

Sacrifices: Digging Deeper

Time and again in the Tanach we read that Yahweh wasn't really interested in the Israelites' sacrifices and offerings, not for their own sake, anyway. (For example, see Hosea 6:6, Micah 6:6-8, or Amos 5:21-24.) Without the proper heart attitude toward Him, the mechanical keeping of the Law was pointless, and He told them so. So why did He instruct them to do all these things in the first place? The author of the Book of Hebrews explains: **"The old system in the law of Moses was only a shadow of the things to come, not the reality of the good things Christ has done for us."** Just as a schoolchild must learn his A-B-Cs and numbers before written paragraphs and algebraic equations can make any sense to him, the Law was given to teach us about the components of God's love—learned by rote at first (the "shadow"), and only later graduating to meaningful understanding (the "reality"). **"The sacrifices under the old system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship. If they could have provided perfect cleansing, the sacrifices would have stopped, for the worshipers would have been purified once for all time, and their feelings of guilt would have disappeared. But just the opposite happened...."** Though the sacrifices were insufficient in themselves, those who trustingly offered them out of obedience to God's Word were cleansed through their faith in what the sacrifices meant—even if they didn't comprehend what that was or what form it would take.

However, the repetitive nature of the sacrificial system was an obvious clue that they were prophetic of something greater, a rehearsal of something perfect. **"Those yearly sacrifices reminded them of their sins year after year. For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. That is why Christ, when he came into the world, said, 'You did not want animal sacrifices and grain offerings. But you have given me a body so that I may obey you. No, you were not pleased with animals burned on the altar or with other offerings for sin. Then I said, "Look, I have come to do your will, O God—just as it is written about me in the Scriptures...."'"** Christ said this when He *came into the world*? Actually, this is a quote from David, from Psalm 40. The writer to the Hebrews is actually saying something quite profound: Christ, through the Holy Spirit, spoke through His prophets (in this case, David) as though He were already here among us. The Messiah, in other words, manifested Himself long before he was "born" in a stable in Bethlehem.

But let us not lose sight of the message while pondering the medium: **"Christ said, 'You did not want animal sacrifices or grain offerings or animals burned on the altar or other offerings for sin, nor were you pleased with them' (though they are required by the law**

of Moses). Then he added, ‘Look, I have come to do your will.’ He cancels the first covenant in order to establish the second. And what God wants is for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all time.” (Hebrews 10:1-10 NLT) That’s pretty clear: we can’t “be made holy” by our own efforts, even in observing the Torah with all our might. It can only be achieved through Yahshua’s sacrifice. And more to the point, God *wants* us to become set apart to Him in this way. In fact, it’s all He wants.

As I said, all of this begs the question: if Yahweh didn’t “want animal sacrifices or grain offerings,” then why on earth did He command the children of Israel to do them? It was for the same reason we educate our small children: so that they might learn the basics, the A-B-Cs of the mind of God. The Law of Moses was never intended to be our whole life, or even our whole education. It was only grammar school. **“Under the old covenant, the priest stands before the altar day after day, offering sacrifices that can never take away sins.”** No, they can’t. But they do teach us that our sins *can* be taken away—important information indeed. **“But our High Priest offered himself to God as one sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down at the place of highest honor at God’s right hand. There he waits until his enemies are humbled as a footstool under his feet. For by that one offering he perfected forever all those whom he is making holy....”** We’ve skipped from kindergarten to graduate school here. Just as attaining the ability to read (or write) an important book makes all the labor expended learning our A-B-Cs worth the effort, the sacrifice of Christ gave the Torah’s sacrifices and offerings meaning and purpose. But remember, there is life after grad school. Yahshua’s sacrifice was, just like the Law, only a means to an end. That end is our eternal life in fellowship with our God and King. Without that, none of the previous sacrifice—Old *or* New Covenant—makes any sense.

“And the Holy Spirit also testifies that this is so. First He says, ‘This is the new covenant I will make with my people on that day, says Yahweh: I will put my laws in their hearts so they will understand them, and I will write them on their minds so they will obey them.’ Then He adds, ‘I will never again remember their sins and lawless deeds....’” (quoted from Jeremiah 31:33-34.) There will come a time when the precepts of God will be understood perfectly by His people. The Torah will be seen not as a list of pointless or incomprehensible rules and regulations but rather as the exquisitely detailed “road map to peace” men have been seeking for so long—a road map that points the way to the Messiah and our salvation. We’re not completely there yet—we still see God’s truth “through a glass, darkly.” But the road has been built and the map has been drawn. All we have to do is finish our journey.

The dividing line between the Old Covenant and the New is now clear: **“Now when sins have been forgiven, there is no need to offer any more sacrifices.”** (Hebrews 10:11-18 NLT) Now that the Torah has been literally fulfilled in the life, death,

and resurrection of Yahshua, now that atonement for our sins has been made through shedding the blood of the Messiah, the blood of bulls and goats is beside the point. A roadmap isn't needed once your destination is in sight.

“And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven’s Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. This is the new, life-giving way that Christ has opened up for us through the sacred curtain, by means of his death for us.” If you’ll recall, in the previous chapter we discussed how the temple had two rooms. The first, the Holy Place, represented the Law, while the second, the Most Holy Place, represented the grace to which the Law was the passageway. The veil separating the two rooms was torn in two at Yahshua’s crucifixion (Matthew 27:51), a sign that the place that had previously been accessible only on the annual Day of Atonement, and then only to the High Priest, was now “open for business” all day, every day—to anyone who had become a child of God. **“And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God’s people, let us go right into the presence of God, with true hearts fully trusting him. For our evil consciences have been sprinkled with Christ’s blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water....”** The imagery being used here is that of the ordination of priests as described in Leviticus 8. The remarkable truth being revealed is that Yahshua—the “great High Priest who rules”—has by his personal sacrifice set us apart as priests in our own right, giving us the ability and right to stand and minister before God.

Priests have duties within the temple of God, of course, and we are no exception. **“Without wavering, let us hold tightly to the hope we say we have, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near....”** Thus these are our priestly duties under the New Covenant: be steadfast, hold onto our hope, trust in Yahweh, and be creative in our expressions of love toward each other. We are further instructed to meet together with other believers in order to encourage them and warn them of spiritual danger, and we are to watch for signs of our Messiah’s return—most of which are evident in abundance today as never before.

The conclusion to all of this sounds at first to be a disastrous loophole in the concept of grace: **“Dear friends, if we deliberately continue sinning after we have received a full knowledge of the truth, there is no other sacrifice that will cover these sins. There will be nothing to look forward to but the terrible expectation of God’s judgment and the raging fire that will consume his enemies. Anyone who refused to obey the law of Moses was put to death without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Think how much more terrible the punishment will be for those who have trampled on the Son of God and have treated the blood of the covenant as if it were common and unholy. Such people have insulted and enraged the Holy Spirit who brings God’s mercy to his people.** (Hebrews

10:19-29 NLT) Is he saying that once we have received God's grace we must never fall short of His perfect standard of behavior again *ever* in our lives, under pain of hell fire? If that's the case, I'm a dead man, for although I have trusted in Yahweh my God for well over half a century now, I can say with all candor that I have indeed sinned against Him in the intervening years—and not just through carelessness or ignorance, either, but also high-handed, deliberate sin: I have been known to yield to temptation with great alacrity (just like you). Sure, I invariably felt terrible afterward, whether or not I repented right away, but the question remains: am I therefore disqualified from participation in my Savior's grace? Should I have waited until I was on my deathbed to accept Yahshua, too old and feeble to backslide?

The vast preponderance of Scripture weighs in against this hypothesis. The judgment spoken of in verse 27 is levied against God's "enemies," or "adversaries." Indeed, a passage very similar to this in II Peter 2 speaks of those who have "*turned from the holy commandment*" that had been given to them. This is far more serious than (and fundamentally different from) yielding to the occasional temptation to behave badly, or falling short of the standard set within the Torah—which as we have seen, *no one* keeps, no matter how hard they try. The people who are in such danger—in both passages—have turned their backs on grace. Not only have they "deliberately continued sinning," they have concluded that God's standard of holiness is not legitimate. They have weighed the evidence, examined the doctrine, and deliberately chosen to become God's antagonists. So the author says, in so many words, "If Yahshua's sacrifice isn't deemed sufficient to cover their sins, then what is? There is nothing else available."

Let us, then, return to our Torah study with a new appreciation of its importance as the foundation of our spiritual education, our "road map to peace."

BLEMISHES, IMPERFECTIONS, and UNCLEANNES

(500) *A kohein's daughter who profaned herself shall not eat of the holy things, neither of the heave offering nor of the breast, nor of the shoulder of peace offerings. "The breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering you shall eat in a clean place, you, your sons, and your daughters with you; for they are your due and your sons' due, which are given from the sacrifices of peace offerings of the children of Israel." (Leviticus 10:14); "If the priest's daughter is married to an outsider, she may not eat of the holy offerings. But if the priest's daughter is a widow or divorced, and has no child, and has returned to her father's house as in her youth, she may eat her father's food; but no outsider shall eat it." (Leviticus 22:12-13)* Normally, an unmarried daughter of a priest, being under his protection, would be automatically eligible, through her relationship with

her father, to benefit from the tithes and offerings that were designated as his. When she grew up and got married, however, the relationship defining her privileges shifted to that with her husband. If she married another priest, then his portion of the offering would also become hers. But if she married an “outsider,” one who was not a priest, she was no longer eligible to eat of the holy offerings.

The defining characteristic of her eligibility, then, is whose protection she is under. The priest’s daughter here is a metaphor for all of humanity. The offerings are symbolic of salvation by grace. While we are young and immature, we are under our parent’s protection. If they are believers (“priests” in the metaphor), we are afforded the same status under God’s grace. That is, if a child of believing parents dies, Yahweh welcomes them as if they had consciously made a choice to follow Him, even though they were not sufficiently mature to make such a choice. This is not the same thing as the fictional “age of accountability” which purports that *all* children are given the same grace—it only applies to the children of believing parents. (Refer to the *Future History* chapter called “The Three Doors” for a full explanation of how it all works.)

When she reaches maturity, however, the “priest’s daughter” makes her own choices concerning whose protection (if any) she wishes to embrace. She could marry a priest—a metaphor for choosing to be part of the “bride of Christ.” Or she could choose to marry an “outsider.” The word comes from *Zur*, a Hebrew verb meaning to be a stranger, a foreigner, or even an enemy. The basic idea is non-relatedness or non-acquaintance. Marrying an outsider is a picture of spiritual alliance with someone other than Yahweh. The good news is that if she and the “outsider” have divorced, she may return to her father’s house—a picture of repentance.

- (501) *After childbirth, a woman shall bring an offering when she is clean. “When the days of her purification are fulfilled, whether for a son or a daughter, she shall bring to the priest a lamb of the first year as a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtledove as a sin offering, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then he shall offer it before Yahweh, and make atonement for her. And she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who has borne a male or a female.”* (Leviticus 12:6-7) When an Israelite woman bore a male child, she was considered ritually unclean (that is, as if she were menstruating) for seven days (See Mitzvah #564). She was to have her son circumcised on the eighth day, and then continue in the state of ritual impurity for thirty-three days (a total of forty days, symbolic, I believe, of the trial and testing to be expected in raising a child). For a female child, this time

period was doubled, perhaps indicating that girls could be expected to be twice as trying to their mothers as boys might be. After this period of purification had elapsed, she was to bring an offering to the sanctuary. A lamb was brought for a burnt offering in homage to Yahweh (an *olah*—see Mitzvah #475), which could be substituted with a young pigeon or turtledove if the woman was poor. Also, a sin offering of a pigeon or turtledove was to be presented (a *chata't*—see Mitzvah #481).

The odd Roman Catholic notion of Mary the mother of Yahshua being “immaculate” or “sinless” is specifically debunked by this mitzvah, for Luke 2:24 records that she brought a pair of turtledoves to the Temple—one of which was a *sin* offering, as required by the Law. And although she didn't realize it at the time, she also brought “a lamb of the first year” to offer up in homage to her God—her Son, who would be totally consumed in God's wrath for our sakes thirty-three years later—one year for every day of His mother's symbolic purification period. How's *that* for symbolism? Maimonides seems to treat these precepts as if Moses was making them up as he went along. But I think it's pretty obvious that Mo was getting Help.

- (502) *The leper shall bring a sacrifice after he is cleansed. “And on the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, and one log of oil.”* (Leviticus 14:10) Moses rambles on for two entire chapters—116 interminable verses—about how to identify leprosy and what to do when a leper was cleansed in Israel. I'm not going to go there (yet—see Mitzvot #565-568 and #577-580). By now, you have plenty of experience sorting out what the symbols of each sacrificial element might mean. Feel free to dig in and figure it all out. I just want to point out one salient fact: we have no record in the entire Old Testament about anyone being cleansed of leprosy under the rules of the Torah—*ever*. Sure, Miriam was cured of the disease, but that was before the Law was given. And yes, Naaman was cleansed through the ministry of Elisha, but he was a Syrian, not an Israelite. Elisha's covetous servant, Gehazi, “inherited” Naaman's disease for life. Likewise, Judah's King Uzziah was struck with leprosy, but was never cured.

No one in the Bible cured anyone of leprosy—*until* you get to Yahshua, who by all accounts did it all the time. Being a son of the Torah, He naturally instructed those he cleansed to “**Go, show yourself to the priests.**” (Luke 17:14) And what was the result? You can't do miracles like that without making an impression. Following the Day of Pentecost, we're told, “**A great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.**” (Acts 6:7)

Maimonides seems interested only in making sure those pesky ex-lepers coughed up the requisite sacrifices. Yahweh had bigger fish to fry.

- (503) *A man having an issue shall bring a sacrifice after he is cleansed of his issue. “And when he who has a discharge is cleansed of his discharge, then he shall count for himself seven days for his cleansing, wash his clothes, and bathe his body in running water; then he shall be clean. On the eighth day he shall take for himself two turtledoves or two young pigeons, and come before Yahweh, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and give them to the priest. Then the priest shall offer them, the one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him before Yahweh because of his discharge.”*

(Leviticus 15:13-15) Again, this is just the tip of the scriptural iceberg. This entire fifteenth chapter of Leviticus addresses a health problem, just as we saw with leprosy above. Maimonides has made an arbitrary distinction between men’s and women’s discharges (see Mitzvah #504) but the offerings specified are identical. A “discharge” (Hebrew: *zub*) is literally a “flowing.” The context specifically excludes such things as sexual discharges (which are covered separately in verses 16-18), and normal menstruation (verse 25), but anything unusual—from a runny nose, to diarrhea, to pus from an infected wound—would be included.

In a future chapter, we will return to the subject of ritual purity—the practical precepts that would keep the transmission of disease to a minimum in Israel. At the moment, however, we’re primarily focusing on the sacrifices given in response to the cleansing from these things that made people “ritually defiled.” After washing his body and clothing and waiting for a week to be sure the condition had actually abated, the cleansed worshipper was to offer two turtledoves—one as a sin offering (*chata’t*) and the other as a burnt offering (*olah*). Why? One might have expected that a *selem*, a peace offering, would have been more appropriate—a spontaneous outpouring of thankfulness. But of course, a *selem* was voluntary—Yahweh would never command somebody to offer one. With the sin offering and burnt offering, I think Yahweh was trying to remind us of our fallen condition. Why do we get sick? Why do our bodies die? It’s because of our sinful natures—not necessarily the individual sins we commit from day to day (although they can have health consequences), but our definitive human predicament. By requiring a *chata’t*, Yahweh was saying, “Your sinful nature has made your body vulnerable to disease and death.” And by specifying the bringing of an *olah*, He was declaring, “Trust and honor Me, for I am your health, strength, and salvation.”

- (504) *A woman having an issue shall bring a sacrifice after she is cleansed of her issue. “But if she is cleansed of her discharge, then she shall count for herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean. And on the eighth day she shall take for herself two turtledoves or two young pigeons, and bring them to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then the priest shall offer the one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, and the priest shall make atonement for her before Yahweh for the discharge of her uncleanness.”* (Leviticus 15:28-30) Special mention (verses 19-33) is given to a woman’s discharge of blood beyond the normal menstruation period. This law comes into play in an encounter (recorded in Matthew 9:20-22) between Yahshua and a woman who had suffered from just such an issue of blood for twelve long years. Her faith in the Messiah led her to surmise that merely touching His tsitzit or the hem of His garment would be enough to heal her. But the law had stated, **“Whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening.”** (Leviticus 15:19) Yahshua was willing to become “unclean” for our benefit, taking our defilement upon Himself in order that we might be healed. The prophet Malachi described the moment: **“To you who fear My name, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings.”** (Malachi 4:2) Our healing ultimately depends on our reverence for Yahweh.
- (505) *Observe on Yom Kippur the service appointed for that day regarding the sacrifice, confessions, sending away of the scapegoat, etc. “And Yahweh said to Moses, ‘Tell Aaron your brother not to come at just any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat. Thus Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with the blood of a young bull as a sin offering, and of a ram as a burnt offering.’”* (Leviticus 16:2-3) Judaism 101 almost always lists just one or two verses to support the rabbinical mitzvah being presented. (I often expand the scope of the passage to include some explanatory context.) Here, however (to their credit), they referenced the entire salient passage, Leviticus 16:3-34. This is no doubt indicative of how seriously observant Jews are about *Yom Kippur*, or the Day of Atonement—considered the “holiest” day on the Jewish calendar. Though you could write an entire book about Leviticus 16, I’m just going to hit the high spots.

Though five of the seven “appointed convocations” (Hebrew: *mow’ed miqra*) had been mentioned before this point in Scripture, this is the first hint we have of a special Day of Atonement. (All seven are listed together for the first time in Leviticus 23, defining the annual cycle of Levitical holidays—three in the spring, one in early summer, and three more in the fall.) A *miqra* is an assembly, group, or convocation of people called out and gathered together for a specific purpose. It’s definition is thus virtually identical to that of the Greek word *ekklesia*, which we mis-translate as

“Church.” A *mow’ed-miqra*, then, is an appointed time, place, and circumstance in which this called-out assembly is to come together for a specific purpose. In historical hindsight, we can see that Yahweh intended these seven annual appointed convocations to be prophetic dress rehearsals for the seven most significant events in His plan of redemption for all mankind, for the first four of them have been fulfilled—in detail, on the very dates of their Levitical mandates—in the life of Yahshua. (See Mitzvah #112 and #133-136 for information we’ve previously covered concerning the Day of Atonement.)

The occasion for this teaching was the sin of Aaron’s two sons Nadab and Abihu, who had waltzed into the tabernacle on their own volition and offered “profane fire” before Yahweh—and had paid for their arrogant presumption with their lives. Here God tells the High Priest that he is to come into the Most Holy Place to minister before Yahweh only one day a year, on the tenth day of the seventh month, Tishri (Leviticus 16:29). My studies of prophecy have led me to the conclusion that this is prophetic of the day Israel as a nation will finally realize and accept that Yahshua of Nazareth is their Messiah. That day is yet future, unfortunately. (See *Future History*: “The Great Awakening” for the whole story.)

The High Priest was to atone for three things: himself (vs. 11-14), the Sanctuary (vs. 15-19), and the people (vs. 20-28). He was to prepare by washing himself and putting on the holy priestly garments (see Mitzvah #372). He was then to sacrifice a young bull as a sin offering (*chata’t*) for himself and his household, and a ram as a burnt offering (*olah*). If you’ll recall, bulls indicated the sin of human pride leading to false doctrine or worship, and rams were metaphorical of Christ in authority—the anointed King. The priest was to burn incense (metaphorical of prayer) upon the altar of incense that stood before the veil (see Mitzvot #433, 434 and #439), and he was also to sprinkle the blood of the sin offering in front of the mercy seat and on the east side (that is, the side of the ark nearest the doorway). He was to “sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times” (verse 14). The details are telling: sprinkling the blood with his *finger* meant the High Priest (metaphorical of Yahshua) would be personally occupied with our atonement—a hands-on involvement. Seven applications, of course, signified that perfect, complete atonement was in view—in marked contrast to the need for an annual repetition of the Levitical rite. This is all supported by the sprinkling of the blood on the *east* side of the mercy seat—it looks forward to the coming King, who will enter His Millennial temple via the eastern gate (according to Ezekiel 43:4)

The central event of the Day of Atonement is the offering of two young goats. The High Priest was to cast lots to choose one of them for Yahweh. This one was to be offered up as a *chata't* sin offering to atone for the sins of all the people for one year, but the other goat was set free in the wilderness. One died so that the other might live. This, like every other facet of the Day of Atonement, is so obviously prophetic of the sacrifice of the Messiah, it's hard to see how the rabbis can manage to remain blind to its spiritual significance. And can somebody explain *this* to me? Why do Jews today make such a big deal of *Yom Kippur* when they haven't been able to properly celebrate it since Nebuchadnezzar sacked Jerusalem in 586 B.C.—when the ark of the covenant and the integral mercy seat were secreted away? To this day, atonement remains an elusive dream to a stubborn and rebellious Israel. But that's all about to change.

- (506) *Do not slaughter beasts set apart for sacrifices outside the Sanctuary.*
“Whatever man of the house of Israel who kills an ox or lamb or goat in the camp, or who kills it outside the camp, and does not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of meeting to offer an offering to Yahweh before the tabernacle of Yahweh, the guilt of bloodshed shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people, to the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices which they offer in the open field, that they may bring them to Yahweh at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, to the priest, and offer them as peace offerings to Yahweh.” (Leviticus 17:3-5) The thrust of the rabbinical mitzvah is right on the money, for a change. The admonition is *not* that an animal from one's flocks or herds couldn't be butchered for food, but rather that sacrificial rites were not to be performed in honor of anyone but Yahweh. This is made clear in verse 7: **“They shall no more offer their sacrifices to demons, after whom they have played the harlot. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations.”**

This precept is specifically directed to Israel during their wilderness wanderings, for verse 3 pointedly refers to being in or outside “the camp.” But later, as the children of Israel were about to enter the Land, Moses clarified the issue: **“Take heed to yourself that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see; but [only] in the place which Yahweh chooses, in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you.”** That “place” was later identified as Jerusalem. **“However, you may slaughter and eat meat within all your gates, whatever your heart desires, according to the blessing of Yahweh your God which He has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, of the gazelle and the deer alike.”** (Deuteronomy 12:13-15) There is a fundamental difference between having a barbecue and offering a sacrifice at the Temple, even if what you're eating is identical. One is just food; the other is a picture of

our redemption through the sacrifice of the Messiah. One feeds the body; the other feeds the soul.

- (507) *Do not eat flesh of a sacrifice that has been left over (beyond the time appointed for its consumption).* “It [the peace offering, or *selem*] shall be eaten the same day you offer it, and on the next day. And if any remains until the third day, it shall be burned in the fire. And if it is eaten at all on the third day, it is an abomination. It shall not be accepted. Therefore everyone who eats it shall bear his iniquity, because he has profaned the hallowed offering of Yahweh; and that person shall be cut off from his people.” (Leviticus 19:6-8) We covered this precept from the point of view of what to do with a leftover sacrifice in Mitzvah #495, and Mitzvah #496 is virtually identical to this one, though supported with a different Scripture passage. The reason given here for not eating the *selem* after the second day is that by doing so, one has “profaned” the offering that has been set apart in honor of Yahweh. We’ve seen this word before. It’s *chalal*, meaning to defile, desecrate, dishonor, or pollute something or someone, literally to pierce, bore, or wound. In Mitzvah #5, we reviewed the command not to *chalal* Yahweh’s holy name—it’s the Third Commandment all over again. Eating sacrifices on the proper day is an issue of obedience and trust, for there is nothing intrinsically evil about eating something on one day rather than another. Sure, Yahweh knew about bacterial growth in three-day-old meat, and wished to spare His people the sickness that came with it. But He didn’t explain the science to them. He merely said “Trust Me. Do what I’ve asked. It’s for your own good. If you can’t trust me with something simple like this, how can you trust Me with your soul? Your lack of trust dishonors Me.”
- (508) *Do not sanctify blemished cattle for sacrifice on the altar. “Whatever has a defect, you shall not offer, for it shall not be acceptable on your behalf.”* (Leviticus 22:20) The next seven mitzvot are all based on the same passage, and together define the “law of blemishes.” The word translated “defect” here is *m’um*. “This word usually describes a physical characteristic that is deemed to be bad. A man with any sort of blemish could not be a priest, nor could an animal which had a blemish be sacrificed. The word is also used to describe an injury caused by another. On the other hand, the absence of any blemish was a sign of beauty. In a figurative sense, the word is used to describe the effect of sin.” (B&C) Animals with defects or blemishes were not acceptable for use as sacrifices. This principle, of course, is predictive of the sinlessness of Yahweh’s ultimate sacrifice on our behalf.

(509) *Every animal offered up shall be without blemish. “And whoever offers a sacrifice of a peace offering to Yahweh, to fulfill his vow, or a freewill offering from the cattle or the sheep, it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it.”* (Leviticus 22:21) Was there a penalty for offering an imperfect sacrifice? Only that the whole exercise would be rendered pointless—God would not accept the sacrifice. The animal’s death would be a meaningless waste of resources. The lesson is that we imperfect people can’t atone for our own sins before God. Sure, we can make sacrificial gestures, from putting what we consider a “bribe” into the offering plate to crawling over broken glass in penance for our sins. But because we’re blemished, defective, and fallen, these sacrifices are by definition unacceptable to God. You may as well keep your money—and your skin. God is not impressed. Only an unblemished sacrifice—Yahshua—is acceptable. If you think about it, that’s really good news to all of us defective sheep. It means we’re free to live out our lives in peace, for He has taken our place on the altar of sacrifice.

But the news gets even better. Song of Solomon describes the torrid love affair between the King (Yahshua) and His bride (believers, we who reciprocate His love). In 4:7 she is described thus: **“Your are all fair, my love, and there is no spot (*m’um*) in you.”** Yes, that’s right. Though we’re sinful creatures, Yahweh sees us as perfect and spotless when He sees us through the eyes of Yahshua the King. It’s like having your cake and eating it too.

(510) *Do not inflict a blemish on cattle set apart for sacrifice. “And whoever offers a sacrifice of a peace offering to Yahweh, to fulfill his vow, or a freewill offering from the cattle or the sheep, it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it.”* (Leviticus 22:21) You’ve got to wonder at the deviousness of the rabbinical mind. The first thing that came to their minds was, *Gee, I’ve got myself an unblemished sheep. If I offer it up in sacrifice to God, I’m going to miss out on the wool or lamb chops that would otherwise be mine. So let’s see—if I stick him with a hot poker, he won’t be “perfect” anymore, and I’ll be able to keep him all for myself.* But in the end, that tactic was too transparent even for the rabbis, so they invented a mitzvah to prohibit it.

They needn’t have bothered. By the time they wrote the Talmud, their sins had long since cost them the temple, the altar, and the priesthood. They couldn’t have made a proper offering to Yahweh if they’d wanted to. Everything they had to say about making sacrifices was a pointless waste of breath.

(511) *Do not slaughter blemished cattle as sacrifices. “Those that are blind or broken or maimed, or have an ulcer or eczema or scabs, you shall not offer to*

Yahweh, nor make an offering by fire of them on the altar to Yahweh.” (Leviticus 22:22) This mitzvah points out the nature of the silly game Maimonides is playing. He’s dividing up the process of making an offering into its component parts, and then individually issuing prohibitions against using blemished animals for any of them: don’t sanctify them (#508), offer them up (#509), slaughter them (#511), burn them (#512), or sprinkle their blood (#513). *Oy vey!* In reality, the passage at hand merely defines what sorts of things constitute “blemishes” for sacrificial purposes. Note that “spots” on an animal’s coat—like the black and white blotches on a Holstein cow—are not considered “blemishes.” *M’um* defects are caused by illness, injury or congenital problems. They have nothing to do with perceived beauty, the “right” style, or monochromatic plainness. Rather, they are flaws, defects, imperfections. They are metaphorical of sin, not misfortune. (See Mitzvah #513 for further clarification.)

- (512) *Do not burn the limbs of blemished cattle upon the altar. “Those that are blind or broken or maimed, or have an ulcer or eczema or scabs, you shall not offer to Yahweh, nor make an offering by fire of them on the altar to Yahweh. Either a bull or a lamb that has any limb too long or too short you may offer as a freewill offering, but for a vow it shall not be accepted.”* (Leviticus 22:22-23) The reference to “limbs” in the text isn’t remotely what Maimonides has made of it. If you’ll recall, a freewill offering (*nedabah*) could be either a *selem*—a peace offering—or an *olah*—a burnt offering. The emphasis of the designation *nedabah* was the voluntary nature of the offering. A vow or votive offering (*neder*) was one of three types of *selem*, one intended to demonstrate the seriousness and sincerity of the worshipper (contrasted to freewill offerings or simple thanksgiving).

Here’s the principle: if you wish to willingly express your devotion with a *selem* or *olah*, you may offer an animal from your flocks or herds that happens to have one limb shorter or longer than the others, but is unblemished in other ways. But if the *selem* is meant to punctuate a vow you’re making before Yahweh, the sacrifice must be perfect in every way. As usual, the Torah doesn’t explain why this is so. But it seems clear to me that any *completely* perfect sacrifice must be metaphorical of God’s self-sacrifice on our behalf. And one way or another, Yahweh “vowed” hundreds of times in scripture to provide a redeemer for us—Yahshua, whose very name means “Yahweh is salvation.” Thus when we make a vow, we are emulating God: we must follow His lead, proving our sincerity by offering up the very best we have. The freewill offering, on the other hand, speaks of our response to Yahweh’s love. Note two things: (1) We don’t *have* to reciprocate His love; it’s strictly voluntary. And (2) we aren’t perfect. Yes, Yahweh has removed our sin—we’re free of *m’um*

“blemishes”—but we still limp through life on uneven legs, tripping over all kinds of things along the way. Yahweh is telling us that He understands our condition, and that He’s willing to accept our homage, devotion, and gratitude even though we’re not “perfect.” *Yet*. He’s still working on us.

- (513) *Do not sprinkle the blood of blemished cattle upon the altar. “You shall not offer to Yahweh what is bruised or crushed, or torn or cut.”* (Leviticus 22:24)

Maimonides is still off on his tangent, making things up as he goes along. While he’s no doubt correct, the supporting text says something completely different. We are not to offer to God that which is of no use or value to us. To do so would be an insult. Thus the only acceptable sacrifice is uninjured—it is fit for work or uncompromised in whatever its function would normally be. The “bruising” spoken of goes beyond injury and includes castration—a metaphor for fruitlessness. As we have seen before, the sacrifice was to be full of promise and potential, just as Yahweh’s Sacrifice would be.

- (514) *Do not offer up a blemished beast that comes from non-Israelites. “Nor shall you make any offering of them in your land, nor from a foreigner’s hand shall you offer any of these as the bread of your God, because their corruption is in them, and defects are in them. They shall not be accepted on your behalf.”*

(Leviticus 22:24-25) It doesn’t matter where the blemished animal comes from: it isn’t acceptable as a sacrifice to Yahweh. At its heart, this precept is an admonition against man-made religion, whether originating in Israel or coming from the gentile nations. Since “defects” are a metaphor for sin, it’s clear that God doesn’t want us to approach Him based on our own merits, for we have none—we are fatally flawed. First, rabbinical Judaism attempted to reach God by outwardly observing His Instructions, or at least a caricature of them, while ignoring their spirit. They failed because the basis of their “obedience” was their own strength, a blemished beast indeed. But then the gentiles came along and replaced the clever Jewish caricature with a crass and blatant counterfeit—rules and regulations from their own imagination, imitation godliness bereft of God’s power, doctrines of demons. These too were defective sacrifices, unacceptable to Yahweh. The *only* sacrifice by which we can approach God is the One He Himself provided—Yahshua, the perfect Lamb of God.

TIMING

- (515) *Sacrifices of cattle may only take place when they are at least eight days old. “When a bull or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall be seven days with its mother; and from the eighth day and thereafter it shall be accepted as an offering made by fire to Yahweh.”* (Leviticus 22:27) Sometimes it’s not what you do,

but when you do it. These next few mitzvot concentrate on scheduling issues found in the Torah. There were practical reasons the sacrificial animals were not to be offered up during the first week of life. It could take that long to determine if the animal was healthy, “without blemish” by Levitical standards. Also, certain biological functions don’t stabilize for a while after birth. (For example, when discussing circumcision in male children in Mitzvah #17, we discovered that the human clotting mechanism isn’t fully developed until the eighth day, hence the timing mandated in Leviticus 12:3.)

But there’s more to it. As we have seen, seven is a key number in Scripture. It indicates perfection, completion, the whole of something. Seven “days” of creation, seven days of the week, seven Feasts of Yahweh—they all point toward the completion of God’s plan for mankind’s redemption. This process will apparently be accomplished within a seven-thousand-year span of time beginning with the fall of Adam and ending at the conclusion of Yahshua’s imminent Millennial reign. But what happens after that? The eternal state commences, populated by those of us who have chosen to honor Yahweh and accept His Spirit—now immortal beings who will dwell forever in the new heaven and new earth. It’s a new beginning, a fresh start in a sinless state. You may think I’ve strayed off the subject, but I haven’t. As the eighth day represents unfolding eternity, the stipulation that the sacrificial animal must live until the eighth day is a reminder that Yahshua’s sacrifice cleanses us not just during this life, but for eternity future.

- (516) *Do not leave any flesh of the thanksgiving offering until the morning. “On the same day it shall be eaten; you shall leave none of it until morning; I am Yahweh.”* (Leviticus 22:30) This is actually a companion mitzvah to #495 and #496. The context is the *selem*, or peace offering—specifically the subset of thanksgiving (Hebrew: *towdah*). Thanksgiving offerings were to be spontaneous and timely, because the Source of all blessings was supposed to be a recognized reality in Israel. So expressions of gratitude were not to be deferred. Of course, because the *towdah* was to be eaten by the worshipper and his family, being thankful benefited the one offering the thanksgiving. It’s like the beatitudes: blessed are the thankful, for they shall be appreciated.
- (517) *Offer up the meal-offering of the Omer on the morrow after the first day of Passover, together with one lamb. “When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before Yahweh, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. And you shall*

offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to Yahweh.” (Leviticus 23:10-12) Because Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Firstfruits fell on successive days (the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth of the month of Nisan) the Jews tended to lump them all into one holiday and call it all Passover. But Yahweh was very specific here in Leviticus 23: there were *three* convocations in the spring, and each miqra was significant in its own right. Passover foretold the death of Yahweh’s Messiah; the Feast of Unleavened Bread predicted the removal of our sin through His sojourn in the tomb; and the Feast of Firstfruits (the subject of this mitzvah) prophesied His resurrection—His victory over death, blazing a trail we can all follow if we choose to. The sheaf of grain (sometimes called an “omer,” which is actually a unit of measure, a little over two quarts) was symbolic of the provision of our salvation through Yahshua’s sacrifice. It was “waved before Yahweh” to demonstrate that this sacrifice was “accepted on our behalf” by Yahweh.

The timing was critical, for it was prophetic of the schedule of Christ’s passion. The sheaf was to be waved “on the day after the Sabbath,” for on the definitive Nisan 16, Sunday, April 3, 33 AD, Yahshua emerged from the tomb, proving that there was such a thing as life after death, and that we could attain it by following Him. The promised Lamb of God had been slain on Passover, to be then consumed in the fires of Yahweh’s wrath to atone for our sins, the smoke ascending to heaven as a pleasant fragrance in the nostrils of God—the sweet smell of salvation for His people. The Messiah’s subsequent resurrection on the Feast of Firstfruits proved that our souls could—and would—be harvested as well.

...Either that, or Yahweh just likes to see people dress up in funny outfits, wave wheat stalks around in the air, and burn poor, innocent sheep to a fare-thee-well. If these mitzvot mean nothing beyond their literal rites and rituals (as Maimonides seems to think, though there’s no way he or anyone else could have literally performed them without a temple and priesthood), we serve a silly God indeed.

- (518) *Do not eat bread made of new grain before the Omer of barley has been offered up on the second day of Passover. “You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.”* (Leviticus 23:14) Maimonides (clever lad that he is) has made three separate mitzvot out of this one precept—dividing it up between the three things not to be eaten before the Feast of Firstfruits offering had been made—bread, raw grain, and roasted or processed grain. Good grief!

At least he's correct in identifying barley as the grain to be offered, for at this time of the year, the barley harvest was just coming in. (Wheat would be the grain *du jour* seven weeks later at *Shavu'ot*, or the Feast of Weeks—see Mitzvah #521.)

The point, of course, was that the children of Israel were to express their thankfulness for the bounty Yahweh had provided as soon as it showed up, recognizing and acknowledging the source of their blessings. Verse 10 (see Mitzvah #517) had pointed out that they wouldn't really be able to do this until they entered the Promised Land, for they would have no crops of any kind to harvest until they arrived. Joshua 5:10-12 records the timing. When they entered the Land, they celebrated Passover as scheduled, making their unleavened bread from the manna that had sustained them during their wilderness wanderings. But the supply of manna ceased the very next day, on the Feast of Firstfruits, when they had sampled the produce of the Land (presumably after the priests had waved the ceremonial sheaf toward heaven). That tended to make them *very* thankful for the barley they found growing in the Land.

- (519) *Do not eat roasted grain of the new produce before that time. "You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings."* (Leviticus 23:14) Thinking more like a lawyer than a Bible commentator, Maimonides is addressing loopholes that only a rabbi would even see. Though Yahweh listed three "forms" the grain might take, these forms are not the point—the timing of the offering and what it represents are the point. Bread or grain is metaphorical of what God has provided for us, and history demonstrates that the specific provision in view in the context of the Feast of Firstfruits is our reconciliation to Yahweh through the resurrection of His Messiah. Therefore, this precept is declaring that until God's provision of salvation is recognized and thankfully acknowledged, we cannot benefit from it in any way. In other words, salvation is not a gift until we receive it.
- (520) *Do not eat fresh ears of the new grain before that time. "You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings."* (Leviticus 23:14) We shouldn't gloss over the parting shot of the passage's discussion of the Feast of Firstfruits: "**It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations.**" This same formula was repeated in reference to Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (in Exodus 12), and, here in Leviticus 23, the Feast of Weeks, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. If nothing symbolic was being

foreshadowed by these miqrym, if they meant nothing beyond the rites and rituals that defined their observance, this would be an extremely odd thing to say. Note that only one miqra of the seven (the Feast of Trumpets) did not receive this instruction. Why? Because of the seven, only the Feast of Trumpets is to be primarily fulfilled through the gentiles, not Israel, for it is prophetic of the rapture of the *Ekklesia*—Yahweh’s called-out assembly of believers in this present age—who are mostly gentiles. In a stunning display of God’s perfect foreknowledge, however, the miqra that *began* the “Church” age, the Feast of Weeks (a.k.a. Pentecost), *did* concern Israel, for the original *Ekklesia* was almost exclusively Jewish.

- (521) *On Shavu’ot, bring loaves of bread together with the sacrifices which are then offered up in connection with the loaves. “You shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath [i.e., the Feast of Unleavened Bread], from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to Yahweh. You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to Yahweh. And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be as a burnt offering to Yahweh, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to Yahweh. Then you shall sacrifice one kid of the goats as a sin offering, and two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice of a peace offering. The priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before Yahweh, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to Yahweh for the priest.”* (Leviticus 23:15-20) This is instruction concerning *Shavu’ot*, or the Feast of Weeks, known in Greek as “Pentecost.” Rabbinical Judaism, clueless as to Yahweh’s plan of redemption, identifies *Shavu’ot* with the giving of the Law at Sinai. This is patently ridiculous, for they didn’t even arrive at the Wilderness of Sinai until three lunar months (88 days) after they left Egypt (see Exodus 19:1)—that’s thirty-eight days after *Shavu’ot*. Ironically, in Orthodox Judaism, the fifty days between the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Weeks (referred to as “Counting the Omer”) has become a period of mourning, in memory of a plague that broke out during the time of Rabbi Akiba. Nobody gets married, throws a party, or gets a haircut between Nisan 15 and Sivan 6. It’s so sad. If only they knew: Akiba *was* the plague, as we saw in the introduction to Chapter 10 of this volume.

So much for what the Feast of Weeks is *not*. Its actual significance is recorded in the New Covenant Scriptures: “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they [Yahshua’s disciples] were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it

filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:1-4) Luke has chronicled the beginning of the *Ekklesia*, the Church, by describing what defines it: the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This is something that had never happened before on a permanent, class-wide basis, but it was the direct fulfillment of a promise of a coming “Helper” that Yahshua had made in John 15 and 16. His explanation of who the Holy Spirit was had been precipitated by an insightful question posed by Judas the son of James: “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?” (John 14:22) That’s the rub, isn’t it? We who have Yahweh’s Spirit abiding within us enjoy the help, comfort, and guidance that only an intimate relationship with God Himself can provide. Those without His Spirit think the peace we enjoy is evidence of our own self delusion. It’s something that can’t be explained, only experienced.

Notice how the Feast of Weeks as described in Leviticus 23 is brought to fruition in the Acts 2 experience. First, the date is correct—seven sabbaths plus one day after Yahshua experienced hell on our behalf on the Feast of Unleavened Bread in 33 AD. (That, by the way, puts the definitive Pentecost on a Sunday. Yahweh is declaring in advance that He knows that we gentiles in our ignorance will jettison his ordained Sabbaths in favor of Sunday worship. He’s not overtly authorizing it, mind you, just subtly reminding us of His omniscience.) Second, note that almost every type of offering listed in Leviticus (see chapter 12 of this volume) is specified: the *minha* (grain offering), the *olah* (burnt offering), the *chata’t* (sin offering), *selem* (peace offering), and *nesek* (drink offering). All of these speak one way or another of Yahshua’s sacrifice, which He Himself said would be necessary in order for the Holy Spirit to dwell within us (see John 16:7).

Conspicuously absent from the list is the *asham*, or trespass offering, because (as we can see in hindsight) the Feast of Weeks is all about the Holy Spirit’s establishment of a permanent, personal relationship with us—not our preoccupation with the inadvertent blunders that only serve to prove we’ve fallen short of Yahweh’s holy standard. Sin is addressed at Pentecost—mistakes are not. Confirming this observation, note something extremely unusual in the instructions for observing the Feast of Weeks: leaven, a metaphor for sin, was to be added to the fine flour of the *minha*. Yahweh was telling us right up front that the *Ekklesia*—His Church—would be full of sinners. *Horrors!* We would be saved by grace, or not at all.

(522) *Offer up an additional sacrifice on Passover. “For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it.”* (Leviticus 23:36) It’s not Passover, Maimonides. The *miqra* referred to in the text is the Feast of Tabernacles, which (like the Feast of Unleavened Bread immediately following Passover) was actually an eight-day feast, commencing on one Sabbath and running through the next one. Nor is it “an additional sacrifice,” as if it was somehow less important than the one given on the first day of the Feast. There were actually sacrifices scheduled throughout the week of the Feast of Tabernacles: (1) a declining number of bulls from 13 on the first day to 1 on the eighth, for a total of 71; (2) two rams each day with one on the eighth, for a total of 15; (3) 14 lambs each day with seven on the eighth day, for a total of 105, and (4) one goat per day, for a total of eight. (See Mitzvah #542 for further discussion of these sacrifices).

Beyond the fact that Tabernacles was a huge annual end-of-summer harvest party that God threw for the whole nation, it is also prophetic of the coming Millennial kingdom of Yahshua, in which He will reign personally upon the throne of earth for a thousand years. Sacrifices aside, its most unique feature was the building of temporary shelters or booths for the worshippers to live in for the week—metaphorical of God (manifested as Yahshua) “camping out” among men. With this in mind, the symbolic significance of the sacrificial animals becomes clear. The bulls stood for false doctrine, the teachings of men that needed to be purged from the life of God’s people. Rams were symbolic of the Messiah in authority, as lambs were of His innocence. And goats were indicative of sin. Thus Yahshua’s authority over the Kingdom of God, purchased by the sacrifice of innocence at Calvary, has dealt forever with our sin—something that will nevertheless be part of our nature as long as we inhabit these mortal bodies. And false doctrine? The declining number of bulls sacrificed over the Festival’s week indicates that it will gradually die out over the course of the Millennium, a casualty of the light of God’s truth.

VOWS: PAYMENTS AND EXCHANGES

(523) *One who vows to the Lord the monetary value of a person shall pay the amount appointed in the Scriptural portion. “When a man consecrates by a vow certain persons to Yahweh, according to your valuation, if your valuation is of a male from twenty years old up to sixty years old, then your valuation shall be fifty shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. If it is a female, then*

your valuation shall be thirty shekels; and if from five years old up to twenty years old, then your valuation for a male shall be twenty shekels, and for a female ten shekels; and if from a month old up to five years old, then your valuation for a male shall be five shekels of silver, and for a female your valuation shall be three shekels of silver; and if from sixty years old and above, if it is a male, then your valuation shall be fifteen shekels, and for a female ten shekels. But if he is too poor to pay your valuation, then he shall present himself before the priest, and the priest shall set a value for him; according to the ability of him who vowed, the priest shall value him." (Leviticus 27:2-8) Vows of service were never required by Yahweh, but He made provision for those whose devotion overflowed into the dedication of a person (whether oneself or a person under one's control, such as a child or a bondsman) to the service of the sanctuary. A scriptural example of this principle is when Hannah, the mother of Samuel, dedicated him as a Nazarite to serve Eli the priest (see I Samuel 1).

Hannah had made her vow sincerely and voluntarily, and she followed through as promised. Her son Samuel went on to become one of Israel's greatest prophets. But Yahweh knows our frailty. Here in Leviticus He made provision for the "conversion" of such a vow to another form of offering: one could "buy back" the person so consecrated. The amount varied, depending upon the relative value of his or her labor. (It's not that males are "better" than females, but that men generally have greater physical strength than women, and are thus presumed to be capable of more work). Note that God in His mercy allows the whole complicated sliding scale of redemption to be thrown out if the one who made the vow is too poor to pay it. He knows the attitude of the heart; that's what matters to Him.

- (524) *If a beast is exchanged for one that had been set apart as an offering, both become sacred. "If it is an animal that men may bring as an offering to Yahweh, all that anyone gives to Yahweh shall be holy. He shall not substitute it or exchange it, good for bad or bad for good; and if he at all exchanges animal for animal, then both it and the one exchanged for it shall be holy."* (Leviticus 27:9-10) We are still on the subject of offerings made to accompany vows, which are one type of the *selem*, or peace offering. The *selem* is completely voluntary. Thus when one selects a clean animal from his flock or herd to offer, the choice is his alone. Yahweh is instructing here that the worshipper is not to "go back on the deal," or change his mind about which animal to offer. A promise is a promise: it must be kept. If a second animal is selected, that's fine, but *both of them* will be sacrificed.

Upon reflection, we can see that Yahweh is telling us about His own character: *“I will not go back on My word. I will send My Messiah, Yahshua, to be the sacrifice that seals My vow to reconcile you to Myself.”* History has proven that He has kept His vow. We cannot substitute ourselves as the sacrifices supporting His vow—the Sacrifice Yahweh originally selected will suffice, or nothing will. We can, however, dedicate ourselves to His service, not to replace His sacrifice, but to gratefully acknowledge it. In this case, *both* sacrifices are holy—albeit in different ways.

- (525) *Do not exchange a beast set aside for sacrifice. “If it is an animal that men may bring as an offering to Yahweh, all that anyone gives to Yahweh shall be holy. He shall not substitute it or exchange it, good for bad or bad for good; and if he at all exchanges animal for animal, then both it and the one exchanged for it shall be holy.”* (Leviticus 27:9-10) It’s interesting that the prohibition against exchanging *selem* sacrifices works both ways—**“good for bad or bad for good.”** When it comes to the efficacy of sacrifices, the Messiah’s perfection cannot be replaced by our less-than-perfect lives. We can’t atone for our own sins, so exchanging “good for bad” obviously won’t work. But “bad for good” doesn’t work either. Christ’s sacrifice is not a desperate attempt on Yahweh’s part to salvage a plan that wasn’t working. The Law was *never* intended to save us, and it was *never* God’s intention to accept the sacrifice of sinful men as payment for their own redemption. So He isn’t “exchanging” sacrifices by sending the Messiah. His word, His plan, has remained unchanged from the beginning.
- (526) *One who vows to the Lord the monetary value of an unclean beast shall pay its value. “If it is an unclean animal, which they do not offer as a sacrifice to Yahweh, then he shall present the animal before the priest; and the priest shall set a value for it, whether it is good or bad; as you, the priest, value it, so it shall be. But if he wants at all to redeem it, then he must add one-fifth to your valuation.”* (Leviticus 27:11-13) Maimonides has missed the point entirely. Suppose the worshipper wants to voluntarily contribute something, but all he’s got to offer is an “unclean” animal—for instance, a donkey, horse, or camel. Though not suitable for blood sacrifices, and forbidden as food, these beasts still had value and utility to their owners as pack animals. (Can you imagine trying to carry the entire carcass of a bull, as required in Leviticus 4:11-12, without using a beast of burden?) So Yahweh declares that they can be contributed to the priests and Levites to help them in their work. The priests were to assign a money value to the “gift horse” based on the going rate for an animal of this age and condition. (*Is it a yearling thoroughbred, or is it a sad old nag ready for the glue factory?*) If the

worshipper subsequently wished to buy back His animal, he was to pay 120% of the price the priest had set.

This “add one fifth” rule shows up several places in this passage. I may be overanalyzing this, but it seems to me that Yahweh is saying, “Okay, I know you’re only human, so I’ve provided a way for you to buy your donkey back that will numerically reflect that fact. Your asset is obviously worth five fifths of its value, but the redemption price will be *six* fifths—six being the number of fallen man. I will not allow you to shortchange my priests, for they serve me by serving you.” Or something like that.

- (527) *One who vows the value of his house shall pay according to the appraisal of the Kohein. “And when a man dedicates his house to be holy to Yahweh, then the priest shall set a value for it, whether it is good or bad; as the priest values it, so it shall stand. If he who dedicated it wants to redeem his house, then he must add one-fifth of the money of your valuation to it, and it shall be his.”* (Leviticus 27:14-15) The same sort of principle we saw in the previous mitzvah is in operation here. One could give a house to Yahweh to be used by the priests and Levites. (It didn’t have to be converted to cash first, as Maimonides implies.) If you’ll recall, the rules concerning the transfer of a house depended upon whether or not it was located within a walled city (see Mitzvah #269). Those that were could be sold (or as here, given away) permanently, after a one-year “seller’s remorse” period had passed. Those outside walled cities reverted to their original owners at Jubilee. Thus the price the priest set for a house would be affected by the time remaining until Jubilee and/or by the house’s location, among other things. Once again, if the worshipper later wished to redeem it, he was to pay the priests six fifths of its predetermined value. Yahweh was allowing the alteration of a vow, but not its negation: if someone wished to change his mind about a voluntary offering, it could not be for monetary reasons. After all, **“The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”** (I Timothy 6:10)
- (528) *One who sanctifies to the Lord a portion of his field shall pay according to the estimation appointed in the Scriptural portion. “If a man dedicates to Yahweh part of a field of his possession, then your valuation shall be according to the seed for it. A homer of barley seed shall be valued at fifty shekels of silver. If he dedicates his field from the Year of Jubilee, according to your valuation it shall stand. But if he dedicates his field after the Jubilee, then the priest shall reckon to him the money due according to the years that remain till the Year of Jubilee, and it shall be deducted from your valuation. And if he who dedicates the field ever*

wishes to redeem it, then he must add one-fifth of the money of your valuation to it, and it shall belong to him. But if he does not want to redeem the field, or if he has sold the field to another man, it shall not be redeemed anymore; but the field, when it is released in the Jubilee, shall be holy to Yahweh, as a devoted field; it shall be the possession of the priest. And if a man dedicates to Yahweh a field which he has bought, which is not the field of his possession, then the priest shall reckon to him the worth of your valuation, up to the Year of Jubilee, and he shall give your valuation on that day as a holy offering to Yahweh. In the Year of Jubilee the field shall return to him from whom it was bought, to the one who owned the land as a possession.” (Leviticus 27:16-24) The principle here was that all land in Israel ultimately belonged to Yahweh. He in turn entrusted it to families within Israel, to whom it would “belong” in perpetuity—as long as they didn’t forsake Yahweh and get themselves thrown out of the Land, of course. Just as with an animal or a house, this land could be voluntarily dedicated to Yahweh. That is, the produce that a plot of land yielded year by year could be given to the priests in honor of Yahweh. This was strictly at the discretion of the landowner/worshipper—there was no stigma for *not* doing so.

As we have seen in the rules of Jubilee, however, land in Israel could change hands. It could be “leased” to someone else with the understanding that the landowner or his heirs would get it back at Jubilee—a once in a lifetime (once every fifty years) event. Therefore, two types of land dedication were possible. The land could be dedicated by its actual owner, or it could be dedicated by someone who has leased it from the owner until the next Jubilee. In each case, the field’s value was based on how much produce it yielded, and a formula is provided here in case the owner wished to redeem it—as usual, for six fifths of its actual value. As we have come to expect, a field dedicated by a lessee would revert back to its owner at Jubilee. But here’s the interesting twist: if the owner dedicated his land and did *not* redeem it, it would become the possession of the priesthood in perpetuity—that is, its “ownership” would transfer from the worshipper back to Yahweh (whose land it was anyway, truth be told).

Why was this so? Land is representative of an inheritance, that which one gains by virtue of his relationship with his father—in this case, our heavenly Father. In other words, it is symbolic of eternal life. This life, of course, is the very nature of Yahweh—He exists from eternity past to eternity future. And we can inherit that everlasting life (at least in the forward direction) from Him—but only if our “land,” our inheritance, has been redeemed, and redeemed at a *very* high price, six fifths of its actual value. That’s what Yahweh did for us by sending His human “Son” to die to atone for our sins—He redeemed our inheritance. If we choose not to

avail ourselves of so great a gift, this inheritance will revert to Him. Worse still, the Leviticus passage mentions the case of a man who has dedicated his land to the priesthood, but then has turned around and sold or leased it to a third party, thus making the redemption of his inheritance impossible. Unless I miss my guess, this is a picture of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit Yahshua warned against in Mark 3:29—the “third party” is metaphorical of Satan.

- (529) *Do not transfer a beast set apart for sacrifice from one class of sacrifices to another. “But the firstborn of the animals, which should be Yahweh’s firstborn, no man shall dedicate; whether it is an ox or sheep, it is Yahweh’s.”* (Leviticus 27:26) The point here is that you can’t “give” to Yahweh what already belongs to Him. A *selem* offering was the voluntary sacrifice of something the worshipper owned. On the other hand, a firstborn ox or sheep was *by definition* already the property of Yahweh. The application is obvious: Yahshua plays the role of Yahweh’s “firstborn.” Since He is thus set apart to Yahweh, His is the *only* suitable sacrifice to atone for our sins. If we, then, attempt to approach Yahweh with vows of good behavior or sacrifices of our own invention, we’ve missed the point, for these things are not efficacious in reconciling us to God. Everything we have is a gift from Yahweh, even our lives. And it’s a good thing to dedicate what we’ve been given back to Him. But we can’t purchase His forgiveness. Only the Firstborn can do that. The Firstborn is Yahweh’s because the Firstborn *is* Yahweh.
- (530) *Decide in regard to dedicated property as to which is sacred to the Lord and which belongs to the Kohein. “Nevertheless no devoted offering that a man may devote to Yahweh of all that he has, both man and beast, or the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed; every devoted offering is most holy to Yahweh.”* (Leviticus 27:28) In the English, this sounds contradictory to the precepts we’ve been studying in the previous few mitzvot, where Yahweh has declared that things dedicated to Him *may* be redeemed—going so far as to set the price of redemption in several cases. But here He says that redemption will not be allowed. What’s up?

The inconsistency is an illusion precipitated by an inadequate translation of the Hebrew verb *haram* and its related noun *herem*, rendered here as “devote” and “devoted offering.” Far from being a mere synonym for “dedicate” (the Hebrew verb *qadash*, related to the noun *qodesh*, meaning something holy or set-apart), *haram* means to ban, prohibit, or dedicate for destruction. For example, the city of Jericho (Joshua 6:17) was “put under the ban,” or “devoted to destruction,” meaning that the Israelites were to kill or destroy whatever they found there, even if it had

intrinsic value. A fellow named Achan got himself in deep dung for disregarding the *herem* concerning Jericho. Likewise, Samuel instructed King Saul to wipe out the nation of Amalek, including all their livestock. But Saul took it upon himself to substitute *haram* with *qadash*, intending (so he said) to sacrifice the captured booty to God—in direct defiance of Leviticus 27:28. Yahweh considered the breach so fundamental, it would cost Saul the throne. Samuel summed it up: **“To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed [better] than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.”** (I Samuel 15:22-23)

Meanwhile, Maimonides, like a guy obsessed with rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic, is concerned only with divvying up the loot between Yahweh and the priests. That’s probably because the authority of the priesthood had been usurped by the rabbis during the time of Akiba, and Yahweh hadn’t had much to say since then. Well, *somebody* has to take care of God’s property, right? It would be funny if it weren’t so sad.

- (531) *Do not sell a field devoted to the Lord. “Nevertheless no devoted offering that a man may devote to Yahweh of all that he has, both man and beast, or the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed; every devoted offering is most holy to Yahweh.”* (Leviticus 27:28) Again, Jericho is the classic example. The fields supporting the city were declared to be “most holy” to Yahweh, and were thus removed from the potential roster of lands to be distributed among the Israelite clans entering Canaan under Joshua. One couldn’t sell (i.e. lease) them to another, since they were the property of Yahweh.
- (532) *Do not redeem a field devoted to the Lord. “Nevertheless no devoted offering that a man may devote to Yahweh of all that he has, both man and beast, or the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed; every devoted offering is most holy to Yahweh.”* (Leviticus 27:28) This is the third mitzvah Maimonides has wrung from this verse, apparently without having a clue as to what it meant. Obviously, if a man couldn’t “sell” lands under the ban (*herem*), neither could he redeem them. The rules of Jubilee did not apply. In practical terms, the *herem* only had significance to Israel during the years of the conquest of Canaan. There were seven people groups singled out for destruction: the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Giragshites, Hivites, and Jebusites. Not everything they possessed would be placed under the ban, however. Keil and Delitzsch explain: “The owner of cattle and fields was only allowed to put them under the ban when they had been either desecrated by idolatry or abused to unholy purposes. For there can be no doubt that the idea which lay at the foundation of the ban was that of a compulsory dedication of something which resisted or impeded sanctification; so that in all cases in which it was carried into execution by

the community or the magistracy, it was an act of the judicial holiness of God manifesting itself in righteousness and judgment.” Or as Moses put it, **“You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. And you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place. You shall not worship Yahweh your God with such things.”** (Deuteronomy 12:2-4)

And by the way, this precept is not without significance for us. In these last days, virtually the whole world has become a “place where the nations served their false gods.” The Israelite conquest of Canaan was supposed to be a metaphorical microcosm of Yahweh’s ultimate global housecleaning during the coming Tribulation. The seven dispossessed peoples thus represent the totality of the God-rejecting world. If I’m reading this correctly, I believe Leviticus 27:28 is telling us that the infrastructure used to support Satan’s agenda in this present world—the corridors of power in government, the military, business, finance, education, the media, and even the pulpit, will not simply be retasked to other purposes during the Millennium. Rather they will be considered “most holy” to Yahweh—either used for His glory or obliterated from the earth.

- (533) *Make confession before the Lord of any sin that one has committed, when bringing a sacrifice and at other times. “When a man or woman commits any sin that men commit in unfaithfulness against Yahweh, and that person is guilty, then he shall confess the sin which he has committed. He shall make restitution for his trespass in full, plus one-fifth of it, and give it to the one he has wronged. But if the man has no relative to whom restitution may be made for the wrong, the restitution for the wrong must go to Yahweh for the priest.”* (Numbers 5:6-8)

There is an important principle being voiced here that is all too easy to miss. Moses at first speaks of sins committed against Yahweh, but then proceeds to prescribe how restitution is to be made to *the person* who has been wronged. His point is that a trespass against a man is in reality a sin against the man’s Creator. When a man is wronged, Yahweh considers it “unfaithfulness” against Himself. That’s even worse than it sounds: the word in Hebrew is *ma’al*, meaning treachery, disloyalty, treason—*perfidy* (though that’s a word nobody uses anymore). Would we act the way we do toward our fellow men if we realized that God takes it *personally* when we abuse them? Would we “screw” our neighbor if we knew God considered it adultery against Him when we did?

As we have seen before, God's idea of justice is restitution, not punishment. The wronged party is to be reimbursed for his trouble—and not just made whole, but given six-fifths of the damages. And what if your victim isn't around anymore to receive the overdue restitution? What if he has no heirs? Restitution must still be made, paid to the one who was *really* offended—Yahweh Himself. And how does one reimburse Yahweh? Through the priesthood—those whose role it is to intercede between God and man. These days, that's any and every believer.

- (534) *Do not put olive oil in the meal-offering of a woman suspected of adultery. "If any man's wife goes astray and behaves unfaithfully [ma'al] toward him, and a man lies with her carnally, and it is hidden from the eyes of her husband, and it is concealed that she has defiled herself, and there was no witness against her, nor was she caught—if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife, who has defiled herself; or if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife, although she has not defiled herself—then the man shall bring his wife to the priest. He shall bring the offering required for her, one-tenth of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil on it and put no frankincense on it, because it is a grain offering of jealousy, an offering for remembering, for bringing iniquity to remembrance."* (Numbers 5:13-15) We saw this passage (Numbers 5:11-31) once before, in Mitzvah #74. It derails the he-said-she-said games that stem from marital infidelity, protecting an innocent wife from the suspicions of a jealous and paranoid husband, while forcing a wife who actually is guilty of adultery to either confess or perjure herself before the Almighty, leaving the wronged husband guiltless. As it turns out, there are prophetic ramifications to this, as well (see #535).

Maimonides' current mitzvah and the next one concentrate on relatively minor details in the Levitical truth-resolving process: what two things *not* to put onto the *minha*, or grain offering, that accompanied the inquiry. If you'll recall, the fine flour of the *minha* was ordinarily supposed to have olive oil and frankincense (as well as salt) added to it. The grain offering commemorates the provision we enjoy from Yahweh's hand—the most significant facet of which is His provision of forgiveness, the atonement for our sins. The olive oil that's usually poured onto the *minha* is symbolic of the Holy Spirit's indwelling of the life of the worshipper. But in this case, oil would be inappropriate, because when the inquiry begins, it is unclear whether or not the accused wife is innocent, as she claims. The Holy Spirit is willing to cleanse us of our sins, of course, but only if we confess them and repent. Adultery symbolized the treachery of giving our love and devotion to a "god" other than Yahweh—and was thus punishable by death. If we have been "born from below" instead of "born from above," that is, if we have embraced Satan's eternal spirit

instead of Yahweh's, then no amount of olive oil on our grain offering is going to extricate us from our predicament. It is an "offering for remembering." Our iniquity will be brought to remembrance, forever.

- (535) *Do not put frankincense on it.* **"He shall bring the offering required for her, one-tenth of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil on it and put no frankincense on it, because it is a grain offering of jealousy, an offering for remembering, for bringing iniquity to remembrance."** (Numbers 5:13-15) A continuation of the previous mitzvah, here we see that just as oil was not to be applied to a "grain offering of jealousy," neither was frankincense to be sprinkled upon it, as was the usual case for a *minha*. Frankincense, you'll recall, indicated purity through sacrifice, specifically, our purity in God's eyes through the sacrifice of His atoning Lamb, Yahshua. If we have already been made pure, no further sacrifice is needed, but if we have given ourselves to Satan in a spiritually adulterous relationship, Yahshua's sacrifice will do us no good. It's scary and sobering when God says of His Spirit and of His Son's sacrifice, "Don't bother. You can't use them." The very thought should shake us to the core. Or should I say, "*should have shaken us...*"

As I explained in Chapter 3 of *Future History*, God's plan of redemption will take 7,000 years to unfold. Each millennial milestone (spaced at precise thousand-year intervals from the Passion, 33 A.D.) marks a significant landmark: Adam's fall, Noah's flood, Abraham's intended sacrifice of Isaac, the building of the temple, the Passion of the Messiah, the year-1033 event I'm about to explain, and finally, the commencement of Yahshua's Millennial reign. What happened in 1033? Yahweh, the jealous Husband of Israel, and Yahshua, the Bridegroom of the Ekklesia, put us to the Numbers 5 test, and we were found unfaithful.

In 1033, you see, Jerusalem suffered a huge earthquake. As a result, the city's sole water source, the Gihon Spring, turned septic, a condition that persisted for the next forty years. It became the "water of bitterness" with which the suspected adulteress was to be tested: **"The priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel, and take some of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle and put it into the water."** The Gihon Spring was literally the "holy water in an earthen vessel" that received "the dust on the floor of the tabernacle," for it lies in the very shadow of the temple mount. **"Then the priest shall stand the woman before Yahweh, uncover the woman's head, and put the offering for remembering in her hands, which is the grain offering of jealousy. And the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that brings a curse. And the priest shall put her under oath, and say to the woman, 'If no man has lain with you, and if you have not gone astray to uncleanness while under your husband's authority, be free from this bitter water that brings a curse. But if you have gone**

astray while under your husband's authority, and if you have defiled yourself and some man other than your husband has lain with you'—then the priest shall put the woman under the oath of the curse, and he shall say to the woman—'Yahweh make you a curse and an oath among your people, when Yahweh makes your thigh rot and your belly swell; and may this water that causes the curse go into your stomach, and make your belly swell and your thigh rot.'" (Numbers 5:17-22)

The bitter waters of the Gihon Spring not only drove out the last of the Jews from the region (due to rabbinic superstition and Muslim greed), but also poisoned thousands of Catholic pilgrims. Both Israel and the Church were thus found to have **"gone astray to uncleanness while under [their] husband's authority."** But a glimmer of hope is held out for the faithful remnant. The Church of this period was addressed by the risen Yahshua: **"To the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.'" So much for the encouragement. "Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols." He's talking about spiritual adultery. "And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works." It's an individual matter: not everyone in Thyatira failed the test. "Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. But hold fast what you have till I come. And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations." (Revelation 2:18-26) It's not too late to repent. But if we have been giving our affections to false gods—of any description—we must turn around and face Yahweh. Now is the day of salvation.**