

Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Parashat Tzav – Shabbat Parah
March 30, 2024 *** 20 Adar II, 5784

[Tzav in a Nutshell](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/2858/jewish/Tzav-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

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The name of the Parshah, "Tzav," means "command" and it is found in Leviticus 6:2.

G-d instructs Moses to command Aaron and his sons regarding their duties and rights as kohanim ("priests") who offer the korbanot (animal and meal offerings) in the Sanctuary.

The fire on the altar must be kept burning at all times. In it are burned the wholly consumed ascending offering; veins of fat from the peace, sin and guilt offerings; and the "handful" separated from the meal offering.

The kohanim eat the meat of the sin and guilt offerings, and the remainder of the meal offering. The peace offering is eaten by the one who brought it, except for specified portions given to the kohen. The holy meat of the offerings must be eaten by ritually pure persons, in their designated holy place and within their specified time.

Aaron and his sons remain within the Sanctuary compound for seven days, during which Moses initiates them into the priesthood.

[Haftarah in a Nutshell: Shabbat Parah – Ezekiel 36:16-36](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/655981/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

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This week's special *haftarah* mentions the "purifying waters" that G-d will sprinkle upon us with the coming of Moshiach. This follows the theme of this week's additional Torah reading — the purifying qualities of the "Red Heifer."

The prophet Ezekiel transmits G-d's message: The Israelites have defiled the Holy Land with their idol-worship and immoral ways. As a result, they will be sent into exile. "And they came to the nations where they came, and they profaned My Holy Name, inasmuch as it was said of them, 'These are the people of G-d, and they have come out of His land.'" So G-d will take them out of their exile — but not by virtue of the Israelites' merits: "Not for your sake do I do this, O house of Israel, but for My Holy Name, which you have profaned among the nations."

G-d will bring the Israelites back to the Holy Land and purify them with the waters of the Red Heifer. The people will feel ashamed of their actions, and after they will have undergone the process of purification and repentance, G-d will rebuild the

country and bestow upon it prosperity and bounty.

"I will resettle the cities, and the ruins shall be built up. And the desolate land shall be worked, instead of its lying desolate in the sight of all that pass by. And they shall say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the Garden of Eden, and the cities that were destroyed and desolate and pulled down have become settled as fortified [cities].'"

Food For Thought

Why Civilisations Die – Tzav by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l

<https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/tzav/why-civilisations-die/>

In *The Watchman's Rattle*, subtitled *Thinking Our Way Out of Extinction*, Rebecca Costa delivers a fascinating account of how civilisations die. When their problems become too complex, societies reach what she calls a cognitive threshold. They simply can't chart a path from the present to the future.

The example she gives is the Mayans. For a period of three and a half thousand years, between 2,600 BCE and 900 CE, they developed an extraordinary civilisation, spreading over what is today Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Belize, with an estimated population of 15 million people.

Not only were they expert potters, weavers, architects, and farmers, they also developed an intricate cylindrical calendar system, with celestial charts to track the movements of the stars and predict weather patterns. They had their own unique form of writing as well as an advanced mathematical system. Most impressively they developed a water-supply infrastructure involving a complex network of reservoirs, canals, dams, and levees.

Then suddenly, for reasons we still don't fully understand, the entire system collapsed. Sometime between the middle of the eighth and ninth century the majority of the Mayan people simply disappeared. There have been many theories as to why it happened. It may have been a prolonged drought, overpopulation, internecine wars, a devastating epidemic, food shortages, or a combination of these and other factors. One way or another, having survived for 35 centuries, Mayan civilisation failed and became extinct.

Rebecca Costa's argument is that whatever the causes, the Mayan collapse, like the fall of the Roman Empire, and the Khmer Empire of thirteenth century Cambodia, occurred because problems became too many and complicated for the people of that time and place to solve. There was cognitive overload, and systems broke down.

It can happen to any civilisation. It may, she says, be happening to ours. The first sign of breakdown is gridlock. Instead of dealing with what everyone can see are major problems, people continue as usual and simply pass their problems on to

the next generation. The second sign is a retreat into irrationality. Since people can no longer cope with the facts, they take refuge in religious consolations. The Mayans took to offering sacrifices. Archaeologists have uncovered gruesome evidence of human sacrifice on a vast scale. It seems that, unable to solve their problems rationally, the Mayans focused on placating the gods by manically making offerings to them. So apparently did the Khmer.

Which makes the case of Jews and Judaism fascinating. They faced two centuries of crisis under Roman rule between Pompey's conquest in 63 BCE and the collapse of the Bar Kochba rebellion in 135 CE. They were hopelessly factionalised. Long before the Great Rebellion against Rome and the destruction of the Second Temple, Jews were expecting some major cataclysm.

What is remarkable is that they did not focus obsessively on sacrifices, like the Mayans and the Khmer. With their Temple destroyed, they instead focused on finding substitutes for sacrifice. One was *gemillat chassadim*, acts of kindness. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai comforted Rabbi Joshua, who wondered how Israel would atone for its sins without sacrifices, with the words:

"My son, we have another atonement as effective as this: acts of kindness, as it is written ([Hosea 6:6](#)), 'I desire kindness and not sacrifice.'"

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Another was Torah study. The Sages interpreted Malachi's words, "In every place offerings are presented to My name," ([Malachi 1:11](#)) to refer to scholars who study the laws of sacrifice ([Menachot 110a](#)). Also:

"One who recites the order of sacrifices is as if he had brought them."

Taanit 27b

Another was prayer. Hosea said, "Take words with you and return to the Lord . . . We will offer our lips as sacrifices of bulls" ([Hos. 14:2-3](#)), implying that words could take the place of sacrifice.

He who prays in the house of prayer is as if he brought a pure oblation.

Yerushlami, Perek 5 Halachah 1

Yet another was *teshuvah*. The [Psalm \(51:19\)](#) says "the sacrifices of God are a contrite spirit." From this the Sages inferred that "if a person repents it is accounted to him as if he had gone up to Jerusalem and built the Temple and the altar and offered on it all the sacrifices ordained in the Torah" ([Vayikra Rabbah 7:2](#)).

A fifth approach was fasting. Since going without food diminished a person's fat and blood, it counted as a substitute for the fat and blood of a sacrifice ([Brachot 17a](#)).

A sixth was hospitality. "As long as the Temple stood, the altar atoned for Israel, but now a person's table atones for him" ([Brachot 55a](#)). And so on.

What is striking in hindsight is how, rather than clinging obsessively to the past, leaders like Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai thought forward to a worst-case-scenario future. The great question raised by parshat Tzav, which is all about different kinds of sacrifice, is not "Why were sacrifices commanded in the first place?" but rather, "Given how central they were to the religious life of Israel in Temple times, how did Judaism survive without them?"

The short answer is that overwhelmingly the Prophets, the Sages, and the Jewish thinkers of the Middle Ages realised that sacrifices were symbolic enactments of processes of mind, heart, and deed, that could be expressed in other ways as well. We can encounter the will of God by Torah study, engaging in the service of God by prayer, making financial sacrifice by charity, creating sacred fellowship by hospitality, and so on.

Jews did not abandon the past. We still refer constantly to the sacrifices in our prayers. But they did not cling to the past. Nor did they take refuge in irrationality. They thought through the future and created institutions like the synagogue, house of study, and school. These could be built anywhere, and would sustain Jewish identity even in the most adverse conditions.

That is no small achievement. The world's greatest civilisations have all, in time, become extinct while Judaism has always survived. In one sense that was surely Divine Providence. But in another it was the foresight of people like Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai who resisted cognitive breakdown, created solutions today for the problems of tomorrow, who did not seek refuge in the irrational, and who quietly built the Jewish future.

Surely there is a lesson here for the Jewish people today: Plan generations ahead. Think at least 25 years into the future. Contemplate worst-case scenarios. Ask "What we would do, if..." What saved the Jewish people was their ability, despite their deep and abiding faith, never to let go of rational thought, and despite their loyalty to the past, to keep planning for the future.

[Prayer as Resonance:Tzav by Luciana Pajecki Lederman](#)

<https://www.jtsa.edu/torah/prayer-as-resonance/>

A few years ago, during a Shabbat retreat, I joined a song circle to escort Shabbat out. We were in the middle of what I thought was a very spirited performance, when the song leader interrupted the singing and gently nudged us: "If the volume of your voice is preventing you from listening to your neighbors voices, then you are singing too loud!" In response to her prodding, we all adjusted the

volume of our voices and as a result, started to produce a much more harmonious sound, turning what was an emotional experience into a spiritual one.

According to sociologist Harmut Rosa, the main role of rituals is to produce axes of resonance, through which we not only affect but also open ourselves to being affected by God, people, and even things around us. In conceiving of Jewish prayer, our ancient rabbis indicate a concern with creating resonance, by balancing "affecting" and "being affected."

Tractate [Brachot \(26b\)](#) speaks of two paradigms that have served as inspiration for the development of the Amidah, the core of the Jewish worship service. According to the first paradigm, תפלות אבות תקנום, the Amidah was instituted by the patriarchs and their distinctive ways of reaching out toward God. This paradigm underlines the "affecting" side of resonance, defining prayer as a particular response in the face of our unique life experiences. Under this model, through prayer, we put forth our concerns and desires in the hopes that they will catalyze some change around us, no matter how small it is.

According to the second paradigm, תפלות כנגד תמידין תקנום, the Amidah was instituted to correspond to the regular daily offerings at the Temple, and their communal choreographed aspect. This paradigm emphasizes the "being affected" side of resonance, defining prayer as a harmonious collective creation, just as the melody that the song leader back in the Shabbat retreat was inviting us to produce.

But how exactly do the תמידין, the daily Temple offerings, role model a disposition to being affected, which is so vital for resonance?

According to Yeshayahu Leibowitz, Parashat Tzav opens with the description of the daily communal offering, which is known in other places in the Bible as the עֹלֶת תָּמִיד (the regular burnt-offering) and which, in the Talmud, serves as model for the Amidah. Given this offering's communal nature, it is surprising that in this parashah, the Torah singles out the individual priest who will be in charge of the offering, instead of addressing the collective בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֲנִים (sons of Aaron, the priests), like it does in other places:

The priest shall dress in linen raiment, ... and he shall take up the ashes to which the fire has reduced the burnt offering on the altar and place them beside the altar. (Lev. 6:3)

Given that the Torah ([Exod. 28:43](#)) has already warned that all priests should wear special garments every time they approach the altar to officiate in the sanctuary, why does it repeat the garment requirement? Also, why in other places the Torah

refers to the priest's clothing as כְּתוֹנֶת (kutonet/tunic), but here it refers to it as מִדּוֹ (mido bad/linen raiment)?

Rashi explains that the requirement of the priest garment is being repeated here to specify that the tunic has to be made according to the exact measures of the priest's body (therefore the name מִדּוֹ/Mido, literally, his size). Noam Elimelekh reads this interpretation metaphorically: the priest has to come into this ritual wearing his personal and unique qualities (מִדּוֹת).

Were the ritual dressing to stop here, with the priest bringing forward to the offering his particular self, it would be simply another expression of "affecting" and not have the necessary qualities of "openness to being affected," so necessary for resonance to take place. But the Torah continues:

He shall then take off his vestments and put on other vestments and carry the ashes outside the camp to a pure place. (Lev. 6:4)

Why does the priest take off one garment and put on another one prior to bringing the ashes outside the camp? And how is the second garment different from the first one?

According to Gersonides, the second set of garments are also holy garments, otherwise the Torah would not have gone out of its way to say that the priest should dress in them. However, the second clothes are פחותים מהראשונים (less than the first ones). Following Noam Elimelekh's metaphorical reading of the clothes: throughout the ritual of disposing the ashes the priest needs to contract and readjust himself to a more balanced presence in the world.

In a society that privileges authenticity and self-expression, the second paradigm of prayer can be challenging and underappreciated. Philosopher Byung-Chul Han claims that such a society puts us in a habitual mode of production of the self, where we are constantly strengthening our persona. As a result, we become experts in the art of affecting, but compromise our ability to enter into relationships "outside the boundaries of the self," in which we are open enough to be affected or reached by others. That creates a crisis of resonance and without resonance, we become isolated, lonely, even depressed.

According to Moshe Halbertal, the fact that so many rabbinic practices "modeled after the sacrifice, and kept its ethos and drive" indicates that there is something about sacrifice that is essential to human expression and life. When it comes to prayer, the תמידין, the daily Temple offerings, teach us the vital gesture of modulating ourselves so resonance and real connections can be made possible.

(Luciana Pajewski Lederman is Director of the Beit Midrash and Nishma Summer Program at JTS)

[Parasha Parah...Do We Really Want to Return Sacrifices and the Temple?](#)

[By Dr Yair Paz](https://schechter.edu/parasha-parah-do-we-really-want-to-return-sacrifices-and-the-temple/)

<https://schechter.edu/parasha-parah-do-we-really-want-to-return-sacrifices-and-the-temple/>
How is it possible to survive without the Temple and without the sacrifices? Dr. Yair Paz tours historical and Rabbinic Judaism for the answers.

We are now in the midst of the 'four Torah Portions.' This year, a 'leap year' (ie: with an extra Hebrew month) it is interesting to note that this week the Torah portion is Parah (cow) and it falls in the book of Leviticus. I will connect the dots. Have you ever met a real cow? Have you recently petted a real cow? Have you seen a kosher slaughter? The modern world has taken us away from the days of old when we lived differently.

We started reading the book of Leviticus and the majority of its focus is on the laws of sacrifices. Thus, the sages call the Pentateuch "Torat Kohanim (teachings of the priests)" or "Torat HaKorbanim (teachings of the sacrifices)." Similarly, half of Exodus is dedicated to the construction of the 'mobile temple,' aka 'The Tabernacle.'

Indeed, from a historical point of view these two elements, the Temple and the sacrifices were at the center of the worship of God by the children of Israel, both during First Temple and Second Temple times.

So it is surprising, how such central elements of the Jewish religion were cut out and disappeared in the distant past, that for nearly two thousand years the people of Israel continued to 'worship God' without these two central elements?! How do we last without them??! How is it possible to survive without the Temple and without the sacrifices??!

Our sages give a specific answer to this difficult question, in the interpretation they preached on a verse in this week's Torah Portion: Tzav. In this week's portion, there are details of several sacrifice types; the burnt offering; meal offering; the sin and guilt offerings; whole sacrifices and more. Lastly, after the details, the following summary appears:

"Such are the rituals (the Torah) of the burnt offering, the meal offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the offering of ordination, and the sacrifice of well-being, with which the Divine charged Moses on Mount Sinai, when commanding that the Israelites present their offerings to the Divine in the wilderness of Sinai." (Leviticus 7:37-38)

About this, the editor of Midrash Tanchuma has this to say about the portion:

"Israel said in front of the Holy One, blessed be He, Master of the world, You command that we bring all of these sacrifices. But now that the Temple was destroyed, where can we bring our sacrifices to atone for our sins?"

So the Holy One, blessed be He, said to them, "If you want that they should be atoned for you, keep my laws. How?"

God said to them, "Keep my Torah. And how do we know this?"

"This is the Torah of the burnt offering, the meal offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the offering of ordination, and the sacrifice of well-being," do not read it 'rather' as such (in Aramaic the word אָלִי is read like the letters LA) these are the teachings (Torah): not the burnt offering, not the meal offering, not the sin offering, not the guilt offering, not the offering of ordination, and not the sacrifice of well-being. Rather you should be busy learning Torah and it should be important to you more as if you were making an offering equal to all of the offerings."

(Tanhuma, Tzav portion, Siman (section)14 – Warsaw edition)

(It is interesting the identification of keeping=being occupied with, in other words learning itself is the 'keeping').

Likewise, we find that this interpretation can be seen regarding prayer and good deeds that are a type of replacement for offerings and the holy work in the Temple (seemingly a retroactive replacement).

But the Amora Rava (Amoraim refers to Jewish scholars of the period from about 200 to 500 CE) in the Babylonian Talmud, at the end of tractate Menachot, formulates the interpretation even more radically:

Rava said: Anyone who learns Torah does not need – neither a burnt nor a sin offering, a meal nor a guilt offering.

That is, in contrast to the interpretations that paint the Torah and the prayers as a retrospective replacement for the loss of the sacrifices. Rava's interpretation shows an approach that completely reduces the need for sacrifices, and offers a replacement for them almost from the beginning.

This idea continues the bold development among Jewish thinkers such as Rambam (Maimonides) and Rabbi Kook, and they were not always understood or accepted by the general public.

We can conclude that the two most central public institutions in early Judaism, the Temple and the sacrifices, were replaced by Rabbinic Judaism and later by two other public institutions, and perhaps three: prayer, the Talmud, and perhaps also by good deeds (Gemilut Hassidim).

In other words, only learning Talmud and Torah along with prayer and together with the performance of good deeds, in other words solidarity of the nation, that includes mutual assistance institutions (like Yad Sarah or even modern bureaucracy like National Insurance Institute in Israel). They are, according to

Rabbinic Judaism, worthy replacements for sacrifices.

The open question that remains is whether, after two thousand years, the desire of some of the public to re-consecrate the temple and offering sacrifices, stems from a real need?

Perhaps it would be better to perfect these three replacements of Rabbinic Judaism and not return to the ugly struggles that accompanied the two ancient institutions in the distant past.

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Parshat Tzav: Partnering Sustainably by Shimon Steiner

Edited By Yosef Gillers and Shoshi Ehrenreich

<https://www.growtorah.org/vayikra/2022/3/16-parshat-tzav-when-eating-meat-was-a-sacrifice>

A handful of the choice flour and oil of the meal offering shall be taken from it, with all the frankincense that is on the meal offering, and this token portion shall be turned into smoke on the altar as a pleasing odor to Hashem. (Vayikra 6:8)

Why is the afternoon prayer called "Minchah"? Shouldn't it, like the other two statutory prayers, be called after the time it is said? The order should be Shacharit/Morning; Tzaharayim/Midday; Arvit/Evening. But we call it "Minchah," or gift. Rabbi Dovid Feinstein notes that it is especially pleasing to Hashem because it is said during the day, when one is busy with other things, and is more of a sacrifice. And yet it is by far the shortest of the prayers, so in that way, it is less of a sacrifice. A curious combination.

Among the sacrifices detailed in Parshiyot Vayikra and Tzav, the Korban Minchah stands out for a few reasons: It is the most simple one, and seemingly the least expensive. It appears to be within reach of even the common people, mainly containing flour and oil, which can be mixed by the offerer before being given to the Kohen. In this way, it is like our Tefillat Minchah, being the smallest of the Korbanot.

But there is another ingredient: Frankincense. Frankincense is the dried sap of a tropical tree called *Boswellia sacra*. It was used for incense and healing and, in Biblical times, was traded over long distances. The animal sacrifices do not require Frankincense. They, like all sacrifices, required only salt. So the Korban Minchah is also a curious combination of apparent opposites: Simple and easy in that it was just flour and oil, but on the other hand it required a spice grown far away, which may not have been cheap for the common Jewish person. Why might this be so?

One notion to consider is that Animal Korbanot not only come at a higher cost but also serve as a visceral reminder of the trade-off involved, as they necessitate the taking of a life. Similarly, frankincense, regardless of its monetary value, originates from the harm inflicted upon one of Hashem's creatures: the tree. Extracting frankincense involves making significant cuts in the tree, prompting it to protect itself by exuding resin to fend off microbes and insects. When done sparingly, this practice does not significantly harm the tree. Unlike farming flour or oil, which require taking the fruits or seeds of a plant, farming frankincense demands direct harm to the tree, Hashem's creation, itself. It therefore demands foresight, quid-pro-quo, and responsible stewardship. We have to limit our harm to the trees, or we will have nothing at all.

In short, Hashem asked us to add a unique ingredient to this smallest of sacrifices, one that reminds us that we are partnering with his creatures to make it. And that there is no alternative to doing it responsibly. (*Shimon Steiner is a Grow Torah Educator*)

[Tzav: Don't Embarrass Me: Protecting Unintentional Sinners](https://www.accidentaltalmudist.org/torah/2024/03/26/tzav-dont-embarrass-me/)
by The Accidental Talmudist

<https://www.accidentaltalmudist.org/torah/2024/03/26/tzav-dont-embarrass-me/>

In Torah portion, Tzav, God tells Moses to command Aaron and his sons – the priestly caste – to offer various types of animal sacrifices in the Tabernacle and Temple. The most common kind of sacrifice is the burnt offering, which expresses a desire to submit to God's will and come close to Him. Another type of sacrifice is the sin offering, to atone for and purge an unintentional sin caused by carelessness. The burnt offering is burnt entirely on the altar but the sin offering is not.

Although the burnt offering and the sin offering are brought for different reasons and serve different purposes, they are slaughtered in the same place. Our Sages explain that this is to protect one who brings a sin offering from embarrassment as it won't be apparent to onlookers which type he is bringing.

In Judaism, embarrassing somebody in public is a grave sin comparable to murder. The Sages of the Talmud teach that it would be better for a person to allow himself to be tossed into a furnace than to willingly embarrass another. Hillel famously summed up the Torah in one line: Do not do unto others what is hateful to you. Public humiliation is hateful to all of us, so let's avoid doing it to others. And if you (God forbid) are shamed in front of others, keeping quiet rather than striking back is considered an exceptionally righteous act that will be rewarded!

[Yahrtzeits](#)

[Bob Woog remembers his uncle Ralph David Fertig on Sunday March 31st.](#)

[Lenny Levin remembers his brother Joseph Levin on Tuesday April 2nd.](#)

