

PARASHAT TETZAVE

Tamid

by Rav Ezra Bick

The usual understanding of the division of Teruma from Tetzave is that the former deals with the building of the mishkan proper, with all its elements and utensils, the latter (except for the first two verses) deals with the kohanim, first the preparation of their garments and then the preparation of themselves as priests. At the end of the parasha there is a glaring exception to this rule, the construction of the incense altar (30,1-4), which was discussed in last year's VBM shiur by Rav Elchanan Samet (<http://www.vbm-torah.org/parsha.60/20tetzav.htm>).

The section of the kohanim itself is divided into two parts, the garments of the kohanim (ch. 28), and the sanctification of the kohanim (ch. 29). The end of this section has a distinct conclusion (before the section on the incense altar mentioned above):

And I shall sanctify the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and Aharon and his sons shall I sanctify to serve Me.

And I shall dwell within the children of Israel, and shall be their God.

And they shall know that I am HaShem their God, who has taken them out of Egypt in order to dwell in their midst, I am HaShem their God. (29,44-46).

These verses serve as the parallel conclusion to the opening of the "construction parshiot," which we read at the beginning of last week's parasha: "And they shall make for Me a mishkan, and I shall dwell in their midst" (25,8).

However, before this conclusion, there is one section appended to the "miluim" (the seven-day ceremony of sanctification of the kohanim) that appears out of place. The previous six verses describe the "korban tamid," the daily sacrifice. The only connection to the previous section appears to be the mention of the altar. During the

seven days of miluim, Moshe used the blood of the sacrifices to purify the altar. The last verse of the miluim reads, "For seven days you shall atone for the altar and sanctify it, and the altar shall be holy of holies; anything that touches it shall be sanctified" (29,37). This is followed by a break (parasha setuma), and then the Torah continues, "This is what you shall do on the altar...." The Torah then proceeds to present the mitzva of korban tamid, the two sacrifices offered every day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. That this is a "mitzva le-dorot," a mitzva for all times and not part of the special miluim sacrifices, is made explicit in the last verse of this section: "A constant offering for your generations...." (42). In fact, the entire section is practically identical to the familiar one from parashat Pinchas (Bemidbar 28,1-8), where it forms the opening to list of sacrifices offered on every day of the year, beginning with the daily (tamid) and followed by the musafim for Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh, and holidays.

Our first question is, what is this section doing here? Why, before the mishkan is even constructed, does God choose to give the command for one particular aspect of the sacrificial ritual immediately after - in fact, as part of - giving the instructions how to construct the mishkan, and why this particular sacrifice?

There are two other, textual, questions. There are two different parshiot to which we should compare our section. The first is the aforementioned parasha in Pinchas. Although it is nearly identical to our parasha, there is one dramatic thematic difference and a host of stylistic ones. We shall examine these differences shortly. The second parasha is the parasha describing the fulfillment of the miluim instructions later after the mishkan is constructed. This is found in the second half of parashat Tzav. It is not the subject of this shiur to compare the instructions in our parasha to the fulfillment in Tzav, but only to look for the section parallel to the tamid command that is our concern. Surprisingly, it is completely absent there. Instead, we have a detailed ritual performed on THE EIGHTH DAY (parashat Shemini) which bears no relationship at all with the korban tamid. In our parasha, no mention is made of an eighth day at all. What is going on?

1. The Korban Tamid

Let us compare the two sections which describe the korban tamid:

Shemot 29,38-43

This is what you shall do on the altar; year-old lambs, two a day, continually.

The first lamb you shall do in the morning, and the second lamb you shall do in the afternoon.

A tenth of flour mixed with a quarter hin of beaten oil, and a libation of a quarter hin of wine, for the first lamb.

And the second lamb shall you do in the afternoon; do for it according to the meal-offering of the morning and its libation, for a sweet savour (rei'ach nichoach), a fire-offering to God.

A continual burnt-offering for YOUR GENERATIONS, AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE TENT OF MEETING BEFORE GOD, where I shall meet with you (pl) there, to speak to you (sing.) there.

And I shall meet there with the children of Israel, and it shall be sanctified with My glory.

Bemidbar 28,3-8

Say to them: this is the fire-offering which you shall sacrifice to HaShem; year old lambs, unblemished, two a day, a continual burnt-offering.

The first lamb you shall do in the morning, and the second lamb you shall do in the afternoon.

A tenth of an epha of flour as a meal-offering, mixed with a quarter hin of beaten oil.

A continual burnt-offering, WHICH WAS MADE ON MT. SINAI, for a sweet savour (rei'ach nichoach), a fire-offering to God.

Its libation is a quarter hin, for each lamb; in the holy place shall you libate a libation of strong wine to God.

And the second lamb shall you do in the afternoon; do for it according to the meal-offering of the morning and its libation, for a sweet savour, a fire-offering to God.

There are several small differences here whose significance eludes me at this point; for instance, why Shemot speaks of wine (yayin), whereas Bemidbar speaks of "shechar" (translated, following Rashi, as "strong wine;" - Unkelos translates it as "old wine"), or why in Shemot the meal-offering and the wine-libation are described as one unit, whereas in Bemidbar, they are separated into two non-contiguous verses. I would like to concentrate on one striking difference, found in the fifth verse of Shemot (29,42) and the fourth verse of Bemidbar (28,6), which are clearly parallel. Both verses open with the phrase "olat tamid," but then refer to two completely different locations. This is the only difference between the two parshiot which is one of outright contradiction. Shemot continues by placing the tamid "at the entrance to the tent of meeting before God;" whereas Bemidbar refers to the tamid as "which was made on Mt. Sinai for a sweet savour, a fire-offering to God." While this presumably means that the tamid follows the same rules as an olah which was sacrificed at Mt. Sinai (see Rashi there for two suggestions precisely which olah), it cannot be ignored that this phrase fills the exact spot occupied in Shemot by the reference to the ohel moed, in what otherwise are two completely parallel parshiot. Similarly, the phrase "for a sweet savour, a fire-offering to God" is out of place here. Although this phrase appears in Shemot as well, it is there the conclusion of the rules for the two sacrifices, at the end of the verse beginning "And the second lamb shall you do in the afternoon." In that location, it appears also in Bemidbar. Its occurrence in the verse we are examining is a SECOND appearance, and is parallel to the end of the verse in Shemot.

Shemot - A continual burnt-offering for your generations, at the entrance to the tent of meeting before God, where I shall meet with you there, to speak to you there.

Bemidbar - A continual burnt-offering, which was made on Mt. Sinai, for a sweet savour, a fire-offering to God.

Mt. Sinai is parallel to the tent of meeting, and "a sweet savour, a fire-offering to God" is parallel to "before God, where I shall meet with you there to speak to you there."

Since we are going to be concentrating on this verse, this the appropriate time to ask a simple "pshat" question. What does "tamid" mean? Why does this verse begin with the expression "olat tamid?"

2. The Mishkan, the Kohanim, and the Tamid

It is quite clear from the structure of the two parshiot, Teruma and Tetzave, and the presence of the opening and concluding verses ("I shall dwell in their midst"), that the entire narrative of these two parshiot is about the construction of the mishkan. Hence, the "production" of the kohanim should also, I think, be viewed, not as an independent item which happens to be important to the eventual operation of the mishkan, but as part of its construction. In other words, and in a halakhic formulation, the kohanim are "klei mikdash;" they are themselves utensils of the mikdash and part of its makeup. This idea is most notably put forward by the Rambam, who includes the laws of kohanim in the section of his Mishne Torah called "klei hamikdash ve-haovdim bo" (the utensils of the temple and those who work in it). This explains why the preparation of the altar after its construction is integrated as part of the miluim of the kohanim, as explicated in 29,35-7:

And you shall do to Aharon and his sons thus, all as I have commanded; for seven days they shall fill their hands.

And every day you shall prepare a bull of sin-offering, and you shall cleanse the altar by atoning for it, and you shall anoint it to sanctify it.

For seven days you shall atone for the altar and sanctify it, and the altar shall be holy of holies, anything that touches the altar shall be sanctified.

The altar, for reasons which we shall not go into here, is not fully sanctified until there are kohanim. In fact, its sanctification is part of their sanctification and is integrated in their procedure. The very last step, then, in the construction and sanctification of the mishkan, is the sanctification of the altar that takes place in step with the sanctification of the kohanim. The very next thing that the Torah tells us is that this altar will be used for the korban tamid. How are we to understand this?

The answer, I think, is clear. The Torah is not giving us the mitzva of daily sacrifices here. The place for that is in parashat Pinchas. This section begins, "This is what you shall do on the altar." In other words, the focus is not the mitzva of tamid, but an explanation of what the altar which you have just finished is to be used for. The Torah is explaining the fulfillment of the altar. The problem is not what sacrifice to bring on a particular day, but what is the altar for. The answer to this question is part and parcel of a larger question - what is the mishkan for? Since the altar is apparently the acme and finale of mishkan creation, left for last, it is necessary now to explain what is the purpose of the mishkan in light of the completion of the altar. The answer is -

to bring a daily sacrifice. And what is the purpose of a daily sacrifice? The answer is found in verses 42-6:

A continual burnt-offering for your generations, at the entrance to the tent of meeting before God, where I shall meet with you there, to speak to you there.

I shall meet there with the children of Israel, and it shall be sanctified with My glory.

And I shall sanctify the tent of meeting and the altar, and Aharon and his sons shall I sanctify to serve Me.

And I shall dwell within the children of Israel, and shall be their God.

And they shall know that I am HaShem their God, who has taken them out of Egypt in order to dwell in their midst, I am HaShem their God.

In other words, the altar, and more specifically, the presence of the sacrifice on it, is the basis for the presence of God in the mishkan, whereby He "meets" ("noad") the Jewish people and therefore "dwells in their midst." The first verse makes the connection between the sacrifice and the "noadi" clear. "Olat tamid" - where? - at the entrance to the tent where God meets with you (plural) and speaks to you (singular; i.e., Moshe).

The proper understanding of these two parshiot is as follows. In the beginning of Teruma, God, in one sentence, summarizes the plan - "They shall make for Me a sanctuary and I shall dwell in their midst." The following five chapters (25-29), all of Teruma and most of Tetzave, repeat this plan in detail. "They shall make for Me a sanctuary" - the detailed construction of the mishkan AND the kohen-garments AND the sanctification of the kohanim themselves. "I shall dwell in their midst" - chapter 29, verses 43-46 ("I shall meet there with the children of Israel..."). After further examination, this second detailed section begins earlier, with the command to bring the daily tamid (verse 38).

Hence the section of the tamid is not out of place. We expect a concluding section to the construction that will define the goals and purpose of the mishkan. The tamid is part of that section, or perhaps, more exactly, the bridge between the two sections. The physical mishkan results in the presence of God through the fulfillment of its permanent, tamid, purpose, exemplified by the korban tamid on the altar.

That is, in my opinion, the explanation of the word "tamid." As we know, the tamid is actually continual, all the time. It is brought twice a day. The commentators explain that "tamid" can mean daily. This is undoubtedly true, but the question remains why the Torah calls this state of twice daily sacrifices "tamid." The answer is that practically, it is done twice daily, but the effect is to make the altar a permanent base of service of God. The altar is defined as the altar with a permanent (tamid) state of sacrifice. Since the presence of God in their midst is meant to be permanent (He DWELLS in their midst, not visits on special occasions), and the altar is the basis for this presence, it must be in a permanent state of binding between the Jews and God.

(There are actually two elements of the mishkan where the Torah, in this parasha of construction, already explains what is to be done on them, and in both cases it is described as tamid. Compare our section with the lighting of the menorah at the onset of our parasha - "to raise a continual light." This requires us to explain the difference between the roles of the menorah and the altar in granting a permanent holiness to the mishkan. This will have to wait for another shiur.)

3. The Tamid and the Eighth Day

Why, when this ceremony was carried out, is the tamid not mentioned, but rather a totally new ceremony of the "eighth day?" This question was discussed in a VBM shiur three years ago by Rav Chanoch Waxman (<http://www.vbm-torah.org/parsha.59/20tetzav.htm>). His answer basically was that our parasha reflects what should have been; the actual ceremony in Tzav and Shemini reflect what had to be done after the sin of the golden calf. The eighth day ceremonies are extremely similar to the ritual for Yom Kippur. Although the mishkan has been constructed as instructed, the presence of God does not fill it because of the sin, and special purification ceremonies must be performed to atone. The difference is not merely technical - it is the difference between "tamid," a permanent day-by-day presence of God as part of our lives, and a special, Yom Kippur-like, descent of the Holy Presence as an extra-normal experience. Our section stresses that God meets with ALL the Jewish people at the entrance to the tent, even if He only speaks with Moshe. The story of Shemini, of course, stresses how dangerous it is to meet with God without special protection - the sons of Aharon are consumed for bringing a "strange fire."

4. Mt. Sinai

The Torah in parashat Pinchas is not describing the mishkan as the meeting place between the Jews and the Presence of God. In fact, the mishkan is not mentioned there at all. The idea of "olat tamid," however, still applies. Here it receives a different meaning. The parasha presents the tamid as part of a larger picture, the tamid together with the additional sacrifices for each special day (the musaf). From the very beginning of that parasha, the sacrifices are described as "rei'ach nichoach" and "isheh laShem." The focus is not on the meeting with God but the service of God. "The sand bread of My fire-offerings, My sweet savour, observe to sacrifice to Me IN THEIR DUE TIMES." The emphasis is on duties to God. We are commanded to sacrifice HIS sacrifice, HIS rei'ach nichoach, in the proper times. The tamid element here defines not a state of the altar but a state of the Jew. He is in a permanent state of service of God. Hence, in the defining verse - "A continual burnt-offering, which was made on Mt. Sinai, for a sweet savour, a fire-offering to God." If the Jew turns himself into a permanent servant of God, he returns himself not to the tent of meeting, a place of rapturous communion, but to Mt. Sinai, the scene where the Jews accepted God's law. The sacrifices make the moment of Sinai into a permanent one, a continual one.

Further study

Answer all the questions I did not, concerning the differences between the tamid in Tetzave and the tamid in Pinchas. In fact, you can find some more differences other than the ones I mentioned and try and explain them as well.

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Yeshivat Har Et
Alon Shvut, Israel, 90433
office@etzion.org.il
