**PARASHAT HASHAVUA**

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This parasha series is dedicated

in memory of Michael Jotkowitz, z"l.

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**PARASHAT TZAV**

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Please pray for a refuah sheleimah for 15-month-old Ariel ben Leah, critically hurt in yesterday's mortar shelling in Atzmona.

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**Continuity and Change in the Mishkan**

**By Rav Yonatan Grossman**

The two parashiot with which Sefer Vayikra opens – Vayikra and Tzav – are devoted to the laws of the sacrifices. In this shiur I would like to focus on one of the strangest units that we find in these parashiot: the laws of the olah (burnt offering) as they appear in parashat Tzav:

"And God spoke to Moshe saying, Command Aharon and his sons saying: This is the law of the olah; it is the olah which shall burn upon the altar all night until the morning, and the fire of the altar shall burn in it. And the kohen shall wear his linen garment, and he shall wear linen trousers upon his flesh, and he shall take up the ashes which the fire has consumed with the olah upon the altar, and he shall place them beside the altar. And he shall remove his garments and wear other garments, and he shall remove the ashes outside of the camp, to a place that is pure. And the fire upon the altar shall burn in it, it shall not be extinguished, and the kohen shall burn wood upon it every morning, and he shall set the olah upon it and burn the fat of the shelamim upon it. An eternal fire shall burn upon the altar; it shall not be extinguished." (Vayikra 6:1-6)

The most surprising element of this strange unit is the introduction: "This is the law of the olah." Following such an opening, we would expect to find the laws pertaining to the olah. Indeed, thereafter we read, "This is the law of the mincha (meal offering)" (6:7), and this is immediately followed by the guidelines for the mincha offering and its consumption by the kohanim. Likewise, later on we read, "This is the law of the chatat (sin offering)" (6:18), "This is the law of the asham (guilt offering)" (7:1) and "This is the law of the zevach shelamim (peace offering)" (7:11). In each of these instances we are taught the laws of the specific sacrifice mentioned in the introduction. In the case of the "law of the olah," by contrast, the text seems to ignore the olah completely, addressing instead various laws concerning the altar and its ashes!

At the beginning of the command we read, "...it is the olah which shall burn upon the altar," and hence it is logical that the text goes on to describe the removal of the olah from the altar. However, the details provided (with no mention whatsoever of the process involved in offering this sacrifice) nevertheless differ from those pertaining to the other sacrifices appearing in parashat Tzav.

In order to understand the uniqueness of this brief unit, let us first pay attention to the laws that are mentioned here and their significance. It would seem that the first verse represents a heading, followed by a division into two separate sections. In other words, the verses should be read as follows:

"This is the law of the olah:

i. IT IS THE OLAH WHICH SHALL BURN UPON THE ALTAR ALL NIGHT UNTIL THE MORNING

ii. AND THE FIRE OF THE ALTAR SHALL BURN IN IT.

i. And the kohen shall wear his linen garment, and he shall wear linen trousers upon his flesh, and he shall take up the ashes which the fire has consumed with the olah upon the altar, and he shall place them beside the altar. And he shall remove his garments and wear other garments, and he shall remove the ashes outside of the camp, to a place that is pure.

**ii.** AND THE FIRE UPON THE ALTAR SHALL BURN IN IT, IT SHALL NOT BE EXTINGUISHED, and the kohen shall burn wood upon it every morning, and he shall set the olah upon it and burn the fat of the shelamim upon it. AN ETERNAL FIRE SHALL BURN UPON THE ALTAR; IT SHALL NOT BE EXTINGUISHED."

The two sub-headings hint at the laws that are to follow and that expand upon them. The first sub-heading deals with the olah which burns all night until the morning; hence the text concentrates on what the kohen must do in the morning, when the olah has finished being burnt. It seems that the Torah is referring here to the daily sacrifice (tamid) offered in the evening (bein ha-arbayim), at the end of the sacrifices for each day in the mishkan or the Beit Ha-Mikdash. It is clear, however, that this unit is not meant merely to provide instruction as to the timing of the olah offering, since the crux of the unit addresses what the kohen must do at the CONCLUSION of the olah offering – i.e., the laws of the clearing of the altar. (Moreover, Rashi [6:1] maintains that what we learn from these laws applies not only to the olah but in fact to all of the sacrifices. See also Ramban, who disagrees.)

Section (i), the law of clearing the altar, is subdivided into two clear parts:

a. And the kohen shall wear his linen garment, and he shall wear linen trousers upon his flesh, and he shall take up the ashes which the fire has consumed with the olah upon the altar, and he shall place them beside the altar.

b. And he shall remove his garments and wear other garments, and he shall remove the ashes outside of the camp, to a place that is pure.

Both parts of this command open with details concerned with clothing. The second clearing of the altar is characterized by the "other garments" which must be worn, in contrast with the special linen garments which the kohen must wear for the first clearing.

Following the clothing details, the Torah commands that the ashes be removed. The expression used for the first removal of the ashes is, "he shall take up (herim) the ashes," while for the second removal we are told, "and he shall remove (hotzi – literally, take out) the ashes."

Thereafter the text describes the place where the ashes that have been removed should be placed, and again there is a discrepancy in the expression used for the two removals: for the first removal, "and he shall place them beside the altar;" for the second: "outside of the camp" – here the ashes leave the boundaries of the mishkan and the camp entirely.

What is the relationship between these two "removals" of the ashes? Rashi (6:4) explains:

"'And he shall remove the ashes' – which have accumulated at the center to the point where there is so much of them that there is no place to set out the sacrifice, and so he removes them from there. This is not obligatory every day; however, the 'teruma' (offering of the ashes) is obligatory every day."

Thus, Rashi understands the command as describing two different acts of ash-clearing which are completely unrelated to each other. There is an obligation every day to offer some of the ashes which are upon the altar (first removal). This clearing does not cause all the remains of the previous day's sacrifices (and the olah which burned all night) to be removed; it is merely a symbolic clearing. The remains that have not thereby been cleared are gathered at the center of the altar, and when this is full, it is removed to a place outside of the camp. This is the second clearing to which the text refers. The symbolic first clearing is an obligation every day, while the removal of the accumulated remains – the second clearing – is performed whenever necessary, when there is a lack of space on the altar.

This explanation does not easily fit the literal text, and so I prefer the Abarbanel's proposal of a chronological relationship between the two removals. The text describes a two-stage journey of the ashes from the altar to somewhere outside of the camp. The first stage, in which the kohen clears ("takes up") the ashes from the altar itself, involves an activity where the kohen is in contact with the altar and therefore he must wear his priestly garments. This stage concludes "beside the altar." Then the text moves on to the second stage, in which the ashes, which have already been taken up and are nbeside the altar, are taken out of the camp. Here the kohen does not come into contact with the altar, and therefore he may wear other garments – perhaps even regular clothes (as the Ramban believes). The kohen takes the ashes out of the camp, thus concluding the second and final stage of their journey.

Whether we adopt the explanation of Rashi or that of the Abarbanel, it is clear that the Torah is dealing here with the process of removing ashes from the altar, and this activity must be performed every morning.

Now the Torah goes on to elaborate on the second part of the heading. The literary hint that the reader is to refer back to that part of the heading is clear from the expression that is repeated over and over: "and the fire of the altar will burn in it" (6:2), "and the fire that is upon the altar will burn in it; it shall not be extinguished" (6:5). In repeating this expression, the text brings us back to the second part of the heading. Indeed, this command is framed clearly by the third appearance of this expression, at the conclusion of the section: "An eternal fire shall burn upon the altar; it shall not be extinguished" (6:6).

 (Attention should be paid to the development that takes place in the course of the command: a. "And the fire of the altar will burn in it"; b. "And the fire that is upon the altar will burn in it, IT SHALL NOT BE EXTINGUISHED"; c. "AN ETERNAL FIRE shall burn upon the altar; it shall not be extinguished.")

This, then, is the crux of the command: the fire on the altar must burn continually without interruption. Sufficient wood must be added to ensure this continual fire, but care must be taken that the additional wood will not extinguish it ("And the kohen will burn wood UPON IT each morning"). The olah, too, must be offered on the fire without extinguishing it ("and he shall set out the olah UPON IT"); likewise the shelamim ("And he shall offer up the fat of the shelamim UPON IT"). The subject of the sentence, throughout this lengthy command, is the fire ("upon it" means upon the fire), and the recurring phrases which frame the command again emphasize the continuity of the fire.

Thus there are two parts to the "law of the olah." The first part emphasizes the clearing of the altar, which must be performed at the start of every day, while the second part emphasizes the continuity of the fire. In effect, the fire which descended from heaven onto the altar on the eighth day of the consecration of the mishkan (Vayikra 9:24) was stoked with new wood daily, but, in principle, it never went out. (The journeys of the mishkan with the Israelite camp in the desert should be regarded as temporary interruptions for technical reasons.)

The two parts of this relatively brief literary unit epitomize the fundamental tension of the service in the mishkan: the tension between continuity and change. The fire that burns permanently upon the altar is never extinguished; day after day it is there. This eternal fire expresses the continuity of the presence of the Shekhina which began, as mentioned, on the eighth day of the consecration of the mishkan, and which never ceased. At the same time, each day the altar must be cleared of the remains from the previous day. Each day brings the start of renewed service in the mishkan, and the sacrifices of each new day require a clean altar, a new start. A new sun shines upon the altar each day, but a permanent and eternal fire burns upon it.

Let us now return to the question with which we began. Why do these laws appear under the heading, "This is the law of the olah"? On the surface it would seem that what we are being taught is actually "the law of the altar," and even if these laws are appropriate for the beginning of parashat Tzav, the "law of the olah" seems to lose out by having these laws come in their place.

This question relates to the fundamental relationship between parashat Vayikra and parashat Tzav. As we know, the whole list of sacrifices appears twice – first in parashat Vayikra (olah, mincha, shelamim, chatat, asham) and then immediately thereafter, again, in parashat Tzav (olah, mincha, chatat, asham, shelamim). The repetition is explained in the following words of the Ramban, commenting on the beginning of parashat Tzav:

"The Torah says, in parashat Vayikra: 'Speak to Bnei Yisrael,' for there God commands them to bring the sacrifices, and Bnei Yisrael bring them. [In parashat Tzav] He says, 'Command Aharon,' for He will describe how the sacrifices are to be offered, and the kohanim will perform them."

 In other words, the list of sacrifices that appears in parashat Vayikra is addressed to the individual Israelite who wishes to come closer to his Maker, or to atone for his sins (as the heading of the parasha makes clear: "Speak to Bnei Yisrael"). The list of sacrifices as it appears in parashat Tzav, on the other hand, is directed at the kohanim, who handle the sacrifice (and hence the heading: "Command Aharon and his sons"). In light of this division we can also understand the discrepancy in the order of the sacrifices as they appear in the two parashiot. (See also Ramban on 6:18.)

Indeed, parashat Tzav deals mainly with the guidelines for the consumption of the sacrifices by the kohanim. The text elaborates, for each sacrifice, on the definitions involved and specifically on two elements, which are determined by whether the sacrifice is defined in our parasha as "kodesh kodashim" (holy of holies) or not.

i. Who eats the sacrifice: Those sacrifices defined as "kodesh kodashim" are eaten only by male kohanim (whereas regarding other korbanot, the rest the kohen's family, as well as the person who brings the sacrifice, may partake).

ii. Where is it eaten: Those sacrifices defined as "kodesh kodashim" are eaten only in a holy place, the azara (whereas the other sacrifices may be eaten anywhere in Jerusalem – see Mishna Zevachim, chapter 5).

Parashat Tzav, then, concerns the eating of the sacrifices, and it lists the laws regulating the consumption of the sacrifices by the kohanim. However, there is one sacrifice of which the kohanim do not partake at all: the olah. The olah is consumed in its entirety by the altar or, more precisely, by the eternal fire that burns upon it.

I would suggest that this is the basis of the answer to our question. The unit describing the "law of the olah" in parashat Tzav deals with the laws of the altar, for it is the altar, rather than the kohanim, that consumes the olah. The text focuses throughout this parasha on those who eat the sacrifice: in the case of the mincha, the chatat and the asham the Torah conveys to the kohanim the laws of their consumption; in the case of the zevach shelamim the Torah deals with the owner's consumption of the meat while the choice portions are given to the kohen, and in the case of the olah the Torah describes its consumption by the altar!

Finally, as mentioned, this consumption by the altar contains two aspects: continuity (the consuming fire which burns continually), and change (the time allotted for the consumption, which is limited to a single 24-hour period).

(Translated by Kaeren Fish)

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