

Tzav

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“Give an order”

Leviticus 6:8 – 8:36

Torah Together



At first glance, this *Torah* portion looks like a copy of the previous one, repeating instructions for the different types of offerings. On closer examination, however, one notices that these instructions are directed specifically to the priests, giving them details concerning their responsibilities for the activities of the Tabernacle.

1. The Burnt Offering - 6:8-13

a) What responsibility did the priest have for the fire on the altar of burnt offering? What are the implications of continuous burning? What does this teach us?

The priest must keep the fire on the altar burning continuously. This implied continuous offerings. (We know they had at least one korban olah each morning and evening.) This teaches that we should constantly re-dedicate our lives to God, once each morning and once each evening. By renewing our commitment twice daily, we are reminding ourselves that we need to commit to obedience on a moment by moment basis.

b) Why do you think it was necessary for the priest to change clothes to clean the ashes from the altar?

Nothing associated with the tabernacle service was to be common; all things that involved the sacrifice were to be sanctified before God. Thus the priest had to have clean, sanctified clothes to clean the ashes.

2. The Grain Offering - 6:14-23

a) What part of the grain offering was to be the ‘memorial portion’? What was to be done with it? What was to be done with the remainder?

The memorial portion was a handful (3 fingers full) of flour + oil + all the incense. This was to be burnt on the altar. The remainder was to be baked without yeast and to be eaten by Aaron and his sons in the courtyard.

Scripture Link:

Fire is a good metaphor for God. **Deuteronomy 4:24** reads, “For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.” Thus the continuous fire on the altar was a constant reminder of the presence of God in the midst of the Israelite camp.

Why Share the Grain Offering?

There are several possible explanations for this. Since the priests were not allowed to work for their livelihood, this was a way of recognizing and thanking God for their daily bread. It can also be seen as a **covenantal meal** between God and the Levites, reaffirming the relationship between God and His priesthood.

Grain Offering at the Ordination Ceremony

Leviticus 6:19-23 gives instructions specifically for the *Korban Mincha* during the ordination ceremony of the priest, something that occurred only once in his life. Given that this offering represents the necessities in one's life, what lesson might God want to teach the priest with this offering?

Holiness by Touching Holy things?

From God's perspective, the world exists in two states: the clean and pure versus the contaminated and impure. Many of the rules that God has ordained for our worship of Him seem to be aimed at reinforcing this concept. When an offering is made or consecrated to God, it belongs to Him and is therefore considered Holy. In most cases, the offering is burned on the altar. However in some cases, not all of the offering is burned or destroyed. Since the remaining part belongs to God, it is holy: things that come into contact with it are holy as well. The goal is to learn to keep the clean and the unclean separate

b) What specific instructions were given for the grain offering that was to be part of the ordination of Aaron and his sons as priests? Who was to prepare this offering?

For the ordination ceremony itself, the grain offering was to be cooked with oil on a griddle and the resultant fried bread was to be broken and presented to God and completely consumed by fire. It was to be prepared by the son who was to succeed the high priest.

c) Can you see any spiritual significance in the total consumption by fire of the priest's grain offering at the time of his ordination? ("Every grain offering of a priest shall be burned completely; it must not be eaten." -- Leviticus 6:23)

Given that the grain offering represented thanksgiving for the sustenance of life, the fact that the priest's grain offering had to be completely consumed by fire might indicate that the priests were to be completely dependent on God for their sustenance. Thus they must live off the offerings brought to them by the people. Another possibility is that as Yeshua was the bread of life offered completely for the people's sins, so was the service of the priest to be. Other possibilities exist.

3. The Sin Offering - 6:24-30

a) What happened to the parts of the sin offering that were not burned on the altar? How was it to be treated? To whom did the sin offering really 'belong'?

The priest who offered the sin offering was to eat the remaining portions in the courtyard. It was to be treated as holy. The offering belonged to God.

b) What was to be done with the vessels in which the remaining sin offering was cooked? Why do you think this was necessary?

The vessels in which the meat was cooked were to be thoroughly cleaned if metal, and broken if pottery. This again reinforced the holiness of the offering: anything it touched became holy and it should not be treated as common.

c) What happened to the sin offering if its blood was used inside the Tent of Meeting?

If any blood from the sin offering was used in the tent of meeting, then the entire offering had to be burned.

4. The Guilt Offering - 7:1-10

Were the regulations for the sin offering and the guilt offering different? What parts of which offerings did the priests receive as their share?

From the priest's point of view, the offerings were the same. God's parts were the fat including the tail, kidneys and liver. The priest got the rest. In the case of a bull, the priest got the hide.

5. The Fellowship Offering - 7:11-21

a) What two types of fellowship offerings are described in these verses? What are the differences between them? How were the “leftovers” to be treated in both cases?

One type was an offering of thanksgiving, the other was the result of a vow. The thanksgiving offering was shared with the priest (and possibly other invited guests), was served with bread & drink, and was to be eaten the same day. The vow or freewill offering was shared with the priests and parts could be leftover till the next day. Everything had to be used up by the third day.

b) Why do you think God is so concerned that the meat of this offering, as well as the persons eating it, be “ceremonially clean”?

God wants us to understand how important it is to keep the holy and the common (or profane) separate. If we are fellowshiping with Him, we must not include any common things.

6. Eating Fat and Blood Forbidden - 7:22-27

Is it clear what parts of the animal are specifically forbidden to be eaten? What is the punishment for the violation of this command? What do you think this means?

God makes it clear that we are not to eat the fat or the blood of animals. Violation requires that one is “cut off from his people.” This could mean “excommunication” from worship or perhaps even death. (The rabbis call this ‘kares,’ or spiritual excision. They interpret it to mean that the soul of the offender is cut off from the rewards of the afterlife.)

7. The Priests’ Share - 7:28-38

a) When a worshipper brings a fellowship offering, what is he to do with it according to verse 30? What significance do you think this might have?

The offerer is to bring the offering and to wave the breast before God. By waving the offering before God, we are physically presenting it to him.

b) Who gets which parts of the fellowship offering?

God gets the blood and the fat, the breast & right thigh belong to the priests (Aaron and his sons), “the regular share for generations to come.” (7:36). The rest of the offering is eaten by the offerer and any family or guests he may have invited.

Scripture Link:

Ezekiel 44:23 reads, “They [the priests] are to teach my people the difference between the holy and the common and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean.” Although we may not clearly understand why, it seems that God is quite serious about the concepts of “clean” and “unclean.” Today, as New Testament believers, we are members of a “Royal Priesthood” (**1 Peter 2:9**) and therefore responsible for carrying out the priestly duties. How do you think the instruction to teach the people “to distinguish between the unclean and the clean” applies to us today?

Ordination Ceremony

This very public ceremony, conducted before the entire Israelite community, had one purpose: to consecrate (set apart for use by God) the high priest and his sons. The rite, performed by Moses, involved the washing of Aaron and his sons, anointing them with oil, and making offerings to YHWH. The entire process lasted seven days and at its conclusion the priests were ready to begin their ministry.

Scripture Link:

Exodus 29 details the process for “consecrating” or “ordaining” Aaron and his sons as priests. This passage (**Leviticus 8**) relates the ceremony from the standpoint of the priests. There is yet another description of the same ceremony in **Numbers 7 and 8** which describes the scene from the point of view of the general population. By reading all three passages, one can form a better mental picture of what the ceremony might have been like.

Scripture Link:

In **Leviticus 8:8**, Moses puts the Urim & Thummim in the breastpiece worn by Aaron. These items are first described in **Exodus 28:28-30**.

8. The Ordination of Aaron and his Sons - 8:1-36

a) Who was invited to the ordination ceremony? What offerings were made as a part of the ordination ceremony?

All the people were invited to the ordination ceremony. A bull for a sin offering, two rams (one a burnt offering, the other as an ordination offering) and bread for a grain offering were presented.

b) What was done to Aaron and his sons before the consecration process began? How was the consecration process begun? What was the symbolic purpose for this?

Aaron and his sons were washed with water, cleansing them before dressing them in their sacred garments. Then Moses anointed everything associated with the tabernacle with oil, including Aaron and his sons. This symbolically set these items apart solely for the use of God.

c) What animal was the first to be sacrificed? For what purpose was this sacrifice? What was the second animal to be sacrificed and what was its purpose?

The first animal sacrificed was a bull as a sin offering. Atonement for the sin of Aaron and his sons must be made before they can approach God. Next a ram was offered as a burnt offering, symbolic of total commitment to God.

d) What was the third animal to be sacrificed and what was its purpose? Describe the process that was followed. What was done with the blood from this sacrifice? Do you see any significance in this act?

The third animal offered was the other ram as an ordination offering. Some of the blood from this sacrifice was placed on Aaron's (and his sons) right ear lobe, right hand thumb, and right big toe. This symbolized that they were set apart to hear God, to do God's work, and to follow God's leading. The appropriate portions were waved before God and eaten as prescribed.

e) How long did the entire ordination process last? According to verse 34, what was the purpose for this ordination process?

The entire process may have only lasted a few hours, but Aaron and his sons were to remain before the tent of meeting for 7 days. (The rabbis believe that the entire process was repeated each of the 7 days.) Verse 34 says the purpose of this process was to make atonement for Aaron and his sons.

“So Aaron and his sons did everything YHWH commanded. . .”
Leviticus 8:36

Digging deeper

1. **Hebrews** chapters 7 – 9 describe the New Covenant priesthood, with *Yeshua* as our High Priest. **1 Peter 2:4-10** says that we, as believers in *Yeshua*, are members of this “holy priesthood.” The chart below compares the New Covenant priesthood with that of the Levitical priesthood described in this *Torah* portion. What insight does this give you into our roles? Can you see how the ordination ceremony conducted for Aaron and his sons might foreshadow our own “ordination” ceremony?

Comparison of Priesthood	
Old Covenant	New Covenant
☆ Levitical Order	☆ Order of Melchizedek
☆ Tribe of Levi, descendants of Aaron	☆ Believers in <i>Yeshua</i> , adopted sons
☆ Sacrifice bulls and goats	☆ Our bodies, a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1)
☆ Mediator of the Old Covenant (Torah written on stones by God)	☆ Mediator of the New Covenant (Torah written on our hearts by God)
☆ High Priest: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Passed through descendants of Aaron- Made sacrifices for his own sin- Continually made atonement for the sins of the people	☆ High Priest: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- One, <i>Yeshua</i>, descendant of Judah- Sinless- Made atonement once for all (Hebrews 4:14 – 5:10; 8:1 - 10:18)

Many interesting comparisons can be made between the two priesthoods. An especially critical one is the part that sacrifices play. The counterpart to the offering of bulls, rams, lambs, and goats is the offering of our bodies, every day, totally, completely, unto death, an appropriate sacrifice for our sin. Our “ordination” process may be likened to our baptism as believers: we were cleansed, dressed in the robes of Yeshua’s righteousness, and begin to operate in our priestly roles, offering our prayers, our praise, and our service to God on a daily basis. It could be meaningful to apply some of the blood of our ordination sacrifice to our ear lobes, our thumbs, and our big toes as a commitment to listen, serve, and walk with God.

Thumbs, Toes and Ear Lobes

As part of the ordination ceremony, Moses took some of the blood from the ram killed for the ordination offering and put it on the lobe of the right ear, on the thumb of the right hand, and on the big toe of the right foot of Aaron and his sons. This symbolizes that the priests were set apart to hear God, to do God’s work, and to walk in God’s leading.

Functions of the Priesthood

The priests were called to be holy, set apart for use by God. They had the following tasks:

1. Represent the people before God and God to the people
2. Present offerings on behalf of the people for cleansing and forgiveness of sin, to restore fellowship with God
3. Teach the people the difference between clean and unclean, between the holy and the common
4. Serve in the operation of the Tabernacle

Digging deeper

2. Read **Mark 7:1-13**. The word used in verse 11, *korban*, is exactly that word defined in **Leviticus**. Does knowing this help clarify what *Yeshua* means in this passage? Can you paraphrase the idea that *Yeshua* is expressing?

Yeshua is calling the Pharisees to task about the way that they have substituted the rules of men (their rules) for the rules of God (Torah). In this case, He is pointing out that when they encourage a person to give something to God as an offering (korban) that might otherwise have been used to help the person's father or mother, they are causing that person to break God's commandment to honor one's mother and father. He continues by pointing out that the Pharisees have many man-made rules which cause this.

For further study, see

Haftarah : Jeremiah 46:13-28

Brit Hadashah : Luke 2:22-24; John 19:31-37; Acts 13:16-17;
Revelation 8:6 – 9:12; 16:1-21