

Selected Shorts: Tzav
Rabbi Eliot Malomet Shabbat Hagadol March 27, 2021 14 Nisan 5781

ויקרא ו':ב'
(ב) צו אֶת-אֶהְרֹן וְאֶת-בָּנָיו לֵאמֹר ...

Leviticus 6:2

(2) *Command Aaron and his sons thus:* Up until now from the beginning of Vayikra, the instructions pertaining to the sacrifices have been directed to the entire Israelite people. Now the focus shifts to the Kohanim, the ones who will be in charge of the daily operation of the enterprise.

ויקרא ו':ר'

(ו) אֵשׁ תָּמִיד תִּוָּקֵד עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לֹא תִכָּהּ: (ס)

Leviticus 6:6

(6) *A perpetual fire shall be kept burning on the altar, not to go out.* In the narrowest sense, the altar fire is an eternal flame. Ignited from the inaugural sacrifice (which has not yet happened), each and every subsequent sacrifice will possess the holiness of the first flame. In the larger sense, we regard this is the symbolic basis of the *Ner Tamid-Eternal Light* in the synagogue.

ויקרא ז':ט"ו

(טו) וּבִשְׂרָר יָבֵחַ תֹּדֶת שְׁלֵמֹיו בְּיוֹם קָרְבָּנוֹ יֵאָכֵל לֹא-יִנְגַח מִמֶּנּוּ עַד-בֹּקֶר:

Leviticus 7:15

(15) *And the flesh of his thanksgiving sacrifice of well-being shall be eaten on the day that it is offered none of it shall be set aside until morning.* There is a story here. The donor is expressing thanks to God for...any number of reasons. In order for gratitude to mean something, it has to be shared. 'No leftovers' entails the necessity to share the offering and its accompanying feast with as many people as possible. Events such as these, build community. The Torah cannot conceive of an individual offering a sacrifice of thanksgiving without accompaniment. If there are leftovers, they need to be burned.

ויקרא ז':כ"ג

(כג) דָּבַר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר כָּל-חֶלֶב שׁוֹר וְכֶשֶׂב וְעֵז לֹא תֹאכְלוּ:

Leviticus 7:23

(23) *Speak to the Israelite people thus:* You shall eat no fat of ox or sheep or goat. And here is another story. The fat that we are talking about is the organ fat, known as suet, not the muscle fat, which we commonly see in meat. The animal body consisted of three "regions": the head and

upper cavity (ribs); the suet, liver and kidneys; and the innards and genital organs. The sanctuary had three regions: the outer court (for the public); the inner court (for the priests) and the Holy of Holies (for only the High Priest on Yom Kippur). Mount Sinai had three regions: the base of the mountain (for all Israel); the middle elevation (for Aaron and the Elders); and the summit (for Moses and God). The suet, which is a hard white in its solid state, symbolizes the cloud that separates the people from the summit. As the layers of the sacrificial pile ignite (head and meat pieces on the bottom, suet and organs in the middle, innards and genital organs on the top), the suet would presumably create a larger fire and give off more smoke. The sacrifice is a re-enactment of the covenantal experience at Sinai (according to Mary Douglas).

ויקרא ז':כ"ו

(כו) וְכֹל-דָּמָם לֹא תֹאכְלוּ בְּכָל מוֹשְׁבֵיכֶם לְעוֹף וְלַבְּהֵמָה:

Leviticus 7:26

(26) *And you must not consume any blood, either of bird or of animal, in any of your settlements.* Later the Torah tells us that the blood is life, and life belongs to God.

ויקרא ח':ג'

(ג) וְאֵת כָּל-הַעֲדָה הַקְהֵל אֶל-פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד:

Leviticus 8:3

(3) *and assemble the whole community at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.* What follows is the ordination ceremony of the priests. Note that the people are to be at the entrance of the Sanctuary, which is the boundary space between the ordinary Israelites and the consecrated Kohanim. The ceremony demonstrates that the Kohanim function as agents of the people.

ויקרא ח':ו'-ז'

(ו) וַיִּקְרַב מֹשֶׁה אֶת-אֶהְרֹן וְאֶת-בָּנָיו וַיִּרְתֹּץ אֹתָם בְּמַיִם: (ז) וַיִּתֵּן עֲלֵיו אֶת-הַכֹּהֲנֵת וַיַּחְגֵּר אוֹתוֹ בְּאַבְנֵט וַיִּלְבַּשׂ אוֹתוֹ אֶת-הַמְעִיל וַיִּתֵּן עֲלָיו אֶת-הָאֶפֶד וַיַּחְגֵּר אוֹתוֹ בְּחֹשֶׁב הָאֶפֶד וַיִּצְאֵד לִן בָּו:

Leviticus 8:6-7

(6) *Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons forward and washed them with water.* (7) *He put the tunic on him, girded him with the sash, clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod on him, girding him with the decorated band with*

which he tied it to him. No words are recited, this all transpires in silence. No words are necessary. Washing, enclotting, girding, robing and “ephod-ing” are acts that speak for themselves of purity, reverence, honor, beauty, adornment and role. The technical term, “investiture” comes from the Latin *investire – to clothe*.

ויקרא ח:י"ב

(יב) ויצק מִשְׁחָן הַמִּשְׁחָה עַל רֹאשׁ אַהֲרֹן וַיִּמָּשַׁח אֹתוֹ לְקַדְּשׁוֹ:
Leviticus 8:12

(12) *He poured some of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head and anointed him, to consecrate him.* This appears to be the first time in the Bible a person is anointed. Jacob has anointed monuments, and there are other instances of objects. Anointing exists in other ancient pre-Israelite cultures. Its purpose is to **sanctify** - לְקַדְּשׁוֹ. Contrast this with the Levites who were sprinkled with a purification water and shaved in order to **purify** them - וְטַהַרְתָּ אֹתָם - (Numbers 8:6). Kohanim: holy. Levites: pure.

ויקרא ח:כ"ג

(כג) וַיִּשְׁחָט אֶת הַזֶּבֶחַ מִדָּמָיו וַיִּקַּח מִשֶּׁה מִדָּמָיו וַיִּתֵּן עַל-הַתְּנוּךְ אֲזִוְ-אֹהֲרֹן הַיְמָנִית וְעַל-בִּתְּחוֹ רִגְלוֹ הַיְמָנִית:

Leviticus 8:23

(23) *and it was slaughtered. Moses took some of its blood and put it on the ridge of Aaron's right ear, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot.* Perhaps the trope on וַיִּשְׁחָט (the fourth and final occurrence of *shal-shelet*) calls attention to this as the climactic moment in a series of slaughterings. So far we have had a bull-*olah* and a ram-*hattat* and this is the ram of *miluim* (ordination). Why do the Kohanim get their earlobes, thumbs and big-toes daubed with blood?

ויקרא ח:ל"ג

(לג) וּמִפְתַּח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֹא תֵצֵאוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים עַד יוֹם מְלֵאת יָמֵי מְלֹאֲכֵיכֶם בִּי שִׁבְעַת יָמִים וְמֵלֵא אֶת-יְדֵיכֶם:

Leviticus 8:33

(33) *You shall not go outside the entrance of the Tent of Meeting for seven days, until the day that your period of ordination is completed. For your ordination will require seven days.* What is the significance of staying in the sanctuary for seven days? Seven, as we know, is the formative unit of time. It recalls creation. Here the Kohanim are being “re-created,” or at the very least, they are being re-purposed here, undergoing a transition from non- or pre-consecrated to consecrated Israelites. Scholars refer to the seven-day period

as “passage time” like the seven days after the birth of a male child, or the seven days following a marriage, or the seven days following a death. The seven days of Sukkot and Pesach are seasonal “passage” times and also recall the original “passage” time of creation, from formlessness and voidness to the structured universe. The seven-day unit of time is deeply imprinted in us.

On Shabbat Ha-Gadol

The Shabbat preceding Passover is called Shabbat HaGadol because of the miracle that happened on that day. (*Isserles: And there is a custom to recite the Haggadah at Minchah (of Shabbat HaGadol) from "We were slaves..." until "... to atone for all of our sins." (right before Rabban Gamliel)... Shulchan Arukh OH 430:1*)

What miracle?

In the year when we left Egypt, the tenth of Nisan was a Saturday, and (on that day) every Israelite took a lamb as his Paschal sacrifice and tied it to the posts of his bed, as it is written, *"In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household."* (Exodus 12:3) And the Egyptians saw this, and asked them, "Why are you doing this?" They responded, "To slaughter our Passover sacrifice as God commanded us!" And (the Egyptians) ground their teeth when they learned that their gods would be slaughtered, yet they were not able to say a thing to them. Because that took place on the tenth of Nissan, which happened to be a Shabbat, it was established that from then on, the Shabbat before Passover would be called "Shabbat HaGadol." (Mishnah Berura)

“It was called Shabbat HaGadol in honor of the Haftarah that is read on this Shabbat...

And I have found yet another reason for the name *Shabbat HaGadol* offered in the book *Shibbole HaLeket* (of Rabbi Zedekiah ben Abraham Anav of Rome) which explains, that on the Shabbat before Passover, Jews stay late in synagogue on Shabbat morning, studying the laws of Pesach and discussing the wonders that God did for our ancestors on that day, based on this **long day** in shul, the day **appeared GADOL** - long to them, and they became accustomed to calling it *Shabbat HaGadol!*” (*Mateh Moshe: R. Moshe of Przemysl*)

Shabbat Shalom!

שבת שלום!

Hag Same'ah!

חג שמח!