YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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**PARASHAT HASHAVUA**

**Rav Meir Shpiegelman**

**PARASHAT TZAV**

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Dedicated in memory of HaRav HaGaon R. Chaim Heller zt"l,  
whose yahrzeit falls on the 14th of Nissan,  
by Vivian S. Singer.

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**Two Accounts of the *Korbanot***

The subject matter of *Parashat* *Tzav*, which describes the laws pertaining to the various sacrifices, seems very similar to that of the previous *parasha*. If we pay close attention, however, we find that while both *parashot* deal with the same categories of sacrifices, there are some discrepancies between them: the *korbanot* are presented in different orders in the two *parashot*, and some of the details of their laws seem to be different. This *shiur* will focus on some of the differences between *Parashat* *Vayikra* and *Parashat Tzav* and try to understand their significance.

**The Differences Between the Two *Parashot***

The most conspicuous difference between the two *parashot* concerns the order of the sacrifices. In *Parashat Vayikra*, the sacrifices appear in the following order:

* burnt offering (*ola*),
* meal offering (*mincha*),
* peace offering (*shelamim*),
* sin offering (*chatat*),[[1]](#footnote-1)
* and guilt offering (*asham*).

In *Parashat Tzav* (chapters 6-7), the order is:

* burnt offering,
* meal offering,
* sin offering,
* guilt offering,
* and peace offering.

Another difference pertains to the distribution of the details of the laws pertaining to each of the sacrifices. For the most part, the specific laws are not brought in both *parashot*;each detail appears in only one *parasha*. This division gives rise to two questions: First, why are the laws divided in this manner? And second, given that general distribution, why do some laws indeed appear in both *parashot*? For example, the slaughter of the sin offering is mentioned in both *parashot*; the slaughter of the burnt offering appears only in *Parashat Vayikra*; and the slaughter of the guilt offering appears only in *Parashat Tzav*. Similarly, *Parashat Vayikra* offers no details as to the procedure for the guilt offering; it is explained only in *Parashat Tzav* – unlike the other sacrifices, whose procedure is set forth in *Parashat Tzav* but not in *Vayikra*. The obligation to bring bread with the peace offerings is mentioned nowhere in *Parashat* *Vayikra*, but appears in *Parashat* Tzav.

We might also mention another difference between the *parashot* with regard to the peace offering. In *Parashat Tzav*, the Torah divides the laws of the peace offering into two parts: the first (7:11-13) stipulates that breads of thanksgiving must be brought with the peace offering, and the following verses seem to conclude the topic. However, the Torah later comes back to the laws of the peace offering (7:28). Why are all the laws of the peace offering not discussed together, as with the other sacrifices?

**Parashat Vayikra vs. Parashat Tzav**

To understand the fundamental difference between the two *parashot* – which gives rise to all the discrepancies mentioned above – let us refer back to the way each *parasha* is introduced. *Parashat Vayikra* opens with God's words to Bnei Yisrael:

And He called to Moshe, and the Lord spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying: **Speak to Bnei Yisrael** and say to them: When any person among you brings a sacrifice to the Lord…" (*Vayikra* 1:1-2)

*Parashat Tzav*, in contrast, opens with God's command to Aharon and his sons:

And the Lord spoke to Moshe, saying: **Command Aharon and his sons**, saying: This is the law of the burnt offering…" (*Vayikra* 6:1-2)

This difference constitutes a guiding principle with regard to the relationship between the two *parashot*: in *Vayikra*, the sacrifices are described from the perspective of the person bringing them; in *Tzav*, they are described from the perspective of the Sanctuary and the *kohanim*.

Obviously, this does not mean there is no mention of the *kohanim* in *Parashat* *Vayikra*, or that the person bringing the sacrifices is absent from *Parashat Tzav*. The sacrifice represents the meeting point of the person bringing it, the *kohen* who offers it, and the Sanctuary. It may therefore be considered from two different, complementary perspectives. First, a sacrifice is a gift that a person brings to God; it therefore reflects and represents the individual. At the same time, it is offered in God's House, and therefore it must abide by the rules governing the sacrifices in the Sanctuary. This duality parallels how gifts are brought to a royal palace: a farmer would bring some of his produce, while a shepherd would bring some of his flock, but both would have to meet the criteria and procedure for presenting gifts to the king.

*Parashat Vayikra* describes the sacrifices from the perspective of the bringer. The central question here is, what must the individual do so that God will accept his sacrifice? The answer is that the animal must be slaughtered, its blood must be sprinkled on the altar, and it must be offered on the altar. As a technical side issue, since a lay Israelite cannot perform the service involving the blood, the *kohanim* perform it for him. In *Parashat Tzav*, the sacrifice is described from the perspective of the Temple. Here, the central question concerns the way sacrifices brought to the Temple are to be handled – regardless of the identity of the person bringing them.

This distinction between the obligations pertaining to the individual and the obligations concerning the Sanctuary itself may have practical ramifications. For example, it is reasonable to assume that obligations pertaining to the individual also applied to sacrifices that were offered on *bamot* (private altars, which were permitted before the Temple was built), while the obligations that pertained to the Sanctuary did not apply to *bamot*.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Now we can understand why the Torah changed the order in which the sacrifices are listed in the two *parashot*. In *Vayikra*, where the focus is on the individual bringing the sacrifice, the Torah draws a distinction between free-will sacrifices and those that are obligatory: he burnt offering, meal offering, and peace offering are all free-will offerings and are therefore grouped together, while the sin offering and guilt offering are obligatory and are mentioned together after the free-will category. (The internal order within each of these two categories reflects the relative importance of the respective sacrifices.) In *Parashat Tzav*, the focus is on the Sanctuary, and so the sacrifices are listed in (descending) order of holiness: first the burnt offering, then the meal offering, sin offering, and guilt offering, and finally, the peace offering.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Burnt Offering (*Ola*)**

All of the actions entailed in the burnt offering are set forth in *Parashat Vayikra*. At the beginning of the *parasha*, we are told how the owner brings his sacrifice to the Sanctuary, places his hands upon the animal, and then slaughters it; the *kohen* pours the blood, the owner skins the animal and cuts it up, and the *kohen* offers it on the altar. In principle, all of these actions should have been performed by the owner, but since he cannot pour the blood or offer the animal on the altar, the *kohanim* perform these actions on his behalf.

In *Tzav*, we find just one detail pertaining to the burnt offering: the requirement that it must remain upon the altar until the morning. In connection with this detail, the Torah teaches that fire must burn on the altar day and night, and that this fire consumes the burnt offerings and peace offerings. The altar is called the "altar of burnt offerings" (*mizbach ha-ola*) because this is the sacrifice that is most often offered upon it,[[4]](#footnote-4) and hence it is in this connection that the Torah sets forth the laws pertaining to the altar. It is especially striking that *Parashat Tzav* mentions only the laws relating to the perspective of the altar, and not those relevant to the owner of the sacrifice.

**Sin Offering (*Chatat*)**

The details of the procedure for the sin offering appear in *Parashat Vayikra*, as part of the perspective of the owner – which makes sense, since the owner brings the sin offering to atone for his transgression. All that *Parashat Tzav* has to say about this sacrifice is to present the laws governing the consumption of its meat by the *kohanim*, and the law concerning a lay individual who touches the meat of the sacrifice or its blood. Again, this reflects the perspective of the Sanctuary in *Parashat Tzav*, as opposed to the perspective of the owner of the sacrifice in *Parashat Vayikra*. The only exception in this regard is the law of slaughtering the sin offering, which is mentioned in both *parashot*; we will address this anomaly below.

**Guilt Offering (*Asham*)**

The way the guilt offering is described in the two *parashot* is unique: *Parashat* *Vayikra* contains almost none of the details of the sacrifice, while we learn in *Parashat Tzav* about the slaughter, pouring the blood, removing the fats, which portions are offered on the altar, and the eating of the sacrifice by the *kohanim*.

Why is it that all these details are found specifically in *Parashat Tzav*? In the previous *shiur*, on *Parashat Vayikra*, we noted the difference between a sin offering and a guilt offering.[[5]](#footnote-5) The essence of a guilt offering is protection for the individual from punishment for his sin, while the sin offering has two main aspects: addressing the negative status that adheres to the individual in the wake of his sin, and cleansing the Sanctuary that was soiled or impaired owing to the sin. The guilt offering has no personal aspect in relation to the individual who brings it,[[6]](#footnote-6) and therefore the details of this sacrifice appear in *Parashat* Tzav and not in *Parashat Vayikra*.[[7]](#footnote-7)

**Meal Offering (*Mincha*)**

*Meal offerings of the pan and of the first fruits*

Two special types of *menachot* (meal offerings) appear in only one of the *parashot* each: the meal offering of the first fruits (*minchat bikkurim*) appears in *Parashat Vayikra* but not in *Parashat Tzav*, while the meal offering brought by the *Kohen Gadol* each day (*minchat chavitin*)[[8]](#footnote-8) is mentioned in *Parashat Tzav* (6:12-16) but not in *Vayikra*.

We might perhaps explain this phenomenon by referring back to the model suggested above. The *minchat chavitin*, which the *Kohen Gadol* must offer each day, is not a private obligation but a part of the fixed daily schedule of the Sanctuary – like the daily *korban tamid*, the daily lighting of the *menora*, and the incense that is offered daily on the golden altar.[[9]](#footnote-9) For this reason it appears only in *Parashat Tzav*, and not in *Vayikra*.

In contrast to the *minhat chavitin*, the *mincha* of *bikkurim* is the obligation of the individual who brings it; it is not something that needs to happen from the point of view of the Sanctuary. The individual brings his *bikkurim* to give thanks to God for the produce of his field, and the *mincha* that accompanies this offering is not like other *menachot*. This explains why it appears only in *Parashat Vayikra*, and why its laws – as we shall see below – are different from those governing other meal offerings.

*Types of menachot*

Another difference between the *menachot* described in the two *parashot* pertains to the different forms of *menachot* brought by individuals. *Parashat Vayikra* describes five different types of *mincha*, each prepared in its own way: one consists of fine flour (*solet*), one is baked in an oven, a third is prepared in a pan or griddle (*machavat*), another is prepared in a deep pan (*marcheshet*), and the fifth is the *mincha* of *bikkurim*. In *Parashat Tzav*, on the other hand, the text mentions the *korban mincha* generally, for the purpose of explaining its division among the *kohanim*, but does not describe the different methods of offering all the different types.

We can understand this difference between the two *parashot* with the same principles that have aided us thus far, noting that our different types of *menachot* can also be divided into three categories by considering the state of the grain from which they are brought: the *mincha* of *bikkurim* consists of wheat that has not yet been ground – "fresh ears [of grain] parched with fire, grits of fresh grain" (2:14);[[10]](#footnote-10) the *mincha* of fine flour consists of wheat that has been ground and sifted; and the other *menachot* are fully prepared – either as *chalot* *matzot* (oven-baked thick *matzot*), *rekikei matzot* (oven-baked wafers), or using a griddle or deep pan. The various *menachot* also differ in their procedural instructions: when the offering of fine flour is described in *Parashat Vayikra* (2:1-3),the actions mentioned are *kemitza* and *haktara* (taking and burning a fistful of the *mincha*), while the description of offering the more processed *menachot* also mentions offering them on the altar (2:8-9) and refers to the *kemitza* as *harama*, “lifting” (2:9).[[11]](#footnote-11) In addition, the Torah later states explicitly that whatever is leftover of the fine-flour offering is given to all the *kohanim*, while what is left of other *menachot* belongs to the *kohen* who offered them (7:9-10).

On the other hand, when *Parashat Tzav* describes the procedure for offering the *mincha* (6:7-11), the Torah says one must “lift” a handful and offer it. This indicates that *Parashat Tzav* is focused on the *mincha* of fine flour only; here, the term *harama* applies to it, while in *Parashat Vayikra*, it was used for the other *menachot*. Indeed, the text goes on to command: "And that which is left over of it shall be eaten by Aharon and his sons; it shall be eaten as *matza* in a holy place…. It shall not be baked with *chametz*…" (6:9-10), a commandment that is relevant only to the offering of fine flour: the other *menachot* are brought in the form of *matza*, not as *chametz*, so there is no way a *kohen* would be able to eat them as *chametz*; only with regard to the offering of fine flour is there any technical possibility that the *kohanim* might eat the leftovers after they have become *chametz*, so only in the context of this *mincha* would the Torah need to prohibit doing so.

Why is it prohibited for the *kohanim* to eat *mincha* leftovers that have become *chametz*? It seems that the Torah compares the priests’ consumption of the *mincha* leftovers to the consumption of the *mincha* by the fire on the altar:[[12]](#footnote-12) just as it is forbidden to offer *chametz* on the altar, so it is forbidden for the *kohanim* to eat leftovers that have become *chametz*.[[13]](#footnote-13) It emerges from the verses that the *mincha* of fine flour is part of the overall system of sacrifices in the Sanctuary, while the other *menachot* pertain to the individual bringing them. This is why the *mincha* of fine flour is given to all the *kohanim*, while any other *mincha* is given to the *kohen* who offers it – i.e., the *kohen* chosen by the owner of the *mincha*. And thus, the Torah draws a distinction between the procedure for the *mincha* of fine flour, which is detailed in *Parashat Tzav*, and that of the other *menachot*, which is described in *Parashat Vayikra*.

It is possible that the differences between the categories of *menachot* also arise from their respective levels of sanctity. We have seen that the three types of *menachot* are divided in terms of the degree of processing of the wheat (raw wheat, fine flour, *matzot*). Perhaps this division reflects a parallel hierarchy of holiness: the *mincha* of *bikkurim* – “fresh ears [of grain] parched with fire, grits of fresh grain” – represents the lowest level of holiness; the *mincha* of fine flour is the next level up; and the other three *menachot* (baked, griddle, and deep pan) are on the highest level of holiness. There is therefore a difference in the role of *kemitza* in each category: in the *mincha* of *bikkurim*, *kemitza* defines the portion of the *mincha* that will be offered on the altar, but the act itself is not part of the laws of the sacrifice; in the *mincha* of fine flour, *kemitza* is one of the laws of the sacrifice, but it does not have the significance of being “lifted” by the individual,[[14]](#footnote-14) and in the *menachot* brought as wafers or *matzot*, the *kemitza* is part of the laws of the sacrifice and also holds significance for the person offering it. Accordingly, *kemitza* of the *mincha* of *bikkurim* is not mentioned anywhere in the Torah; the *kemitza* of the *mincha* of fine flour is referred to as such in *Parashat Vayikra* and as “lifting” in *Parashat Tzav*; and the *kemitza* of other *menachot* is referred to as “lifting” already in *Parashat Vayikra*.[[15]](#footnote-15)

**Peace Offering (*Shelamim*)**

The peace offering is in some ways the most complicated to analyze. The details of this sacrifice are divided into three parts in the Torah: *Parashat Vayikra* presents a command to Bnei Yisrael concerning the procedure for the peace offering; *Parashat Tzav* then presents a command to the *kohanim* concerning the thanksgiving breads that accompany the sacrifice; and finally, an additional command, directed once again to Bnei Yisrael, relates to the gift of the breast and the right thigh of the animal to the *kohen*.

In light of our discussion so far, the simplest element to explain is the second – the breads of thanksgiving. These are not part of the obligation of the person who brings the sacrifice, but belong to the procedures of the Sanctuary. Peace offerings cannot be brought to the altar without accompanying breads, and therefore the Torah mentions this command in *Parashat Tzav*.[[16]](#footnote-16) In a certain sense, this distinction recalls the distinction between bringing a sacrifice and bringing the libation offering accompanying it: the obligation of the libation pertains not to the individual bringing the offering, but rather is part of the sacrificial system of the Sanctuary; therefore, when there is no libation accompanying the sacrifice (for example, when it is brought by a non-Jew), a libation is still brought from communal funds.

The third section of the laws of the peace offering concerns the gift of the breast and the thigh. This gift, mentioned in *Parashat Tzav*, is directed to the individual (in the framework of a command to Bnei Yisrael, not to the *kohanim*), but is formulated essentially in passive voice: “His own hands [but not him, himself] shall bring the offerings of the Lord made by fire” (7:30). It seems that the gift belongs to the system of the sacrificial laws of the Sanctuary, and it is for this reason that it appears in *Parashat Tzav*. These portions are the “payment” to the *kohanim* for their service, rather than a detail of the sacrifice itself. Like the gifts and tithes from produce, the breast and thigh of the peace offering are given to the *kohanim* by Bnei Yisrael. Hence, while in principle the individual must bring the breast and the thigh to the *kohen* (and therefore this requirement appears as part of the command to Bnei Yisrael), the obligation arises from the sacrificial system of the Sanctuary (and therefore it is located in *Parashat Tzav* and is formulated as if the individual were a passive participant).

(Translated by Kaeren Fish; edited by Sarah Rudolph)

1. The “ascending and descending” burnt offering is part of the sin offering. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. At the very least, the obligations pertaining to the Sanctuary were not practiced for sacrifices offered on a “minor *bama*” – see *Zevachim* 119b. In practice, we do find the same sort of distinction as the one described above. For example, the gift of the animal’s breast and thigh, and the waving, were not practiced in the case of a *bama*; no breads of thanksgiving were offered on a *bama*; and according to the opinion that *menachot* (meal offerings) were brought to a *bama*, they were not waved and placed on the altar. Obviously, the scope of this *shiur* does not allow for a discussion of all the details of the *halakhot* and the reason some apply to a *bama* while others do not. Some of the differences may be explained in light of the fact that a Yisrael (i.e., a lay member of *Am Yisrael*) could perform the sacrificial service of a *bama*; it was not limited to *kohanim*. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In two places the Torah adds details as to who receives portions of the sacrifice: Following the unit on the guilt offering, we read, “And the *kohen* who offers any person’s burnt offering – the *kohen* shall have for himself the skin of the burnt offering which he has offered” (7:8), and after the unit on the peace offering, we find, “He among the sons of Aharon who offers the blood of the peace offerings, and the fat, shall have the right thigh as a portion” (7:33). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The sin offering is brought only when a transgression was committed, and the peace offering is a different model, whereby the sacrifice is consumed by the owner together with God, as it were. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. My teacher and rabbi, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein *ztz”l*, addressed this point in an article that appeared in *Ma’alin ba-Kodesh*, the journal of Kollel Beit Ha-Bechira in Karmei Tzur. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For the same reason, the Torah makes no mention of an obligation to rest one’s hands on a guilt offering. The guilt offering wards off punishment, but does not effect personal repair, and therefore the owner is not personally required to rest his hands on it. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Like all the sacrifices, the guilt offering repairs the point of contact between the individual and the Sanctuary. Since it does not repair the sin (but rather only prevents punishment), the Torah sets forth the manner of the sacrifice in *Parashat Tzav*, which is focused on the service of the Sanctuary. In a certain sense, the guilt offering is similar to the *“egla arufa*”: in the event that a murder victim is found outside an inhabited area and the identity of the murderer cannot be established, the “*egla arufa*” ceremony is performed to protect the collective from punishment and atone for the land. Likewise, the guilt offering protects the individual from punishment, and therefore it is brought to atone for the Sanctuary. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. This *mincha* should not be confused with the *mincha al machavat* brought by an individual. [Editor’s note, as clarified with the author.] [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. In halakhic terms, the *minchat chavitin* is clearly not a personal obligation of the *Kohen Gadol*; it is only a monetary responsibility that applies to him. Therefore, if the *Kohen Gadol* dies, the *minchat chavitin* continues to be brought, either from his funds or from communal funds (Mishna *Menachot* 4:5; 51b), even though no personal obligation can apply to the *Kohen Gadol* after his death.

   Note that I have not addressed here the laws that appear in *Sefer Bamidbar* (chapter 18), since those laws require study in relation to their location in *Parashat Korach*. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Hopefully we will have some other opportunity to discuss the discrepancy between the plain meaning of the text and the practical *halakha*, but I will not address it here. Indeed, the remainder of our discussion in this *shiur* will not include detailed analysis of the *minchat bikkurim*, as it requires a separate discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. To further emphasize the distinction between these *menachot*, the Torah concludes each section with a verse of summary: “And that which is left over from the *mincha*…” (2:3, 10). However, it may be that this verse is meant to create a framework around the *menachot* that are baked or prepared on a griddle or in a deep pan, since afterwards the discussion returns to all the *menachot*, including fine flour. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Indeed, this is stated specifically in the verse: “…it shall not be baked with *chametz*; I have given it as their portion of My offerings made by fire…” (6:10). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *Chazal* broaden this principle to include the sin offering, and possibly the other sacrifices, as well, but the plain reading of the verse suggests that the rule was stated at its origin with regard to the *mincha*, while the rule concerning other sacrifices is an extension of the principle. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. “Lifting” (*harama*) is on a higher level than “waving” (*tenufa*): the “waving” is given to the person who skins the sacrifice, while the “lifting” is dedicated to God, with the *kohen* receiving it from God’s table, as it were. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. A similar hierarchy is found with regard to bringing the offering to the altar: this action is not mentioned in relation to the *mincha* of *bikkurim*; regarding the *mincha* of fine flour, the bringing to the altar is mentioned only in *Parashat Tzav* (6:7, with the term *hakrava*), as a command to the *kohanim*; for the other *menachot*, it is mentioned already in *Parashat Vayikra* (2:8, using both *hakrava* and *hagasha*). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. This also explains a well-known contradiction between the plain text and the *halakha*. The Torah states: “And if [a *korban shelamim*] is **eaten** on the third day, it is an abhorred thing (*pigul*); it shall not be accepted” (*Vayikra* 19:7); however, the *halakha* is that *pigul* (invalidation) with regard to a peace offering does not depend on the eating itself but on the *thoughts* one entertains while eating. Perhaps the Torah is referring to the laws pertaining to the Sanctuary – since in relation to the Sanctuary, it is the act of eating that matters – while *Chazal* sought to transfer the law of eating to the realm of laws of *offering* the sacrifice, and therefore they replaced the eating of the sacrifice with one’s thoughts while eating it. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)