְבֻל יַעֲבֹד עִמָּךְ: מֵא וַיֵּצֵא מֵעִמָּךְ הוּא וּבְנָיו  
 עִמּוֹ וְשִׁבְ אֶל-מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ וְאֶל-אֲחֻזַּת אֲבֹתָיו אֲבֹתָיו יָשׁוּב: מֵב פִּי-עֶבְדֵי הֵם  
 אֲשֶׁר-הוֹצֵאתִי אֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם לֹא יִמְכְרוּ מִמִּכְרַת עֶבֶד: מֵג לֹא-תִרְדֶּה  
 בּוֹ בַּפֶּרֶךְ וַיִּרְאֵת מֵאֲלֹהֶיךָ: מֵד וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמָּתְךָ אֲשֶׁר יִהְיוּ-לְךָ מֵאֵת הַגּוֹיִם  
 אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבֹתֶיכֶם מֵהֶם תִּקְנוּ עֶבֶד וְאִמָּה: מֵה וְגַם מִבְּנֵי הַתּוֹשָׁבִים הַגֵּרִים  
 עִמָּכֶם מֵהֶם תִּקְנוּ וּמִמִּשְׁפַּחְתָּם אֲשֶׁר עִמָּכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹלִידוּ בְּאֶרְצְכֶם וְהָיוּ  
 לְכֶם לְאֻחָזָה: מו וְהִתְנַחֵלְתֶם אֹתָם לְבְנֵיכֶם אַחֲרֵיכֶם לְרִשְׁתָּ אֲחֻזָּה לְעֹלָם  
 בָּהֶם תַּעֲבֹדוּ וּבְאִחֻכֶם בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ בְּאִחֻיו לֹא-תִרְדֶּה בּוֹ בַּפֶּרֶךְ:

**(39) If your kinsman under you continues in straits and must give himself over to you, do not subject him to the treatment of a slave.**

**(40) He shall remain with you as a hired or bound laborer; he shall serve with you only until the jubilee year.**

**(41) Then he and his children with him shall be free of your authority; he shall go back to his family and return to his ancestral holding.**

**(42) For they are My servants, whom I freed from the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold in the manner of a slave.**

**(43) You shall not rule over him ruthlessly; you shall fear your God.**

**(44) Such male and female slaves as you may have – it is from the nations around you that you may acquire male and female slaves.**

**(45) You may also buy them from among the children of aliens resident with you, or from their families that are**

among you, who were born into your land; these may become your property.

**(46) You may keep them as a possession for your children after you, for them to inherit as property for all time. Such you may treat as slaves. But as for your Israelite kinsmen, no one shall rule ruthlessly over the other.**

**(39) If your kinsman under you continues in straits and must give himself over to you:** Earlier, the text described a poor man selling his field and home, then a person in need of a loan (presumably with nothing left to sell), and now it addresses an even more dire situation where someone becomes so impoverished that he cannot survive on his own. In ancient times, the solution was to sell oneself into slavery to another Jew: his freedom was limited, and he had to perform any assigned work, but in return, he received food, clothing, and shelter for himself and his family.

**do not subject him to the treatment of a slave:** Tradition interprets “do not subject him to the treatment of a slave” primarily as a prohibition against degrading labor, such as “do not force him to carry your clothes to the bathhouse or put on your sandals.” Degrading work harms both the individual serving and the dignity of the master.

**(40) He shall remain with you as a hired or bound laborer:** The master must view the man who sold himself into slavery as a free individual who has hired his labor. He sold his work, not his identity. Therefore, the master must not perceive him mentally as a slave. A worker is employed not for the master’s comfort but for productive labor – farming or craftsmanship – and this is the type of work a Jewish slave should be assigned. Such labor enables him to maintain his skills and earn a living after gaining his freedom.

**he shall serve with you only until the jubilee year:** This fixed term differs from what is stated in Exodus (21:1), where a slave goes free in the seventh year. Here, the issue is considered not from the perspective of social relations, but from the perspective of holiness.

**(41) Then he and his children with him shall be free of your authority; he shall go back to his family and return to his ancestral holding:** From a social perspective, a Jewish slave could

remain with his master indefinitely if he desired and felt secure (Exodus 21:5). However, in the Jubilee Year, even these slaves were set free – this circumstance was no longer about convenience or choice. Since every Jew is a servant of God, he cannot remain permanently enslaved to another individual. Importantly, the liberation of slaves coincided with the return of ancestral properties. Thus, in the Jubilee Year, a slave not only regains his freedom but also receives land, allowing him to support himself. This is why, unlike in Deuteronomy 15:13, there is no mention of a severance grant – the Jubilee Year provides for it.

**(42) For they are My servants, whom I freed from the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold in the manner of a slave:** They must not be sold at public auctions. Selling a Jew into slavery is disgraceful in itself, so the sale should not be conducted publicly. Here, the prohibition against treating Jews as slaves is based not on social but on religious grounds: since Jews are God’s servants, destined to proclaim Him to the world, it is improper for them to be enslaved by others – even if harsh economic conditions drive them to it. This also parallels the earlier point: just as the Land of Israel belongs to God and cannot be sold permanently, so too do the Jewish people.

**(43) You shall not rule over him ruthlessly:** The Torah uses the expression *be-pareh*, meaning “harshly, cruelly,” echoing the description of oppression in Egypt (Exodus 1:13). Tradition interprets this “cruelty” as compelling someone to perform pointless labor – often assigned to slaves merely to assert the master’s dominance. Naturally, this also prohibits demanding unbearable labor, beating slaves, and similar acts, as discussed in the slavery laws in Exodus from a social standpoint.

**(44) Such male and female slaves as you may have – it is from the nations around you that you may acquire male and female slaves:** If surrounding nations practice slavery, Jews are not required to abolish the institution entirely. Slaves from other nations adhered to the norms of the time. Nevertheless, even for such slaves, the Torah mandates better treatment than was typical; for instance, a slave would be freed if the master knocked out his tooth or eye (Exodus 21:26). However, if the era of slavery ends, then Jews are also forbidden to keep slaves from other nations.

**(45) You may also buy them from among the children of aliens resident with you, or from their families that are among you, who were born into your land; these may become your property:** Above, these individuals were described as members of society, sharing communal responsibilities with the Jews. They should receive economic support and assistance when needed. However, if they believe they might sell their children into slavery, then those children may be bought.

§ 25.3. IF AN ISRAELITE IS SOLD TO  
A RESIDENT ALIEN (25:47-55)

מז וכי תשיג גר ותושב עמך ומך אחיך עמו ונמכר לגר ותושב עמך או לעקר משפחת גר: מח אחיך נמכר גאולה תהיה-לו אהוד מאחיו יגאלנו: מט או-דדו או בן-דדו יגאלנו או-משאר בשירו משפחתו יגאלנו או-השיגה ידו ונגאל: נ וחשב עם-קנהו משנת המכרו לו עד שנת היבל והיה פסוף ממכרו במספר שנים כימי שכיר יהיה עמו: נא אם-עוד רבות בשנים לפיהן ישיב גאלתו מכסף מקנתו: נב ואם-מעט נשאר בשנים עד-שנת היבל וחשב-לו כפי שניו ישיב את-גאלתו: נג כשכיר שנה בשנה יהיה עמו לא-ירדנו בפרו בפרו לעיניו: נד ואם-לא יגאל בגאולה ויצא בשנת היבל הוא ובניו עמו: נה כי-לי בני-ישראל עבדים עבדי הם אשר-הוצאתי אותם מארץ מצרים אני יי אלהיכם:

**(47) If a resident alien among you has prospered, and your kinsman, being in straits, comes under his authority and gives himself over to the resident alien among you, or to an offshoot of an alien's family,**

**(48) he shall have the right of redemption even after he has given himself over. One of his kinsmen shall redeem him,**

**(49) or his uncle or his uncle's son shall redeem him, or anyone of his family who is of his own flesh shall redeem him; or, if he prospers, he may redeem himself.**

**(50) He shall compute with his purchaser the total from the year he gave himself over to him until the jubilee**

**year, the price of his sale being applied to the number of years: as with a hired laborer's term, so shall he be under his authority.**

**(51) If many years remain, he shall pay back for his redemption in proportion to his purchase price;**

**(52) and if few years remain until the jubilee year, he shall so compute and pay for his redemption according to the years involved.**

**(53) He shall be under his authority as a laborer hired by the year; he shall not rule ruthlessly over him in your sight.**

**(54) If he is not redeemed in any of those ways, he and his children with him shall go free in the jubilee year.**

**(55) For it is to Me that the Israelites are servants: they are My servants, whom I freed from the land of Egypt, I the Lord your God.**

**(47) If a resident alien among you has prospered, and your kinsman, being in straits, comes under his authority and gives himself over to the resident alien among you, or to an offshoot of an alien's family:** This presents the most difficult situation: an impoverished Jew could not find another Jew to purchase him and was compelled to sell himself to a resident alien.

**(48) He shall have the right of redemption even after he has given himself over. One of his kinsmen shall redeem him:** Such a sale is seen as a desperate cry for help. Unlike the slave who stays within the Jewish community, this situation demands immediate action. Therefore, the circle of relatives necessary to redeem him is intentionally expanded.

**(53-54) He shall be under his authority as a laborer hired by the year; he shall not rule ruthlessly over him in your sight. If he is not redeemed in any of those ways, he and his children with him shall go free in the jubilee year:** Non-Jews living in the land of Israel are subject to its rules. Therefore, a non-Jew who purchases a Jewish slave must also provide for the slave's children (a requirement absent from the laws of slavery in other nations),

may not “rule over him ruthlessly,” and must free the slave in the Jubilee Year.

#### § 25.4. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EXODUS AND LEVITICUS IN THEIR APPROACHES TO SLAVERY AND THE SEVENTH YEAR

As noted earlier, the Torah addresses the issues of the Sabbatical Year, loans, and the status of slaves in both the Book of Exodus and the Book of Leviticus. However, the approaches in these two books differ considerably.

Exodus outlines laws for those recently freed from slavery in Egypt, emphasizing practical matters like daily life and social protection. In contrast, Leviticus examines these issues from a different perspective – through the lens of holiness, humanity’s relationship with God, and the Jewish people’s mission to impact humanity.

Exodus does not question the institution of slavery itself; rather, it focuses on the conditions of slavery, the process of release from it, and the circumstances under which a slave might choose to remain with his master. Many of the laws in Exodus also address compensation and the payment of fines.

In Leviticus, although the institution of slavery is still permitted, it is implicitly challenged through laws that regulate its practice and emphasize the dignity and holiness of each individual Jew. It is forbidden to treat an Israelite slave as mere property, for all Israelites are “slaves” of God. A Jew cannot remain in slavery forever, even by his own choice. Consequently, the Jubilee Year mandates the release of all Israelite slaves, regardless of their desires.

Likewise, the Sabbatical Year is treated differently in these two books. In Exodus, the seventh year is presented with a focus on social distinctions, particularly between the wealthy and the impoverished. The text emphasizes aiding the needy, including widows and orphans. The fruits of the land during the seventh year are allocated for the poor – those who are well-off have their means of sustenance. In contrast, Leviticus does not address social status – all Israelites are considered God’s servants. Moreover, the land belongs to the Creator; thus, in the seventh year, everyone shares equally in its produce.

The Jubilee Year arrives, abolishing permanent land ownership and slavery altogether. If a fellow Israelite becomes impoverished, the commandment mandates assistance to ensure that he “lives by your side.” This aid is rooted not in justice but in brotherhood.

In essence, Exodus reflects a more earthly reality, emphasizing social and material needs, whereas Leviticus conveys a more divine perspective centered on holiness and spiritual principles. In life, achieving a balance between these two approaches is essential for fostering harmony between the practical and the spiritual.

§ 25.5. COMPLETING THE THEME OF HOLINESS:  
THE PROHIBITION OF IDOLATRY AND THE VIOLATION  
OF THE SABBATH (26:1-2)

א לא-תעֲשׂוּ לָכֶם אֱלִילִים וּפְסֵל וּמִצְבֵּה לֹא-תִקְיִמוּ לָכֶם וְאֲבֹן מִשְׁפָּיִת  
לֹא תִתְנֶנּוּ בְּאֶרְצְכֶם לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת עָלֶיהָ כִּי אֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: ב אֶת-שַׁבְּתֹתַי  
תִּשְׁמְרוּ וְתִשְׁמְרוּ וּמִקְדָּשִׁי תִירָאוּ וְתִירָאוּ אֲנִי יְיָ:

**(1) You shall not make idols for yourselves, or set up for yourselves carved images or pillars, or place figured stones in your land to worship upon, for I the Lord am your God.**

**(2) You shall keep My sabbaths and venerate My sanctuary: I am the Lord.**

These two verses open the 26th chapter; however, in terms of content, they conclude the preceding 25th chapter. Chapter division is a later Christian tradition that originated in the 13th century. Although it was adopted by Jews for reference purposes, it cannot always be relied upon as a meaningful organizational structure of the text. Numerous instances in the Torah demonstrate that the chapter divisions do not align with the thematic or logical structure of the text.

WEEKLY  
PORTION 10

# BECHUKOTAI

## § 26. BLESSINGS AND CURSES FOR KEEPING AND VIOLATING THE COVENANT

### § 26.1. BLESSINGS AND CURSES AS PART OF THE COVENANT

The *Bechukotai* portion outlines the consequences of obeying or violating the commandments. It begins with a brief overview of the prosperity that comes from obedience, followed by a detailed account of the severe repercussions of disobedience. These descriptions are so alarming that when the Torah is read in the synagogue, they are often recited quickly, almost in a whisper, to avoid dwelling on the horrors.

However, it would be incorrect to assume that the curses outweigh the blessings. Although fewer in number, the blessings are comprehensive and complementary: prosperity, peace, health, and spiritual growth. They encompass all aspects of life.

The curses, however, are presented in greater detail, with each verse addressing a specific aspect while often reiterating certain points for emphasis. Consequently, the blessings are significantly more profound, but the text underscores the curses for pedagogical reasons – to leave a stronger impression on potential violators.

The Torah discusses blessings and curses in Leviticus and reiterates them twice in Deuteronomy (*Ki Tavo*, Chapter 28 and *Ha'Azinu*, Chapter 32). This theme is deeply woven into the Covenant and forms a vital part of it.

In the commentary on Deuteronomy, we will examine the differences among these three passages in greater detail. For now, we will limit ourselves to a brief commentary.

§ 26.2. THE BLESSINGS FOR KEEPING  
THE COVENANT (26:3-13)

ג אם-בְּחַקְתִּי תִלְכוּ וְאֶת-מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וְעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם: ד וְנָתַתִּי  
גִשְׁמֵיכֶם בְּעֵתָם וְנָתַנָּה הָאָרֶץ יְבוּלָהּ וְעֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה יִתֵּן פְּרִיֹ: ה וְהִשִּׁיג לְכֶם  
דְּבִישׁ אֶת-בְּצָיִר וּבְצָיִר יִשִּׁיג אֶת-גֶּרֶע וְאֶכְלֹתֶם לַחֲמֹכְכֶם לְשִׁבְעָה וְיִשְׁבַּתֶּם  
לְבַטַח בְּאַרְצְכֶם: ו וְנָתַתִּי שְׁלוֹם בְּאָרֶץ וְיִשְׁכַּבְתֶּם וְאִין מִחְרִיד וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי  
חַיָּה רָעָה מִן-הָאָרֶץ וְחָרֵב לֹא-תַעֲבֹר בְּאַרְצְכֶם: ז וְרַדְפְּתֶם אֶת-אֲיִבֵיכֶם  
וְנִפְּלוּ לְפָנֵיכֶם לְחָרֵב: ח וְרַדְפוּ מִכֶּם מִכֶּם חֲמֹשֶׁה מֵאָה וּמֵאָה מִכֶּם רַבְּבָה  
יִרְדְּפוּ וְנִפְּלוּ אֲיִבֵיכֶם לְפָנֵיכֶם לְחָרֵב: ט וּפְגִימֵי אֲלֵיכֶם וְהַפְּרִיתִי אֶתְכֶם  
וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֶתְכֶם וְהִקִּימֵתִי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם: י וְאֶכְלֹתֶם יֶשֶׁן נוֹשָׁן וְיֶשֶׁן  
מִפְּגֵי חַדָּשׁ תּוֹצִיאוּ: יא וְנָתַתִּי מִשְׁכָּנִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְלֹא-תִגְעַל נַפְשֵׁי אֶתְכֶם:  
יב וְהִתְהַלַּכְתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְהִייתִי לְכֶם לְאֱלֹהִים וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ-לִי לְעָם: יג אֲנִי  
יִי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם מֵהַיָּם לְהָם עֲבָדִים  
וְאֲשַׁבֵּר מִטַּת עַלְכֶם עַלְכֶם וְאוֹלֵךְ אֶתְכֶם קוֹמָמִיּוֹת:

**(3) If you follow My laws and faithfully observe My commandments,**

**(4) I will grant your rains in their season, so that the earth shall yield its produce and the trees of the field their fruit.**

**(5) Your threshing shall overtake the vintage, and your vintage shall overtake the sowing; you shall eat your fill of bread and dwell securely in your land.**

**(6) I will grant peace in the land, and you shall lie down untroubled by anyone; I will give the land respite from vicious beasts, and no sword shall cross your land.**

**(7) You shall give chase to your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword.**

**(8) Five of you shall give chase to a hundred, and a hundred of you shall give chase to ten thousand; your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.**

**(9) I will look with favor upon you, and make you fertile and multiply you; and I will maintain My covenant with you.**

**(10) You shall eat old grain long stored, and you shall have to clear out the old to make room for the new.**

**(11) I will establish My abode in your midst, and I will not spurn you.**

**(12) I will be ever present in your midst: I will be your God, and you shall be My people.**

**(13) I the Lord am your God who brought you out from the land of the Egyptians to be their slaves no more, who broke the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect.**

**(3) If you follow My laws and faithfully observe My commandments:** The blessings begin with the promise of rain – the primary water source in the land. Without it, the crops will wither, no harvest will grow, and famine will ensue.

**(5) Your threshing shall overtake the vintage, and your vintage shall overtake the sowing.** The grain harvest occurs in spring and early summer, the grape harvest at the end of summer, and grain sowing in early winter, just before the rainy season. This promise indicates that the harvests will be so abundant that they will overlap, creating a seamless agricultural cycle.

**(6) I will grant peace in the land:** *Shalom* means not only the absence of war but also encompasses “wholeness, harmony, and completeness.”

**(9) I will look with favor upon you:** God reveals Himself when people recognize His influence in their lives.

**and I will maintain My covenant with you:** This not only confirms the original Covenant at Sinai, but also renews the Covenant on a new level: God’s manifest presence among the Jewish people.

**(11) I will not spurn you:** Even if you make mistakes, I will never turn my back on you.

§ 26.3. THE CURSES FOR VIOLATING  
THE COVENANT (26:14-39)

יד ואם-לא תשמעו לי ולא תעשו את כל-המצוות האלה: טו ואם-בחקתי  
תמאסו ואם את-משפטי תגעל בפשכם לבלתי עשות את-כל-מצותי  
להפרכם את-בריתי: טז אף-אני אעשה-נזאת לכם והפקדתי עליכם בהלה  
את-השחפת ואת-הקדחת מכלות עינים ומדיבת גפוש וזרעתם לריק  
זרעכם ואכלהו איביכם: יז ונתתי פני בכם ונגפתם לפני איביכם ורדו  
בכם שונאיכם ונסתם ואיו-רדף אתכם: יח ואם-עד-אלה לא תשמעו לי  
ונספתי לסרה אתכם שבע על-חטאתיכם: יט ושברתי את-גאון עונם  
ונתתי את-שמכם כפרזל ואת-ארצכם כנחשה: כ ותם לריק לחכם ולא-  
תתו ארצכם את-יבולה ועץ ועץ הארץ לא יתן פרו: פרו: כא ואם-  
תלכו עמי קרי ולא תאבו לשמע לי ונספתי עליכם מכה שבע כחטאתיכם:  
כב והשלחתי בכם את-חית השדה ושפלה אתכם והכריתיה את-בהמתכם  
והמעיטה אתכם ונשמו דרכיכם: כג ואם-באלה לא תוסרו לי והלכתם  
עמי קרי: כד והלכתי אף-אני עמכם בקרי והפיתי אתכם גם-אני שבע  
על-חטאתיכם: כה והבאתי עליכם חרב נקמת נקם-ברית ונאספתם אל-  
עריכם ושלחתי לברל בתוככם ונתתם ביד-אויב: כו בשברי לכם מטה-  
לחם ואפו עשור נשים לחמכם בתנור בתנור אהד אהד והשיבו לחמכם  
במשקל ואכלתם ולא תשבעו:

כז ואם-בזאת לא תשמעו לי והלכתם עמי בקרי: כח והלכתי עמכם  
בחתת-קרי ויסרתי אתכם אף-אני שבע על-חטאתיכם: כט ואכלתם בשר  
בניכם ובשור בנותיכם בנותיכם תאכלו: ל והשמדתי את-במתיכם והכרתי  
את-חמניכם ונתתי את-פגריכם על-פגרי גלויכם וגעלה נפשי אתכם: לא  
ונתתי את-עריכם חרבה והשמותי את-מקדשיכם ולא אריח בריח גיחתכם:  
לב והשמתי אני את-הארץ ושממו עליה איביכם הישבים הישבים בה: לג  
ואתכם אזרה בגוים והיריקתי אתריכם חרב והיתה ארצכם שממה ועריכם  
יהיו חרבה: לד אז תרצה הארץ את-שבתהיה כל ימי השמה ואתם בארץ  
איביכם אז תשבת הארץ והרצת את-שבתהיה: לה כל-ימי השמה תשבת  
את אשר לא-שבתה בשבתתכם בשבתתכם בשבתתכם עליה: לו והנשארם  
בכם בכם והבאתי מרוד מרוד בלבכם בארצת איביהם ורדף אתם קול עלה  
גדף ונסו מגסת-חרב וגפלו וגפלו ואיו רדף: לז וכשלו איש-באחיו כמפגי-  
חרב ורדף איו ולא-תהיה לכם תקומה לפני איביכם: לח ואבדתם בגוים  
ואכלה אתכם ארץ איביכם: לט והנשארם בכם ימקו בעונם בארצת  
איביכם ואף בעונת אבתם אתם ימקו:

**(14) But if you do not obey Me and do not observe all these commandments,**

**(15) if you reject My laws and spurn My rules, so that you do not observe all My commandments and you break My covenant,**

**(16) I in turn will do this to you: I will wreak misery upon you – consumption and fever, which cause the eyes to pine and the body to languish; you shall sow your seed to no purpose, for your enemies shall eat it.**

**(17) I will set My face against you: you shall be routed by your enemies, and your foes shall dominate you; you shall flee though none pursues.**

**(18) And if for all that you do not obey Me, I will go on to discipline you sevenfold for your sins,**

**(19) and I will break your proud glory. I will make your skies like iron and your earth like copper,**

**(20) so that your strength shall be spent to no purpose; your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit.**

**(21) And if you remain hostile toward Me and refuse to obey Me, I will go on smiting you sevenfold for your sins.**

**(22) I will loose wild beasts against you, and they shall bereave you of your children and wipe out your cattle; they shall decimate you, and your roads shall be deserted.**

**(23) And if these things fail to discipline you for Me, and you remain hostile to Me,**

**(24) I too will remain hostile to you: I in turn will smite you sevenfold for your sins.**

**(25) I will bring a sword against you to wreak vengeance for the covenant; and if you withdraw into your cities, I will send pestilence among you and you shall be delivered into enemy hands.**

**(26) When I break your staff of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven; they shall dole out your**

bread by weight, and though you eat, you shall not be satisfied.

(27) But if, despite this, you disobey Me and remain hostile to Me,

(28) I will act against you in wrathful hostility; I for My part will discipline you sevenfold for your sins.

(29) You shall eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters.

(30) I will destroy your cult places and cut down your incense stands, and I will heap your carcasses upon your lifeless idols; I will spurn you.

(31) I will lay your cities in ruin and make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not savor your pleasing odors.

(32) I will make the land desolate, so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled by it.

(33) And you I will scatter among the nations, and I will unsheath the sword against you. Your land shall become a desolation and your cities a ruin.

(34) Then shall the land make up for its sabbath years throughout the time that it is desolate, and you are in the land of your enemies; then shall the land rest and make up for its sabbath years.

(35) Throughout the time that it is desolate, it shall observe the rest that it did not observe in your sabbath years while you were dwelling upon it.

(36) As for those of you who survive, I will cast a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; the sound of a driven leaf shall put them to flight; fleeing as though from the sword, they shall fall, though none pursues.

(37) With no one pursuing, they shall stumble over one another as before the sword. You shall not be able to stand your ground before your enemies,

(38) but shall perish among the nations; and the land of your enemies shall consume you.

**(39) Those of you who survive shall be heartsick over their iniquity in the lands of your enemies; moreover, they shall be heartsick over the iniquities of their fathers.**

The consequences of breaking the covenant are depicted with such detail and severity that people tremble and take heed.

The list of transgressions and punishments unfolds in five cycles. Each cycle begins with an outline of the sin, followed by the corresponding divine punishment. Initially, God's punishment is not severe, allowing for repentance. However, if people do not change their ways, the consequences will become increasingly severe.

**The first cycle:**

Transgression (verses 14–5)

Punishment (verses 16–17)

**The second cycle:**

Transgression (verse 18)

Punishment (verses 18–20)

**The third cycle:**

Transgression (verse 21)

Punishment (verses 21–22)

**The fourth cycle:**

Transgression (verse 23)

Punishment (verses 24–26)

**The fifth cycle:**

Transgression (verse 27)

Punishment (verses 28–39)

**(17) You shall flee though none pursues:** This indicates a state of demoralization that leads to paranoid fear.

**(26) ...ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven; they shall dole out your bread by weight:** Families will be compelled to bake bread together and share it in small portions. Owning an oven at home indicates prosperity, while communal baking represents hardship.

**(29) You shall eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters:** Cannibalism is the extreme result of famine in a besieged city. In these situations, children are often the first victims

of starving people who are driven mad by hunger. These chilling words can also be interpreted metaphorically.

The first four cycles of transgressions and punishments are similar in structure and length; however, the fifth differs greatly. It describes the devastation of the land and the national exile. Unlike the first four cycles, which allow for immediate correction – if repentance occurs – since the people still remain in their land, the fifth describes a prolonged period of exile.

Yet it is precisely during exile that the people can repent and make amends.

**(31) I will lay your cities in ruin and make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not savor your pleasing odors:** Do not expect that sacrifices and prayers will magically atone for you. When God’s patience is exhausted, rituals will not save you.

**(32) I will make the land desolate, so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled by it:** Earlier verses describe the punishments inflicted on the people while they reside in the Land. This verse elevates the punishment to the next level – exile. Yet, even as the Land expels the Israelites, it will not welcome their enemies, who will be appalled by its barrenness. Hidden within this curse is a blessing: The Land of Israel will remain faithful to the people of Israel. Even in their absence, it will not bestow its bounty on another nation, awaiting the return of its rightful owners. This has held true throughout history until the return of the Jewish people; the “land between the river and the sea” remained a neglected frontier of empires.

**(34) Then shall the land make up for its sabbath years throughout the time that it is desolate, and you are in the land of your enemies; then shall the land rest and make up for its sabbath years:** As noted above, it is necessary to periodically “detach” from the land (every seven years). Failure to do so will result in long-term exile – literal separation from the land. Exile serves as a “bitter medicine” for excessive attachment to the land and dependence on its material benefits. According to tradition, the seventy years of Babylonian exile correspond to the seventy unobserved Sabbatical Years of the First Temple period. (This “Divine arithmetic” likely does not pertain to the exile following the destruction of the Second Temple.)

**(35) Throughout the time that it is desolate, it shall observe the rest that it did not observe in your sabbath years while you were dwelling upon it:** This concept is also found in the Book of Jeremiah and other texts, where the seventy years of the Babylonian exile are associated with the number of neglected Sabbatical Years. Ezra and Nehemiah similarly recognized this: upon their return and the rebuilding of the Second Temple, they mandated that the people observe the Sabbatical Years. Although the formal obligation of *shmita* was not in effect, as the majority of Israelites resided outside the land, the sages instituted its observance to maintain the tradition and memory of the First Temple period.

**(36) As for those of you who survive, I will cast a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; the sound of a driven leaf shall put them to flight; fleeing as though from the sword, they shall fall, though none pursues:** In exile, unable to defend themselves militarily, the people lose their national dignity. Uprooted from their land, they forfeit their legendary courage, pride, and audacity. Exile diminishes the Jewish people; although individuals and communities may achieve great heights, as a nation, they become weak, vulnerable, and reactive.

#### § 26.4. THE CORRECTION (26:40-45)

מ והתנדו את-עונם ואת-עון אבתם במעלם אשר מעלו-כי ולא אשר-  
הלכו עמי בקרי: מא אף-אני אלך עמם בקרי והבאתי אתם בארץ-  
איביהם או-אז: כנע לבבכם הערל ואז: רצו את-עונם: מב וזכרתי את-  
בריתי יעקוב ואף את-בריתי: יצחק ולא את-בריתי אברהם אברהם  
אזכר והארץ אזכר: מג והארץ תעזב מהם ותרוץ את-שבתתיה בהשמה  
מהם והם: רצו את-עונם יעו יעו ובלעו במשפט מאסו ואת-חקתי געלה  
נפשים: נפשים: מד ואף-גם-זאת בהיותם בהיותם בארץ איביהם לא-  
מאסתים ולא-געלתים לכלתם להפר בריתי אתם כי אני יי אלהיהם:  
מה וזכרתי להם ברית ראשנים אשר הוצאתי-אתם מארץ מצרים לעיני  
הגוים הגוים להנות להנות להם לאלהים אני יי

**(40) But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, in that they trespassed against Me, indeed, were hostile to Me,**

(41) when I, in turn, have been hostile to them and have removed them into the land of their enemies – then, at last, their obdurate heart will humble itself, and they will atone for their iniquity.

(42) Then will I remember My covenant with Jacob; I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land.

(43) For the land shall be forsaken of them, making up for its sabbath years by being desolate of them; while they atone for their iniquity, for the abundant reason that they rejected My rules and spurned My laws.

(44) Yet, even then, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or spurn them so as to destroy them, annulling My covenant with them: for I the Lord am their God.

(45) I will remember in their favor the covenant with the ancients, whom I freed from the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God: I, the Lord.

(40) But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers: Repentance occurring in exile begins with confession.

(44) Then will I remember My covenant I will not reject them or spurn them so as to destroy them, annulling My covenant with them: God will remember His covenant. Following this, the return will come.

However, the return itself is not described in detail in this passage. Nowhere in the Torah, even in passages that discuss exile and the preservation of the nation from disappearing in exile (*Ki Tavo* and *Ha'azinu*, Deuteronomy 28 and 32), is the actual act of return mentioned.

The Prophets, such as Ezekiel 36 (the prophecy of the dry bones), discuss the return, but the Torah does not. This may be due to Moses' role. Moses was not the appropriate conduit for information about the Messianic era; he was focused on leading the people to the Promised Land. This theme will be further explored in the commentary on the Book of Numbers.

## § 26.5. ALL THIS WAS GIVEN AT SINAI (26:46)

מוֹ אֱלֹהֵי הַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים וְהַתּוֹרֹת וְהַתּוֹרֹת אֲשֶׁר נָתַן יי  
 בֵּינֵנוּ וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהַר סִינַי בְּיַד-מֹשֶׁה:

**(46) These are the laws, rules, and instructions that the Lord established, through Moses on Mount Sinai, between Himself and the Israelite people.**

The Book of Leviticus concludes with a recurring reference to Mount Sinai, signaling the end of the covenant description. However, the covenant contains an addition: the laws concerning the redemption of items consecrated to God and the Temple.

## § 27. CONSECRATION TO GOD AND THE REDEMPTION OF THE CONSECRATED

### § 27.1. THE CONSECRATION OF MAN (27:1-8)

א וַיְדַבֵּר יְיָ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ב דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אִישׁ כִּי יִפְלֵא גִידָר בְּעַרְפֹּתָי נִפְשֹׁת לַיְי: ג וְהָיָה עַרְפֹּת הַזָּכָר מִבֶּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְעַד בֶּן-שִׁשִּׁים שָׁנָה וְהָיָה עַרְפֹּת חֲמִשִּׁים שָׁקֶל כֶּסֶף בְּשָׁקֶל בְּשָׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ: ד וְאִם-נְזִיבָה הִוא וְהָיָה עַרְפֹּת שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁקֶל: ה וְאִם מִבֶּן-חֲמִשׁ שָׁנִים וְעַד בֶּן-עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְהָיָה עַרְפֹּת הַזָּכָר עֶשְׂרִים שָׁקֶלִים וְלִנְזִיבָה עֶשְׂרֵת שָׁקֶלִים: ו וְאִם מִבֶּן-חֲדָשׁ וְעַד בֶּן-חֲמִשׁ שָׁנִים וְהָיָה עַרְפֹּת הַזָּכָר חֲמִשָּׁה שָׁקֶלִים כֶּסֶף וְלִנְזִיבָה עַרְפֹּת חֲמִשָּׁה שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה אִם-זָכָר וְהָיָה עַרְפֹּת חֲמִשָּׁה עֶשְׂרִים שָׁקֶל וְלִנְזִיבָה עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁקֶלִים: ח וְאִם-מִבֶּן הִוא מִעַרְפֹּת וְהָיָה מִבֶּן חֲמִשָּׁה שָׁנִים וְעַד חֲמִשָּׁה עֶשְׂרִים שָׁקֶלִים אִתּוֹ הַכֹּהֵן עַל-פִּי אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁיֵג יַד הַגִּזְרֵר יַעֲרִיכֵנו הַכֹּהֵן:

**(1) The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:**

**(2) Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: When anyone explicitly vows to the Lord the equivalent for a human being,**

**(3) the following scale shall apply: If it is a male from twenty to sixty years of age, the equivalent is fifty shekels of silver by the sanctuary weight;**

**(4) if it is a female, the equivalent is thirty shekels.**

**(5) If the age is from five to twenty years, the equivalent is twenty shekels for a male and ten shekels for a female.**

**(6) If the age is from one month to five years, the equivalent for a male is five shekels of silver; for a female, the equivalent is three shekels of silver.**

**(7) If the age is sixty years or over, the equivalent is fifteen shekels in the case of a male and ten shekels for a female.**

**(8) But if one cannot afford the equivalent, he shall be presented before the priest and the priest shall assess him; the priest shall assess him according to what the vower can afford.**

This chapter describes situations where a person can enhance holiness by dedicating an individual or their property to God and the Temple. Since this represents an additional expansion of the realm of holiness, it is regarded as an addendum to the Book of Leviticus.

**(2) When anyone explicitly vows to the Lord the equivalent for a human being:** One can consecrate himself or his close relatives to God by transferring a specific sum of money to the Temple, referred to as the “redemption fee for the consecrated.”

**(3) If it is a male from twenty to sixty years of age, the equivalent is fifty shekels of silver by the sanctuary weight:** This amount is roughly equivalent to the cost of hiring a laborer for an extended period. Among those of working age, between 20 and 60, the valuation is the highest. For younger or older individuals, the value decreases to reflect their reduced ability to work. The payment required for the vow adds psychological significance to the dedication. Thus, if a person wishes to dedicate their entire life to God through a vow, they may do so – but the cost will be substantial. However, if the individual cannot afford the amount, it is adjusted accordingly.

## § 27.2. THE CONSECRATION OF LIVESTOCK (27:9-13)

ט ואם-בְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר יִקְרִיבוּ יִקְרִיבוּ מִמֶּנָּה קָרְבָּן לִּי כֹל אֲשֶׁר יִתֵּן מִמֶּנּוּ לִּי יִהְיֶה-קֹדֶשׁ: י לֹא יִחְלִיפֻנּוּ וְלֹא-יִמָּיר אֹתוֹ טוֹב בְּרַע אֹר-רַע בְּטוֹב וְאִם-הֵמָּר יִמָּיר בְּהֵמָה בְּבֵהֶמָה וְהִיהָ-הוּא-וּתְמוּרָתוֹ יִהְיֶה-קֹדֶשׁ: יא וְאִם כָּל-

בְּהֵמָה טְמֵאָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִקְרְבוּ מִמֶּנָּה קֶרְבָּן לַגִּי וְהֶעֱמִיד אֶת-הַבְּהֵמָה לִפְנֵי  
הַכֹּהֵן: יב וְהֶעֱרִיף הַכֹּהֵן אֹתָהּ כִּי־יֵטֵב וְכִי־רָע כְּעֶרְפֶּךָ הַכֹּהֵן כִּן יִהְיֶה: יג  
וְאִם-גָּאֵל יִגְאֹלְנָה וַיִּסְרֶף חֲמִישְׁתּוֹ עַל-עֶרְפֶּךָ:

**(9) If it is an animal that may be brought as an offering to the Lord, any such that may be given to the Lord shall be holy.**

**(10) One may not exchange or substitute another for it, either good for bad, or bad for good; if one does substitute one animal for another, the thing substituted for and its substitute shall both be holy.**

**(11) If it is any unclean animal that may not be brought as an offering to the Lord, the animal shall be presented before the priest,**

**(12) and the priest shall assess it; whether high or low, its assessment shall stand.**

**(13) And if he wishes to redeem it, he must add one-fifth to its assessment.**

**(9) If it is an animal that may be brought as an offering to the Lord, any such that may be given to the Lord shall be holy:** This refers to a person consecrating his animal for sacrificial use in the Temple.

**(10) One may not exchange or substitute another for it, either good for bad, or bad for good:** A consecrated animal cannot be exchanged for another, regardless of whether the replacement holds greater or lesser value.

**if one does substitute one animal for another, the thing substituted for and its substitute shall both be holy:** In the case of substitution, both the original and the replacement are consecrated on the altar.

**(11) If it is any unclean animal that may not be brought as an offering to the Lord, the animal shall be presented before the priest.** If someone consecrated an unclean domestic animal, like a donkey or a camel, the Temple would sell it.

**(13) And if he wishes to redeem it, he must add one-fifth to its assessment:** If a person wishes to reclaim the animal he has consecrated, he must pay more than others for it, demonstrating the seriousness of his commitment to the offering.

§ 27.3. THE CONSECRATION OF THE HOUSE  
AND FIELD (27:14-25)

יד ואיש קי-יקדש את-ביתו קדש ליי והעריכו הפהו בין טוב ובין רע  
 קאשר געריד אתו הפהו פו יקום: טו ואם-המקדיש יגאל את-ביתו וינסף  
 חמישית כסף-ערפס עליו והיה לו: טז ואם | משנה אחתו יקדיש איש  
 ליי והיה ערפס לפי זרעו זרע חמר שערים בחמשים שקל כסף: יז אם-  
 משנת היבל יקדיש שנהו כערפס יקום: יח ואם-אתר היבל יקדיש שנהו  
 וחשב-לו הפהו את-הכסף על-פי השנים הנותרת עד שנת היבל ונגרע  
 מערפס: יט ואם-גאל יגאל את-השנה המקדיש אתו וינסף חמישית כסף-  
 ערפס עליו נקם לו: כ ואם-לא יגאל את-השנה ואם-מכר את-השנה  
 לאיש השנה 1 אתר לא יגאל עוד: כא והיה השנה בצאתו ביבל קדש ליי  
 בשנה התרם לפהו תהיה אחתו: כב ואם את-שנה מקנתו מקנתו אש  
 לא משנה אחתו יקדיש ליי: כג וחשב-לו הפהו את מכסת הערפס עד  
 שנת היבל ונתן את-הערפס ביום ההוא קדש ליי: כד בשנת היובל ישוב  
 השנה לאשר קנהו מאתו לאשר-לו אחנת הארץ

**(14) If anyone consecrates his house to the Lord, the priest shall assess it; whether high or low, as the priest assesses it, so it shall stand.**

**(15) And if he who has consecrated his house wishes to redeem it, he must add one-fifth to the sum at which it was assessed, and it shall be his.**

**(16) If anyone consecrates to the Lord any land that he holds, its assessment shall be in accordance with its seed requirements: fifty shekels of silver to a homer of barley seed.**

**(17) If he consecrates his land as of the jubilee year, its assessment stands.**

**(18) But if he consecrates his land after the jubilee, the priest shall compute the price according to the years that**

remain until the jubilee year, and its assessment shall be so reduced.

(19) And if he who consecrated the land wishes to redeem it, he must add one-fifth to the sum at which it was assessed, and it shall pass to him.

(20) But if he does not redeem the land, and the land is sold to another, it shall no longer be redeemable.

(21) When it is released in the jubilee, the land shall be holy to the Lord, as land proscribed; it becomes the priest's holding.

(22) If he consecrates to the Lord land that he purchased, which is not land of his holding,

(23) the priest shall compute for him the proportionate assessment up to the jubilee year, and he shall pay the assessment as of that day, a sacred donation to the Lord.

(24) In the jubilee year the land shall revert to him from whom it was bought, whose holding the land is.

(25) All assessments shall be by the sanctuary weight: the shekel shall consist of twenty gerahs.

(14) If anyone consecrates his house to the Lord, the priest shall assess it; whether high or low, as the priest assesses it, so it shall stand: If a person consecrates his house, then, similar to the case of an animal, an outside buyer pays the value set by the priest. However, the owner may redeem it by paying one-fifth above the assessed value.

(16) If anyone consecrates to the Lord any land that he holds, its assessment shall be in accordance with its seed requirements: fifty shekels of silver to a homer of barley seed: Dedicating a field is more complex, as it involves not only property but also hereditary land, which is returned in the Jubilee year. Like a standard sale, the field's value (and thus its redemption price) is determined by the number of years remaining until the Jubilee. However, if the individual who consecrated the field fails to redeem it, this is considered a renunciation of ownership, leading to a permanent forfeiture of all rights to the field. The new owner who

purchased the field also loses its rights in the Jubilee Year. In this scenario, the field attains the status of *cherem*, meaning “proscribed” (see verse 28 below), and the property is transferred to the priests.

If a person consecrates to God a field he purchased (not hereditary land), then in the Jubilee year, it returns to the original owner – since that person never renounced his rights.

**fifty shekels of silver to a homer of barley seed:** A *homer* (literally “a donkey-load”) was the largest unit of volume for dry goods or liquids, approximately 250 liters (one homer = 10 ephahs). The amount of land required to cultivate a *homer* varied, typically ranging from 1.2 to 3.7 acres, depending on the quality of the specific field. Therefore, “for seed requirements of a homer of barley” refers not to the area but to the field’s productivity.

#### § 27.4. THE CONSECRATION OF THE FIRSTBORN CATTLE (27:26-27)

כּו אֶד-בְּכֹר אֲשֶׁר-יִבְכַּר לִי בַּבְּהֵמָה לֹא-יִקְדֹּשׁ אִישׁ אֶתּוֹ אִם-שׁוֹר אִם-  
שֶׂה לִּי הוּא: כּו וְאִם בַּבְּהֵמָה הַטְּמֵאָה וּפְדָה בְּעֶרְכָּהּ וְיִסַּף חֲמִשְׁתּוֹ עָלָיו  
וְאִם-לֹא יִגְאָל וְנִמְכַר בְּעֶרְכָּהּ:

**(26) However, a firstling among animals, which – as a firstling – is the Lord’s, cannot be consecrated by anybody; whether ox or sheep, it is the Lord’s.**

**(27) But if it is of unclean animals, it may be ransomed at its assessment with one-fifth added; if it is not redeemed, it shall be sold at its assessment.**

The firstborn of clean animals cannot be consecrated as a different type of offering because it “does not belong to its owner” but is sacred – “belonging to God” – from birth. Still, the firstborn of unclean animals may be consecrated, but it must either be redeemed or sold after that.

In all cases of consecration (fields, livestock), the former owner has the right to redeem his offering, always adding one-fifth of its value. Only if he does not exercise this option can the property be sold to someone else.

§ 27.5. THE STATUS OF THE AVOWED PROPERTY  
OR PERSON (27:28-33)

כח אה-כל-חֲרָם אֲשֶׁר אֲשֶׁר יִחְרַם אִישׁ לְיָי מִכָּל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ מֵאֲדָמָה וּבְהֵמָה  
וּמִשְׂדֵּה אֲחֻזָּתוֹ לֹא יִמָּכַר וְלֹא יִגָּאֵל כָּל-חֲרָם קֹדֶשׁ-קֹדְשִׁים הוּא לְיָי: כֹּט  
כָּל-חֲרָם אֲשֶׁר יִחְרַם מִן-הָאָדָמָה לֹא יִפְדֶּה מוֹת יוֹמָת: ל וְכָל-מַעֲשֵׂוֹ הָאָרֶץ  
מִזְרַע הָאָרֶץ מִפְרֵי הָעֵץ לְיָי הוּא קֹדֶשׁ לְיָי: לֹא וְאִם-גָּאֵל יִגָּאֵל אִישׁ  
מִמַּעֲשָׂוֹ תִמְשִׁיתוּ יֶסֶף עָלָיו: לב וְכָל-מַעֲשֵׂוֹ בְקָרָ וְצֹאֵן כָּל אֲשֶׁר-יִעֲבֹר  
תַּחַת הַשֹּׁבֵט הָעֲשִׂיָּי יִהְיֶה-קֹדֶשׁ לְיָי: לג לֹא יִבְקַר בֶּן-טוֹב לְרַע וְלֹא  
יִמְרֹנּוּ וְאִם-הֶמְרָ יִמְרֹנּוּ וְהִיָּה-הוּא וְתִמְוֹרְתוֹ יִהְיֶה-קֹדֶשׁ לֹא יִגָּאֵל:

**(28) But any devoted thing that a man may devote to the Lord from his holdings, whether human or animal, or from his ancestral field, shall not be sold or redeemed; every devoted thing is most holy to the Lord.**

**(29) No human being who has been proscribed can be ransomed: he shall be put to death.**

**(30) All tithes from the land, whether seed from the ground or fruit from the tree, are the Lord's; they are holy to the Lord.**

**(31) If anyone wishes to redeem any of his tithes, he must add one-fifth to them.**

**(32) All tithes of the herd or flock – of all that pass under the shepherd's staff, every tenth one – shall be holy to the Lord.**

**(33) He must not look out for good as against bad, or make substitution for it; if he does make substitution for it, then it and its substitute shall both be holy; it cannot be redeemed.**

**(28) But any devoted thing that a man may devote to the Lord from his holdings, whether human or animal, or from his ancestral field, shall not be sold or redeemed; every devoted thing is most holy to the Lord:** The term *herem*, meaning “proscribed,” refers to something irrevocably excluded from ordinary use – either in a positive sense, such as property consecrated to God

and the Temple, or in a negative sense, as something destined for destruction or exclusion destruction. Here, it refers to a situation where the person making the dedication renounces any right to reclaim it in advance. (This *herem* status also applies in cases such as a field that cannot be redeemed, as mentioned above in verse 21.) Because *herem* is considered “most holy,” items in this category may only be used by priests; they cannot be redeemed, and the Temple cannot sell them.

**(29) No human being who has been proscribed can be ransomed: he shall be put to death:** In its negative sense, *herem* refers to something that is absolutely destined for destruction – here, a case of final capital judgment.

A similar usage appears in warfare, where captured property is destroyed and forbidden for use, as seen in the conquest of Jericho (Joshua 6:17) or in a city that has turned to idolatry (Deuteronomy 13:18).

During the Talmudic period, *herem* referred to “a prohibitive vow or curse” and later to “excommunication.”

The root *h-r-m* originates from Semitic languages; Mount Hermon derives its name from this root, which means “sacred mountain” (Deuteronomy 3:8).

**(30-31) All tithes from the land... they are holy to the Lord... If anyone wishes to redeem any of his tithes, he must add one-fifth to them:** Tithing is mentioned here by analogy as a form of consecration. However, while the tithe is regarded as “holy,” it is not considered “most holy,” unlike *herem*. Consequently, it is treated as a standard offering to the Temple and may be redeemed. According to Halacha, this refers not to the standard tithe given to the Levites but to the “second tithe,” which loses its sanctity upon redemption. The redeemed value is then used to purchase food and drink for a celebratory meal near the Temple. (Refer to Deuteronomy 14:22 and its commentary for further details.)

**(32-33) All tithes of the herd or flock – of all that pass under the shepherd’s staff, every tenth one – shall be holy to the Lord. He must not look out for good as against bad, or make substitution for it; if he does make substitution for it, then it**

**and its substitute shall both be holy; it cannot be redeemed:** This describes the unique process for the “tithe of the livestock.” Young animals were driven from the pen one by one, and every tenth animal was marked with a staff dipped in red dye. The marked animal became sacred and was designated for sacrifice in the Temple. Its blood and fat were offered on the altar, and its meat was consumed by the owner and his family guests.

Importantly, the owner did not select which animals to tithe; this was determined by count. The sanctity of the tithe applied regardless of whether the animal had a blemish. As with other consecrated animals, no substitutions were allowed.

If a blemished animal was selected, it was not offered on the altar; yet, it still retained its holy status, as it could not be sheared or used for labor and had to be slaughtered and consumed according to the laws of the tithe.

Thus, both the produce tithe and the livestock tithe were consumed during a festive meal. However, while the tithe from produce could be redeemed and substituted, the tithe from livestock could not be exchanged.

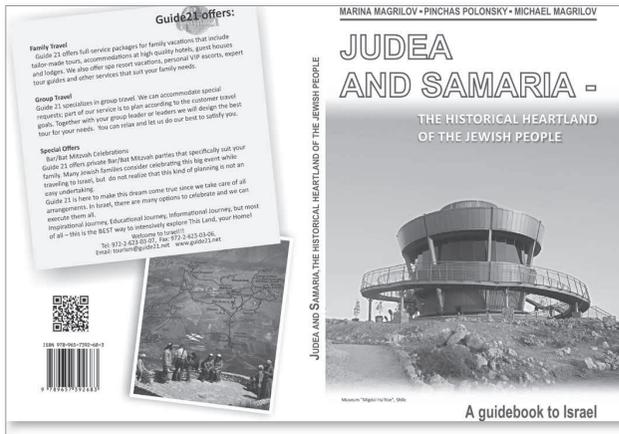
§ 27.6. FINALE: THE COMMANDMENTS WERE  
GIVEN AT MOUNT SINAI (27:34)

לד אלה המצוות אשר צנה יי את-משה אל-בני ישראל בְּהַר סִינַי:

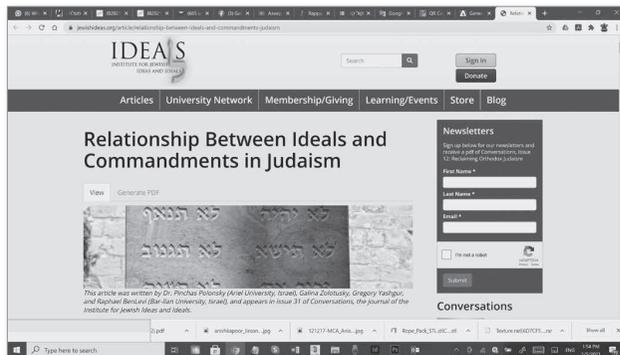
**(34) These are the commandments that the Lord gave Moses for the Israelite people on Mount Sinai.**

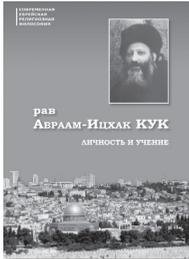
This fact, repeated at the beginning and end of Leviticus, establishes the book’s framework.

# Unique guidebook to Israel: the only one that describes Judea and Samaria, the historical heartland of the Jewish people

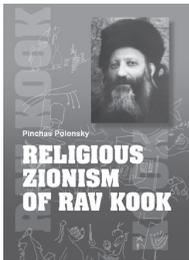


## Articles on Modern Judaism





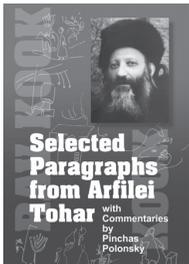
Full Russian version, 570 p.



Concise English version, 95 p.



Concise Hebrew version, 48 p.



Selected Paragraphs from Arfilei Tohar with Commentaries, 123 p.

## PINCHAS POLONSKY "RELIGIOUS ZIONISM OF RAV KOOK"

You can order these books at [ppolonsky@gmail.com](mailto:ppolonsky@gmail.com)  
You can find all texts at [www.pinchaspolonsky.org/en/](http://www.pinchaspolonsky.org/en/)

Pinchas Polonsky's book on the philosophy of Rav Kook gave me an entirely new insight into Judaism.

*Natan Sharansky*

I have been involved with the Rav Kook's works for many years. I have certainly gained from reading this book and think it can speak to the hearts of many. I wish you to spread your ideas and influence the public.

*Rabbi Yitzhak Shilat, Leading scholar of teachings of Rav Kook, senior faculty member at Birkat Moshe Yeshiva*

Dr. Pinchas Polonsky's work "Religious Zionism of Rav Kook" is one of a kind, because not only does it bring Rav Kook's ideas closer to the general public, but also explains how Rav Kook's philosophy can help solve some of the issues in contemporary society – he does so intelligently and uses clear explanations suitable for everyone while remaining loyal to Jewish tradition.

*Rabbi Yakov haLevi Filber, Senior faculty member at Merkaz HaRav Yeshiva*

I was delighted with your superb work about the development of Judaism according to Rav Kook's philosophy. Your book spreads before the reader a dimension of novelty in Rav Kook's school of thought. You were able to emphasize the demanding sides of his teachings that do not leave any sector of the society in peace, not even the Religious Zionists. Many blessings!

*Rabbi Uri Cherki, Senior faculty member at Machon Meir Yeshiva, Chairman of Brit Olam Noahide World Center*

Dr. Polonsky's book, 'Religious Zionism of Rav Kook', is an important contribution to Orthodox thought and to all who seek to embrace the tradition while living it fully inside the modern world. Dr. Polonsky brings his own ideas to illuminate Rav Kook's wisdom. The book is full of fine insights into understanding of Rav Kook's thought; it deserves a wide readership and deep reflection.

*Rabbi Irving (Yitz) Greenberg, Founding President, CLAL: National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, Founding President, Jewish Life Network*

## **ELECTRONIC VERSION OF "BIBLE DYNAMICS"**

and other materials from Pinchas Polonsky can be found at

<https://www.PinchasPolonsky.org/en/>



- Electronic version of "Bible Dynamics" in English and other languages
  - Publications on the philosophy of Rav Kook and the Orthodox modernization of Judaism
  - Contemporary problems of the religious Zionism
  - A new relationship stage between Israel and humanity
- and all other publications, books and materials of Pinchas Polonsky

**We will greatly appreciate your feedback, reviews, and any assistance in book distribution and its ideas. Please contact the author at PPolonsky@gmail.com**



**Supported by Orot Yerushalaim  
nonprofit organization  
<http://orot-yerushalaim.org/donations.html>**

**All your donations will be much appreciated and welcomed with gratitude. They will be used to prepare new materials in English and other languages**