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Abstract

The Israelite sacrificial cult was a unique and sophisticated commentary on the basic human instinct to offer sacrifices to higher powers. The deep-rooted instinct to sacrifice grew out of basic archaic taboos on eating flesh, and the need to reconcile mortal frailties with the gods upon whom man believed his well-being depended. Sacrifice often served to placate the fury and jealousy of these gods, and more commonly, to feed them daily meals, not unlike royal cooks in the palace of a king. In most ancient Near Eastern cultures, these meals were offered twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening, usually handsomely presented on a table before an idol.

The Temple cult in Jerusalem differed from the surrounding cultures in many important ways. In the Israelite sacrificial cult, the dashing or sprinkling of blood was the essence of any sacrifice, stemming from a reverence of the power of life which was believed to be contained in the blood. Of course, there was no idol before whom an offering was presented. Rather, the twice-daily *tamid*, the continual offering, was burnt whole, transferring it from the tangible realm of man to an ethereal God-dimension.

The Levitical law demanded that no sin offered could be presented for a sin that was committed intentionally. Only transgressions that were made unwittingly could be expiated with sacrifice. A sinner could not trick the God of Israel with pleasing sights and aromas. Already through the studying the sacrifices it is clear that a new God-concept was taking shape. There is a weighty emphasis on the purity of the offerer.

After the destruction of the Temple in the year 70 CE, legislation regarding the regulation of sacrificial worship was not longer applicable. However, sages continued to study the subject with no less intensity, bearing new interpretations. The rabbis believed that the study of the laws of sacrifice was as meritorious as actual offerings.

This thesis will examine the types of sacrifices that constituted the Temple cult, and focus on the *tamid* offering through Tractate Tamid, the oldest tractate in the Talmud. This tractate which is nearly untouched by the Mishnah's redactor, opens a window into the daily rituals of the Second Temple. By focusing on the *tamid* offering and the rituals that surrounded it, the melody of the Temple cult will begin to unfold, and all of the offerings fall into harmony around it, for the *tamid* was of primary importance, a constant reassurance to the people. There was a belief that as long as the *tamid* was continually offered the walls of the Temple could not be breached.

The tractate is divided into seven chapters. The first describes the night watches and preparation for the morning sacrifices, including the clearing of the ashes. The second chapter maps out the laying of the new fire upon the altar. Chapter three describes the casting of the lots in order to assign each priest to his duty. Chapter four details the slaughtering of the lamb. Chapter five describes the morning liturgy including the *Shema* and the ten commandments. Chapter six describes the incense offering, and the seventh chapter describes the high priest's entry, prostration, the priestly benediction, and how the ceremonials are altered when the high priest participates.

In conclusion, it is explained how our exalted concept of holiness and Jewish prayer was cultivated out of this deep-rooted human instinct.

ANIMAL SACRIFICE AND THE CONTINUAL OFFERING
IN THE SECOND TEMPLE PERIOD

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Rabbi Simeon said to [Elijah]: What does the Holy One, blessed be God, study in the firmament? He said to him: God studies the sacrificial offerings.¹

Eternal God, may this work be accounted as though I burnt and presented offerings to Your Name.²

¹ Isaiah Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar, An Anthology of Texts*, (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1949) 927.

² Based on B. Men. 110a: "To the scholars who devote themselves to the study of Torah in whatever place they are, [God says] I account it unto them as though they burnt and presented offerings to My Name."

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I am indebted to Rabbi Aaron Panken for the patience and wisdom with which he guided me through this process. Every meeting to discuss my thesis with Rabbi Panken was a sanctuary in my day. It has been a great privilege to work with such a rabbi and scholar whose teachings and presence constantly reveal a genuine love of Torah and life.

And to my husband and soul-mate Rabbi Jonathan Klein;

You are blemish-free
and rainshower-pure,
head of dark wavelets,
fleece of a yearling lamb,
Yeho-natan,
God's perfect offering.

Your mind is a garden
of sunlit blooms,
nectar-sweet thoughts.
Your soul is a library
seven heavens high.
The lines of your palm
are the rivers of Eden.
My paradise is in you.

When you lowered my veil
the Most Secret God
was radiant in your face.
When you lifted my veil...
never has the sky been so blue,
with such clarity
and serenity.

How can I thank
God Who gave
Yeho-natan...
for the honor of one moment beside him,
let alone a thousand,

let alone, my life.

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Chapter I: Introduction to the Study of the Daily Sacrifice

1. Introduction

For nearly six centuries the altar of the Second Temple burned, likened by some to a small sun,¹ and just as the rays of an extinct star persist, coursing ever more distant galaxies, so, too, the influence of that extinguished fire continues to evolve into the religious consciousness of ever more distant generations. The altar in Jerusalem was a theological 'singularity'² into which our concept of holiness, developing ethics, understanding of God, and fear of mortality were compressed, and out of which world religions and systems of belief were forged. A considerable constellation of foreign altars consumed the gifts of surrounding cultures, however this does not infringe upon the absolute uniqueness of the Israelite cult "any more than the fact that religious belief did not begin with the Sinaitic Revelation affects the validity of the religion of Israel."³ Sacrifice had a universality and an antiquity which "only serve to testify to a deep-rooted sacrificial instinct in the human heart which seeks to respond to the claims of God upon man, and which like all other instincts, needs correcting, purifying and directing."⁴ The Israelite sacrificial cult was a unique and sophisticated commentary on sacrifice in general, and an essential step in 'purifying and directing' that basic human instinct.

¹ Rashi on Leviticus 1:7.

² A singularity is the name physicists give to an infinitely small point of space packed with infinitely dense matter.

³ I. Epstein, editor, "Introduction to Seder Kodashim," *The Babylonian Talmud: Seder Kodashim*, (London: The Soncino Press, 1948) xxi.

⁴ I. Epstein, "Introduction to Seder Kodashim," xxi.

2. God at the Table

*"If only we had meat!"*⁵

Man will have meat for his food and he will kill to get it. At least let us not let him dehumanize himself in the process.⁶

There is no restriction whatsoever in the fruit and vegetable kingdom for what we can or cannot eat. "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food. And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky and to everything that creeps on earth in which there is the breath of life, I give all the green plants for food."⁷ God does not say, "Every bovine that is upon the earth I give to you as food, and to the beasts on land I give fish and rodents, and to the birds of the sky I give everything that creeps on the earth for food." Rather, it is clear that the Garden is home to an idyllic serenity of species cohabiting. Continuing this theme, Isaiah prophesies the day when the wolf and the lamb, the herbivore and the carnivore dwell together in peace.⁸

In the perfect world of the Garden and in the perfect world of the Messianic Age, there is no craving for the taste of anything with the life-breath. The first mention in the Torah of animals being slaughtered and offered up is when Abel offers the firstlings of his flock to God.⁹ The acceptance of these sacrifices over a harvest-offering becomes the

⁵ Numbers 11:4; *Tanakh-The Holy Scriptures, The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text*, (New York: The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1988).

⁶ Jacob Milgrom, *Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology*, (Leiden: EJ Brill, 1983) 104.

⁷ Genesis 1:29-30.

⁸ Isaiah 11:6.

⁹ Genesis 4:4.

impetus for fratricide, the first murder. The second mention of animal sacrifice is immediately after the catastrophic flood receded back into the fountains of the deep:

"Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking of every clean animal and of every clean bird, he offered burnt offering on the altar."¹⁰ In these texts, it appears that the origins of sacrifice are coupled with tragedy, man's murder of an innocent, and God's slaying of the guilty.

It is only after Noah's sacrificial offerings that God says, "Every creature that lives shall be yours to eat; as with the green grasses."¹¹ The sanction on eating meat is given the moment after God realizes "the devising of man's mind are evil from his youth."¹² Though there are different blessings one pronounces over eating the fruit of a tree,¹³ the fruit of the ground,¹⁴ or new fruit,¹⁵ there is no blessing specifically limited to the eating of meat.¹⁶ There are, however, strict limitations as to how we are allowed to manipulate the animal kingdom for food. Meat-eating is God's concession to an imperfect mankind, and man, being acutely aware of his imperfection, and ashamed before the Creator on his hunger for flesh, attempts to elevate the entire process. The age-old taboo on killing animals required

¹⁰ Genesis 8:20.

¹¹ Genesis 9:3.

¹² Genesis 8:21.

¹³ "*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech haolam, Borei pri ha'etz.*"

¹⁴ "*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech haolam, Borei pri ha'adamah.*"

¹⁵ "*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech haolam, shehechianu v'kiamanu v'higianu lazman hazeh.*"

¹⁶ When one eats meat and there is no bread present, the blessing "*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech haolam, shehakol nihiyeh bid'varo*" is pronounced, which is a 'catch-all' blessing that is also used for a glass of water or anything that does not fit into another category.

that meat consumption be legitimized by turning the animal into an offering. God, apologetically, is invited to the table.

"The need for reconciliation of man with the higher power on whom his welfare depends lies at the heart of all religion."¹⁷ Religious consciousness has been defined as "a sense of uneasiness that there is something wrong with us as we naturally stand and of a solution for that uneasiness, of being saved from wrongness by our connection to that higher power."¹⁸ The gods in mythology are prone to fits of anger and jealousy, and sacrifices are brought to placate them, soothe their moods, and encourage them to act favorably toward mortal man. Usually this sacrifice was not as much a gift as an actual meal.

The Anunnaki, the great gods, sat in hunger and thirst...sated with grief she was thirsting for beer...they suffering hunger pangs...like flies around the offering they gathered, smelling the sweet savor.¹⁹

The images in the Temple of Uruk were served two meals a day, each with two courses. This included a course of liquid dishes (soup and cocktails) and then the main course of roasted game, all of which were served in human proportions. Babylonian gods were served milk in alabaster vessels in the morning. In Mesopotamia a giant feast was dedicated to "the Lady of the High City." In Egypt the gods were served much grander feasts which, after the ceremony, would provide food for the entire staff and sometimes

¹⁷ I. Epstein, "Introduction to Seder Kodashim," xxi.

¹⁸ I. Epstein, "Introduction to Seder Kodashim," xxi-xxii.

¹⁹ James B. Pritchard, editor, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) 95.

even the whole city. In this case, going to the temple for a ceremony could be compared to going to an expensive restaurant today.²⁰

In the feeding of the gods, the transubstantiation of the physical food into a source of strength and power was guarded as a mystery which human eyes were not allowed to see. The very fact that the images were manufactured constituted a problem in that the very god-image, which was to be the central focus of worship, was indeed fashioned by mortal hands. These god-images, "fashioned and repaired in special workshops in the temple...had to undergo an elaborate and highly secret ritual of consecration to transform the lifeless matter into a receptacle of the divine presence. During these nocturnal ceremonies they were endowed with 'life,' their eyes and mouths were 'opened' so that the images could see and eat, and they were subject to the 'washing of the mouth,' a ritual thought to impart special sanctity."²¹ All the same, the fashioning of images of the gods "seems to create a certain malaise in all the religions in which they have a cultic or sacred function, as is indicated by the frequent legends and pious tales that stress a miraculous origin for the more famous of these representations."²²

There is evidence of this 'malaise' in the Biblical tirade of the prophets against idols and idol-makers. In the Book of Jeremiah it is written, "They say to the wood, 'You are my father,' to stone, 'you gave birth to me,' while to Me they turn their backs and not their faces. But in their hour of calamity they cry, 'Arise and save us!' And where are

²⁰ A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia; Portrait of a Dead Society*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964)188-191.

²¹ A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 186.

²² A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 186.

those gods *you made for yourself?*"²³ This seems to be a commentary on the great arrogance of the idol-maker, who worships the work of his hands.

There is a gentler polemic found in the description of the Ark of the Covenant's creation. At first it is written that "everyone whose spirit moved him came, bringing to the Lord his offering for the work of the Tent of Meeting...men and woman, all whose hearts moved them."²⁴ In this way, the Tent of Meeting along with the Ark of the Covenant and the priestly vestments reflected the investment of an entire public, rather than the genius of one private artisan. In addition to the contributions of the people, God appointed a special craftsman of whom Moses says: "See, the Lord had singled out by name Betzalel, son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. He has endowed him with a divine spirit of skill, ability, and knowledge..."²⁵ The text is emphatic that Betzalel's extraordinary skill does not originate within himself but rather in a divine source which is God. Even his name *B'tzal-El* has been taken to mean "In the shadow of God."²⁶ Betzalel's very name reminds the reader that although this masterpiece is the work of his hands, his own creative legend fades into near-anonymity when overshadowed by the mastery of God's ultimate design.

²³ Jeremiah 2:27-28. Note also the tirade against such man-made idols in Jeremiah 10:3-5: "For the objects that the nations fear (their idols) are delusions: For it is the work of a craftsman's hands. He cuts down a tree in the forest with an ax, he adorns it with silver and gold, he fastens it with nails and hammer, so that it does not totter. They are like a scarecrow in a cucumber patch, they cannot speak. They have to be carried for they cannot walk. Be not afraid of them, for they can do no harm; Nor is it in them to do any good."

²⁴ Exodus 35:21-22.

²⁵ Exodus 35:30-1.

²⁶ "The name Betzalel, 'in the shadow of God' was most appropriate for this man whose wisdom made clear to him what none could know save one who dwelt in the shadow of God," Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968), 155.

Certainly, mortal man was not privileged to witness the contact between the physical world and the realm of the gods. In Mesopotamia, after the meal was ceremoniously laid out before the image, linen curtains were drawn around it.²⁷ After a certain amount of time had elapsed, the curtains were opened, the table was removed, and a bowl of water was left with the image for washing the fingers. The curtain was closed here too until the god finished with his or her toilette. In many cultures, after the image had 'eaten' the food with his or her eyes, the meal was brought to the king for consumption. It was believed that the food was blessed because of its contact with the gods.²⁸ It is interesting to note that when gods eat, the food becomes more, enriched with blessing as well as nutrient, unlike when a human eats, and the plate becomes empty.

There are remnants of this cruder concept of divinity to be found in the Torah. The three men who appear to Abraham by the terebrinths of Mamre are interpreted by tradition to be three angels.²⁹ Immediately upon their arrival, Abraham hastened to fetch a little water to bathe their feet, while Sarah bakes cakes, fixes a dairy dish, and prepares a calf.³⁰ This familial ritual of catering to divine beings and 'playing host' to God can also be clearly seen in the verses: "Then Moses, Aaron, Nadav and Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel ascended, and they saw the God of Israel. Under His feet there was a likeness of a pavement of sapphire, like the very sky for purity. Yet He did not raise His hand against the leaders of the Israelites. They beheld God, and they ate and drank."³¹ Rather than

²⁷ A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 193.

²⁸ A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 189.

²⁹ "And the Lord appeared unto him.' How? Through the arrival of three angels in the guise of men;" Rashbam on Genesis 18:1.

³⁰ Genesis 18:1-8.

³¹ Exodus 24:9-11.

throwing themselves upon their faces in reverence, the Israelite leaders invite God to the table.

The common practice of partaking in the sacrificial gift after it had been offered to a deity has been given two interpretations.³² One maintains that along with a satisfying meal, the worshipper also ingested an element of divine commendation. The other suggests that it was a matter of hospitality and a sharing of possessions, fulfilling the basic assumption that if two fellows share a meal, the one is less likely to kill the other. The meal serves to achieve man's longing for an amiable union with his god. "Just as a contract between men was sealed with a meal, so, too, a covenant between worshipper and his god is established and strengthened by this sacrificial meal."³³ There are clear examples in the Torah of how a meal between men seals a contract. In one passage, an agreement is reached between Abimelech and Isaac: "Let us make a pact with you that you will not do us harm, just as we have not molested you but have always dealt kindly with you and sent you away in peace. From now on, be you blessed of the Lord!' Then he made for them a feast and they ate and drank."³⁴ Another meal confirms a pact between Jacob and Laban: "Come, then, let us make a pact, you and I...then Jacob offered up a sacrifice on the Height and invited his kinsmen to partake of the meal."³⁵ It is interesting to note that in the Israelite tradition there is no meal-sharing associated with a sin offering, seemingly because the covenant has to be reestablished first.³⁶

³² A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 190.

³³ Ronald de Vaux, *Ancient Israel; Its Life and Institutions*, (London: Longman, and Todd, 1961) 453.

³⁴ Genesis 26:28-30.

³⁵ Genesis 31:44-54.

³⁶ Ronald de Vaux, *Ancient Israel; Its Life and Institutions*, 453.

In *Tanach*, the altar is only rarely referred to as a table. "The Levitical priests descended from Zadok...they alone may enter My sanctuary and they alone shall approach My table to minister to Me."³⁷ Conversely, the table of shewbreads is compared to an altar: "Before the Shrine was something resembling a wooden altar...and he said to me, 'This is the table that stands before the Lord.'"³⁸ Rather than an altar being compared to a table, this verse compares a table to the altar, making a definitive distinction between the two. There are also passages, sometimes with overtones of ridicule, that react against the idea of God having need of any regular meals prepared and served by man. "The angel of the Lord said to Manoah, 'If you detain me, I will not eat your food; and if you present a burnt offering, offer it to the Lord.'"³⁹ This verse isolates the act of offering from any notion of feeding, explaining that what is offering as food will not be accepted, but what is offered with proper intention, as a gift, will be accepted. The following passage is particularly revealing of the uniqueness of the Israelite approach to sacrifice:

I censure you not for your sacrifices, and your burnt offerings, made to Me daily; I claim no bull from your estate, no he-goat from your pens. For Mine is every animal of the forest, the beasts on a thousand mountains. I know every bird of the mountains, the creatures of the field are subject to Me. **Were I hungry, I would not tell you, for Mine is the world and all it holds. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of he-goats?** Sacrifice a thank-offering to God, and pay your vows to the Most High. Call upon Me in time of trouble: I will rescue you, and you shall honor Me.⁴⁰

³⁷ Ezekiel 44:15-16.

³⁸ Ezekiel 41:21-22. The table that holds the shewbreads is mentioned again in I Kings 7:48 where it is written, "Solomon made all the furnishings that were in the House of the Lord, the altar, of gold, *the table* for the bread of display, of gold."

³⁹ Judges 13:16.

⁴⁰ Psalm 50:8-15.

According to this passage, the God of Israel is the Creator of the world and "for [Him] is the world and all it holds." God does not eat flesh or drink blood, and even if God did have a hunger for anything at all, it is arrogant for man to presume the power to slake it. Indeed, God does not need anything from man. "All is from You, and it is Your gift that we have given to You. For we are sojourners with You, mere transients..."⁴¹ Even that which man gives is taken from God's world in order to give, in the same way a child borrows money from his mother to buy her a present. Encased within these ancient words, the reader encounters the simple and elegant equation of One, of an omnipresent One who knows "every bird of the mountain" and "every animal of the forest." The reader also glimpses the outcome of this equation: "I know, God, that You search the heart and desire uprightness; I, with upright heart, freely offered all these things; now Your people, who are present here, I saw them joyfully making freewill offerings."⁴² It is not the gift that God demands, for everything is His, but rather it is the honor man gives through uprightness and loving obedience. Here we find the tiny core of a covenant that grows more in complexity over time: "I will rescue you, and You shall honor Me." In all you do, adore Me, and I will be your shield.

The Israelite religion infused new significance into the practices they may have adopted.

In mythology and polytheism, the gods are filled with anger and envy and hatred, and sacrifices are brought in order to effect a reconciliation and re-establish connection with them. But the God of Israel can only be angry on account of injustice, and cannot be reconciled otherwise than by doing justly, loving mercy and walking humbly with Him. It was

⁴¹ I Chronicles 29:14-15.

⁴² I Chronicles 29:17.

therefore essential to transform the crude ideas and desires concerning man's approach to God by filling them with a spiritual-ethical content, and it was for this end that the sacrifices in the Torah were designed as the most effective means.⁴³

Sacrifices are only offered for religious or ritual sins, but not for social sins. No sacrifice could be offered in expiation of the deliberate transgressions but only for such offenses as had been committed in error or under constraint. There is no parallel for this in any other system.⁴⁴ Israelite religion did not offer gifts to restore the love of an offended deity, but rather, "their aim is essentially man's spiritual regeneration and perfection."⁴⁵

It is said with reference to a burnt offering of a bird: an offering made by fire, a sweet savor to the Lord. With reference to a meal offering: an offering made by fire, a sweet savor to the lord. This teaches us that it is the same whether one gives much or little, as long as he directs his heart to his Father who is in Heaven!⁴⁶

Through a progressive interpretation of the age-old inclination to sacrifice, the Temple cult began to spin a culture of moral and religious dynamism. Sacrifice became the vehicle to express "both the interior feeling of the person offering it and God's response to this prayer."⁴⁷ This sacrifice was dependent on the *kavanah* of the person offering it. Not only did the victim itself have to be blemish-free, but the offerer had to maintain a certain purity about himself as well.⁴⁸ The sacrifice, therefore, is designed to lead to the sacrificer's purification of himself, and the true offering is not the flesh of bulls or the

⁴³ I. Epstein, "Introduction to Seder Kodashim," xxii.

⁴⁴ I. Epstein, "Introduction to Seder Kodashim," xxii.

⁴⁵ I. Epstein, "Introduction to Seder Kodashim," xxiii.

⁴⁶ B. Sheb., 15a.

⁴⁷ Ronald de Vaux, *Ancient Israel; Its Life and Institutions*, 451.

⁴⁸ Ronald de Vaux, *Ancient Israel; Its Life and Institutions*, 451.

blood of goats, but rather, it is the worshipper's very self, his purified heart and his clear readiness to be God's servant.

Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? I did not bid you to sacrifice so that you should say, I will do His will that He may do my will. You do not sacrifice for My sake, but for your own sakes, as it is written, "You shall sacrifice it at your will." Another interpretation of "sacrifice it at your free will," sacrifice it with the proper intention, and this rule is proven to be indispensable because it is repeated twice in the holy writ in reference to holy things.⁴⁹

This sacrifice was "an ideal gift, something which all gifts should be if they are to have any ethical value."⁵⁰ They were always domestic animals which man needs for his own livelihood. They are a part of his life and therefore a part of himself. He deprives himself of them by giving them away. But in losing this gift, man also binds himself to the God who will protect him. One commentator suggests that the sacrifices are all domestic animals because God is with the pursued rather than the pursuer. The lamb is pursued by the wolf; the goat is pursued by the fox; the bull is pursued by the lion.⁵¹ In this suggestion, God is a caring God, the God of life, who could not be honored with killer creatures.

The burning of the sacrifice was also unique to Israelite culture. The purpose of the burning was not to destroy, for "the God who is the Lord of all creation and all life cannot be honored with destruction,"⁵² but rather to render the gift irrevocable. This "harmonizes with a wider concept that everything which is consecrated to God must be

⁴⁹ B. Men., 110a.

⁵⁰ Ronald de Vaux, *Ancient Israel; Its Life and Institutions*, 451.

⁵¹ Based on Leviticus Rabba 27:5.

⁵² Ronald de Vaux, *Ancient Israel; Its Life and Institutions*, 452.

removed from profane use, like breaking a vase which was used for libation.” The practice of burning was also one step further away from idolatry. Not only was there no idol in the sanctuary to whom the sacrifices were offered, but the burning transferred the offering into the realm of the ethereal. The gift was taken out of man’s world and offered into God’s world. Through the act of burning offerings, the Israelite conception of God moved substantially away from corporeality and into a sophisticated sense of the universe being multi-dimensional, our physical world stratified with many less tangible realities that are no less authentic.

Along with the uniqueness of the burning was the Israelite preoccupation with the blood-offering. “The life of all flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement, by the reason of the life that is in it.”⁵³ The very life-principle, according to Israelite thought, was contained within the blood. Therefore it is considered repulsive to eat it, and of highest crime to shed it. Blood is the very elixir of being, the miraculous ingredient that enables life to open its eyes and interact with the world. It is given special, scrupulous attention in the sacrificial system. It is dashed on the corners of the altar, rubbed on the horns, speckled on the curtain, and sprinkled on the people. This is the essence of the sacrifice. The God of life is not honored with the death and destruction of the victim, but rather with the offering up of its life-principle. It is the highest gift man can think to offer, that which marries soul to body. On the altar, man offers up his awe-filled appreciation for the miraculous gift of life, for the secret of life which courses through him in his blood.

⁵³ Leviticus 17:11-14.

Through blood, man acknowledges God's magnificent wisdom, and expresses his desire to reconnect that life-principle with its eternal source.

3. From Temple to Text

*"...Obedience to God rather than burnt offerings."*⁵⁴

Some modern historians tend to see sacrificial systems as "a state of madness through which humanity passed in the first ages of its existence which has bequeathed to us many errors...the oldest, the worst and most difficult to uproot."⁵⁵ On the contrary, sacrifice was a necessary, and in the case of the Israelite cult, even sophisticated step in the development of religious thought. It is 'most difficult to uproot' because it *is* the root. In the philosophy of the church it is clear that the sacrificial system was superseded by the ultimate sacrifice, word made flesh. In Judaism, the progression has been exactly the opposite, it has been flesh made word, sacrifice made prayer.⁵⁶ This is not to say that the sacrificial system was replaced with prayer. Rather, the essence of the sacrificial system survived, unanchored in space with an altar, unfettered in time by the routine of daily offerings. The "spiritual-ethical" content of the Temple sacrifices survived as a code of behavior and a system of blessing and prayer which would later be called Judaism.

The gradual refining of sacrifice into an ethical code of behavior is evident in the writings of the prophets: "With what shall I approach the Lord, do I pay homage to God on high? Shall I approach Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Would the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with myriads of streams of oil? He has told you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do justice and to love

⁵⁴ Hosea 6:6.

⁵⁵ Ronald de Vaux, *Ancient Israel; Its Life and Institutions*, 446.

⁵⁶ "Prayer is better than sacrifice;" B. Ber. 32b.

goodness, and to walk modestly in God's way."⁵⁷ "If you offer Me burnt offerings, or your meal offerings, I will not accept them...spare Me the sound of your hymns, and let Me not hear the music of your lutes. But let justice well up like water, righteousness like an unfailing stream."⁵⁸ "For I desire goodness, not sacrifice; Obedience to God rather than burnt offerings."⁵⁹ "What need have I of frankincense that comes from Sheba, or fragrant cane from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable and your sacrifices are not pleasing to Me."⁶⁰ "When I freed your fathers from the land of Egypt, I did not speak with them or command them concerning burnt offerings or sacrifice. But this is what I commanded them: Do My bidding, that I may be your God and you may be My people."⁶¹ "What need have I of all your sacrifices? I am sated with burnt offerings of rams, and suet of fatlings, and blood of bulls. And I have no delight in lamb and in he-goats...your new moons and fixed seasons fill Me with loathing... Though you pray at length, I will not listen. Your hands are stained with crime. Wash yourselves clean; Put your evil-doings away from My sight. cease to do evil; learn to do good. Devote yourselves to justice; Aid the wronged, uphold the rights of the orphan; defend the cause of the widow."⁶²

Following the destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70 CE, the body of biblical legislation aiming at the regulation of the sacrificial worship of Israel lost its applicability. However, "the sages of subsequent centuries, down to the close of the Talmudic period continued to cultivate the subject matter and implications of that

⁵⁷ Micah 6:6-8.

⁵⁸ Amos 5:22-24.

⁵⁹ Hosea 6:6.

⁶⁰ Jeremiah 6:20.

⁶¹ Jeremiah 7:21-22.

⁶² Isaiah 1:11-17.

legislation with no less perspicacity and minuteness than in the case of such laws as remained in full force. As a result, the biblical legislation concerning offerings was expounded and expanded to a very considerable extent during the Tannaitic period. In turn, this Tannaitic exposition was expounded and further developed by the sages of the Gemara to an even greater extent."⁶³ Even today, children commence their life-long learning with the sacrificial laws in Leviticus.⁶⁴

There were a couple of generations of early Amoraim whose interest in the sacrifices waned and they concentrated on the first four orders.⁶⁵ However, there was a revival of interest in the later Amoraim. Even without the Temple, diligent study of these sacrifices has continued, bearing new interpretations, with no less fervor.

Nor did the exponents of this wholly theoretical and purely scholastic development did not find it altogether void of immediate practical value. Rather, they conceived of their work as serving at least a pietistic kind of applicability. Partly with the hopes that the Temple would be rebuilt again and benefit from their legistic efforts, but mainly, as we shall see, because they believed that the scholastic preoccupation with the laws of offerings was indeed as meritorious as the act itself.⁶⁶

R Isaac said, "What is the significance of the verses: This is the law of the sin offering and this is the law of the guilt offering?" They teach that whoever occupies himself with the study of the laws of the sin offering is as though he were offering a sin offering, and whoever occupies himself with the study of the laws of the guilt offering, is as though he were offering a guilt offering.⁶⁷

⁶³ Mendell Lewittes, trans., "Introduction to the Temple Service," *The Code of Maimonides; The Temple Service*, book VIII, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957) xxiii-xxiv.

⁶⁴ Based on Leviticus Rabba 7:3.

⁶⁵ Berachot 20a

⁶⁶ Mendell Lewittes, trans., "Introduction to the Temple Service," xxiv.

⁶⁷ B. Men. 110a.

“With the destruction of the Temple, the entire divine service was discontinued; sacrifices, among other things, ceased. But the everlasting value of the ordinances of the Torah was maintained as an absolute principle of Jewish faith.”⁶⁸ The study of the chapters dealing with the various forms of sacrifice stood out all the more prominently. There are references to daily sacrifices included all over the daily prayer service. Some of the sacrifices are even reenacted at the dining room table, a setting in many ways the ghost of that ancient altar. This reenactment includes the ritual washing of the hands (similar to the Temple priests before they approached the altar), the two challah loaves (symbolic of the double sacrifice), and salting the bread (the way the pieces of the Tamid were salted.) We see similar reenactments of the incense offering within the *havdalah* ceremony.

This is an ordinance for ever to Israel. R. Giddal said in the name of Rab, this refers to the altar built in heaven where Michael the great prince stands and offers up thereon an offering. R. Johanan said, It refers to the scholars who are occupied with the laws of the Temple service; Holy writ imputes it to them as though the Temple were built in their days. Resh Lakish said, What is the significance of the verse ‘this is the law for the burnt offering, for the meal offering, for the sin offering, and for the guilt offering? It teaches that whoever occupies himself with the study of Torah is as though he were offering a burnt-offering, a meal offering, a sin offering, and a guilt offering. Raba asked, Why then does the verse say “For the burnt offering, for the meal offering?” It should have said, “A burnt offering, a meal offering!” Rather said Raba, it means that whoever occupies himself with the study of the Torah needs neither burnt offering, nor meal offering nor sin offering nor guilt offering.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Eli Cashdan, “Introduction to Menachot,” *Babylonian Talmud*, (London: The Soncino Press, 1960), xix.

⁶⁹ B. Men. 110a.

Laced within the words of this text is an interesting and accurate historical transition. In the beginning it says of the scholars who occupy themselves with the laws of the Temple service, "Holy Writ imputes it to them as though the Temple were built in their days." It expands to say that one who is engaged in studying the guilt offering, it is as if he had offered a guilt offering, and this is the same if one is studying the meal, sin, or burnt offerings. The study of the offerings is as meritorious as actually offering them in the Temple. However, the study is still being compared to the act of sacrifice, the action being held up as the golden standard. In the end, Raba's statement is even stronger than that of Resh Lakish. Resh Lakish said that one who occupies himself with the study of Torah, it is as if he had made offerings. Raba says that the Torah scholar has no need of the sacrificial system at all, neither for offerings nor for comparisons. These words mark the moment when word supersedes flesh, when prayerful study no longer needs to attempt the merit of actual sacrifice, but has been freed, as the highest value to which nothing can be compared. "But the study of Torah is equal to them all."⁷⁰

⁷⁰ B. Shab. 127a.

Chapter II: Sacrifice in *Tanach*

1. Types of Offerings

*"God will see to the sheep for the burnt offering."*⁷¹

All these you shall offer to the Lord at the stated times, in addition to your votive and freewill offerings, be they burnt offerings, meal offerings, libations, or offerings of well-being.⁷²

The voluntary offerings enumerated in the *Tanach* can be categorized as sin offerings and guilt offerings, fellowship, freewill, and votive offerings. The obligatory offerings can be categorized as burnt offerings (including the *tamid*, the continual offering), meal, libation, peace, wave, and ordination offerings. There are a number of terms that *Tanach* employs in regard to sacrifice. The roots *SH-CH-T* and *T-V-CH* are used for the slaughter of animals for sacred as well as secular purposes. An example of secular usage would be the verse: "Slaughter and prepare an animal, for the men will dine with me at noon."⁷³ The verbs *Z-V-CH*, *O-L-AH* and *K-R-V*, on the other hand, are exclusively used in reference to sacred sacrifice.

The fascinating uniqueness of the sin-offering in the Israelite tradition was that it was only permissible "when a person **unwittingly** incurs guilt in regard to any of the Lord's commandments about things not to be done, and does one of them."⁷⁴ In other words, if a person was to break one of the negative commandments listed in the Torah, he would be required to bring a sin-offering before the Lord. If he knowingly broke a

⁷¹ Genesis 22:8.

⁷² Numbers 29:39.

⁷³ Genesis 43:16.

⁷⁴ Leviticus 4:2.

negative commandment, brazenly, perhaps spitefully, doing that which he was told not to do, he could not bring a sin-offering. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord."⁷⁵ Furthermore, if a person incurred guilt in regard to his fellow, without breaking one of God's commandments, for example an unkind remark or side-swiping his donkey cart at the market, he could not atone with a sin-offering. We encounter a similar phenomenon with the Day of Atonement: "For transgressions from man toward God the Day of Atonement effects atonement, but for transgressions between a man and his fellow the Day of Atonement does not effect atonement until he shall have first placated his fellow man."⁷⁶

The sin-offering is a matter between a person and God. It is the vehicle by which a person appeals to God's mercy, God who is "compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness."⁷⁷ Using the analogy of family dynamics: A father gives his daughter a precious gift. If the gift slips out of her hands accidentally, assuming the father is "slow to anger, abounding in kindness," he will not be upset; he might even buy her a new gift. However, if the child throws down the special present to spite him, it is deeply hurtful to the father, even infuriating. "But the person, be he citizen or stranger, who acts defiantly reviles the Lord; that person shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has spurned the word of the Lord and violated His commandment, that person shall be cut off."⁷⁸ The sin-offering is the timorous admittance that mortal man is prone to bouts of clumsiness and forgetfulness, but nonetheless he is God-fearing enough to seek pardon. It

⁷⁵ Proverbs 15:8.

⁷⁶ M. Yom. 8.

⁷⁷ Exodus 34:6.

⁷⁸ Numbers 15:30-31.

is also therapeutic for the offerer: "People are often deeply disturbed if they cause harm by accident, ignorance, or oversight. The sacrifice relieved the troubled conscience."⁷⁹

The sin-offering was suited to the rank and circumstance of the offerer. The high priest would bring a young bull, and if the congregation as a whole had erred unwittingly, they would offer the same.⁸⁰ This makes sense because the high priest represents the congregation, and therefore their transgression would be equally weighed. Just as it is mathematically sound that if $X = Y$ then $(10)X = (10)Y$, it follows that if HIGH PRIEST = CONGREGATION then $(\sin)HIGH PRIEST = (\sin)CONGREGATION$, requiring the same offering to absolve them.

The Israelite congregation had a strong sense of unity. They believed that the transgressions of a few members of their community could bring guilt upon everyone. One example of this is found in the Book of Joshua. When the Israelite army is devastated, it is discovered that this tragedy befell them because of one man who coveted and took forbidden spoil. Because of this one man's greed, "the Israelites will not be able to hold their ground against their enemies... I will not be with you any more unless you root out from among you what is proscribed."⁸¹

A chieftain was required to bring a male goat,⁸² and a commoner from the populace would bring a female goat.⁸³ If the commoner could not afford a goat, he would

⁷⁹ Bernard Jacob Bamberger, *The Torah: A Modern Commentary, Leviticus* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1979) 27.

⁸⁰ "If it is the anointed priest who has incurred guilt, so that the blame falls upon the people, he shall offer for the sin of which he is guilty a bull of the herd;" Leviticus 4:3. "...when the sin through which they incurred guilt becomes known, the congregation shall offer a bull of the herd;" Leviticus 4:14.

⁸¹ Joshua 7:11-12.

⁸² Leviticus 4:23.

bring a female lamb,⁸⁴ and if he could not afford the lamb he could bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons.⁸⁵ If he could not spare even that, he could bring a measure of fine flour.⁸⁶ Midrash describes a priest who once expressed contempt toward a woman who brought only a handful of flour to the Temple. In a dream, God rebuked him saying, "She offered her very soul."⁸⁷ Rites of purification called for lesser sin-offerings such as lambs or birds after childbirth, leprosy, unclean issues, hemorrhages, or defilement during a nazirite vow.⁸⁸ An example of defilement during a nazirite vow would be "if a person dies suddenly near him, defiling his consecrated hair..."⁸⁹

The offerer would lay his hands upon the animal's head.⁹⁰ There are those who insist that this ritual was a method of transferring the person's sins onto the animal, so that the sacrifice of the animal would take the place of his own punishment.⁹¹ However, this position is hotly debated. One of the main arguments is that nothing impure was allowed to be put on the altar. (However, if a priest made a mistake, the impure offering was not removed from the altar, for upon contact with the fire it too became consecrated.) It is for precisely this reason that the Yom Kippur goat upon which the High Priest laid all of the sins of the people was *not* offered on the altar, but rather it was sent out of the holy sanctuary and into the wilderness of Azazel: "Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head

⁸³ Leviticus 4:27-28 and Numbers 15:27.

⁸⁴ Leviticus 4:32.

⁸⁵ Leviticus 5:7.

⁸⁶ Leviticus 5:11-13.

⁸⁷ Leviticus Rabbah 3:5.

⁸⁸ Childbirth: Leviticus 12:68; Leprosy: Leviticus 14:12-13, 19, 22; Unclean issues and hemorrhages: Leviticus 15:15; Defilement during nazirite vow: Numbers 6:10-11.

⁸⁹ Numbers 6:9.

⁹⁰ Leviticus 4:4.

⁹¹ Ibn Ezra on Leviticus 1:1.

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."⁹² According to this argument, the laying of the hands upon the sacrificial animal is simply a symbol of ownership and that is all.⁹³

After the laying of the hands, the offerer would slaughter the animal on the north side, and a priest would collect the blood. If it was the sacrifice of the High Priest or the congregation, he would dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle it seven times before the veil and on the horns of the incense altar.⁹⁴ Then the fat, the kidneys, and the finger of the liver were offered on the altar and the carcass was burned outside of the camp.⁹⁵ For all other animals, the blood was rubbed on the horns of the burnt offering altar.⁹⁶ A portion of the offering was removed and given to the priests to eat under strict rules. Leviticus provides one case when the priests did not follow these rules and Moses reprimanded them: "Why did you not eat the sin-offering in the sacred area? For it is most holy, and God has given it to you to remove the guilt of the community and to make expiation for them before the Lord."⁹⁷ It appears that the consumption of a portion of the offering was more than a method of fueling and sustaining the hard-working priests; eating a portion of the sin-offering was a requisite in effecting expiation.

⁹² Leviticus 16:21.

⁹³ Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel; Its Life and Institutions*, 418.

⁹⁴ Leviticus 4:45.

⁹⁵ Leviticus 4:11 and 12:21.

⁹⁶ Leviticus 4:18.

⁹⁷ Leviticus 10:17.

A guilt offering was a special category of sin offerings. The same rules of offering apply to it as to the sin offerings in terms of how it is sacrificed.⁹⁸ A person would offer a guilt offering under the following conditions: "When a person commits a trespass, being unwittingly remiss about 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. He shall make restitution for that wherein he was remiss about the sacred things, and he shall add a fifth part to it and give it to the priest."⁹⁹ It is brought by "one who has misappropriated property. He must restore what he has taken plus a 20 percent indemnity."¹⁰⁰ This misappropriation could have been the profane use of food, money, or vessels belonging to the sanctuary. Such a transgression was called *meilah*, translated as "trespass." The tractate of Talmud immediately following *Tamid* is named *Meilah* and is based on these verses.

A guilt offering was also required if a man had carnal relations with a woman who is a slave.¹⁰¹ In the case of a leper who has been healed, the guilt offering was a male lamb instead of a ram. The priest would take some of the blood of this guilt offering and touch it to the right ear, right thumb, and the big toe on the right foot of the cleansed leper. the priest then touched the same places again with oil and then pour the oil over the cleansed leper's head.¹⁰² It is curious why a leper would be in the category of trespass, and it is speculated that it was "because the Lord was deprived of the service due from the

⁹⁸ Leviticus 7:1-7.

⁹⁹ Leviticus 15-16.

¹⁰⁰ Bernard J. Bamberger, *The Torah; A Modern Commentary*, 37.

¹⁰¹ Leviticus 19:21.

¹⁰² Leviticus 14:12-19.

infected person so long as his disease kept him outside the pale of the ritually clean society.”¹⁰³

Rising early in the morning, he would make burnt offerings, one for each of them; for Job thought, ‘Perhaps my children have sinned and blasphemed God in there thoughts.’¹⁰⁴

The burnt offering was considered the standard sacrifice. Most of the required communal sacrifice were burnt offerings. As noted, the burnt offering to God was unique to Israelite culture. “In contrast, sacrifices made by the Greeks to the Olympian gods were always shared by the worshipers; only sacrifices made to the dread underground deities to ward off evil were presented as *holocausts*, i.e., completely burned.”¹⁰⁵ If the burnt offering was brought as a voluntary offering of an individual, it could be a bull, goat, sheep, or a bird.¹⁰⁶ The offerer laid his hands upon the animal and then slaughtered it. The priest collected the blood and dashed it against the sides of the altar. It is then flayed and cut into sections, and the pieces are arranged on the fire, turning the whole into smoke, becoming a “pleasing odor to the Lord.”¹⁰⁷ There were some purification rituals that called for burnt offerings as well as sin offerings, and these included after childbirth, unclean issues, hemorrhages or defilement during a nazarite vow.¹⁰⁸

The commandments concerning the *tamid* offering, the continual burnt offering, are enumerated in the following passages:

¹⁰³ Bernard J. Bamberger, *The Torah; A Modern Commentary*, 148.

¹⁰⁴ Job 1:5.

¹⁰⁵ Bernard J. Bamberger, *The Torah; A Modern Commentary*, 9.

¹⁰⁶ Bull, goat, sheep: Leviticus 1:2; Bird: Leviticus 1:14.

¹⁰⁷ Leviticus 1:9.

¹⁰⁸ Childbirth: Leviticus 12:6-8; Unclean issues: Leviticus 15:14; Hemorrhages: Leviticus 15:29; Nazarite vow: Numbers 6:10.

Now this is what you shall offer upon the altar: two yearly lambs each day, regularly. You shall offer the one lamb in the morning, and you shall offer the other lamb at twilight. there shall be a tenth of a measure of choice flour with a quarter of a *hin* of wine for one lamb; and you shall offer the other lamb at twilight, repeating with it the meal offering of the morning with its libation - an offering of fire for a pleasing odor to the lord, a regular burnt offering throughout the generations, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting before the Lord.

For there I will meet with you, and there I will speak with you.¹⁰⁹

These are the offerings by fire that you are to present to the Lord: As a regular burnt offering every day, two yearling lambs without blemish. You shall offer one lamb in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight. And as a meal offering, there shall be a tenth of an *ephah* of choice flour with a quarter of a *hin* of beaten oil mixed in - the regular burnt offering instituted at Mount Sinai - an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the Lord.¹¹⁰

The *tamid* offering is the unifying factor of the sacrificial system. It is the system's foundation. Through examining this daily offering, the bedrock of the sacrificial cult, and its accompanying rituals in great detail in the next chapter, the system which relies on it will be further elucidated.

Accompanying the burnt offering and the peace offering was the meal offering which consisted of cereal. The term for a meal offering, *mincha*, appears elsewhere in the Torah meaning "gift," as in: "He selected from what was at hand these *gifts*;"¹¹¹ or as a "tribute," as in: "They brought Solomon *tribute* and were subject to him all his life."¹¹²

However, in the Levitical texts, the term refers to a mixture of fine flour, oil and

¹⁰⁹ Exodus 29:38-42.

¹¹⁰ Numbers 28:18.

¹¹¹ Genesis 32:14.

¹¹² I Kings 5:1.

frankincense which could be made into cakes or wafers spread with oil.¹¹³ The flour was usually wheat flour, except in the very specific case of a 'meal offering of jealousy' when barley flour was used.¹¹⁴ No offering with leaven or honey was permitted upon the altar.¹¹⁵ A handful of the meal offering was turned into smoke upon the altar and the rest was eaten by the priests as their holy portion, except when the priest offered it on his own behalf and none of it was eaten.¹¹⁶

Along with the meal offering, there was also a libation offering that accompanied the burnt and peace offerings, "a quarter of a *hin* of wine as a libation for each sheep.. in the case of a ram... a third of a *hin* of wine... and if it is an animal from the herd,, half a *hin* of wine."¹¹⁷ As with the burnt offering, all was expended and nothing was given to the priest. The libation offerings are specifically mentioned in connection with the daily offering; "The libation with it shall be a quarter of a *hin* for each lamb to be poured in the sacred precinct as an offering of wine to the Lord. The other lamb you shall offer at twilight, preparing the same meal offering and libation as in the morning."¹¹⁸

The basic sacrifice of all communal offerings was the peace-offering, also translated as "a sacrifice of well-being."¹¹⁹ Any domesticated animal from the herd of the flock, male or female, was permissible.¹²⁰ The blood of the sacrifice was dashed on the altar in the same way that the blood of a burnt offering is dashed, although the whole of

¹¹³ Leviticus 2:4.

¹¹⁴ Numbers 5:15.

¹¹⁵ Leviticus 2:11.

¹¹⁶ Details of the meal offering are found in Leviticus 6:7-16.

¹¹⁷ Numbers 15:4-10.

¹¹⁸ Numbers 28:7-8.

¹¹⁹ Bernard J. Bamberger, *The Torah; A Modern Commentary*, 21

¹²⁰ Leviticus 3:1.

the animal is not turned into smoke. One noteworthy difference between the peace offering and the other types of offerings was that it was not sacrificed on the north side of the altar, but rather at the door of the sanctuary to the outer court.¹²¹ Every peace offering culminated in a meal. The majority of the sacrifice was given to the offerer, except for a portion that was burned on the altar and a small donation to the priest who dashed the blood. The offerer shared this meal with "your sons and daughters and with your male and female slaves, along with the Levite in your settlements, for he has no territorial allotment among you."¹²² It is a joyous occasion, a family reunion that could only take place at the Temple: "You must consume before the Lord your God in the place that the Lord your God will choose - you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, and the Levite in your settlements - happy before the Lord your God in all your undertakings."¹²³

Peace offering are specified on three occasions, Shavuot, the completion of a nazirite vow, and the installation of priesthood.¹²⁴ It also appears at other celebrations such as the inauguration of a sanctuary: "Solomon offered 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep as sacrifices of well-being to the Lord. Thus the king and all the Israelites dedicated the House of the Lord."¹²⁵ Well-being offerings appear at national events like a new king: "They declared Saul king before the Lord. They offered sacrifices of well-being there before the Lord; and Saul and all the men of Israel held a great celebration,"¹²⁶ or a new

¹²¹ Leviticus 3:2.

¹²² Deuteronomy 12:12.

¹²³ Numbers 12:18.

¹²⁴ Shavuot: Leviticus 23:19; Nazirite vow and installation of priesthood: Numbers 6:17.

¹²⁵ I Kings 8:63.

¹²⁶ I Samuel 11:15.

candidate for king: "Adonijah made a sacrificial feast... he invited all his brother princes and all the king's courtiers."¹²⁷ They also indicate the end of a plague: "And David built there an altar to the Lord and sacrificed burnt offerings and offerings of well-being. the Lord responded to the plea for the land and the plague against Israel was checked."¹²⁸ Other happy occasions include a national spiritual renewal: "Now that you have consecrated yourselves to the Lord; come, bring sacrifices and thanksgiving to the House of the Lord... The congregation brought sacrifices of well-being and thanksgiving... Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced,"¹²⁹ or for an annual family reunion: "The whole family has its annual sacrifice there."¹³⁰

The most frequent kind of peace offering was a thanksgiving offering that expressed gratitude for blessings already received from God: "I must pay my vows to You, O God; I will render thank offerings to you. For You have saved me from death,"¹³¹ "Let them praise the Lord for His steadfast love, His wondrous deeds for mankind. Let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices and tell his deeds in joyful song,"¹³² "How can I repay the Lord for all His bounties to me... I will sacrifice a thank offering,"¹³³ "The sound of mirth and gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and bride, the voice of those who cry, 'give thanks to the Lord of Hosts, for the Lord is good, for his kindness is everlasting!' as they bring thanksgiving offerings to the House of the Lord."¹³⁴ The term 'fellowship

¹²⁷ I Kings 1:9.

¹²⁸ II Samuel 24:25.

¹²⁹ II Chronicles 29:31-36.

¹³⁰ I Samuel 20:6.

¹³¹ Psalms 56:13-14.

¹³² Psalms 107:21-22.

¹³³ Psalms 116:12-17.

¹³⁴ Jeremiah 33:11.

offerings' is employed to describe those offerings expressing a voluntary desire on the part of the offerer.

Wave offerings involved a peculiar ritual of waving the priest's portion of the offering before the Lord, probably to signify that though the priest would keep it, it indeed belonged to God.¹³⁵

This is reminiscent of the presentation of the ceremonial food to the Mesopotamian deity after which it was given to the King. The basic difference seems to be that there the deity was considered to have partaken of the food and added its radiance to it while in Israel the priest ate the divine portion as God's representative, thus showing that the offerer's food was being shared by Him.¹³⁶

The same term also signified precious metals given for the construction of the sacred artifacts,¹³⁷ the two loaves offered on Shavuot,¹³⁸ and most interestingly, the Levites themselves:

Let the Israelites lay their hands upon the Levites, and let Aaron designate the Levites before the Lord as a wave offering from the Israelites, that they may perform the service of the Lord. The Levites shall now lay their hands upon the heads of the bulls... designate [the Levites] as a wave offering to the Lord. Thus you shall set the Levites apart from the Israelites, and the Levites shall be Mine.¹³⁹

Here it is shown that a wave offering is designated to the Lord as belonging to God. It is unusual to see a selection of people designated as an "offering from the Israelites," but in this way it is clear that the Levites are truly consecrated to the sacred

¹³⁵ Y.D., "Sacrifice," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, volume 14, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House) 604.

¹³⁶ Y.D., "Sacrifice," 604.

¹³⁷ Exodus 35:22 and 38:29.

¹³⁸ Leviticus 23:17, 20.

¹³⁹ Numbers 8:10-14.

service. Just as a wave offering demonstrates that the priest's portion truly belongs to God, so too the Levites, who are representatives of the people, are truly servants of God. Another interesting aspect of this passage is the chain of hand-laying. First the Israelites lay their hands upon the Levites, then the Levites lay their hands upon the sacrificial bulls. This way it is clear that the Israelites are expiated vicariously through the actions of their representatives, the Levites.

The flesh of a peace or thanksgiving offering had to be eaten on the same day it was sacrificed, while the flesh of a freewill or votive offering could be eaten the next day.¹⁴⁰ A votive offering was a peace offering or a burnt offering. It was any gift promised to the Lord in a vow, like a "the ram... together with the basket of unleavened cakes" at the consummation of a nazirite vow.¹⁴¹ "If a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath imposing an obligation on himself, he shall not break his pledge; he must carry out all that has come out of his mouth."¹⁴² The votive offering, therefore, is "in fulfillment of a vow explicitly uttered."¹⁴³ The freewill offering, like the votive offering, could be either a burnt or a peace offering. It was "the minimum offering that one could bring to the holy convocations that took place on the three pilgrimage festivals."¹⁴⁴ For example, at Sukkot: "Then they celebrated the festival of Tabernacles as is written, with its daily burnt offering in the proper quantities, on each day as is prescribed for it, followed by the regular burnt offerings and the offerings for the new moons and for all the sacred fixed times of the

¹⁴⁰ Leviticus 7:15-18.

¹⁴¹ Numbers 6:17.

¹⁴² Numbers 30:2.

¹⁴³ Numbers 15:3.

¹⁴⁴ Y.D., "Sacrifice," 605.

Lord, and whatever freewill offerings were made to the Lord,”¹⁴⁵ or at Passover: “Josiah donated to the people small cattle - lambs and goats, all for Passover sacrifices... His officers gave a freewill offering to the people, to the priests, and to the Levites.”¹⁴⁶

The same Hebrew term used for “ordination offerings” is used in regard to setting precious stones: “Lapis lazuli and other stones for setting.”¹⁴⁷ It is reasoned, then, that “the modern expression of *installation* is more appropriate.”¹⁴⁸ The term is also connected with the concept of “filling the hand,” which seems to have meant consecrating someone to sacred service: “Put these on your brother Aaron and on his sons as well; anoint them, and fill their hands and consecrate them to serve Me as priests.”¹⁴⁹ The sacrifice was a ram, and some of the blood of the ram was touched to the priest’s right ear lobe, right thumb, and right big toe,¹⁵⁰ similar to the leper who was cleansed. Similar to the votive and freewill offerings, none of the flesh was allowed to be eaten on the following day.

The majority of these sacrificial laws are found in the book of Leviticus, which is the shortest of the five books of Moses.

Its centrality in the Pentateuch is more than a mere matter of position. For all its apparent attention to archaic and obsolete priestly concerns, a far different focus emerges when the book is set against the Torah as a whole and against the literature of the surrounding Near East. Then we see that its real concern is with the consumption of food (1-110 and with the related requirements of purification (12-16) and sanctification (17-27). These broad topics provide, as it were, the warp of the book, while the woof is based on another triad: God, priests, and laity. To each are assigned

¹⁴⁵ Ezra 3:4-5.

¹⁴⁶ II Chronicles 35:7-8.

¹⁴⁷ Exodus 25:7.

¹⁴⁸ Y.D., “Sacrifice,” 605.

¹⁴⁹ Exodus 28:41.

¹⁵⁰ Exodus 29:19-34 and Leviticus 8:22-32.

very specific portions of all edibles, each receive distinct roles in purification and discrete levels of holiness.¹⁵¹

Indeed within the precise sacrificial system which has been laid out, there is a triad of God, priests, and laity (and we might add lambs!) The use of the word 'triad' over the word 'hierarchy' is profound, for just as a peace offering is divided up among all three, a portion burnt on the altar to God, a portion to the officiating priest, and a portion to the Israelite offerer, so too are each refractions of the same holiness. "You shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy."¹⁵²

2. Festival Offerings

*"On your new moons..."*¹⁵³

On the Sabbath, no sacrifices of individuals were offered, however all work connected with communal offerings were permitted. Along with the two *tamid* offerings, "a burnt offering for every Sabbath, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its libation,"¹⁵⁴ called a *musaf*, was offered. On new moons, a cornucopia of animal sacrifices were offered up in smoke: "Two bulls of the herd, one ram, and seven yearling lambs,"¹⁵⁵ each with its own libation offering and meal offering of choice flour and oil. There would also be a sin offering. The Sabbath was the only holy day upon which no sin offering was required.

¹⁵¹ William W. Hallo, "Leviticus and Ancient Near Eastern Literature," *The Torah; A Modern Commentary*, xxiii-xxiv.

¹⁵² Leviticus 20:26.

¹⁵³ Numbers 28:11.

¹⁵⁴ Numbers 28:10.

¹⁵⁵ Numbers 28:11.

On the first day of the seventh month, *Rosh Hashanah*, the "day when the horn is sounded,"¹⁵⁶ the presentations included: "One bull of the herd, one ram, and seven yearly lambs,"¹⁵⁷ in addition to the libation and meal offerings for each, one goat for a sin offering, the regular burnt offering of the new moon. On the tenth day of the same month, the Day of Atonement, again one bull, one ram, and seven lambs were offered, along with the goat for the sin offering. However, on this solemn day, the sin offering was married to a unique ritual. Two he goats were brought to the Temple and lots were cast over them. "One marked for the Lord and the other marked for Azazel."¹⁵⁸ One was allotted to be the sin offering, and the other to be the 'scapegoat.' The High Priest would lay his hands upon the scapegoat and, according to Mishnah Yoma, make the following confession: "I pray, O Eternal! Your people, the house of Israel, have done wrong, they have transgressed, they have sinned before You."¹⁵⁹ He would confess all of the iniquities of the people, "putting them on the head of the goat; and it shall be sent off to the wilderness through a designated man. Thus the goat shall carry on it all their iniquities to an inaccessible region."¹⁶⁰ According to Mishnah Yoma, ten booths were erected between Jerusalem and the cliff known as "Bet Hadura." At each of these booths, the scapegoat was offered food and water until it reached the cliff where it would be pushed off.¹⁶¹

On the pilgrimage festivals, the daily service was altered to accommodate the vast quantity of sacrifices which were brought. The altar ashes which were usually cleared at

¹⁵⁶ Numbers 29:1.

¹⁵⁷ Numbers 29:2.

¹⁵⁸ Leviticus 16:8.

¹⁵⁹ M. Yom. 2:2.

¹⁶⁰ Leviticus 16:21-22.

¹⁶¹ M. Yom 4:2, 6:5, 6.

dawn were already cleared by midnight. At midnight, the gates of the Temple courts were opened and by dawn the court was already filled with Israelites.¹⁶² The priests had to anticipate the festival's *musaf* offering along with the bucking and braying throngs of peace and freewill offerings the people brought with them on their pilgrimage.

The largest quantity of communal offerings were sacrificed during the Feast of Tabernacles, the seven day festival beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month. On the first day the burnt offering consisted of: "Thirteen bulls of the herd, two rams, fourteen yearling lambs," the second day: "Twelve bulls of the herd, two rams, fourteen yearling lambs," the third day: "Eleven bulls, two rams, fourteen yearling lambs," the fourth day: "Ten bulls, two rams, fourteen yearling lambs," the fifth day: "Nine bulls, two rams, fourteen yearling lambs," the sixth day: "Eight bulls, two rams, fourteen yearling lambs," the seventh day: "Seven bulls, two rams, fourteen yearling lambs."¹⁶³ Altogether, the festival consumed seventy bulls, fourteen rams, and ninety-eight yearling lambs, along with seven goats for daily sin offerings and the regular daily burnt offerings. Not described in the Torah, the Talmud describes water libations that were also offered on *Sukkot*. The Sadducees vehemently opposed this innovation, and once a Sadducean high priest poured the water out at his feet in contempt, which provoked the congregation to pelt him with *etrogim*.¹⁶⁴

Passover, the fourteenth day of the first month and the seven days following, had a special characteristic in that on the first day, rather than individual offerings, the Pascal

¹⁶² M. Yom. 1:8

¹⁶³ Numbers 29:13-34.

¹⁶⁴ B. Suk. 48b.

lamb was offered by groups of between ten and twenty Israelites.¹⁶⁵ This is probably based on the verse: "Go, pick out lambs for your families, and slaughter the Passover offering."¹⁶⁶ The lambs are for 'families,' not individuals. The Talmud relates that King Agrippa once wanted to take a census of the Jewish people, and so the High Priest took a kidney from each Pascal lamb. At the end of the festival, 600,000 pairs of kidneys were counted! Of course, there were at least ten people for each lamb, and so the festival was called "the Passover of the dense throngs!"¹⁶⁷ It was required that the roasted Pascal lambs be eaten that same night, and so the masses enjoyed all-night-picnic-feasts as a reward for their having completed the steep pilgrimage. Along with the countless lambs, there were also two bulls, one ram, seven yearling rams, and one goat for the sin offering each of the seven mornings of the festival.

On Shavuot, the "day of the first fruits, your Feast of Weeks,"¹⁶⁸ two bulls, one ram, and seven yearling rams were offered along with the goat for the sin offering and the proper meal and libation offerings. A special offering of new grain was brought to the Temple, and two additional yearling lambs as a sacrifice of well-being. The lambs and two leavened loaves were lifted by the priest as a wave offering¹⁶⁹

Each of the festival days are marked with specific sacrificial rituals that set them apart from each other and other days. The middle C, the unifying factor of the entire calendar was the daily offering. Even throughout the siege of Jerusalem, the *tamid* was

¹⁶⁵ B Pes. 64b.

¹⁶⁶ Exodus 12:21.

¹⁶⁷ B. Pes. 64b.

¹⁶⁸ Numbers 28:26.

¹⁶⁹ Leviticus 23:19.

offered up until the time the walls of the city were breached by the Romans on the 17th of Tammuz.¹⁷⁰ By examining the *tamid* offering, the melody of the Temple cult begins to unfold, and all of the burnt, sin, guilt, freewill, peace, fellowship, votive, meal, libation, wave, ordination, and festival offerings fall into harmony around it.

One of the most controversial statements concerning the Israelite sacrificial system was written by Maimonides: "The people are just hankering after the idolatrous practices of their environment."¹⁷¹ He explained that they were merely a temporary means whose purpose was to wean the people off of their more primitive tendencies. Nahmanides countered his remarks saying that sacrifices were "a moral symbolism founded on a psychological analysis of conduct." Few commentators, such as Abrabanel, adamantly defend Maimonides.¹⁷²

However Maimonides did not make a terse comment and then dismiss the sacrificial system to go on discussing more significant matters. Rather, he dedicated a tremendous amount of intellectual effort and energy to discussing the sacrifices. What exactly did he mean when he said they were merely to wean the people away from idolatrous practices? In his own words: "Sacrifices belong to the class of divine commandments designated as *hukkim*, for which no reason is ascertainable."¹⁷³ He also wrote that sacrifices have meaning in general, but they do not have meaning in the minutia of detail associated with them.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ Y.D., "Sacrifice," 609.

¹⁷¹ Maimonides, *Mishna Torah*, Book II, 32.

¹⁷² I. Epstein, "Introduction to Seder Kodashim," xxiv.

¹⁷³ I. Epstein, "Introduction to Seder Kodashim," xxv.

¹⁷⁴ I. Epstein, "Introduction to Seder Kodashim," xxv.

It is argued that Maimonides was making a distinction between obligatory and voluntary sacrifices.¹⁷⁵ The obligatory form an integral part of revealed religion. Their reason may be unknown, but "the very fact that God had commanded them imparts to them a spiritual and moral quality making for human perfection." Voluntary sacrifices are not enjoined by God. The prophets only raged against the voluntary offerings, but never against the obligatory. So, it is argued that Maimonides was saying that the voluntary offerings were the concession, but the ritualistic offerings were mysterious and God-given. Maimonides called the obligatory sacrifices a test of man's obedience.¹⁷⁶ Their value is not in content, but compliance to a higher will: "You ask why must a lamb be sacrificed and not a ram, and the same question would be asked why a ram had been commanded instead of a lamb...seven lambs and not eight..."¹⁷⁷ Accordingly, it was the guilt offerings and the sin offerings that the people had to be weaned away from, but the obligatory sacrifices, like the *tamid*, were divinely sanctioned.

3. Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

*"A kindness repaid is an offering of flour."*¹⁷⁸

The specific laws of sacrifice are not discussed in the Apocrypha or Pseudepigrapha, rather the religious significance of the system itself. The shift from legislation to spirituality was related in part to the dominant pressures of oppressive societies, and in part to a gradual maturing of religious thought. The forced influence of

¹⁷⁵ I. Epstein, "Introduction to Seder Kodashim," xxv.

¹⁷⁶ Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, Book III, 26.

¹⁷⁷ I. Epstein, "Introduction to Seder Kodashim," xxv.

¹⁷⁸ Testimony of Levi 9:8.

tyrannical powers are illustrated especially in the Books of the Maccabees: "He purposed publicly to inflict a disgrace upon the Jewish Nation, and erected a pillar on the tower in the palace with the inscription, that none who did not sacrifice should be allowed to enter their temples; and that all Jews should be degraded."¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, anyone who spoke out against these decrees was to be put to death. The attack on the religion was thorough: "Burnt offerings, sacrifices, and libations in the temple were forbidden; Sabbaths and feast days were to be profaned...swine and other unclean beasts to be offered in sacrifice...the penalty for disobedience was death."¹⁸⁰ The system which had been the pulse of the nation was turned into a humiliation.

The zealot Mattathias took it upon himself to set forth his own decree. Opposing "the penalty for disobedience was death," he enacted instead a death penalty for obedience. When "a Jew stepped forward in full view of all to offer sacrifice on the pagan altar at Modin, in obedience to the royal command... The sight stirred Mattathias to indignation; he shook with passion, and in a fury of righteous anger rushed forward and slaughtered the traitor on the very altar."¹⁸¹ It is a powerful scene when Mattathias sacrifices the sacrificer, completing the transformation of the altar from a vehicle for repentance to a provocation for murder.

Without a clean altar, the commanded sacrifices could no longer be fulfilled, but the importance of sacrifice had already been deeply imbedded into the hearts of the ancient Israelites when they wished to communicate with God:

¹⁷⁹ III Maccabees 2:28.

¹⁸⁰ I Maccabees 1:45.

¹⁸¹ I Maccabees 2:23.

Neither is there at this time prince, or prophet, or leader, or burnt offering, or sacrifice, or oblation, or incense, or place to offer before You and to find mercy. But in a contrite heart and a humble spirit let us be accepted, like as in the burnt offerings of rams and bullocks, and like as in ten thousands of fat lambs; so let our sacrifice be in Your sight this day, and grant that we may wholly go after You, for they shall not be ashamed to put their trust in You.¹⁸²

In the absence of an altar, the people ask that their "contrite heart and a humble spirit" be worthy offerings to God. It has been noted in Chapter I that the Jewish Sages also included "study" in this list of new offerings.

This next passage seems to be on the bridge between two stages in religious development:

Keeping the law is worth many offerings; to heed the commandments is to sacrifice a thank offering. A kindness repaid is an offering of flour, and to give alms is a praise offering. The way to please the Lord is to renounce evil; and to renounce wrongdoing is to make atonement.

Yet do not appear before the Lord empty-handed; perform these sacrifices because they are commanded. When the just man brings his offering of fat to the altar, its fragrance rises to the presence of the Most High. The just man's sacrifice is acceptable, it will never be forgotten. be generous in your worship of the Lord and present the first fruits of your labor in full measure. Give all your gifts cheerfully and be glad to dedicate your tithe. Give to the Most High as he had given to you, as generously as you can afford. For the Lord always repays; you will be repaid seven times over.¹⁸³

It begins with a lyrical expansion of the idea posed in *Tanach*, "Surely, obedience is better than sacrifice,"¹⁸⁴ however it shies away from abandoning sacrifice altogether "because

¹⁸² Azariah 17:5-8.

¹⁸³ Sirach 35:1-11 .

¹⁸⁴ I Samuel 15:22.

they are commanded,” and returns to extol its merit, with a weighty emphasis on the virtue of the offerer.

In the Testimony of Levi there is a small passage on the origin of the sacrificial system which is laden with nuance: “And so we came to Hebron to dwell there. And Isaac called me continually to put me in remembrance of the law of the Lord, even as the angel of the Lord appeared to me. He taught me the law of the priesthood, of sacrifices, whole burnt-offerings, first fruits, free-will offerings, peace-offerings... and every sacrifice you shall salt with salt.”¹⁸⁵ It is left ambiguous whether the “he [who] taught me” is Isaac or the angel of the Lord. Either way, it is noteworthy that the sacrificial system claims its source in a supernatural place, and that Levi is informed of them through a vision. The coupling of the Patriarch Isaac with this revelation is significant in that it was only Isaac who has first hand experience in being bound upon an altar. The Gemara on *Tamid* clarifies that the lamb for the daily offering was not bound in the same way that butchers would bind lamb, but rather in the way that Abraham bound his son Isaac.¹⁸⁶ The Hebrew verb, *A-K-D*, used in the Mishnah for binding the lamb is the same as the verb used in the binding of Isaac, and moreso, the two other times that this verb appears in the Talmud are in reference to this passage in *Tamid*.¹⁸⁷ This linguistic connection led later teachers to claim that the daily sacrifice was ordained at the very moment that Abraham bound Isaac,¹⁸⁸ inextricably linking Isaac with the sacrificial system. Furthermore, the binding of

¹⁸⁵ Testimony of Levi 9:7-13.

¹⁸⁶ B. *Tamid* 28a.

¹⁸⁷ B. *Shab* 54a and *Tamid* 31b.

¹⁸⁸ Aryeh Kaplan, *The Torah Anthology*, (New York: Maznaim Publishing Corporation, 1982) 53.

Isaac predates the sacrifice of Jesus, who is said to be the completion of the sacrificial system in the New Testament. In this way, the very origin of the system and its disappearance are flanked by the ordeal of the son of the Patriarch Abraham and the suffering of one often called simply "the son."

Not only are the sacrifices divinely sanctioned according to various texts, but according to this passage, they are also performed in heaven! "In the highest of all dwells the Great glory, far above all holiness. In the heaven next to it are the archangels, who minister and make propitiation to the Lord for all the sins of ignorance of the righteous; and they offer to the Lord a sweet-smelling savor, a reasonable and bloodless offering." The idea of a bloodless offering probably alludes to the Essene's objection to bloody sacrifice, but also suggests a fundamental difference between the way man worships and the way angels worship. Perhaps releasing the life-principal which is found only in blood is necessary for man to connect to God's eternal life, but in heaven, in the place where life is triumphant, it is not at all necessary.¹⁸⁹

In another text, sacrifice is abhorred and criticized with scathing cynicism:

Happy shall those men be throughout the earth who shall truly love the mighty God, blessing Him before eating and drinking, staunch in their godliness. Who, when they see them, shall disown all temples and altars, vain erections of senseless stones, befouled with constant blood of living things and sacrifices of four-footed beasts. But they shall look to the great glory of the one God neither committing dastard murder, nor bartering for dishonest gain, which are altogether evil.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ See chapter III for a fuller discussion of Israelite blood-theology.

¹⁹⁰ Sib. 4:29-31.

The New Testament combines the sense of dread that the Temple cult was nearing its end and the promise that this too was God's will. Rather than the gradual dissolving of sacrifice into its essence, prayer, study, and good deeds, in the New Testament the system ends with a definitive closing of the book "once and for all" with the sacrifice beside which all else pales. "The Temple could disappear and animal sacrifices had to end for they were merely the imperfect figure, indefinitely repeated, of the sacrifice of Christ who offered himself once and for all in a unique offering for our redemption and our sanctification."¹⁹¹ This notion is illustrated in the following texts: "He has no need to offer sacrifices daily, as the high priests do, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; for this he did once and for all when he offered up himself,"¹⁹² and "The blood of his sacrifice is his own blood, not the blood of goats and calves; and thus he has entered the sanctuary once and for all and secured eternal deliverance. ...he offered himself without blemish to God, a spiritual and eternal sacrifice."¹⁹³ There is no condemnation of sacrifice, rather conclusion. Other references to Jesus being the ultimate sacrifice: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give up his life as a ransom for many."¹⁹⁴ "...gave himself up on your behalf as an offering and sacrifice whose fragrance is pleasing to God,"¹⁹⁵ as the Pascal lamb: "Our Passover has begun; the sacrifice is offered, Christ himself."¹⁹⁶ "He has appeared once and for all at the climax of history to abolish sin by the

¹⁹¹ Ronald de Vaux, *Ancient Israel; Its Life and Institutions*, 456.

¹⁹² Hebrews 7:27.

¹⁹³ Hebrews 9:12.

¹⁹⁴ Mark 10:45.

¹⁹⁵ Eph. 5:2.

¹⁹⁶ I Corinthians 5:7.

sacrifice of himself.”¹⁹⁷ For the Rabbis, the “climax of history” will be the dawn of the new, perfect world.

4. Dead Sea Scrolls

*“Have pity on the city of your Sanctuary.”*¹⁹⁸

The Dead Sea sect broke off relations with the priests of Jerusalem and took no part in the official worship. Even so, they claimed to be scrupulous observers of the Law. consequently, they did not offer up sacrifices, for sacrifice outside of the Temple was unlawful. There have been excavations at Qumran which have uncovered heaps of animal bones buried in a ritual way, leading some authors to claim “that these bones are the remains of sacrifices. These finds would therefore confirm the statement of Josephus that the Essenes offered private sacrifices. It is more likely, however, that these bones are the remains of religious meals which do not have a strictly sacrificial character.”¹⁹⁹ There is no evidence “that the Qumran authors regarded their meals as a substitute for the sacrificial service. The required purity of food and drink and the rituals associated with grace before and after meals were certainly widespread by that time, but such practices in no way prove that every meal was sacral.”²⁰⁰ Although there are these remnants of communal meals and texts of grace before and after, “there is no archeological or historical support for recent contentions that sacrifices were conducted at Qumran.”²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ I Corinthians 9:26.

¹⁹⁸ Ben Sira 36:11-14.

¹⁹⁹ Ronald de Vaux, *Ancient Israel; Its Life and Institutions*, 455.

²⁰⁰ Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 336.

²⁰¹ Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 337.

The sect separated from the Temple because they regarded the Temple procedure as improper and the priests not of the Zadokite line. However, "they still legislated for Temple worship on the assumption that they would resume their participation after their approach had triumphed over that of their opponents."²⁰²

But we hold the view that the Temple is [the equivalent of] the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting, and Jerusalem is the camp, and outside the camp is [equivalent to] outside of Jerusalem. (Halakhic letter b29-31)²⁰³

The Dead Sea sect still insisted on the centrality of the Temple and of Jerusalem. There are texts that envision the future Temple, enormous in size, with a design that creates more stringency against the entrance of impurities. The visionary in the "New Jerusalem" texts even observes in a vision a variety of animal sacrifices.

To the Dead Sea sect, the city of Jerusalem represented three things: the polluted society and sanctuary from which they had chosen to withdraw; the dwelling place of the Divine presence, regulated by specific legal requirements regarding the temple and its service; and the sect's final destination in the End of Days, where a perfect Temple, built by God, would arise in the heart of a perfect city spreading out in all directions.²⁰⁴

That the sect did not perform sacrifices was not a commentary against the concept of sacrifice, but rather on what they perceived as corruption in the Temple of their days, which polluted every service performed therein. They forswore participation in the Temple sacrificial service as it stood, believing the priests illegitimate. "Prayer, purity, study, and sectarian life replaced Temple and sacrifice for the sect."²⁰⁵

²⁰² Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 282.

²⁰³ Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 389.

²⁰⁴ Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 394.

²⁰⁵ Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 290.

[I will praise Him at the times which He has ordained:
 At the beginning of the rule of light in its time,
 and when it is gathered to its appointed place.
 At the beginning of the watches of darkness,
 when he opens His storehouse and sets out the darkness,
 and at its end when it is gathered before the light.
 When the lights appear from the holy heaven,
 when they are gathered to the place of honor.²⁰⁶

The words of this prayer acknowledge that the time for prayer were at dawn and twilight, mirroring the hour of the daily sacrificial offerings, however prayer was seen as a temporary substitute and not a permanent replacement.

The sect at Qumran still maintained that "the correct conduct of sacrificial worship was the primary guarantor of their welfare. Indeed, they regarded the sacrificial system as the prime connection of the people of Israel to God, the source of blessing for the land and its inhabitants."²⁰⁷ The author of the Temple scroll stressed that only if sacrifices are conducted according to the particular ritual calendar of the text, "will God cause His name, that is, His presence, to dwell in the Temple. The sacrifices are intended to bring God's favor upon Israel, both strengthening the bond between God and His people and bringing about atonement for transgression."²⁰⁸

For all groups of Second Temple Jews, prayer was increasing in importance, as were a variety of other religious practices centered in the home. Today, with historical hindsight, we can see that during the Second Temple period, Judaism was moving away from sacrifice.

However, for the Jews of the Hellenistic period, this major transition had not yet dawned. They regarded prayer and ritual as either mere accompaniments to sacrifice, substitutes for those located too far away from the Temple,

²⁰⁶ Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 264.

²⁰⁷ Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 290.

²⁰⁸ Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 214.

or, in the case of sectarian groups like the Qumran sect, as replacements for a Temple ritual they judged impure.²⁰⁹

By the time of the destruction of the Second Temple, many groups such as the Dead Sea sect had developed a way of life that could survive the new post-sacrifice era.

Chapter III: Tractate Tamid

1. Introduction to Tractate Tamid

In the two or three generations preceding Rabbi's compilation of the Mishnah, there were many great political and economical upheavals, including the failure of the Bar Kochba Revolution "which caused the shifting of the center of gravity of Jewish life from cultured Judea to uncultured Galilee, combined with new systems of thought and study, inaugurated by Rabbi Akiva and developed by his disciples, [keeping] the Halakhah in a continuous flux."²¹⁰ As a result of this, "when Rabbi undertook his compilation of the Mishnah the new Halakhah which was the least changed at Rabbi's time was the one which we would describe as archeological. Consequently, the tractates *Bikkurim*, *Pesahim*, *Shekalim*, *Yoma*, *Sotah*, *Tamid*, *Middot*, *Negaim*, *Parah* which contain descriptions of the Temple service or of other public ceremonies observed at the time of the Temple, show the most archaic forms."²¹¹ Parts of these archaic texts were inserted into Rabbi's work without undergoing many essential changes.

²⁰⁹ Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 289.

²¹⁰ Louis Ginzberg, "The Mishnah Tamid," *Journal of Jewish Lore and Philosophy*, volume 1, (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1969) 38.

²¹¹ Louis Ginzberg, "The Mishnah Tamid," 38.

The Tractate *Tamid* occupies "an exceptional position among the tractates enumerated inasmuch as it remained entirely untouched by the hands of the last editor of the Mishnah, while the others contain only fragments of the earlier Mishnah collections."²¹² It is argued that indeed this tractate is not a part of Rabbi's Mishnah at all. There are references to only three authorities in support of or in contradiction to the views given, and each of these are proven to be a later addition.²¹³ Excluding *Tamid*, there are only six other chapters out of 508 in the Mishnah Talmud where there are no authorities quoted.²¹⁴

This establishes the fact that the *Mishnah* of *Tamid* was late as the time of the *Amoraim* did not contain one single reference to any authority, while the other fifty-nine tractates of the *Mishnah* quote authorities in almost every chapter. There are two possibilities: Either that the *halakhot* in *Tamid* were accepted by all the *Tannaim* so that there was no need to quote any authority in support of them and no occasion to note a difference, or that this tractate was not edited by the same redactor as the rest of the *Mishnah*.²¹⁵

²¹² Louis Ginzberg, "The Mishnah Tamid," 38.

²¹³ Ginzberg proves each as follows: Remark of Rabbi Elazar ben Daglai in Tamid III, 8 which is not in the Munich manuscript, is of post-talmudic times. The same passage is found in Y. Suk. V and B. Yom. 39b and both times it is quoted as an Amoraic tradition and not as a mishnah. The statement of R Eliezer ben Jacob in Tamid V, 2 is quoted in Yom. 26a as a *baraita* and not as a mishnah which proves that it was not in the text of Tamid at the time of the Amoraim. Rabbi Judah in Tamid VII, 2 is not found in the Munich manuscript or the Oxford manuscript and was probably inserted from Sotah VII, 6/

Tamid III, 2 does not quote the view of Matthatias ben Samuel, but the words are part of a historical narrative and not to be translated, in that he was in the habit of announcing the time of the slaughtering of the daily sacrifice. Louis Ginzberg, "The Mishnah Tamid," 40-42.

²¹⁴ Maaser Sheni I, Yebamot IX, Shebuot VIII, Zebahim V, Meilah II and Negain III.

²¹⁵ Louis Ginzberg, "The Mishnah Tamid," 42.

The first option is not a possibility because many of the laws laid out in *Tamid* are contradicted in other sections of the Mishnah. For example, *Tamid* III,3 situates the Chamber of the Lambs at the north-west corner of the Temple court, while *Middot* I,6 situates in on the south-west. This leaves only the second option, that "this tractate was not edited by the same redactor."

A study by Louis Ginzberg of the linguistic oddities of tractate *Tamid* point to an age much earlier than that of the rest of the *Mishnah*. There are archaic words and expressions which never occur in Rabbi's *Mishnah* or other Tannaitic sources except where they refer back to this tractate. Many of the verbs are written in Biblical form and are not known in post-biblical literature.²¹⁶ These lead to the conclusion that "the editor of *Tamid* lived at least several generations before Rabbi, the compiler of our *Mishnah*."²¹⁷

In attempting to date *Tamid*, Ginzberg pointed out two *halakhot* mentioned in *Tamid* III,1 and IV,1 which are also given in *Yoma* I,13, and *Zebachim* VI,13, except in the other tractates they are given as statements of R. Simon of Mizpah. R. Simon of Mizpeh is mentioned only in one other passage, *Peah* II,6 where it is written that R. Simon of Mizpeh and Rabban Gamliel, confused on a point of law, went together to the Chamber of Hewn Stone. There they received an answer from the scribe Nahum. Knowing that the chamber is located in one of the Temple buildings, the incident had to occur before 70 CE. "If we accept as historical the Talmudic tradition that the *Sanhedrin* left the Chamber of Hewn Stone in 30 CE, we have to assume that *Tamid* was composed before

²¹⁶ Louis Ginzberg, "The Mishnah *Tamid*," 198.

²¹⁷ Louis Ginzberg, "The Mishnah *Tamid*," 265.

the destruction of the Temple."²¹⁸ However, that would mean that the Rabban Gamliel who accompanied R. Simon of Mizpeh was the elder one who was the head of the Pharasean school from 25-50 CE. Ginzberg found that it would be strange for Rabban Gamliel the elder to appear before his own *Sanhedrin* to ask a question. He also points out that the title "Rabbi" attached to R. Simon was not used in Rabban Gamliel the elder's generation. Also, he shows that Nahum the scribe is mentioned in the Munich manuscript as Nahum the Median, who belong to the generation of Rabban Gamliel II. Therefore, he concludes that it was actually Rabban Gamliel II who went to the Chamber of Hewn Stone and that the *Sanhedrin* returned to old meeting place during revolution. This would put Rabbi Simon of Mizpeh just before 70.²¹⁹ It could have been written even earlier, to give the priests a practical guide to the sacred service. However, the two temple officers mentioned, Mattatias and Arza, occupied their positions in the very last days of the Temple. In conclusion, Ginzberg says the probability is that *Tamid* was composed just after the destruction to preserve the order and details of the sacred service. It is for this reason that there are no authorities cited in this tractate, because while "the Mishnah is a code of law, *Tamid* is an archeological study."²²⁰

In outer form, the tamid offering resembled the daily offering of Israel's neighbors, where sacrifices symbolically formed the daily diet of the gods who were likewise served two meals a day. The tamid offering was also presented two times a day, with a main course of lamb and a meal offering and libation as side dishes. However, reviewing the

²¹⁸ Louis Ginzberg, "The Mishnah Tamid," 286.

²¹⁹ Louis Ginzberg, "The Mishnah Tamid," 286-290.

²²⁰ Louis Ginzberg, "The Mishnah Tamid," 290.

menu for the Mesopotamian gods, there is a sharp contrast: "The daily total, throughout the year, for four meals per day: Twenty-one first-class, fat, clean rams which had been fed barley for two years; two large bulls; one milk-fed bullock; eight lambs; sixty birds; three cranes; five ducks; two ducks of lower quality; four wild boars; three ostrich eggs; three duck eggs."²²¹ The Mesopotamian gods were perceived as having a robust appetite. The prophet Nathan's parable can be used to express the contrast: "The rich man had very large flocks and herds, but the poor man had only one little ewe lamb."²²² The daily offering in Israel "was restricted to the essential staples of the Israelite diet, the flesh of lambs (the most inexpensive meat), and a portion of the three most abundant crops, from which first fruits were prescribed, wheat, wine and olive oil."²²³ Thus it is clear that the daily offering had moved away from the notion of a feast for the gods and was valued more as an expression of Israel's obedience. The continuity of the offering was also a reassurance to Israel, and its cessation was viewed as a great calamity: "It hurled some stars of the [heavenly] host to the ground and trampled them. It vaunted itself against the very chief of the host; on its account the regular offering was suspended, and His holy place was abandoned,"²²⁴ and "Forces will be levied by him; they will desecrate the Temple, the fortress; they will abolish the regular offering and set up the appalling abomination."²²⁵

Legend has it that as long as the *tamid* was uninterrupted
the walls of Jerusalem were impregnable. One of the reasons

²²¹ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, (New York: Doubleday, 1961) 456-457.

²²² II Samuel 12:2-3.

²²³ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 38.

²²⁴ Daniel 8:10-11.

²²⁵ Daniel 11:31.

for observing the fast of the seventeenth of Tammuz is that on this day the *tamid* ceased.²²⁶

The tractate is divided into seven chapter. The first describes the night watches and preparation for the morning sacrifices, including the clearing of the ashes. The second chapter maps out the laying of the new fire upon the altar. Chapter three describes the casting of the lots in order to assign each priest to his duty. Chapter four details the slaughtering of the lamb. Chapter five describes the morning liturgy including the *Shema* and the ten commandments. chapter six describes the incense offering, and the seventh chapter describes the high priest's entry, prostration, the priestly benediction, and how the ceremonials are altered when the high priest participates.

2. Guarding the Temple

*"The Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps"*²²⁷

"In three places the priests stand guard in the Temple" are the opening words of tractate Tamid. They not only diagram the positions of the priestly guards in three Temple chambers, but seem to caution the student-reader that this is a manual for priests, not a textbook for laity. The three guard-posts overlook not only the Temple Court, but also the very entrance-point into this text. Just as the "*cherubim* and the fiery ever-turning sword"²²⁸ guard the Garden against the reentry of the banished, so it seems "the priests stand guard in the Temple" against the probing of the prohibited.

The rule of the guarding is derived from the verse "And those that were to pitch before the Tabernacle eastward, before the Tent of Meeting toward the sun's rising, were

²²⁶ M. Ta'an. 4:6.

²²⁷ Psalms 121:4.

²²⁸ Genesis 3:24.

Moses and Aaron and his sons, *guarding* the holy *watch* for the *watch* of the children of Israel.”²²⁹ The threefold use of the root “to watch” serves “as a hint that the priests should stand guard in three places in the Temple.”²³⁰ Tractate Middoth, which begins with the same opening words as Tamid, elaborates that whilst the priests kept watch in three places, the Levites kept watch in twenty-one:²³¹ five at the five gates of the Temple Mount, four at the four inside corners, five at the five gates of the Temple Court, four at the four outside corners, one at the Chamber of Offerings, one at the Chamber of the Curtain, and one behind the Holy of Holies. On the Temple Mount, if the guard becomes tired and wishes to sit, he may sit, but in the Temple Court “if he feels tired and wants to sit down he may not sit, since a Master has said that sitting is not allowed in the Temple Court save only to kings of the House of David; therefore [the guards] are placed on the outside.”²³²

Archeologists and historians have learned much about the fashion of the royal courts of ancient civilizations based upon the design and customs surrounding their divine courts.²³³ It may be deduced that in the inner royal court of Israelite kings, no one sat down, respectfully, save his majesty himself. Indeed, a vision is described in the book of Ezekiel describing God seated like a king: “Upon this semblance of a throne, there was a

²²⁹ Numbers 3:38, cited in B. Tamid 26a.

²³⁰ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, vol.3, Tamid, (Jerusalem: Eliner Library, 1995) 3.

²³¹ Mid. 1:1. The reasoning for there being twenty-one Levites is based upon a creative interpretation of I Chronicles 26:17-18

²³² B. Tamid 27a.

²³³ A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 187.

semblance of a human form...that was the appearance of the semblance of the Presence of the Lord,"²³⁴ while God's attendants either "moved forward" or "*stood still*."²³⁵

The reasoning for the guarding reflects the manner of earthy palaces. The Temple was not guarded "to protect it from enemies, thieves or marauders - the gates of the Temple were all locked at night - but rather to enhance its glory just as royal palaces are watched by a ceremonial guard."²³⁶ Writing in the twelfth century, halachist and philosopher Rambam hypothesized that just as the priests were not allowed to bring beds into the chamber where they slept in the Temple, so too guards watching over a king's palace would sleep on the ground. Ravad, writing in twelfth century Provence, and Rosh, writing in thirteenth century Germany, insist that there was always a ceremonial watch on duty, both day and night in the Temple. In one of countless discussions that span the centuries, Rambam says the commandment was only to guard at night. It would appear that the night would be the time that the Temple least needed to be watched because "the gates of the Temple were all locked at night," and during the day it would be more vulnerable because the gates were open. However, it is clear that the Temple guarding was for a different purpose. It was not merely a nicety, an additional ornamentation to the Temple's grandeur, but a distinctive honor which was gravely observed:

The chief of the Temple Mount guards used to make the round of every watch with flaming torches before him, and if any guard did not stand up, the chief of the Temple Mount would call to him, 'Peace be to you!' If it were evident that he was asleep, [the chief] thrashed him with his staff and he had the right to burn his raiment. And they [that were in the Temple Court] would say, 'What is [this] noise

²³⁴ Ezekiel 1:26.

²³⁵ Ezekiel 1:19-21.

²³⁶ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 2. Rashi and Rambam say the same.

in the Temple Court?' [And someone would reply], '[It is] the noise of some Levite being beaten and his garments being burned because he has been asleep during his watch.'²³⁷

The chief, with his flaming torch (reminiscent of the "fiery ever-turning sword"), would check to see if any of the guards had fallen asleep on duty. If a guard did not stand and return the chief's greeting, it was evident that he had fallen into a slumber, and he was presently thrashed and his garments were burned. Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob offered a particular occasion when "they found my mother's brother [asleep at the post] and they burned his clothes."²³⁸ It may be that his priestly attire was burned in order to castigate the guard by removing his vestiges of authorities: "They shall remove their robes and strip off their embroidered garments, and they shall clothe themselves in trembling."²³⁹ More probably, however, the garments were burned because "They did not sleep in their sacred garments."²⁴⁰ They were forbidden to "make general use of" the priestly garments.²⁴¹ After discussion, the Gemara concludes that not only were the priests not permitted to sleep in their priestly attire, but it was also forbidden to walk around in them. Sleeping in them, however, was especially forbidden for four reasons; firstly, to avoid the potentiality of having a nocturnal emission in the sacred garments; secondly, because of the prohibition of "mixed kinds."²⁴² Although Scripture does not expressly say one cannot lie upon a cloth of

²³⁷ B. Mid. 2.

²³⁸ B. Mid. 2.

²³⁹ Ezekiel 26:16.

²⁴⁰ M. Tamid 1:1.

²⁴¹ B. Tamid 27a.

²⁴² "You shall not put on a cloth from a mixture of two kinds of material;" Leviticus 19:19.

mixed kinds, the sages said that it is forbidden "for fear that a thread may wind itself round the body."²⁴³ The high priest's girdle contained both wool and linen, and so this reading is valid only if the girdle of an ordinary priest was the same as that of the high priest. Thirdly, sleeping in the priestly attire was forbidden because sleeping was considered to be 1/60th of death,²⁴⁴ and any contact with death made a priest ritually impure. It is for this reason that the priests must immerse themselves in the morning before attending to any sacred service. By falling asleep, the guard rendered his garments ritually impure and valueless. Fourthly, as stated above, general or profane use cannot be made of these dedicated garments, as it is written, "When [the priests] go out to the outer court - the outer court where the people are - they shall remove the vestments in which the minister and shall deposit them in the sacred chambers."²⁴⁵

The three places that the priests kept watch were the Chamber of Avtinas, the Chamber of the Spark, and the Oven Chamber. The Chamber of Avtinas and the Chamber of the Spark were both balconies and provided appropriate guard-posts.²⁴⁶ Avtinas was a family of priests who specialized in preparing incense.²⁴⁷ The Chamber of the Spark was where the permanent source of fire was kept. The Oven Chamber was a dome-shaped room which housed a large fire for a hearth. (The fire in the Chamber of the Spark was not used for secular purposes.) The priests who would be serving the next day would sleep there. This hearth warmed the priests who walked barefoot on the cool marble floor and

²⁴³ B. Tamid 27b.

²⁴⁴ B. Ber. 57b.

²⁴⁵ Ezekiel 44:17-19.

²⁴⁶ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 4.

²⁴⁷ B. Shek 5:1 and B. Yom. 1:5.

only wore one thin garment.²⁴⁸ In describing the priest's garb, the book of Ezekiel says "They shall not gird themselves with anything that causes sweat."²⁴⁹ The hearth also warmed them after they immersed in the *mikvah*.²⁵⁰

The priests that would stand guard are described as *rovim*, which is interpreted to mean "youngsters,"²⁵¹ priests that were too young to perform sacred service. Others derive the word, using Genesis 21:20 *rovah keshet*, as "archer."²⁵² In combination, "youngsters" and "archers" bring to mind the much later image in architecture and art of fair, child-like guardian angels with a quiver of arrows slung across their winged backs. These youngsters who were not old enough to attend to the sacred service in the Temple stood watch at night while the elders slept in the Oven Chamber. Perhaps inherent in their obligatory guard duty was an element of essential training for these fledgling priests, a maturing awareness of a Presence, even at night with the Temple gates locked, when there was no fear of thieves or marauders, a fear nonetheless, a necessary watchfulness of this Space, a watching, and a being-watched, and the creeping sensation that a Presence dwells within: "You will bring them and plant them in Your own mountain, the place You made to dwell in, O Lord, the sanctuary..."²⁵³

3. Preparing for Sacred Service

*"If anyone among you has been rendered unclean..."*²⁵⁴

²⁴⁸ Rosh on Tamid 1:1.

²⁴⁹ Ezekiel 44:17.

²⁵⁰ Rambam on Mid. 1:6.

²⁵¹ This is derived from the Aramaic *revia* which means child. Exodus 2:10, "and the child grew up," is rendered into Aramaic by Onkelos as *urva revia*.

²⁵² Rambam, *Mishna Im Perush HaRambam, Kedoshim*, (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1967), on Tamid 1:1.

²⁵³ Exodus 15:17.

²⁵⁴ "...by a nocturnal emission." Deuteronomy 23:11.

When you go out as a troop against your enemies, be on your guard against anything untoward. If anyone among you has been rendered unclean by a nocturnal emission, he must leave the camp, and he must not reenter the camp. Toward evening he shall bathe in water, and at sundown he may reenter the camp.²⁵⁵

The text now turns from the novice priest's guarding of the Temple to the priest's guarding of himself, or more exactly, his function to safeguard the sanctity of the Temple against his own human inclinations. Before the tractate addresses the highest order of sacred service, the offering of the daily sacrifice, it turns to the lowest order. The early morning progression of events which will eventually lead to the fiery crown of the altar, begins far below, "down the winding staircase which went under the *birah*, and which was lit by lights on each side,"²⁵⁶ through the subterranean passageways outside the wall, to the privy and the *mikvah*.

Where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven,
You are there; if I descend to Sheol, You are there too.²⁵⁷

It was no ordinary privy. This privy was deemed "superior" because it possessed a lock which enabled one to know if someone was already inside. If a priest were to have a nocturnal emission in the night, he would descend through the lit staircase and tunnels to the bathing place, for it was forbidden to cross the Temple Court in a state of impurity.²⁵⁸ The privy was adjacent to the *mikvah* so that the priest might urinate before immersing, lest he become impure again.²⁵⁹ After he had warmed himself by the fire, the priest waited

²⁵⁵ Deuteronomy 23:11-12.

²⁵⁶ Tamid 1:1.

²⁵⁷ Psalms 139:7-8.

²⁵⁸ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 5.

²⁵⁹ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 5.

for the Temple gates to open at which point he would leave until nightfall. Even after the immersion, he is still considered a *tevul yom*, literally "one who is bathed in daylight." It is said, based upon the double mention of the word 'camp' in Deuteronomy 23:11, that one who has had a nocturnal emission is sent out of two camps, the camp of the Levites and the camp of *Shechinah*, God's Presence.²⁶⁰

The discussion of the privy in the Gemara leads to a tangential list of etiquette advice passed on from Rabbi Huna to his son Raba. This list includes attending "to your needs at nightfall and before daybreak," when there are no people around, "sit first and then uncover, and cover first and then rise...when you drink water, pour some out before giving it to your disciple," and "do not spit anything out in front of your teacher except pumpkin and leek, for they are like molten lead."²⁶¹

If there is a flaw in the foundation of a house, a fissure in the sealing of a ship, the structure will not withstand the natural pressures laid upon it. The holiness of the Temple cult rested upon the integrity of its toilers, how they treated one another, how they compensated for their own human needs through immersion, and the punctiliousness with which they tended to divine service. Consequently, how the priests behaved in the privy, drank water, or spit out pumpkin seeds was entirely relevant to the stability of a holy system. The candor of this tractate beginning the daily service with a visit to the underground privy serves as a reminder that the Temple was a human enterprise designed to help us perfect ourselves on every level that we may offer heavenward that which God

²⁶⁰ Philip Blackman, *Mishnayoth, Order Kodashim*, (New York: The Judaica Press, Inc., 1964) 470.

²⁶¹ Tamid 27b.

most desires: "For I desire goodness, not sacrifice; obedience to God, rather than burnt offerings."²⁶²

4. Removing the Ashes

*"Like golden apples in silver showpieces..."*²⁶³

The first sacred service of the day was the removal of the ashes of the offerings left burning overnight. Every morning one priest would take the silver shovel from the western corner between the ramp and the altar, climb the ascent, push aside the burning coals, and remove the fine ash in the center. Often the pile of ash in the center of the altar would grow quite large. This pile was packed tightly into a round shape like a glowing apple.²⁶⁴ Indeed, this pile was called the "apple." When the apple grew too large, the priests would clear it away to a place outside of town called *Shefekh haDeshen*, however on festivals they did not clear away the apple because it was considered an ornament that would impress the pilgrims with the vast amount of sacrifices. The Mishnah says that sometimes this apple grew to over three hundred *kor*, which is approximately cubit 120 meters!²⁶⁵ The rabbis of the Gemara, however, dismiss this measurement as excited hyperbole.²⁶⁶ It is probable that the reference in the verse "Like golden apples in a silver showpiece is a phrase well-turned,"²⁶⁷ is the brilliant rounded pile of fine ash lifted upon the silver shovel.

The Mishnah quickly points out that the immense size of the apple on the festivals did not reflect any level of neglectfulness on the part of the priests. It was pure adornment

²⁶² Hosea 6:6.

²⁶³ Proverbs 25:11.

²⁶⁴ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 13.

²⁶⁵ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 13.

²⁶⁶ Tamid 29a.

²⁶⁷ Proverbs 25:11.

of the altar, for even though removal of the ash to *Shefekh haDeshen* was not, strictly speaking, a sacred service, "someone always volunteered to do it with enthusiasm."²⁶⁸ Some infer that the apple was cleared every day, while others say it was only when it grew unmanageable.²⁶⁹

Whoever wanted to clear the ashes would wake up early and immerse. Even if he was ritually pure, he was still required to immerse after sleep. Then it would be decided by lot who would perform the service of removing the ashes. Originally, however, the removal of the ashes was not determined by lot, but rather by contest. If there were many priests who wished to perform this duty, "they ran and ascended the ramp and anyone who was within four cubits in advance of his fellow won, but if two of them were level, the officer said to them, 'Raise a finger!' And what did they raise? One or two, but they did not hold out the thumb in the Temple."²⁷⁰ It seems contrary to the ambiance of the Temple Court to hold a competitive sprint. It seems to negate the emphasis on humility, not to mention the understanding that "it was forbidden to enter the area between the altar and the Sanctuary except in order to perform a sacred service, and the ramp shares the same status as the altar."²⁷¹ But perhaps at the time the race signified an uninhibited eagerness to serve God, a notion that was pleasing and encouraged.

The contest, however, developed to its most unfortunate extreme. In time, it so happened that two priests were equal as they ascended the ramp and one of them,

²⁶⁸ Rambam on Tamid 2:1.

²⁶⁹ Rambam and Ravad say that it was cleared every day. Kahati and Mishneh Lemelech say otherwise.

²⁷⁰ Yom. 2:1.

²⁷¹ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 10, in the name of Tiferet Yisrael.

undoubtedly in the heat of competition, "pushed his fellow causing him to fall and his leg was broken; and so when the Court saw that they ran risk they enjoined that they should not clear the ashes except by lot."²⁷² The Gemara submits a more gruesome tale:

Our rabbis taught: It once happened that two priests were equal as they ran to mount the ramp and when one of them came first within four cubits of the altar the other took a knife and thrust it into his heart. Rabbi Zadok stood on the steps of the Hall (leading to the interior of the Temple) and said "Our brethren of the house of Israel hear ye! Behold it says: *If one be found slain in the land...then thy elders and judges shall come forth...* (Deuteronomy 21:1) On whose behalf should we offer the heifer whose neck is to be broken? On behalf of the city or on behalf of the Temple Courts? All the people burst out weeping. The father of the young man came and found him still in convulsions. He said, "May he be an atonement for you. My son is still in convulsions and the knife has not become unclean." [His remark] comes to teach you that the cleanness of their vessels was of greater concern to them even then the shedding of blood.²⁷³

Therefore, the first lottery of the day became who should clear the ashes. The manner of the lottery was as follows: the superintendent would ask that the priests stood in a ring and each raised one or two fingers (they would never put out a thumb in the Temple). The superintendent would choose a number greater than the number of priests in the circle. He would then take off the head gear of one of the priests and from that person, he would start to count the raised fingers (superstition forbade the counting of people directly²⁷⁴) until he reached the decided number, and this would determine the winner.²⁷⁵

²⁷² Yom. 2:4.

²⁷³ Yom. 22b-23a.

²⁷⁴ And interpretation of: "David reproached himself for having numbered the people," II Samuel 24:10.

²⁷⁵ Hanoch Albek, *Seder Kedoshim*, (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1958), 294.

At this point, the group of priests divided into two groups. They walked along the porticos to the east and the west carrying two lighted torches. They inspected to be sure that everything was in place. When they rejoined at the place where the griddle-cakes are prepared, each group assured the other, "All is well." Then the one on whom the lot had fallen to clear the ashes made ready to do so, and the priests all warned him, "Be careful not to touch any vessel until you have washed your hands and feet from the laver!" It is curious that the text is so meticulous in having the priests caution their fellow daily. Wouldn't the priest already know to wash his hands and feet?

The later authorities say that the forbids performing any sacred service before the hands and feet have been washed.²⁷⁶ "They shall wash their hands and feet, that they may not die. It shall be a law for all time for them, for him and his offspring, throughout the ages."²⁷⁷ There are nine other verses in Torah where the phrase "a law for all time" is used.²⁷⁸ Each of the other occurrences refers to the portion of the offerings that are given to the sons of Aaron. The "law for all time" on washing the hands and the feet is the only one with a death sentence attached to it, "that they may not die." This might be why the priests were sure to be stringent in reminding the priest who would clear the ashes that he must wash his hands and feet. Also, because he goes into the Temple Court alone, he is more likely to forget.

²⁷⁶ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 10, citing Rambam, Meiri, and Ravad.

²⁷⁷ Exodus 30:21.

²⁷⁸ The phrase *hok olum* appears in Exodus 29:28, Leviticus 6:11, 6:15, 7:34, 10:15, 24:9, Numbers 18:8, 18:11, and 18:19.

The lone priest walked only by the light of the altar, as the open sky was still dark, because he needed to have both of his hands free.²⁷⁹ No one could see him because the ramp blocked their view, and he did not make any sound.²⁸⁰ This must have been a powerful moment for a priest, to be alone by the light of the altar, and the unusual hush of his brethren on the other side, intently waiting for him to reach laver. The laver had a wooden pulley which was lowered into the basin at night to prevent the water in the basin from being rendered unfit for sacred service by standing overnight.²⁸¹ When the other priests heard the creaking sound of the wooden pulley interrupt the stillness, they would all shout, "The time has come!" It is written that all the way "from Jericho they heard the noise of the wooden pulley which Ben Katin made for the laver."²⁸²

Once the priest had pushed aside the coals and cinders and scooped up the fine ash in the center onto the silver shovel, he would go down the ramp. "At the southernmost tip he would then turn his face to the north and walk along the east side of the ramp."²⁸³ It appears that at the southernmost tip he turns to face north so as not to have his back to the altar. As it is written above, the ramp had the same sanctity as the altar, so it was not necessary to walk down the ramp backwards, facing the fire. The priest would walk along the east side of the ramp approximately ten *amot* (approximately 18 inches) and there he would make a pile. The ramp itself was thirty-two *amot* long and sixteen *amot* wide.²⁸⁴

²⁷⁹ Rambam on Tamid 1:4.

²⁸⁰ Tiferet Yisrael, *Mishnayot Yachin Uvoez, Seder Kodashim*, (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1980) on Tamid 1:4.

²⁸¹ Yom. 3:10.

²⁸² Tamid 30b.

²⁸³ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 11.

²⁸⁴ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 11.

"He shall take up the ashes of the burnt offering on the altar and place them beside the altar."²⁸⁵ "Place them" instructs that he should put them in one spot and not spread them around.²⁸⁶ This is the same place where the bird crops (part of the digestive system) are put, as it is written, "he shall remove the crop with its feathers, and he shall throw it near the altar on the east side, to the place of the ashes."²⁸⁷

It is interesting to note that the first sacred service of the day is actually the last sacred service of the day before, or the completion thereof. In this way, the offerings are not isolated events, but part of a larger chain, and therein lies the nuance of the name, *tamid*, the continual offering with its suggestion of immortality, an endless gift which mirrors Eternity.

5. The Superintendent and the Lotteries

*"Hark, my beloved knocks..."*²⁸⁸

At some time in the morning, before the commencement of any sacred service, the superintendent arrives. The Mishnah says that sometimes he arrived at the rooster's crow, sometimes earlier and sometimes later. The unpredictability of his arrival urged the priests who wanted to participate in the first lottery to rise and immerse, lest he come early that day.²⁸⁹ When he arrived, he would knock on the outer door of the Oven Chamber where the priests slept and they would open for him. Rambam, imagining this scene, connects this procedure to the exchange in Song of Songs between lover and beloved: "Hark, my

²⁸⁵ Leviticus 6:3.

²⁸⁶ Bartenura, *Mishnayot Yachin Uvoez, Seder Kodashim*, (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1980) on Tamid 1:4.

²⁸⁷ Leviticus 1:16.

²⁸⁸ Song of Songs 5:2.

²⁸⁹ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 6.

beloved knocks!' 'Let me in, my own, my darling...' In this particular passage of Song of Songs, the woman in her bed-chamber hesitates a moment before opening the door because she had already prepared herself for bed. When she opens the door, she finds that her beloved had gone. Her moment's hesitation caused her much heart-ache and sorrow, and provoked her beloved to flee. In referring to this passage, Rambam acknowledges that the priests had to maintain a level of readiness, even anxiousness, in attending the sacred service. The reference also bears a subtle implication that divine service was romantic, that the priests loved the God they served and felt somehow loved.

The superintendent's primary function was to be in charge of the lotteries. There were four lotteries in the Temple: to choose the priest to clear the ashes, to choose the thirteen priests for various tasks surrounding the morning sacrifice, to choose the priest to offer the incense, and to choose the priests to take the limbs up from the ramp to the altar. All of the lotteries were conducted in the same fashion of raising one or two fingers while the superintendent counted up to a designated number. In the second lottery, the priest who won the lottery would be the one to slaughter the animal, the priest to his right would be the one to collect and dash the blood, and the eleven priests to his right would be assigned various tasks. Some authorities, however, argue that the priest who won the lottery is not the slaughterer but the blood-dasher, which is a more prestigious sacred service, because even an ordinary Israelite is qualified to slaughter an offering.²⁹⁰ The dashing of the blood is the essence of the sacrifice.²⁹¹

6. The Altar Fires

²⁹⁰ Yom. 27b.

²⁹¹ Bartenura on Tamid 3:1.

*"A perpetual fire shall be kept burning."*²⁹²

There were three fires upon the altar at all times.²⁹³ The rabbis find a source for this in the Torah:

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... The **fire** on the altar shall be kept burning, not to go out... A perpetual **fire** shall be kept burning on the altar, not to go out.²⁹⁴

There was the main fire upon which the sacrificial offerings were placed, the incense fire from where the coals were taken for the small incense altar inside the sanctuary, and a small perpetual fire whose sole purpose was to fulfill the double-commandment, "And the fire on the altar shall burn on it; it shall not be extinguished."²⁹⁵ It is a double-commandment in that it is both positive, "shall burn," and negative, "shall not be extinguished." Every morning two logs were added to the fire, based upon the verse, "The priest shall burn on it pieces of wood every morning."²⁹⁶ The plural of "pieces of wood" led the rabbis to understand that at least two logs must have been added in the morning.²⁹⁷ Rambam points out that it is positive commandment to arrange the fire upon the altar "even though the fire descends from heaven."²⁹⁸ Just as it was important for neighboring cultures to fabricate a divine transformation of a man-made idol, it became important to Jewish sages of subsequent generations to attribute the very origin of that fire

²⁹² Leviticus 6:6.

²⁹³ Yom. 4:6.

²⁹⁴ Leviticus 6:1-6.

²⁹⁵ Leviticus 6:5.

²⁹⁶ Leviticus 6:5.

²⁹⁷ Yom. 22a.

²⁹⁸ Rambam on Leviticus 1:7.

to a divine source. The idea of the fire descending from heaven hearkens back to the Sinaitic revelation when "the Lord had come down upon it in fire."²⁹⁹

God often appears in the Torah in the guise of fire. God appeared to Moses as the burning bush,³⁰⁰ to the Israelites at Sinai as a fiery, smoking kiln,³⁰¹ to the wilderness-wanderers as a pillar of fire at night.³⁰² Fire is a powerful metaphor for God for many reasons. Fire is necessary, and yet one cannot draw too close "lest you die."³⁰³ Fire provides light, which is a favorite metaphor for divine manifestation. Rabbi Joseph Albo describes the following advantages of using light as a metaphor: "The existence of light cannot be denied. Light is not a corporeal thing. Light causes the faculty of sight and the visible colors to pass from potentiality to actuality. Light delights the soul. One who has never seen a luminous body in his like cannot conceive colors not the agreeableness and delightfulness of light. And even he who has seen luminous objects cannot endure to gaze upon an intense light."³⁰⁴ Rabbi Joseph Ergas adds, "Light is emitted from the luminary without ever becoming separated from it. Even when its source is concealed or removed ...the previous rays do not remain entities separate from the luminary but are withdrawn with it... Light *per se* never changes. The perception of more or less intense light, or of differently colored lights, is not due to any change in the light *per se* but is due to external factors. Light is essential to life in general."³⁰⁵

²⁹⁹ Exodus 20:18.

³⁰⁰ Exodus 3:2.

³⁰¹ Exodus 19:18.

³⁰² Exodus 40:38.

³⁰³ Exodus 19:12.

³⁰⁴ Jacob Immanuel Schochet, "Mystical Concepts in Chassidism," *Likutey Amarim-Tanya*, (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1981) 822.

³⁰⁵ Jacob Immanuel Schochet, "Mystical Concepts in Chassidism," 823.

The fire on the Temple altar became mythic in retrospect:

The fire that descended to the altar was in the time of Moses. The coal that was burned remained aflame as long as the Tabernacle stood until King Solomon built the Holy Temple. Then new flame descended from heaven and remained burning until Manasseh came and tore down the altar.³⁰⁶

Five miracles occurred with the fire that descended from heaven. The flame lay on the altar in the form of a lion; it shone as brightly as the sun; the fire actually had substance; the fire consumed wet and dry alike; the flame did not produce any smoke.³⁰⁷

All trees, provided they were not rotten,³⁰⁸ were fit for the fire except the vine or the olive tree.³⁰⁹ It is suggested that they were not practical in that their knots retained moisture and were hard to burn.³¹⁰ They also produced a lot of smoke which was not seen as appropriate for a sacred altar. The Gemara suggests that vine and olive trees were not used "because they were amenities to the house of Israel."³¹¹ In other words, because olives and grapes are very important fruits, it was not encouraged to kindle their wood "to avoid inhibiting the development of the land of Israel."³¹² This is interesting in that their concern for the land even superseded the concern for the altar. Wood from fig, walnut, and oil trees burned very nicely and cleanly.³¹³ The question is asked why, if olive trees and grape vine were not allowed to be used "to avoid inhibiting development in the land of

³⁰⁶ Aryeh Kaplan, *The Torah Anthology*, 28.

³⁰⁷ Rashi on Leviticus 1:7.

³⁰⁸ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 15.

³⁰⁹ Tamid 2:3.

³¹⁰ Tamid 29b.

³¹¹ Tamid 29b.

³¹² Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 15.

³¹³ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 15.

Israel," were fig trees allowed to be used? Aren't figs and dates as important as olives and grapes? The problem is resolved by the rabbis of the Gemara who say that the fig refers to the "inedible desert figs or old fig trees that had stopped producing fruit."³¹⁴ The farmers had also developed a special method of cultivating fig and date trees that did not produce any fruit, by scraping "them with a rope of date tree bark on which seed is smeared, and they are then planted in alluvial soil, and they produce trunks but no fruit."³¹⁵ This way, they grew fine wood without having to expend bountiful produce. "You must not destroy its trees, wielding the ax against them...only trees that you know do not yield food may be destroyed."³¹⁶ Ninth century Rashi, called the "father of commentators,"³¹⁷ fancied³¹⁸ that the fig tree was specifically selected for the altar fire because it was the fig tree that assisted Adam and Eve after they had sinned: "And they sewed fig trees to make loin cloths for themselves."³¹⁹

The big fire was arranged with "its face to the east."³²⁰ There are several explanations of this "face." It may have been a gap left in the eastern side of the pile to allow the wind to enter and fan the flames,³²¹ or to facilitate setting the kindling wood afire. It could have also been a special mark to indicate that the fire was arranged from east to west.³²² Or, it may have been that the logs were arranged pointing east and west

³¹⁴ Tamid 29b.

³¹⁵ Tamid 30a.

³¹⁶ Deuteronomy 20:20.

³¹⁷ Nosson Scherman, *The Rishonim*, (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1982), 122.

³¹⁸ B. Zev. 58a.

³¹⁹ Genesis 3:7.

³²⁰ Tamid 2:4.

³²¹ Tamid 30a.

³²² Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 16.

with the western heads arranged roughly and the eastern heads arranged evenly in a face, leaving an unobstructed path for the priests to walk on without fear of their clothing catching on fire.³²³ The heads of the inner logs would touch the 'apple' in the middle of the fire. This large pile was situated in the eastern-most part of the altar. Coals were taken from the large fire to feed the second, smaller pile for the incense coals. The incense fire was situated in the south-west corner. The third fire could be anywhere on the altar and could be tended to at any time.³²⁴

7. The Time of the Sacrifice

*"I will wake the dawn."*³²⁵

The slaughtering of the lamb was performed facing the sun. In the morning, when the sun was rising in the east, the animal was sacrificed in the north-western corner, while in the twilight, when the sun was setting in the west, the animal was sacrificed in the north-eastern corner. This, retrospectively, fulfills the commandment "two to the day,"³²⁶ interpreting "to the day" as "toward the sun."³²⁷

The slaughtering of the animal was not permitted to begin until the sky began to lighten, as it is written, "On the **day** that you slaughter."³²⁸ Though the daily offering is offered twice during the day, the tractate only focuses on the rituals of the morning offering. If one built a new altar in the afternoon, one would not initiate it with a twilight sacrifice, but rather, wait until the next morning to make an offering upon it.³²⁹ The timing

³²³ Tamid 30a.

³²⁴ Hanoch Albek, *Seder Kedoshim*, 296.

³²⁵ Psalms 57:9 and 108:3.

³²⁶ Numbers 28:3.

³²⁷ Tamid 31b.

³²⁸ Numbers 28:3.

³²⁹ Rambam, *Hilchot Tamidin uMusafim*, 1:12.

of the sacrifices seems to sanctify the wondrous transitioning of light to darkness and darkness to light, the two times of the day when light is the most illusionary with its lengthened shadows, reflecting the ethereality of the God to whom they offer. The higher significance of the morning sacrifice may serve to teach that the passage from darkness to light is more holy, an act of divine creation, "...the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep ... God said 'Let there be light.'"³³⁰ Darkness seems to have existed before Creation, while light is a miraculous manifestation of God's word. And so, the first sparkle of morning light is greeted enthusiastically with offerings, and the last glimmer of day is likewise saluted. The augmentation of light symbolizes increasing hope in this world, while diminishing light symbolizes an ebbing presence of the divine. "Beit Hillel's reason [for increasing rather than decreasing the number of candles lit] is that we promote in [matters of] sanctity but do not reduce."³³¹

As the hour of the sacrifice drew near, one priest was sent to ask the "observer," a priest stationed on the roof for this purpose, whether the appropriate time had arrived. If it had arrived, the observer would say, "*Barkai!*" which means "sparkling," the first sparking of dawn.³³² Some say that the word could refer to the appearance of the morning star. Matya ben Shmuel's comment amends the text saying "The face of the entire east has lit up," implying that the sacrifice could not be made until the entire east had lit up, while the first statement says that the slaughter may begin at the first flash of dawn. The observer is then asked if the sky has lit up as far as Hebron. Fifteenth century commentator Bartenura

³³⁰ Genesis 1:2-3.

³³¹ Shabbat 21b.

³³² Tamid 3:2.

suggests that Hebron was mentioned to invoke the merit of our forefathers who are buried there.³³³

Sky-watching is an important dimension of Judaism. The calendar is marked by the careful plotting of the new moon and its stages, and the daily ritual is arranged around the positioning of the sun. Sewn into the Jewish tapestry of days is an unusual combination of God-time and human-time. In one place it is written that the process of preparing for the sacrifice begins with the rising of the sun, when the observer declares, "*Barkai!*" In another place it is written, "The slaughterer would not slaughter until he heard the sound of the Great Gate as it was opened."³³⁴ In the first instance, the start of the system is signaled in God-time, in the brightening of the heavens. In the second instance, the process is initiated in human-time, by the sound of the Great Gate opened by a priest. Similarly in the opening chapter of Tractate Berachot:

From what time may one begin to recite the *Shema* in the evening? From the time that the people come home to eat their meal on a Sabbath eve... But the Sages say: From the time that the priests are entitled to eat their *terumah*. A sign for the matter is the appearance of the stars... For it is written, 'from the rise of dawn till the appearance of the stars.'³³⁵

In the first response, recitation may begin when the people come home, which is human-time. In the second response, according to the Sages, it is the appearance of the stars, which is God-time. The Jewish calendar, therefore, is demarcated with the assistance of

³³³ Bartenura on Tamid 3:2.

³³⁴ Tamid 3:7.

³³⁵ Ber. 2b.

two matched pairs: the sun and the moon, and God and Israel. Israel, like the moon, reflects the blaze of its much grander partner.

8. The Sacrifice

*"I was like a docile lamb led to the slaughter."*³³⁶

The priests went and selected a lamb from the Chamber of the Lambs, which was located in the north-western corner of the court, the same corner where the morning offering was slaughtered. They also went into the chamber of vessels and brought out ninety-three silver and gold vessels, "all holy vessels used in the course of the day."³³⁷ The only explanation for this number "ninety-three" is the imaginative supposition that it reflects the ninety-three times God's name appears in the prophecies of Haggai, Zacheriah, and Malachi.³³⁸ A record of the exact purpose of so many vessels, each vessel being dedicated to one service, is not available.

The lamb was given a little drink of water from a gold cup. The Gemara is quick to say that this is hyperbolic, along with the statement that there were three hundred *kor* of ashes heaped upon the altar during festivals they considered hyperbole. Rabbi Jannai ben Nahmani said in the name of Samuel: "In three places the Sages used the language of hyperbole, namely in connection with the heap, the vine, and the veil."³³⁹ In the case of the vine it was taught that a gold vine stood at the door of the inner temple and trailed on poles, and anyone who offered a leaf, a single grape, or a cluster would hang his humble gift on it. The hyperbole to which they refer is when it is said that "on one occasion three

³³⁶ Jeremiah 11:19.

³³⁷ Rambam on Tamid 3:4.

³³⁸ J. Haggai 3:8.

³³⁹ Tamid 29a.

hundred priests were commissioned to clear it."³⁴⁰ In the case of the veil, the hyperbole to which they refer is when Rabbi Simeon ben Gamliel says that "it took three hundred priests to immerse it."³⁴¹ However, they conclude, the fact that, of the three cases of the Sages using hyperbole, the use of the golden cup is not mentioned, then it must not be an exaggeration at all. Rather, it was true that they gave the lamb a drink from a golden cup "because in the abode of wealth no sign of poverty is allowed."³⁴² Giving the lamb a drink may have "made it easier to skin."³⁴³

The animal was inspected by torch light, as it was still quite dark. Although it had been inspected already, whether the night before, or according to much later speculation "at least four days before ... a blemish may have developed in the interim."³⁴⁴ There were certain places on a sacrificial animal, like the inside of the lip or the white of the eye, that the priests would inspect for blemishes which would render the beast an invalid offering.

The slaughterer led the lamb to the north side of the altar where there were six rows of four semi-circular hooks fastened to the ground under which the head of the animal was put to keep it steady. The slaughterer brought the lamb to the north-western corner of the altar at the second ring from the altar. The first row of rings was not chosen because it was in the shade of the high altar.³⁴⁵ It is interesting to note that the slaughtering place is situated in the north of the Temple court, and that in *Tanach*, terror most often strikes from the north: "From the north shall disaster break loose, for I am

³⁴⁰ Middoth 3:8.

³⁴¹ Tamid 29b.

³⁴² Tamid 29a.

³⁴³ Rambam on Tamid 3:4.

³⁴⁴ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 23.

³⁴⁵ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 37.

summoning all the peoples from the north.”³⁴⁶ “The waters are rising from the north, they shall become a raging torrent,”³⁴⁷ “The entrance of the inner gate that faces north that was the site of the infuriating image that provokes fury.”³⁴⁸ The reason the text cites disaster from the north surely has more to do with the aggressive nations that were located there than the location of the slaughtering place in the Temple. However, the following verses seem to play upon both, combining in the feared nations and the ritual slaughterer in a single vision:

Six men entered by way of the upper gates that faces north, each with his club in his hand; and among them was another, clothed in linen, with a writing case at his waist... and the Lord said to him, ‘Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who moan and groan because of all the abominations that are committed in it.’ To the others He said in my hearing, ‘Follow him through the city and strike; show no pity or compassion... but do not touch any person who bears the mark. Begin here at My Sanctuary.’³⁴⁹

At the sound of the opening of the Great Gate, the slaughterer began to slaughter the lamb. The source for this³⁵⁰ is creatively, “And he shall slaughter it at the opening of the Tent of Meeting,”³⁵¹ a verse which is clearly referring to the *locale* of the slaughter when it says “at the opening,” but is reinterpreted as the *time* of the slaughter, “at [the sound of] the opening of the Tent of Meeting.” The opening of the gate may also be a pale

³⁴⁶ Jeremiah 1:13-14.

³⁴⁷ Jeremiah 47:2.

³⁴⁸ Ezekiel 8:3.

³⁴⁹ Ezekiel 9:2-6.

³⁵⁰ Tosefot Yom Tov on Tamid 3:7.

³⁵¹ Leviticus 3:2.

remnant of a much earlier understanding of God, one in which it was necessary to let the deity into the temple in order to accept its gift.

There is much discussion on the manner of the binding of the animal. They did not bind the animal in the same way as if they were taking it to market,³⁵² neither did they imitate the gentiles who would tie all the legs together for pagan sacrifices.³⁵³ The Gemara says that they did not tie it up this way so as "not to show disrespect to holy things."³⁵⁴ However, it is asked, if it was tied with a silk or gold thread, would this not be showing respect for holy things? The problem, as it turns out, lies more in the blemishes the friction of the string might cause on the animal's skin than the value of the string itself. Some commentators posit that the legs of the animal were held by other priests rather than being tied at all.³⁵⁵ However, most commentators follow the Gemara which says that the binding of the lamb was similar to the binding of Isaac, binding each hand to the corresponding foot on the same side.³⁵⁶ Rashi suggests that the binding of the lamb was similar to the binding of Isaac in that the hands were bound behind the back to the corresponding foot, thus exposing the neck.³⁵⁷ Most commentators explain that it was bound this way to invoke the merit of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son.³⁵⁸ This would lead a still later commentator to say that "When Abraham bound Isaac on the altar, God ordained the commandment of daily sacrifice ... The Israelites offered the daily *tamid* sacrifice, bringing

³⁵² Rosh on Tamid 4:1.

³⁵³ Tamid 31b.

³⁵⁴ Tamid 31b.

³⁵⁵ Rambam and Rosh on Tamid 4:1.

³⁵⁶ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 36.

³⁵⁷ Rashi on Tamid 4:1; Shab. 54a.

³⁵⁸ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 36, in the name of Biurei Hagra.

to memory the ram that was offered in Isaac's place. Through that merit God has mercy on Israel.³⁵⁹ The comparison between the binding of the daily offering and the binding of Isaac points out that while actual human sacrifice was condemned, the animal offering was to be approached with the same reverence and dread as if it were the slaughterer's own child.³⁶⁰

The head of the lamb was to the south, so that if it were to defecate, it would be away from the altar.³⁶¹ The face of the lamb was toward the west while the slaughterer stood to the east. They are never eye to eye. The slaughterer never had his back to the altar. The lamb's throat was swiftly cut, and the one who won the position of throwing the blood collects it first as it pours from the throat. He is called "the one who throws" rather than "the one who collects" because it is actually the dashing of the blood against the altar that is the essence of the sacrifice.³⁶²

The law is quite clear: "It is a law for all time throughout the ages, in all of your settlements: you must not eat any fat or any blood."³⁶³ The prohibition is emphasized again: "Anyone who eats blood shall be cut off from his kin,"³⁶⁴ and in even stronger terms:

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 any blood, and I will cut him off from among his kin. For **the life of the flesh is in the blood**, and I have assigned it to you for making

³⁵⁹ Aryeh Kaplan, *The Torah Anthology*, 35.

³⁶⁰ Based on an *aggada* where Abraham says as he is slaughtering the ram, "This is instead of my son." Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 283.

³⁶¹ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 36.

³⁶² Bartenura on Tamid 3:1.

³⁶³ Leviticus 3:17.

³⁶⁴ Leviticus 7:27.

expiation for your lives upon the altar; **it is the blood, as life**, that effects expiation. 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. And if any Israelite or any stranger who resides among them hunts down an animal or a bird that may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth. **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.³⁶⁵

The sheer repetition of the prohibition of partaking in any blood leaves no room for any doubt. In the ancient world, "they thought of blood as a powerful and dangerous agent, endowed with uncanny, supernatural potencies. Many people have had taboos against seeing and touching blood, as well as against shedding or consuming it."³⁶⁶ This taboo is "probably based on the common belief that the soul or spirit of the animal is in the blood."³⁶⁷ Even so, the biblical laws concerning blood have no known parallel in the records of the Ancient Near East. There is "nothing in the Babylonian ritual texts comparable to the 'dashing' of the blood of ordinary sacrifices... nor is there any known rule which resembles the rigorous and consistent prohibition of tasting blood."³⁶⁸ The above text states that "it is the blood, as life, that effects expiation." In this way, it is not the death of the animal that is offered to the God of life, but rather it is the life-principle of the animal which is offered. The idea of blood having expiatory power is further developed in Christianity, "which taught that atonement is made for mankind through the blood of

³⁶⁵ Leviticus 17:10-14.

³⁶⁶ Bernard J. Bamberger, *The Torah; A Modern Commentary*, page 179.

³⁶⁷ Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, (Denmark: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1993), 228.

³⁶⁸ Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 228.

Jesus.³⁶⁹ In its earliest form, long before the Levitical structure was established, it is argued:

The dashing of blood against the altar in the case of ordinary sacrifices developed from blood-libations to underground deities; it was intended to assuage the wrath of God, should He be displeased with His worshipers. And, in the case of purgation sacrifices, blood was sprinkled in the sanctuary and placed on the horns of the altars to neutralize the demonic forces of impurity, which threatened the Deity as well as His followers!³⁷⁰

In this argument, the blood which seeped into the ground and was poured out at the base of the altar was an offering to placate the demons of the underworld. This theory, if correct, applies "to a very early stage in the development of Israelite religion, which was long past when Leviticus acquired its present form."³⁷¹ Others see the offering of the blood much more simply, in the case of a sin offering, as saving the offerer from the penalty of his own bloodshed.³⁷² "For your own life-blood I will require a reckoning... whoever sheds the blood of man by man shall his blood be shed."³⁷³

An interesting aspect of the blood offering is the dashing against the altar. Once the blood is collected, the one who throws the blood proceeded to the north-eastern corner of the altar and dashed some of the blood against it so that it splattered on both the northern and eastern sides. Then he dashed blood on the south-western corner so that it splattered on both the southern and western sides. The remaining blood was poured out at

³⁶⁹ Bernard J. Bamberger, *The Torah; A Modern Commentary*, 179.

³⁷⁰ Bernard J. Bamberger, *The Torah; A Modern Commentary*, 179.

³⁷¹ Bernard J. Bamberger, *The Torah; A Modern Commentary*, 333.

³⁷² Ibn Ezra on Leviticus 1:1.

³⁷³ Genesis 9:4-6.

the southern base. The unique practice of dashing is mysterious, and especially the obligation to dash against two corners of the altar rather than once on each side. It has already been noted that the essence of the sacrifice was the dashing of the blood. The answer may lie in this. Believing that the blood was considered to contain the life and spirit of the animal, perhaps the dashing of the blood against a sharp corner served to 'break open' the life-principle in order to release the life-spirit, in the same way that one breaks a sprig of mint to release the sweet aroma. In sin-offerings, the blood is rubbed on the horns of the altar, in the same way that one rubs a petal to release its perfume. In this way, the spirit, the inner-most component hidden within the blood, the elixir of life, is offered up to God. In this sense, the altar is not an altar of death, but an altar of life-essence: "Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself in which to set her young, near Your altar."³⁷⁴

After the dashing of the blood, the slaughterer would make a hole in the left leg and hang the animal from there. This was unlike the practice of the butchers who would make a hole in one of the feet and put the other foot through, breaking it so that it would not slip out, and then hang it up between the two feet.³⁷⁵ this was not acceptable because it was disrespectful to break the bones of a sacrificial animal and it was inconvenient because the feet also had to be skinned. While it was hanging, the slaughterer flayed the lamb until the breast. When he came to the breast, "he cut off the head and gave it to the one to whose lot it had fallen. He then cut off the legs and gave them to the one to whose

³⁷⁴ Psalms 84:4.

³⁷⁵ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 38.

lot they had fallen.”³⁷⁶ Here he would stop, take out the heart and squeeze out the blood because the animal draws in some blood at the time of the initial slaying. This part about squeezing the blood of the heart seems out of place, and some posit that it should have appeared when the flaying reaches the breast.³⁷⁷ The order of the rest of the dismemberment went as follows: the forelegs, the right leg with the two testicles attached, the fat from inside was put on top of the place where the head had been severed, the inwards, the breast, the right flank as far as the spine with the liver attached, the neck with two ribs on each side and the windpipe, heart and lung attached, the left flank with the spine and the milt, the tailbone with the tail, the finger of the liver, and the two kidneys attached, and the left leg. Although the left flank was the largest piece, the right flank was called the largest because the liver was attached. The stomach was washed very thoroughly in the washing chamber and the entrails were washed at least three times to remove any semi-ingested food, based on the verse, “The entrails and the legs shall be washed with water.”³⁷⁸

By this time they were all standing in a row with the limbs in their hands.

1) The first had the head and the right hind leg. The head was in his right hand with its nose toward his arm, its horns between his fingers, and the place where it was severed turned upward with the fat covering it. The right leg was in his left hand with the place where the flaying commenced away from him.

2) The second had the two forelegs, the right leg in his right hand and the left leg in his left hand, the place where the flaying commenced being turned away from him.

³⁷⁶ Tamid 4:2.

³⁷⁷ Rosh on Tamid 4:2.

³⁷⁸ Leviticus 1:13.

3) The third had the tail bone and the other hind leg, the tail bone in his right hand with the tail hanging between his fingers and the finger of the liver and the two kidneys with it, and the left hind leg in his left hand with the place where the flaying commenced away from him.

4) The fourth had the breast and the neck, the breast in his right hand and the neck in his left hand, its ribs being between two of his fingers.

5) The fifth had the two flanks, the right one in his right hand, and the left one in his left hand, with the place where the flaying commenced away from him.

6) The sixth had the innards on a platter with the knees on top of them.

7) The seventh had the fine flour,

8) the eighth the griddle cakes,

9) the ninth the wine.

They went and placed them on the lower half of the ascent on its western side, and salted them and came down and went to the chamber of hewn stone to recite the *Shema*.³⁷⁹

There were six priests holding the parts of the animal sacrifice and three holding the flour, griddle cakes, and wine. The innards were held on a platter because they were too loose to be held by hand. It is interesting that all of the limbs were not held on special silver and gold platters, but rather everything that could be held by hand was held by hand. This way, the priests were not removed from the offering, but experienced a very visceral connection. The place where the limbs had been severed was held away from the public out of respect and aesthetic. The head was held upside down, avoiding any blood dripping

³⁷⁹ Tamid 4:3.

onto the floor, and the severed place was covered with fat. So too, the knees were placed over the inwards on the platter so that in no place was the animal's inside unduly exposed.

The line of priests went and laid the pieces on the bottom half of the ramp on its western side and salted them. "On all your sacrifices you shall offer salt."³⁸⁰ At this point, the priests went to the chamber of hewn stone to recite the *Shema*. Why did they not complete the sacrificial offering before going to recite the morning prayers? Would it not make more sense to bring the offerings all the way up the ramp and lay them upon the fire, instead of arranging them half-way up the ramp, leaving, and coming back to finish the sacrificial service? Instead, "prayers were recited at this stage so that they could pray for their sacrifices to be accepted, before anything was actually burned on the altar."³⁸¹ In other words, prayer was an elementary part of the sacrifice, without which the sacrifice would not only be incomplete, it would be for naught, because it would not be accepted.

At this point in the Tractate the Gemara ends, after a rambling legend of Alexander of Macedon, and a final teaching from Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah: "The disciples of the wise increase peace in the world, as it says, 'And all your children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children.'³⁸² Read not 'your children', but 'your builders.'³⁸³

9. Prayer

*"...for the future to come, for a day that is entirely Shabbat."*³⁸⁴

³⁸⁰ Leviticus 2:13.

³⁸¹ Tosefot Yom Tov and Tiferet Yisrael on Tamid 4:3.

³⁸² Isaiah 54:13.

³⁸³ Gemara 32b.

³⁸⁴ Last line of Tamid 7:4.

The official said to them: Bless one blessing! And they blessed, recited the Ten Commandments, *Shema*, *Vehaya Im Shamo-a*, *Vayomer*. They blessed the people three blessings; *Emet Veyatziv*, and *Avodah*, and the blessing of the *kohanim*. And on Shabbat they would add one blessing for the outgoing priestly watch.³⁸⁵

The priests would regroup in order to recite the blessings for *Shema*. It is understood that the blessing they recited before the *Shema* was *Ahavah Rabah*.³⁸⁶ The Ten Commandments were recited, however the Mishnah goes on to say that outside of the Temple they were not recited, "so as not to lend unwitting support to the heretical contention that only they were given by God."³⁸⁷ After this the three paragraphs of *Shema* were recited, and then *Emet v'yatziv* which concludes with the benediction, "Blessed are You O Lord, who has redeemed Israel," and the *Avodah* which ends with the relevant words, "Favor, O Lord our God, the *avodah* of Your people Israel," The *birkat kohanim* at this point in the sacred service is not considered to be the threefold benediction, "May God bless you and keep you. May God's countenance shine upon you and be gracious to you. May God's countenance lift up to you and grant you peace."³⁸⁸ The threefold blessing is done later, at the climax of the service. Some say that this prayer is a private prayer of the priest that their sacrifice be acceptable. Others say it is *Sim Shalom*.³⁸⁹

After the sacrifice was offered up amidst Levitical songs of praise and the sounding of trumpets, the priests stood aligned on the steps before the people, and they recited the threefold priestly benediction over the people. "However, in the country, they

³⁸⁵ Tamid 5:1.

³⁸⁶ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 45.

³⁸⁷ J. Ber. 1:5.

³⁸⁸ Numbers 6:22-27.

³⁸⁹ Bartenura says it is a private prayer; Rambam says it is *Sim Shalom*.

would recite it as three blessings, and in the Temple, as one blessing. In the Temple they would pronounce the Name as it is written, but in the country, by its representation. In the country the priests would raise their hands, with their hands opposite their shoulders, but in the Temple over their heads, except the High Priest who would not raise his hands above the inscribed plate.”³⁹⁰ Calling the threefold benediction “one blessing” probably means that in the Temple the people responded “Amen” only once, while in the country they said “Amen” three times. The priests raised their hands as it is written: “And Aaron raised his hands towards the people and he blessed them.”³⁹¹

The last mishnah of *Tamid* lists the prayers that the Levites would recite in the Temple for each day of the week at the conclusion of the morning *Tamid* sacrifice. The very order of the tractate, ending with a list of psalms, contains a historical order as well, moving from the scrupulous details of the continual sacrifice, to worship through prayer and study alone. The significance of these psalms is explained in *Rosh Hashanah* 31a which parallels each of the daily psalms to its corresponding day of Creation. There is also an explanation of the psalms found in the thirteenth century mystical work, the Zohar. There, each of the daily psalms parallels a millennium since the world’s Creation. During the fifth millennium, the present millennium, it says that “there was no sacrificial service, but we continued to serve God by singing aloud with all our strength.”³⁹² During the sixth millennium, according to the mystical text, the Messiah will come. During the seventh, the dead will be resurrected.³⁹³ The last words of *Tamid* read “A psalm, a song for the future

³⁹⁰ *Tamid* 7:2.

³⁹¹ Leviticus 9:22.

³⁹² Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 68.

³⁹³ Pinhas Kahati, trans., *Mishnah Seder Kodashim*, 68.

to come, for a day that is entirely a Shabbat rest for eternity.” How extraordinary, how profound, to conclude this tractate with “a song for the future to come,” when the wolf will lay with the lamb, the herbivore with the carnivore; and no one will need to bring personal sacrifices; and man will achieve that eternity toward which he has so desperately been striving; and, according to a mystical reading, the dead will be resurrected, flocks and flocks and flocks of them.

Chapter IV: Conclusions

1. Holiness

“...for I am holy.”³⁹⁴

The Order in which tractate Tamid is found is called *Kedoshim*, holy things. Indeed, the term ‘sacrifice’ comes from a Latin word meaning to make something holy.³⁹⁵ The most common Hebrew term is *korbon*, something brought near, to God, the source of holiness. The concept of holiness traces its origins in the restrictions laid out concerning dietary laws: “You shall be holy people to Me: you must not eat flesh torn by beasts in the field,”³⁹⁶ “For I the Lord your God 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,”³⁹⁷ “I the Lord am your God who has set you apart from other peoples. So you shall set apart the clean beast from the unclean, the unclean bird from the clean... You shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy, and I have set you apart from

³⁹⁴ Leviticus 11:44.

³⁹⁵ Bernard J. Bamberger, *The Torah; A Modern Commentary*, 201.

³⁹⁶ Exodus 22:30.

³⁹⁷ Leviticus 11:44.

other peoples to be Mine,"³⁹⁸ and "You shall not eat anything that has died a natural death... for you are a holy people to the Lord your God."³⁹⁹ There are very few biblical statutes that are connected with the demand for holiness, mostly concerning the priesthood and idolatry, "and none of these have the demand with the same staccato emphasis and repetition [as the dietary laws]."⁴⁰⁰

Through examination of the blood prohibition and the slaughtering methods of the Israelites, It is clear that "they teach the inviolability of all life, that animal life is conceded to man's lust and need only on the condition that a qualified few will actually do the killing, and that death must be effected in such a way (by painless slaughter and spilling of blood) that the slaughterer's sense of reverence for life may never be blunted."⁴⁰¹ As discussed in Chapter I, the sacrificial system stems out of man's basic desire for meat and his need to quell that killing instinct. It is an imperfection in man which manifests itself in the wicked generation of Noah. Through dietary restrictions and sacrificial offerings, man lifts his baser, profaner instincts to levels of holiness, separating his more earthy, animal self from his "in [God's] image"⁴⁰² self.

The modern concept of 'holiness' originally grew out of a concept of 'separateness' that only could have developed out of a monotheistic belief.

An examination of Semitic polytheism shows that the realm of the gods is never wholly separate from and transcendent to the world of man. Natural objects such as specific trees, rivers, stones, and the like, are invested with supernal force. but this earth-bound power is independent of the gods and

³⁹⁸ Leviticus 20:24-26.

³⁹⁹ Deuteronomy 14:21.

⁴⁰⁰ Jacob Milgrom, *Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology*, 108.

⁴⁰¹ Jacob Milgrom, *Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology*, 108.

⁴⁰² Genesis 1:26.

can be an unpredictable danger to the latter as well as man. 'Holy' is thus aptly defined, in any context, as "that which is unapproachable except through divinely imposed restrictions," or "that which is withdrawn from common use."

In opposition to this widespread animism we notice a marked distinction in the Bible. There we find no animism. Holiness is not innate. The source of holiness is assigned to God alone. Holiness is the extension of His nature; it is the agency of His will. If certain things are termed holy, such as the land of Canaan, a priest, the sanctuary, or a holy day, they are by virtue of divine dispensation. Moreover, this designation is always subject to recall.

It is more than that which is unapproachable or withdrawn, it becomes a positive concept, an inspiration and a goal associated with God's nature and his desire for man. That which man is not, nor can ever fully be, but that which man is commanded to emulate and approximate is what the Bible calls holy...

Holiness means *imitatio dei*, the life of godliness.⁴⁰³

Because God is one and everything is ascribed to Him, nothing in this world can be separate from God's omnipotent will. Therefore, those things that are set aside are done so as part of God's own master design. Milgrom describes three concentric circles of decreasing holiness, or separateness, in the Torah, these being the priesthood, Israel, and man. These form rings around the source of holiness in the center which is God. "The biblical ideal, however, is that all Israel shall be a 'kingdom of priests and a holy people.' If Israel moves to a higher sphere of holiness, then it is bound to a more rigid code of

⁴⁰³ Jacob Milgrom, *Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology*, 109.

behavior. And just as the priest lives by more stringent standards than his fellow Israelite, so Israel shall be expected to follow different standards than his fellow man."⁴⁰⁴

To this day, for the observant Jew, the act of eating is a divine service: a benediction is recited before the meal and grace is said after it as reminders of the source of our food. The benediction is preceded by a ritual washing of the hands, reminiscent of the ritual of the Temple priests before they offered sacrifices. Salt is sprinkled on the bread to be eaten, just as it was poured on the sacrifice; the knife is covered during the recitation of the grace since it is a weapon of death and was not allowed upon the altar.

And during the meal, conversation must include words of Torah in keeping with a divine service. As Rabbi Simeon said, 'If three have eaten at a table and have spoken no words of Torah, it is as if they had eaten sacrifices to dead idols.' Thus, the daily meal was transformed into a sacred ritual; the ordinary into the extraordinary; the profane sanctified; the animal appetite sublimated into an ethical discipline.⁴⁰⁵

2. The Third Temple

*"For there I will meet with you..."*⁴⁰⁶

There is a tale that tells of the aged Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai visiting the ruins of the Temple with his students. One of the students cried out in sorrow over the destruction. Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai replied, "Do not grieve, my son. We have a means of atonement that is equal to sacrifice: the doing of kind deeds. For it is said, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice."⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁴ Jacob Milgrom, *Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology*, 112.

⁴⁰⁵ Jacob Milgrom, *Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology*, 114.

⁴⁰⁶ Exodus 29:42.

⁴⁰⁷ Hosea 6:6.

When the Temple stood, sacrifice was the central act of the religion, and the very action of sacrifice was itself a prayer. The daily continuity of the sacrifices led to "the first public liturgy to occur with great regularity, being held not only on Sabbaths and festivals, but on every day of the year, thus bestowing some of its sanctity on all life. This effect was all the more enduring in that the daily morning and evening services, originally the practice of the community, soon became the customary practice of individuals, even when they were not with the community."⁴⁰⁸

Elbogen wrote: "The theory that prayers are a replacement for sacrifices belongs to the thinking of a later age,"⁴⁰⁹ for prayer was already an integral part of the Temple service, and developing as an integral part of communities far from the Temple in the form of early synagogues. When they prayed, they turned toward the Temple, just as they would be turning toward the sanctuary were they in the Temple: "Listen to my plea for mercy when I cry out to You, when I lift my hands toward Your inner sanctuary,"⁴¹⁰ and "I bow toward Your holy Temple."⁴¹¹ Even after the exile the Jews still turned toward the city on the hill: "They pray to the Lord in the direction of the city which You have chosen,"⁴¹² and "He went to his house, in whose upper windows he had had made facing Jerusalem, ad three times a day he knelt down, prayed..."⁴¹³

⁴⁰⁸ Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy; A Comprehensive History*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1993), 3.

⁴⁰⁹ Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy; A Comprehensive History*, 99.

⁴¹⁰ Psalms 28:2.

⁴¹¹ Psalms 138:2.

⁴¹² I Kings 8:44.

⁴¹³ Daniel 6:11.

How did the three services develop? Of the two daily sacrifices, one was offered in the morning and the other at twilight. The later offering was eventually moved to the early afternoon:

From observation of the sun's rising, setting, and zenith, three times of prayer were established, evening, morning and noon...

In the morning the sacrifice and the service occurred together; out of the midday service the Additional Service was created; in the afternoon the second daily service, that of late afternoon, originally corresponded to the Evening Service, but after the time of the sacrifice was changed there arose out of it two prayers, one before the sacrifice at the ninth hour known as *mincha* and the second at evening when the Temple gates were closed, known as *neilat shaarim* or, for short, *neilah*.⁴¹⁴

The connection with the sacrificial worship was considered central. This is clear in the way that the status of the evening service, to which no Temple sacrifice corresponded, was debated and eventually declared optional.⁴¹⁵ There are some who say that the prayers were instituted by the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who had each prayed once at one of the designated times,⁴¹⁶ but "the later sages explained that even if the three prayer services had originated with the patriarchs, their exact times were set only later to correspond to the schedule of sacrificial worship."⁴¹⁷

Today, the commandments of the *tamid* offering are still included in traditional prayer books. Every morning the words are recited: "Rebuild the Holy Temple speedily, in

⁴¹⁴ Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy; A Comprehensive History*, 190.

⁴¹⁵ Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy; A Comprehensive History*, 191.

⁴¹⁶ Ber. 26b.

⁴¹⁷ Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy; A Comprehensive History*, 191.

our days, so that we may offer to You the continual offering."⁴¹⁸ Prayer books of Liberal and Reform movements have eliminated prayers for the restoration of sacrifices. Some do not refer to them at all and others mention them only as a historical reference.⁴¹⁹ It is not unfitting that the prayers for restoring sacrifices be eliminated, for it is clear that they were not an end in and of themselves, but rather an essential step toward the establishment of a refined ethical-spiritual Judaism whose worship, study, and deeds have the profundity of several thousand years of striving toward godliness.

Whenever a *minyan* gathers at some distant point in the Diaspora, and turns toward the direction of the ghost of the Temple in Jerusalem at the designated time, morning, afternoon, or twilight, and in pious whispers utter the words of the *Amidah*, "Be gracious, O Lord our God, to Your people Israel, and receive our prayers with love. May our *tamid* always be acceptable to You,"⁴²⁰ the memory of that small sun flickers on its phantom-altar, the attentive and loving worship of six hundred years.

**O may Your exalted Temple be rebuilt, dear God,
speedily and in our lifetime.
Not in Jerusalem, but in every heart.
Not in stone,
but in Essence.**

⁴¹⁸ From the morning service.

⁴¹⁹ Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy; A Comprehensive History*, 332.

⁴²⁰ From the seventeenth blessing of the *Amidah*.

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