

Parshat Tetzaveh
The Lambs of Commitment
Talia Weisberg - Class of 2024

Parshat Tetzaveh deals mostly with the establishment of the *Mishkan* and the role of the *kohanim* in its service. In Shemot 29:38-46, Hashem commands the *kohanim* regarding the *korban tamid*, the requirement to sacrifice a lamb every morning and every evening:

וְזֶה אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ כִּבְשִׂים בְּנֵי־שָׁנָה שְׁנַיִם לַיּוֹם תָּמִיד:
אֶת־הַכֹּבֵשׁ הָאֶחָד תַּעֲשֶׂה בַבֹּקֶר וְאֶת הַכֹּבֵשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי תַעֲשֶׂה בֵּין הָעֶרְבָיִם:
וְעֹשֶׂן סֹלֶת בָּלוּל בְּשֶׁמֶן כְּתִית רְבַע הַהֵין וְנִסָּךְ רְבִיעֵת הַהֵין לַכֹּבֵשׁ הָאֶחָד:
וְאֶת הַכֹּבֵשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי תַעֲשֶׂה בֵּין הָעֶרְבָיִם כַּמִּנְחַת הַבֹּקֶר וְכַנְסָפָה תַעֲשֶׂה־לָּהּ לְרִיחַ נִיחֹחַ אֲשֶׁה לִיקְוֹק:
עַל־תָּמִיד לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם פֶּתַח אֹהֶל־מוֹעֵד לִפְנֵי יְקֹוֹק אֲשֶׁר אוֹעֵד לָכֶם שְׁמָה לְדַבֵּר אֵלַיִךְ שָׁם:
וְנַעֲדַתִּי שְׁמָה לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְנִקְדַּשׁ בְּכַבְדִּי:
וְקִדַּשְׁתִּי אֶת־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְאֶת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְאֶת־אֹהֶרֶן וְאֶת־בְּנָיו אֶקְדָּשׁ לְכַהֵן לִי:
וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהֵייתִי לָהֶם לְאֱלֹקִים:
וַיְדַעוּ כִּי אֲנִי יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹקֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְשָׁכְנִי בְּתוֹכָם אֲנִי יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹקֵיהֶם:

Now this is what you shall offer upon the altar: two yearling lambs each day, regularly.

You shall offer the one lamb in the morning, and you shall offer the other lamb at twilight.

There shall be a tenth of a measure of choice flour with a quarter of a *hin* of beaten oil mixed in, and a libation of a quarter *hin* of wine for one lamb; and you shall offer the other lamb at twilight, repeating with it the meal offering of the morning with its libation—an offering by fire for a pleasing odor to the LORD, a regular burnt offering throughout the generations, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting before the LORD.

For there I will meet with you, and there I will speak with you, and there I will meet with the Israelites, and it shall be sanctified by My Presence. I will sanctify the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and I will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve Me as priests.

I will abide among the Israelites, and I will be their God.

And they shall know that I the LORD am their God, who brought them out from the land of Egypt that I might abide among them, I the LORD their God.

These *pesukim* are a unit, delineated by a *samech* and *pei* in the masoretic text. Verses 38-41 understandably describe the necessary parts of the *korban tamid*, but 42-46 seem to be a curious addition to the topic. Why does Hashem make His presence among *Bnei Yisrael* contingent on the *korban tamid*? Furthermore, if God is omnipotent and all-knowing, why does God need us to build an abode for Him and sacrifice animals within it for Him to dwell among us? Why did Hashem have to free us from slavery and bring us to our own land to be with us? Can't He just bring the *Shechina* to wherever *Bnei Yisrael* happens to be? After all, he's Hashem - He can do anything!

On the final *pasuk* of this section, Ramban notes that the *lamed* in “*l’shochni b’tocham* - that I might abide among them” (Ex. 29:46) is a unique grammatical construct that is not found anywhere else in Tanach. He explains that Hashem chose this unusual language in order to indicate to *Bnei Yisrael* that “the purpose of My bringing them forth from the land of Egypt was *only* that I might dwell in their midst” (emphasis mine). Although this is a sufficient explanation on its own, Ramban adds, “there is in this matter a great secret. For in the plain sense of things it would appear that the *Shechina* in Israel was to fulfill a want below, but it is not so. It fulfilled a want above.” (Ramban on Ex. 29:46)

Yes, Ramban says, Hashem is capable of being anywhere He wants, whenever He so desires. Of course He did not have to free us from Egypt or instruct us on how to build the *Mishkan* in order to have a place for the *Shechina* to dwell; in the absence of the *Beit Hamikdash*, the Jewish people have nonetheless found ways to arrange our religious practice to bring God in. Hashem gives us instructions on how to do so because He wants us to have a mutual relationship. A relationship where only one partner is committed is not viable, so Hashem provides us with a roadmap for how to invest in Him and show that we want to have a two-sided relationship.

It is not a coincidence, then, that Hashem’s desire to abide among *Bnei Yisrael*, and specifically the statement of “*l’shochni b’tocham*,” is made in the section about the *korban tamid*. Because the *korban tamid* happened twice a day every day, it indicates a regular commitment to Hashem, a desire and ability for the Jewish people to arrange our lives in a way that makes us open to His presence among us.

God wants to be close to us, the *korban tamid* says, but we have to let Him in. God is not automatically part of our lives; we must make space for Him to enter. This is not a passive process, but an active decision we must make every morning and every evening. Tehillim 92:3, which we recite in the *Shir Shel Yom* of Shabbat, says “*u’l’hagid baboker chasdecha v’emunatcha balailot* - to proclaim Your lovingkindness in the morning and Your faithfulness at night,” expressing our gratitude to Hashem for allowing us to wake up in the morning and our trust that He will not abandon us overnight. The *korban tamid* also demonstrates that our belief in God is all-encompassing and part of every minute of every day.

The Gemara in Menachot 50a understands the *pasuk* “and you shall offer the other lamb at twilight” (Ex. 29:39) to mean that the evening *korban tamid* is reliant on the morning one, and that the *kohanim* cannot give the sacrifice in the evening if they had not done so in the morning. A day that did not begin with a dedication to Hashem is not complete. It is our imperative to use every day to its fullest, to bring down the *Shechina* and make it feel welcome.





Talia Weisberg is a connector, passionate about facilitating rich Jewish experiences and introducing people to resources that will help them make informed Jewish decisions. She is currently serving as the Orthodox Educator at MIT Hillel and was a student chaplain at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. She is the founder and director of Shalom Camberville, a project that welcomes newcomers to the Jewish community of Cambridge and Somerville, MA. She has volunteered for several years as the Ritual Chair on the board of the Orthodox Minyan at Harvard Hillel, a minyan that caters to students, young professionals, and young families. Previously, she was the Director of Academic Affairs at the Consulate General of Israel to New England. She earned her Bachelor of Arts at Harvard University and wrote a senior honors thesis about the Bais Yaakov girls' school movement, of which she is an alumna, and its role in the evolution of Orthodox women's formal religious education. She has learned Torah at Drisha and the Center

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