

Date: 15 Tammuz 5786 (June 30, 2026)

Torah Portion: Pinchas

Topic: A Night in Yerushalayim

The continual burnt offering (*tamid*) stands at the very center of Yisrael's daily worship. It was not merely a ritual repeated morning and evening, but a perpetual testimony that fellowship with YHWH must be continually renewed. Scripture declares: "And you shall say to them, 'This is the fire-offering which you bring to YHWH: two male lambs in their first year, perfect ones, day by day, as a continual burnt offering. The one lamb you prepare in the morning, and the second lamb you prepare between the evenings'" (Num. 28:3–4).

The Midrash highlights the remarkable effect of these continual offerings: "Never did a person in Yerushalayim remain overnight with a sin. The continual offering of the morning atoned for the sins committed during the previous night, while the continual offering of the afternoon atoned for the sins committed during the day. Thus no one spent the night in Yerushalayim burdened with sin, as it is written, 'Righteousness lodged in her'" (Isa. 1:21).

At first glance, however, this statement raises an important question. Why does the Midrash restrict this unique blessing to those who remained in Yerushalayim? The *tamid* offerings were purchased from the annual half-shekel contributed by all Yisrael (Exod. 30:11–16; Mishnah *Shekalim* 4:1). Since they were offered on behalf of the entire nation, should not their atoning power extend equally to every Yisraelite, wherever he lived?

R' Avraham Mordechai Alter of Gur explains that the *tamid* possessed a specific and limited sphere of atonement. Unlike the individual sin offering (*chatat*) or guilt offering (*asham*), the continual burnt offering did not remove deliberate transgressions that required personal sacrifice. Rather, it atoned for lesser offenses, uncertain violations, and failures of the heart. Consequently, only those who came to Yerushalayim, confessed their sins, and brought the required personal offerings could experience complete cleansing through the additional atonement provided by the *tamid*. The continual offering completed what individual repentance and sacrifice had already begun.

R' Simcha Alter offers another perspective. He explains that although every member of Yisrael shared in the atoning merit of the *tamid*, not everyone was equally prepared to preserve that renewed state of purity. Those who remained in Yerushalayim were surrounded by the sanctity of the Temple, the service of the priests, the songs of the Levites, and the continual reminders of YHWH's presence. Immersed in such an atmosphere, they were strengthened against quickly returning to the sins from which they had just been cleansed. Their external environment nurtured the inner transformation that the sacrifice symbolized.

R' Yitzchak Sorotzkin focuses on another dimension of the burnt offering. The Sages teach that the *olah* atones particularly for sinful thoughts and the silent meditations of the heart (*Vayikra Rabbah* 7:3). This addresses one of humanity's greatest spiritual struggles. As the Talmud observes, "No man escapes sinful thoughts for even a single day" (Bava Basra 164b). External sins may be restrained, but the inner life continually requires purification.

If the *tamid* chiefly addressed the hidden realm of the heart, then the Midrash's statement takes on deeper significance. Yerushalayim was not merely the location where sacrifices were offered; it was the city where hearts were continually redirected toward YHWH. There the worshiper encountered the Word of Elohim, heard the Torah taught by the priests and Levites (Deut. 33:10), and witnessed the rhythm of continual worship ascending heavenward. The atmosphere itself encouraged holiness.

This explains why Scripture repeatedly connects purity of heart with meditation upon Torah. Solomon writes, "When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul..." (Prov. 2:10). Likewise David declares, "I have treasured Your word in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Ps. 119:11). The most effective remedy for impure thoughts is not simply resisting them, but replacing them with the wisdom of YHWH. As the Sages teach, "If this evil inclination meets you, drag it into the house of study" (*Kiddushin* 30b). The mind cannot remain empty; it must be continually filled with truth.

This principle also sheds light on the Renewed Covenant. The writer of Hebrews presents the continual offerings as shadows pointing to the perfect and perpetual ministry of the Moshiach. Unlike the priests who offered sacrifices "day after day," the Moshiach offered Himself "once for all" (Heb. 7:27; 10:11–14). Yet believers are still called to continual

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spiritual renewal. Paul exhorts us to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2), while also urging us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). The continual rhythm of the *tamid* thus finds its fulfillment not in repeated animal sacrifices, but in a life of continual communion with YHWH through the work of the Messiah.

The holiness of Yerushalayim therefore illustrates an enduring spiritual principle. Every believer shares in the atoning work that YHWH has provided, but those who continually dwell in His presence, saturate their minds with His Word, and cultivate an atmosphere of worship experience the fullest fruit of that atonement. Forgiveness is received in a moment, but sanctification is nurtured through continual fellowship with YHWH.

Yishayahu's declaration, "Righteousness lodged in her" (Isa. 1:21), thus describes more than the city itself. It portrays the heart that becomes a dwelling place for the presence of YHWH. As long as one remains in that spiritual "Yerushalayim"—walking in Torah, meditating on His Word, and living in continual worship—the cleansing symbolized by the *tamid* continues to shape the inner person. The continual burnt offering teaches that the life of faith is not sustained by occasional moments of repentance alone, but by an unceasing rhythm of surrender, renewal, and communion with YHWH.

Shalom.