

Parashat Tzav

The Repetition of the Korbanot

Our parasha (Tzav) continues the theme of the korbanot, begun last week (Vayikra), with more details and regulations concerning the sacrificial procedure. To give the parasha some shape and meaning, we will begin by outlining the general “headings” of its content. We will demonstrate how the parasha contains two distinct sections and we will explain the objective of each section.

Our Parasha divides into two topics:

I Ch. 6-7 : A delineation of the procedures for the five main types of sacrifice.

II Ch. 8 : The “miluim” - the seven day ceremonial inauguration of the tabernacle.

A REPETITION?

When approaching the first section of our parasha, we need to understand why we are detailing the sacrifices for a second time. Let us explain. Last week in parashat Vayikra, the Torah outlined in great detail, the appropriate animals, procedures, and restrictions of the five archetypes of korban. All the legal requirements were spelled out. Now, as we read through Parashat Tzav this week, we read about those same korbanot. Why the repetition?

This question lies at the root of understanding the purpose of the listing in our parasha, for in essence, what we see here are two lists. If you pay close attention to structure, you will note that in both lists, all five classic sacrifices appear, only that the order of the five has been altered. Here are the two listings :

VAYIKRA (Leviticus Ch.1-5): TZAV (Lev.Ch. 6-7)

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olah (burnt)	olah
mincha (flour)	mincha
shelamim (peace)	chatat
chatat (sin)	asham
asham (guilt)	shelamim

We need to understand two things. First; why the repetition of all five sacrifices? Even if the details are

divided between Vayikra and Tzav, why could they not have been included in a single text? And second; why are the orders of the lists switched? To begin searching for an answer we turn to the HEADINGS given to each “listing”.

PARASHAT VAYIKRA opens with the following introduction.

“ The Lord called to Moses ... saying: ‘Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: When any of you presents an offering to God ...’ (1:1-2)

Note that the introduction addresses a particular group. Moses is talking to the people, the Children of Israel. This is in contrast to the opening line of Parashat Tzav. There God instructs Moses to talk to a more specific grouping:

“The Lord spoke to Moses , saying ‘ Command Aaron and his children ...’ (6:1)

Parashat VAYIKRA talks to the person, the common individual who, motivated by religious stirrings, offers a sacrifice. Parashat TZAV is addressed to the officaries of the Temple; Aaron and his sons, who must bring the sacrifices themselves. This is the key to understanding all the differences between the two “lists” and the two parshiot.

In VAYIKRA, the ordering begins with sacrifices that are self- motivated (*olah, mincha, shelamim*) and then continues with obligatory sacrifices (*chatat, ashram*). Why? Because the focus is the individual. We begin with a human motivation to come closer to God. Only after that do we move “down” to the person who is forced to bring a korban by virtue of his sin. And in Tzav, the order is fixed differently. There we talk to the officaries of the Temple. The first four classifications (*olah, mincha, chatat, ashram*) are all grouped together in that they have a degree of sanctity which precludes taking the food of the sacrifice from the precincts of the Temple. They are “kodshei kodshim” - highly sanctified. But the shelamim sacrifice can be eaten by a non-priest anywhere in Jerusalem. It is “kodshim kalim” - lightly sanctified. Thus the order reflects the group being addressed. In both listings we move from higher levels to lower levels, but the lists have very different agendas. For the Israelites we talk about human motivation. For the priests we talk about what they are responsible for, degrees of sanctity, and what they will allow to leave the Temple grounds.

If you check the two lists, you will discern that the details mentioned in VAYIKRA concern the procedure of the korban as regards the person who brings it (and the acts of the priests on behalf of the owners) whereas the details in TZAV are concerned far more with matters which would fall under the jurisdiction of the priesthood. One example is that Parashat Tzav delineates the sections of each sacrifice that the priests may use for their own purposes. These details are noticeably absent in the Vayikra listing.

TO SUMMARISE. Parashat Tzav returns to the five classifications of korban described last week, however this time the focus is different. In Vayikra the laws of sacrifices are outlined as regards the individual Israelite. Now they are described as regards internal Temple procedures.

THE MILUIM

The final chapter of our parasha gives the process whereby the Temple was dedicated. For seven days, a special order of sacrifices were offered. The priests were restricted from leaving the sanctuary for the entire seven days (8:33). This was all a lead up to the eighth day (next week's parasha) which was the day when "God will appear" (9:6) to the entire nation.

WHY THE DETAIL?

We often wonder why the Torah goes into such detailed descriptions of the sacrifices. Even if we identify fully with the korbanot and what they do for the I-Thou connection between man and God, we frequently read through all the detail wondering why the Torah could not have been more concise. The same is true for the detailed instructions of the Tabernacle - the mishkan - which take up 12 chapters in Shemot (Exodus). Why the extensive "coverage"?

Let me strengthen my question with a comparison to another fundamental area of Judaism: Shabbat. Shabbat gets only a few lines in the Torah. It never receives detailed treatment, no more than a few verses at a time are devoted to it, yet its laws are incredibly complex and massive in their scope. The Rabbis pictured the Laws of Shabbat as "a mountain suspended by a thread" (Chagiga 1:8). The "thread" is the minimal space devoted to Shabbat in the Torah. The "mountain" is the enormous volume of legal material which describes the obligations and restrictions of Shabbat. Why did the Torah choose to present Shabbat in such minimal terms and to become so verbose when talking about Temple and sacrifice?

An answer that I heard from my teacher in Tanach, David Netiv, goes something like this. The Torah, despite its divine nature, was not born in a vacuum. Its messages are eternal, there are lessons for all time, but we must all agree that the written law was given over, at a particular point in history to a particular people who lived in a world with a strong, firmly established way in religious expression. At the time of the birth of Judaism, all cultures had temples and all religions were practised through sacrifices of one type or another. This is the religious reality, the cultural background that Judaism had to contend with.

Judaism arrived and introduced a revolution in many areas: the dignity of man, human freedom, ethical monotheism. Judaism introduced many new ideas. For the Jews, there were laws and regulations to follow, 613 commands which would shape the new way of life that God was introducing into the world. Certain ideas were unique to the new religion. Do not mix milk and meat, Shabbat for example. These could be mentioned in a sentence. There was no danger that any of the contemporary culture would pollute these ideas because only the Jews were practising them. But if God told them to build a temple, to bring sacrifices, they would have simply followed the contemporary pagan way!

Instead, God had to spell it all out. To prevent possible osmosis from other cultures, the infiltration of alien ideas into the sanctum of the monotheistic mind-set, the Torah had to define these spiritual tools in the most miniscule detail. A Jewish temple was to be exactly this way. Nothing was to be left to interpretation. But the Sabbath; there was no danger from the outside to that institution. Whoever Moses defined it would become its shape and form.

And so, the detail in which the sacrifices are described was vital in ensuring a uniquely monotheistic, Jewish way of serving God.

Shabbat Shalom