

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Tzav	24 Mar., 2018	8 Nisan 5778	Lev. 6:8-8:36	Mal. 3:4-4:6	Matt. 17:9-13

The Shabbat before Pesach is called *Shabbat Hagadol* (the Great Sabbath). Hashem spoke to Moshe and Aaron, “Speak to all the congregation of Yisrael” and the Israelites were to select a lamb that would serve as Pesach sacrifice as they prepare to leave *Mitzrayim* (Egypt). This mitzvah (commandment) required Israelites to actively participate in the redemption from *Mitzrayim*. The name, *Shabbat Hagadol* comes from Malachi 3:4-4:6 (in Hebrew version 3:4-24) which also alludes to a messianic future, Malachi 4:5, “Behold, I will send you Eliyahu *ha navi* (the prophet) before the coming of the great and dreadful Yom YHWH.”

The deeper meaning of *Shabbat Hagadol* is found in the Talmud when Hashem commanded the Israelites on the tenth of Nisan to prepare lambs to be used as Pesach-offerings.¹ When the Egyptian firstborn visited the Israelites homes and asked what they were planning to do with the lamb, they replied that they were preparing a Pesach-offering to Hashem, who would kill the *Mitzrayim* firstborn. Upon hearing this they went to their parents and to Pharaoh begging them to send out the Israelites. When they refused, the firstborn declared war against their parents and killed many of them, as it is written in Psalms 136:10, “To Him that smote *Mitzrayim* and their *bachorim* [first-born].” Because of the “great miracle” that occurred on this Shabbat day, the Shabbat before Pesach is called *Shabbat Hagadol*.

This week’s parashat is *tzav* (command). Up to this point in the Scripture, Hashem used the words, “speak” or “say” to communicate with the Israelites. Hashem would say, “Speak to the Israelites” or “Say to the Israelites.” But on few occasions, He would say, “Command the Israelites.” In most instances, Hashem instructs Moshe to tell us what He wants us to do. In few cases, however, Hashem is so concerned that we fulfill His will that He instructs Moshe to *tzav* (command) us to do.²

The sages teach Hashem used “command”³ to Aharon and his sons to show following verses directly applies to the priests who perform burnt offerings as they derive little or no personal benefits. Therefore, Hashem says, “This is the Torah...”⁴ to show the priests are required to perform their duties with due diligence.

The book of Vayikra (Leviticus) mostly consists of *Korbanot* (Sacrifices). Hashem put a lot of emphasis on how to make sacrifices, and to teach about sacrifices. The sages teach that the mystical meaning of *korban olah* (the burnt offering) has certain remedy to correct and to be able to affect us that has to do with wrong thoughts, the impure thoughts.

All of us are guilty of impure thoughts which includes harming others, slandering, jealous, judgmental, hateful, etc. It can come to us in many different ways. Nevertheless, this specific sacrifice is to correct such impure thoughts but to be able to have control over such thoughts.

In Leviticus 6:13, Hashem says, “The fire shall always be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out” to Aharon and his sons who are priests. The priests symbolize *Chesed* (loving-kindness) are commanded to feed the fire on the altar which symbolizes *Din* (judgment). When a person is about to sin, he kindles himself with the flame of the evil impulse, and the evil impulse comes from the side of impure spirit, so the impure spirit

¹ Gemara Shabbat 87b

² Vayikra, The Lubavitcher Rebbe, p. 33

³ Leviticus 6:9

⁴ Leviticus 6:9

dwells in him.⁵ The only way to eliminate the evil spirit is by “the fire of the altar,” that is, the holy fire. Therefore, “it shall never go out.” Such duty applies to us today as Yochanan (John) said, “Yahushua..., has made us kings and priests to Eloha and his Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen”⁶

“And the fire upon the altar shall be burning in it; it shall not be put out: and the kohen shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order upon it; and he shall burn on it the fat of the shalom offerings.”⁷ As discussed previously, the priests represents *Chesed* which is also symbolized by the light of morning. He arranges the fire each morning to temper the harshness of Din (Judgment).⁸ The holy fire consumes the threatening fire deriving from the left side of Sefirot.

The sages taught in a Baraisa (a tradition in the Jewish oral law not incorporated in the Mishnah) that there are six types of fire, one of which is a fire that consumes fire. The consuming fire is mentioned many times throughout the Scripture, few examples: Exodus 24:17; Deuteronomy 4:24; 9:3; Isaiah 29:6, Hebrews 12:29, etc... Related to this is the fire between the First and Second Temple. The Sages teach there are five things which the Second Temple differs from the First. It did not have: 1. the Ark, Ark-cover, and Cherubim; 2. the fire from heaven; 3. the divine presence; 4. the Holy Spirit of prophecy; and 5. the Urim VeTumim. Thus, fire from heaven was not present in the Second Temple. The Gemara disputes by answering that there was fire from heaven even in the Second Temple, but it did not assist in consuming that which was placed on the Altar.⁹

When Hashem said, “This is the Torah of the burnt offering.” It means, “This is the instructions of the burnt offering.” He is teaching us the way or the path to the Holy One, Blessed be He. “This is” in Hebrew is *zot* (זֹאת) which is another word for *Shekinah*, the feminine aspect of Divine. If I learn the Torah and the Torah is for the sake of *zot* of the *Shekinah*, meaning “for the sake of Hashem”. What does it mean that the Torah is for the sake of *shamayim* (heavens)? It is not to learn for your sake. People might learn to be smarter so they can put somebody down or for their own self-gratification, “I know a lot more.” Each person has different agenda to learn. But the Torah tells you, you have to learn for *leShem shamayim* (the sake of heavens), and also the *mitzvot* (deed) *leShem shamayim*. When you learn the Torah and it is for the sake of *Shekinah* to elevate it in order to give joy and happiness to our Master.

“*HaOlah*” is the type of sacrifice that goes up (ascent). But when it refers to *zot Torah haOlah*, *zot* is the *Shekinah*; Torah is the path of Hashem; *HaOlah* that goes up. It mean the Torah that I am learning is presented to the Master, and going in front of Him as if I sacrificed something to the Master of the Universe.

What if I don’t learn for the sake of heavens? I am learning for my own ego or I am learning to get paid. Some people learn the Torah only to prove that other people are wrong. Some people learn the Torah to get others away from the Torah to confuse them and get them off the path of the Torah. That means he is coming more from the left side, the evil side.

Baal Shem Tov explains there are two chambers in the *Shamayim* which everything goes through. One of them is a chamber of purity, and another is a chamber of impurity. And if I pull myself toward a chamber of purity, I pull towards me the chamber of purity. If not, I am pulling from the left side, the impurity towards me.

⁵ Zohar 3:27b

⁶ Revelation 1:5-6

⁷ Leviticus 6:12

⁸ Zohar 3:28b

⁹ BT, Yoma 21b

The animal sacrifice on the Altar expresses how we dedicate ourselves, and specifically our pursuit of pleasure (signified by the fats placed on the Altar) to Hashem. When we offer up our pleasure on Hashem's Altar, we are changing our self-oriented pleasures that we derive because of its benefits or the gratification it gives us, to the pleasure of doing things for Hashem.

The "day" signifies spiritual "light," i.e., Divine consciousness: studying the Torah and fulfilling His commandments. The "Night," signifies all other, mundane aspects of our lives, whose Divine dimension is obscured by the "darkness" of materiality. Therefore, placing the fats on the Altar during the day and the night indicate that we must change our self-oriented pleasure into Hashem-centered pleasure.