



Tzav- Coommanded - Leviticus 6:1-8:36

Haftorah – Jeremiah 7:21-8:3; 9:22-23

B’rit Hadashah - Hebrews 9:11-28

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Leadership Anointed and Set Apart

Parshah Overview: ¹

G-d instructs Moses to **command** Aaron and his sons regarding their duties and rights as *kohanim* (“priests”) who offer the ***korbanot*** (animal and meal offerings) in the Sanctuary.

The **fire** on the altar must be kept burning at all times. In it are burned the wholly consumed ascending offering; veins of **fat** from the peace, sin and guilt offerings; and the “**handful**” separated from the **meal offering**.

The *kohanim* eat the meat of the sin and guilt offerings, and the remainder of the meal offering. The peace offering is eaten by the one who brought it, except for specified portions given to the *kohen*. The holy meat of the offerings must be eaten by ritually pure **persons**, in their designated holy **place** and within their specified **time**.

Aaron and his sons remain within the Sanctuary compound for **seven days**, during which Moses **initiates** them into the priesthood.

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Haftorah

Jeremiah 7:21-8:3; 9:22-23.

This week's haftorah touches on the subject of sacrifices, the main topic of the week's Torah portion.

G-d tells the prophet Jeremiah to rebuke the Jewish people, saying that His primary intention in taking their forefathers out of Egypt wasn't the sacrificial offerings, **rather in order that they observe the commandments**. But despite the fact that G-d repeatedly dispatched prophets to admonish the people, **"They did not obey nor did they incline their ear, but walked according to [their] own counsels and in the view of their evil heart, and they went backwards and not forwards."** G-d further informs Jeremiah that **the people will also not hearken to these words that he will speak to them now.**

The haftorah concludes with G-d's admonition: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom, nor the strong man boast of his strength, nor the rich man boast of his riches. But let him that boasts exult in this, that he understands and knows me, for I am G-d Who practices kindness, justice and righteousness on the earth; for in these things I delight, says G-d."

Leadership Anointed and Set Apart

Consecration of Aaron and His Sons

Lev 8:1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Lev 8:2 "Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments [*which are symbols of their office*], and the anointing oil, and the bull for the sin offering, and the two rams, and the basket of unleavened bread;

Lev 8:3 and assemble the entire congregation at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting."

Lev 8:4 Moses did as the LORD commanded him, and the congregation was assembled at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting.

Lev 8:5 Moses said to the congregation, "This is what the LORD has commanded us to do."

Lev 8:6 Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water.

Lev 8:7 He put the undertunic on Aaron, tied the sash around him, clothed him in the robe, and put the ephod (an upper vestment) on him. He tied the [*skillfully woven*] band of the ephod around him, with which he secured it to Aaron.

Lev 8:8 Moses then put the breast piece on Aaron, and he put in the breast piece the Urim and the Thummim [*the sacred articles the high priest used when seeking God's will concerning the nation*].

Lev 8:9 He also put the turban on Aaron's head, and on it, in the front, Moses placed the golden plate, the holy crown, just as the LORD had commanded him.

Lev 8:10 Then Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and consecrated them.

Lev 8:11 He sprinkled some of the oil on the altar seven times and anointed the altar and all its utensils, and the basin and its stand, to consecrate them.

Lev 8:12 Then he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him, to consecrate him.

Lev 8:13 Next Moses brought Aaron's sons forward, put undertunics on them, belted them with sashes, and bound caps on them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Lev 8:14 Then he brought the bull for the sin offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the bull.

Lev 8:15 Next Moses killed it and took the blood and with his finger put *some of it* around on the horns of the altar and purified it [*from sin*]. Then he poured out the *rest of the* blood at the base of the altar and consecrated it, to make atonement for it.

Lev 8:16 He took all the fat that was on the entrails, and the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys with their fat, and Moses offered them up in smoke on the altar.

Lev 8:17 But the bull (the sin offering) and its hide, its meat, and its refuse he burned in the fire outside the camp, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Lev 8:18 He brought the ram for the burnt offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram.

Lev 8:19 Moses killed it and sprinkled the blood around on the altar.

Lev 8:20 When he had cut the ram into pieces, Moses offered up the head, the pieces, and the fat in smoke.

Lev 8:21 After he had washed the entrails and the legs in water, Moses offered up the whole ram in smoke on the altar. It was a burnt offering for a sweet *and* soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Lev 8:22 Then he brought the second ram, the ram of consecration (ordination), and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram.

Lev 8:23 Moses killed it and took some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot.

Lev 8:24 He also brought Aaron's sons forward and put some of the blood on the lobes of their right ears, and the thumbs of their right hands, and the big toes of their right feet; and Moses sprinkled the *rest of the* blood around on the altar.

Lev 8:25 He took the fat, the fat tail, all the fat that was on the entrails, the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and their fat, and the right thigh;

Lev 8:26 and from the basket of unleavened bread that was before the LORD, he took one unleavened cake, a cake of oiled bread, and one wafer and put them on the fat and on the right thigh;

Lev 8:27 and he put all *these things* in Aaron's hands and his sons' hands and presented them as a wave offering before the LORD.

Lev 8:28 Then Moses took these things from their hands and offered them up in smoke on the altar with the burnt offering. They were a consecration (ordination) offering for a sweet *and* soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD.

Lev 8:29 Moses also took the breast and presented it as a wave offering before the LORD; it was Moses' portion of the ram of consecration (ordination), just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Lev 8:30 So Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood which was on the altar and sprinkled it on Aaron and his garments, and also on his sons and their garments with him; so Moses consecrated Aaron and his garments, and his sons and his sons' garments with him.

Lev 8:31 Then Moses said to Aaron and to his sons, "Boil the meat at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting and eat it there together with the bread that is in the basket of the consecration (ordination) offering, just as I commanded, saying, 'Aaron and his sons shall eat it.'

Lev 8:32 And what remains of the meat and of the bread you shall burn in the fire.

Lev 8:33 You shall not go outside the doorway of the Tent of Meeting for seven days, until the days of your consecration (ordination) are ended; for it will take seven days to consecrate you.

Lev 8:34 As has been done this day, so the LORD has commanded to do for your atonement.

Lev 8:35 You shall remain day and night for seven days at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting, doing what the Lord has required you to do, so that you will not die; for so I (Moses) have been commanded."

Lev 8:36 So Aaron and his sons did all the things which the LORD had commanded through Moses.

The Priestly Portion and Consecration

God set down rules so that the priests were provided for in their service. The same pertains as well today for those who are called to serve God as Congregational leaders. The tithe represents a sacrifice to God by the believer and in turn the tithe is supposed to be to support the Rabbi/Shepherd so he can focus on leading God's people without having to depend on working a secular job. Also, the tithes and offerings provide the finances needed to be able to have a place to meet. To tabernacle together, so to speak to meet together in the presence of God for teaching and instruction, praise, worship and prayer.

#1. The one who offers peace offerings shall give a portion of it to Adonai for the priests V. 29

#2. His own hands shall bring the offering made by fire, the fat to burn and the breasts for the priests portion V. 30-31

#3. The right shoulder shall be given to the priest offering the blood of atonement and burning the fat. V. 32-33

#4. Always give the wave breasts and the heave shoulders of peace offerings to the priests. V. 34

The wave offering derived its name from the fact that whatever was offered was waved toward the brazen altar symbolizing it was offered to Adonai, and away from the altar symbolizing that it was returned to the priests for their services. V. 34-36

The heave offering was lifted up and down several times, up as a symbol of offering it to Adonai who is above, and down again as a symbol of offering it to God's servant on earth. V. 34-36

Our tithes are given to God as our worship and thanks to Him for His provision, who in turn gives the tithes to support the priesthood, or ministers he has set aside to serve Him and His people.

The portion appointed for Aaron and his sons who were anointed to minister in the priests office. V.35-36

Aaron and his sons were consecrated and anointed publicly – before all Israel, so that all would know they were chosen ministers V3-5

There were 7 steps in Consecration of Priests:

#1. Brought them to God. V. 1-5

The people witnessed that these men were set apart by God. He did the same thing with Joshua so that the people would know that this is the person God chose to lead.

#2. Washed them in water v. 6

Represents cleansing and being set apart

#3. Clothed them V. 7-9; 13

The wore special garments that represented who they were in the service to God

#4. Anointed them V. 10-12

They were anointed to stand in the office of a minister to God's people

#5. Offered Sacrifices to God Vs. 14-30

They offered up sacrifices

#6. Communion with God v. 31-32

They were separated for 7 days to spend time in the presence of God as they were being set apart for service

#7. Separation and Services v. 33-36

They were separated to serve God and His people

Redemption Through the Blood of Messiah

Heb 9:11 But when the Messiah appeared as cohen gadol of the good things that are happening already, then, through the greater and more perfect Tent which is not man-made (that is, it is not of this created world),

Heb 9:12 he entered the Holiest Place once and for all. And he entered not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of his own blood, thus setting people free forever.

Heb 9:13 For if sprinkling ceremonially unclean persons with the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer restores their outward purity;

Heb 9:14 then how much more the blood of the Messiah, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself to God as a sacrifice without blemish, will purify our conscience from works that lead to death, so that we can serve the living God!

Heb 9:15 It is because of this death that he is mediator of a new covenant [*or will*]. Because a death has occurred which sets people free from the transgressions committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.

Heb 9:16 For where there is a will, there must necessarily be produced evidence of its maker's death,

Heb 9:17 since a will goes into effect only upon death; it never has force while its maker is still alive.

Heb 9:18 This is why the first covenant too was inaugurated with blood.

Heb 9:19 After Moshe had proclaimed every command of the Torah to all the people, he took the blood of the calves with some water and used scarlet wool and hyssop to sprinkle both the scroll itself and all the people;

Heb 9:20 and he said, "This is the blood of the covenant which God has ordained for you."

Heb 9:21 Likewise, he sprinkled with the blood both the Tent and all the things used in its ceremonies.

Heb 9:22 In fact, according to the Torah, almost everything is purified with blood; indeed, without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

Heb 9:23 Now this is how the copies of the heavenly things had to be purified, but the heavenly things themselves require better sacrifices than these.

Heb 9:24 For the Messiah has entered a Holiest Place which is not man-made and merely a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, in order to appear now on our behalf in the very presence

of God.

Heb 9:25 Further, he did not enter heaven to offer himself over and over again, like the *cohen hagadol* who enters the Holiest Place year after year with blood that is not his own;

Heb 9:26 for then he would have had to suffer death many times—from the founding of the universe on. But as it is, he has appeared once at the end of the ages in order to do away with sin through the sacrifice of himself.

Heb 9:27 Just as human beings have to die once, but after this comes judgment,

Heb 9:28 so also the Messiah, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to deliver those who are eagerly waiting for him. CJB

Notes from the Complete Jewish New Testament Commentary

11–15 Having described the Mosaic Covenant’s system of priesthood and sacrifice, the author now addresses his readers’ preoccupation with it by showing many ways in which the New Covenant’s system and its priest/mediator are better; in vv. 13–14 he makes use of a *kal v. chomer* argument (see Mt 6:30&N):

- (1) With Yeshua arrive **the good things that are happening already** (v. 11; some manuscripts have “the good things yet to come”). The entire discussion that follows, through 10:18, demonstrates that these things are better than what came with the Mosaic Covenant’s system of priesthood and sacrifice.
- (2) Yeshua serves in a better **Tent**. It is **greater, more perfect, and not manmade (that is, it is not of this created world)** (v. 11). Moreover, it is not merely a copy of the true Tent, but the heavenly original (8:5, 9:24, 10:1).
- (3) Yeshua, unlike the Mosaic *cohen hagadol* (v. 7a), has **entered into the Holiest Place** (literally, “the Holy Place,” but the context implies “the Holiest Place”; see v. 8 on this) **once and for all** (v. 12a). His single, unique and eternally effective sacrifice and entry into the Holiest Place is discussed further at vv. 25–28, 10:10–18.
- (4) Yeshua’s **means** of entry into the Holy Place was better: **his own blood, not the blood of goats, calves and bulls and the ashes of a heifer** (vv. 12–13; the significance of blood is discussed at vv. 18–22). The blood of any other human being would not only have been an abomination itself, but would have accomplished nothing useful for others. But because Yeshua was sinless, he was **a sacrifice without blemish**, and God accepted his shed blood (see 7:26–28).

Secondly, his sacrifice was **through the eternal Spirit** (v. 14), that is, authorized by God.

And finally, his death was necessary to **set people free from the transgressions** they have **committed under the first covenant** (v. 15). The ineffectiveness of animal sacrifices in comparison with Yeshua’s sacrifice is taken up again at 10:1–4.

(5) What Yeshua’s death accomplished is better than what the death of animals accomplishes: **setting people free forever** (v. 12) and **purifying our conscience from works that lead to death, so that we can serve the living God** (v. 14), versus not

having our conscience brought to the goal (v. 9) and instead merely restoring **outward purity** (v. 13&N).

- 13 Restores their outward purity**, so that they may enter the Temple; literally, “sanctifies toward the cleansing of the flesh.” Also see v. 23.

Ashes of a heifer. According to Numbers 19, anyone defiled by contact with or proximity to a corpse was ritually cleansed by **sprinkling** him with water containing the ashes of a perfect red heifer. According to Maimonides (*Yad-HaChazakah* 1, *Halakhah* 4), the *cohen hagadol* was sprinkled with this water in order to restore purity before entering the Holiest Place on *Yom-Kippur*; if so, this offers an explanation as to why these ashes are mentioned here.

A curious phenomenon that attracted the attention of the rabbis is that the ashes of the red heifer both purified and defiled. After the ceremony the person who had touched a corpse was no longer defiled (Numbers 19:11–12), but anyone touching the ashes was impure until evening (Numbers 19:7–8, 10). Yeshua has a similar dual role—see Yn 9:39, Lk 20:18.

Sprinkling is what cleansed; see also vv. 14, 19–22. At 10:19–22 the text uses the words “sprinkling” and “water” in an allusion to Ezekiel 36:16–38, which is the *haftarah* (prescribed reading from the Prophets) for *Shabbat Parah* (“heifer”), when Numbers 19 is the *Torah* reading.

At 13:11–13, a comparison is made between Yeshua and the animals “burned outside the camp”; the red heifer was one of those animals (Numbers 19:3, 5).²

This verse mentions all three: **the Messiah, the eternal Spirit and God** (likewise 10:29). But our understanding of how these relate to the oneness of *Adonai* is not compressed into the word “trinity.”

- 15 Mediator of a new covenant.** Yeshua’s relationship to the **new covenant** (see 8:6–13&NN) is, first, that **he is mediator** of it (see 1 Ti 2:5b–6aN), and second, that his **death** inaugurated it (see Mt 26:28N). However, his death has a function not only in relation to the New Covenant, but also in relation to **the first covenant: it sets people free from their transgressions** of it by being an effective death that pays the penalty for sin once and for all, whereas the death of animals offered as sin offerings gives temporary remission (see 10:1–14, Ac 13:38–39&N).

Promised eternal inheritance. These three words can be traced through the *Tanakh* as they outline one of its major themes. God promised Adam everlasting life, conditional on obedience (Genesis 2:9, 16–17; 3:22). God’s covenant with Noah includes many promises and is called eternal (Genesis 9:16). God promised Avraham and his seed the Land of Israel for ever (Genesis 13:15), and the term “inherit” is first used in the Bible in connection with this promise (Genesis 15:7). God’s promises to Avraham are reconfirmed in the covenant with Moses (see Ga 3:6–4:7&NN, which constitute an indispensable commentary on this verse), but people’s sins disqualified them from receiving what had been promised. Those who accept Yeshua’s once-for-all dealing with sin, as explained in these chapters, **may receive the promised eternal inheritance.**

² Stern, D. H. (1996). *Jewish New Testament Commentary: A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Heb 9:11–13). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

16–17 Greek *diathêkê* may be translated “**covenant**,” “**will**” or “testament”; the sense of these two verses depends on keeping in mind at least the first two meanings. A modern reader may be able more easily to grasp the author’s argument by thinking in terms of wills, but the context (vv. 15, 18–22) is that of covenants as set forth in the *Tanakh*, where the Hebrew word “*b.rit*” must be translated “covenant” and cannot be rendered as “will.” Although “will” is suggested by the last word of v. 15, “inheritance,” the *Tanakh* uses “inheritance” to mean “that which is to be received” and knows nothing of wills.

There must necessarily be produced the evidence of its maker’s death. For wills this is self-evident; but it is also true for God’s covenants, insofar as sacrifices are stand-ins for the death of the one offering them. Noah offered sacrifices (Genesis 8:20, 9:9). In the case of Avraham there were actual sacrifices (Genesis 15:9, 17–18) as well as the symbolism of the blood shed at circumcision (Genesis 17:11). The author himself discusses the Mosaic sacrifices (Exodus 24:1–8) in vv. 18–22.

Now a will is one-sided, but a covenant is two-sided. Obviously it was not God, who set the terms of these covenants, who died. Rather, it was, in all instances, the receiver of God’s covenant who died—not actually, but symbolically through identification with the shed blood. In the Mosaic Covenant, the dead animals represent the people of Israel as having died to their former uncovenanted, sinful way of life; while the sprinkled blood represents the new life offered through the covenant (“the life is in the blood,” Leviticus 17:11). The necessary connection between deaths and covenants in the *Tanakh* is further suggested in the Hebrew phrase for “to make a covenant,” “*likrot b.rit*,” which means, literally, “to cut a covenant.” On the day God cut a covenant with Avram that his descendants would inherit the Land, Avram cut animals in pieces and saw a burning lamp pass between them (Genesis 15:7–21).

19 **After Moshe had proclaimed** the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and the civil code of Exodus 21–23, and the people had responded, “We will do and obey everything *Adonai* has said,” he inaugurated the covenant by **sprinkling** blood on the altar and on **the people** (Exodus 24:1–8). Leviticus 14:4, 6, 49, 51–52 report that in purification rituals **scarlet wool** and **hyssop** (see Yn 19:28–29N) were used, and living (i.e., running) **water** was mixed with the blood. The scroll of the covenant, from which Moses read to the people, is nowhere mentioned as having been sprinkled; but since it was made by human hands, it too needed cleansing, even though the words in it were from God himself.

21 Exodus 40:9–10 says that **the Tent and all the things used in its ceremonies** were purified with oil, but it does not mention **blood**. However, Josephus, in retelling the story, writes that Moses purified

“the Tent and the vessels which belonged to it, both with oil that had first been incensed, and with the blood of bulls and rams.” (*Antiquities of the Jews* 3:8:6)

22 **Everything is purified with blood.** See the numerous examples in **the Torah** at Exodus 29–30; Leviticus 1–9, 14–17. **Almost.** For exceptions, see Exodus 19:10; Leviticus 15:5ff.; 16:26, 28; 22:6; Numbers 31:22–24.

Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. This basic principle is minimized or overlooked entirely in modern non-Messianic Judaism.

On the one hand, those forms of non-Messianic Judaism which borrow from secular philosophy promulgate the idea that modern man has evolved past the kind of primitive

religion that portrays God as requiring blood atonement. Thus Reform Judaism has removed from the *Amidah* of its prayerbook all reference to the restoration of sacrifices.

On the other hand, although Orthodox Jews pray thrice daily for the rebuilding of the Temple, so that animal sacrifices can be offered in the manner the *Torah* requires, Orthodox Judaism attenuates their significance by emphasizing the efficacy of other factors in atonement. For example, at *Rosh-HaShanah*, the solemn New Year festival when Jews are supposed to examine the sin in their lives and seek God's forgiveness, one of the most revered and moving prayers in the liturgy is the *Un'tanneh Tokef*, quoted here in full:

“We will celebrate the solemn holiness of this day, how awesome and fearsome it is. On this day your rulership is lifted up, your throne is established in mercy, and you sit upon it in truth. Truly you alone are judge, arbiter, discerner, witness, recorder, sealer, inscriber and reckoner; and you remember all forgotten deeds. You open the book of records and it reads itself, and everyone's signature is there.

“The great *shofar* is sounded, the still small voice is heard, and the angels tremble with fear as they proclaim: ‘Behold! The Day of Judgment!’ Even the armies of heaven are to be brought to judgment, for in your sight even they are not innocent. You cause all who come into the world to pass before you like a flock of sheep. Like a shepherd seeking out his flock and causing them to pass under his staff, you cause every living soul to pass before you; you count, reckon and review every creature, determining its lifetime and inscribing its destiny.

“On *Rosh-HaShanah* it is inscribed, and on *Yom-Kippur* it is sealed: how many will pass away and how many will be born, who will live and who will die; who will die prematurely and who will live out his days; who will perish by fire and who by water; who by sword and who by wild animals; who by hunger and who by thirst; who by earthquake and who by plague; who by strangling and who by stoning; who will have rest and who will wander about; who will be at peace and who will be tormented; who will be at ease and who will be bothered; who will become poor and who will become rich; who will be brought low and who will be raised up.

“But repentance, prayer and charity (*tzedakah*) avert the harsh decree.”

This prayer paints a terrifying picture of how gravely God views sin. It delineates heaven on the annual Day of Judgment (which gives but a foretaste of the final Day of *Adonai*; see Rv 1:10&N), when forgotten deeds are remembered and God apportions fates according to what everyone has done. At the end is an attempt to relieve the tension with the assurance that “repentance, prayer and charity avert the harsh decree.” But this is a false hope. Although repentance, prayer and *tzedakah* (which means “righteousness” but came to have the secondary meaning “charity”; see Mt 6:1–4&N) are expected in a believer's life, they do not suffice to avert the harsh decree of eternal separation from God awaiting those who refuse the prompting by the Holy Spirit of God to trust in Yeshua the Messiah's blood atonement.

It is understandable that it was necessary for the survival of non-Messianic Judaism after the destruction of the Temple that it minimize the role of blood sacrifice. However, it is the *Torah* itself which proclaims the necessity of blood atonement for sin:

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life.” (Leviticus 17:11, Jewish Publication Society translation)

It is not supposed here that a magical power resides in blood (see Yn 6:35N, Ro 3:25bN). Rather, Leviticus 17:11 is one of the *Torah*'s clearest statements of the indissoluble connection between sin and death. Already at Genesis 2:17–21 it is clear that sin, defined as disobedience to God, requires the sinner's death (see Ro 5:12–21N). Animal sacrifice, which by implication is found as early as Genesis 3:11, is a reminder of the seriousness of sin (see 10:3 below) and at the same time a demonstration of God's mercy toward sinners (compare Ro 3:25–26).

In non-Messianic Judaism there is today no blood atonement. This contradicts the *Torah*, which says that “the blood maketh atonement by reason of the life.” This discrepancy is implicitly acknowledged by some Orthodox Jews on *Yom-Kippur* in a ceremony called *kapparot* (“atonements”). Each person wrings a chicken's neck and swings the chicken around his head three times

“while the following is pronounced: ‘This is my substitute, my vicarious offering, my atonement; this chicken shall meet death, but I shall find a long and pleasant life of peace.’ The fowl is thought to take on any misfortune which might otherwise befall a person in punishment of his sins. After the ceremony, it is customary to donate the fowl to the poor, except for the intestines which are thrown to the birds.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica* 10:756).

The paltriness of this substitute for the awesome, fearsome, never-ending bloodiness of the Temple sacrifices is obvious even to those performing the ritual. For if “it is impossible that the blood of goats and bulls should take away sin” (10:4 below), how much less will the blood of chickens?

In the light of the above, what is to be made of Scripture passages that seem to minimize the importance of animal sacrifices? For example, Isaiah 1:11–17 says, “I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats Who has required this of you? ... Do not bring vain oblations any longer; it is an offering of abomination to me!” At Mt 12:7 Yeshua himself quoted Hosea 6:6: “I want compassion rather than animal-sacrifice.” The answer is that animal sacrifices offered by people who lack compassion, whose “hands are full of blood,” and who do not “seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless fairly or plead on behalf of the widow” (Isaiah 1:15–17; compare Ya 1:27) are not merely useless but are “an offering of abomination.”

Micah has a representative Israelite say,

“With what shall I come before *Adonai*
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with yearling calves?
Will *Adonai* be pleased with even thousands of rams,
with tens of thousands of rivers of olive oil?
Am I to give my firstborn son for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” (Micah 6:6–7)

The answer is one of the *Tanakh*'s best-known epitomes of the *Torah* (see Ga 5:14N):

“Man, it has been told you what is good,
and what *Adonai* requires of you—
just this: to do justice, to love mercy,

and to walk in humility with your God.”
(Micah 6:8)

Other similar passages are 1 Samuel 15:22, Amos 5:2ff. and Psalm 40:7–9(6–8)—which the author himself quotes at 10:5–7 in support of his own argument! Thus it is clear that the author does not regard such verses as downgrading the sacrificial system. Rather, he sees that God has never regarded sacrifices in themselves as capable of removing the guilt of sin in a permanent way (see 10:1–4). Only those whose hearts are right can offer blood sacrifices that will please God; “repentance, prayer and *tzedakah* (righteousness)” are necessary *preconditions* for acceptable sacrifice, but not *substitutes* for it.

That this is true throughout the *Tanakh*, not only at the beginning of Israel’s history but at its end, is proved by quoting the last prophet, Malachi, who writes that in Messianic times, when *Adonai* suddenly comes to his Temple along with the “messenger of the covenant” (who should be understood as Yeshua the Messiah),

“Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem
will be pleasant to *Adonai*,
as in days of old,
as in years long past.”
(Malachi 3:1–4)

What repentant, prayerful and righteous (or charitable) Judah and Jerusalem must offer God is “a sacrifice of praise continually” (13:15&N), thanking him that Yeshua has provided a once-for-all *kapparah*, a blood atonement for sin; because, as the present verse says, **without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins**. This kind of sacrificial offering will in truth “be pleasant to *Adonai*, as in days of old, as in years long past.”

- 23** Why do **heavenly things require ... sacrifices** at all? Surely they are not defiled, as are the **copies** (see 10:1), such as the Tent and its implements. Hugh Montefiore, a Jewish Anglican, writes on this verse,

“What our author meant was this: the purification of men’s consciences, made by means of the heavenly cultus, needed a better sacrifice to make it effective than [the sacrifices] which sufficed for the earthly cultus, which was a mere copy of the heavenly.” (*The Epistle To The Hebrews*, London: Adam and Charles Black, 1964, *ad loc.*)

The Messiah’s blood made it possible for undefiled heavenly things to purify defiled sinners. For external cleansing, external sacrifices suffice (9:9–10); but for spiritual cleansing, spiritual ones are needed.

- 26** **To suffer death**, Greek *pathein*, literally, “to suffer.” See 2:9b–10.

- 27** God has so organized the universe that **human beings have to die once**, not “many times” (v. 26). This is the Bible’s refutation of the concept of reincarnation, which is found in most Eastern religions and incorporated into a number of recent Western imitations. Reincarnation is based on the notion that although the body is obviously mortal, the soul is not; so that after one’s body dies, the soul that was in it migrates, perhaps after an interval of time, to another body. The purpose of this migration is

variously explained in these religions as purification, gaining experience or working out “karma.” In Hinduism and Buddhism, karma is the spiritual force which attaches to a person’s soul as a result of the ethical consequences of his actions. In general, karma causes the round of rebirths and deaths a soul endures until it achieves spiritual liberation; also the karma attached to a soul at a particular point in its evolution determines its specific destiny in its next existence.

The concept of reincarnation is attractive to people who are in some measure discontented with this life—which is to say, it is attractive to most people. And understandably so—it satisfies deep romantic needs to suppose that in a past life one might have been a general, a princess, a hermit, a great religious leader, or even a lion or a snail. Moreover, it builds on a nonbiblical notion, held by many, that only the soul is pure, the body is unclean, inferior, unworthy of being immortal (the same notion underlies gnostic and other philosophies that denigrate sex or promote various ascetic and, oddly, libertine practices; see 13:4, Ro 7:5N, 1C 7:2–9&N, Co 2:18–23&N).

Quite apart from being false, belief in karma and reincarnation attenuates responsibility for one’s actions. Anyone who believes in reincarnation cannot take sin seriously. This is because in his view the transgressions of this life can be made up in subsequent ones, and eventually every soul will achieve liberation from the “wheel of karma.” In other words, there will be no Day of Judgment when sinners must account to God for their actions and receive what their deeds deserve (as taught in 10:25b–29; Yn 5:27–29; Ac 17:31; Ro 2:5–16; 1C 3:8b–15, 4:5; 2C 5:10); so that there is little motivation for ethical behavior here and now in this present existence. Moreover, a common vulgarization of the karma doctrine lets people excuse their present sins as the consequence of bad karma in past lives, so that they shouldn’t be held responsible now (“my karma made me do it”).

But our text is correct in proclaiming that first everyone dies; and then, **after this comes judgment**. Human life is nonrepeatable, one’s actions in this life are judged after death, and there is no opportunity for amendment later. A great-uncle of mine who was a secular Jew and did not believe in an afterlife of any sort used to say it was his unbelief that motivated him to behave ethically in this life, since he would never have another chance to do so. I myself think that he was “living off the capital” of forbears who believed in the *olam haba*. If one doesn’t believe in afterlife, one perforce does not believe that there is a Judge who will reward and punish according to what one has done. The concept of a Day of Judgment (*Yom-HaDin*) is found throughout the *Tanakh*, as well as in Jewish tradition. I am not a fan of reductionism, but I am tempted to see ethics without God and judgment as reducible either to acting from learned patterns or seeking one’s own advantage, and I question whether either deserves to be called ethics—even if “one’s own advantage” is construed to include willing good for others.

Is it too extreme to say that belief in reincarnation among Hindus is one reason why Mother Theresa, a Christian, has a ministry of comforting persons left to die on the streets of Calcutta (for which she received the Nobel Peace Prize)? People who regard the miseries of this life as merely the outworking of karma acquired in past lives find it easy to regard unexplained suffering as just and have correspondingly little incentive to relieve it. There are, of course, other reasons for neglect—life in India is hard, and there may not be much poor people can do to help, even if they want to.

Reincarnation also does away with the idea of historical purpose. This is because it implies that the individual soul's journey from body to body is incomparably more important than anything a nation or a people might do. I call this the yo-yo theory of history; it asserts that the soul descends from the eternal unchanging world, takes on a body and appears in this illusory world of ordinary existence where nothing matters, lives a life without significance in relation to other people, and then goes back up into the eternal unchanging world, only to repeat the process. This yo-yo theory of history, in which nothing of moment ever happens, completely contradicts the *Tanakh's* pervasive theme that history has a beginning (creation), a middle (revelation) and an end (redemption)—that God has created man for a purpose, and has revealed his choice of a people, Israel, through whom he will accomplish that redemptive purpose.

In sum, when compared with the alternatives, the idea expressed in this verse provides the most solid basis for a sound ethics and an intellectually satisfying philosophy of history, both of which are needed by anyone seriously seeking happiness and meaning in his life. For more, see my *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*, Chapter III, entitled "History."

- 28 Here is the clearest statement in the Bible of the relationship between Yeshua's first and second comings. His first coming fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 52:13–53:12, which predicted that the Messiah would die as an atonement for human sin and be raised from the dead, so that he could **appear a second time** to fulfill such prophecies as Isaiah 2:2–5 and 9:5–6(6–7), which say that the Messiah will bring peace to the world and deliver his people Israel from oppression. However, since "not everyone from Israel is truly part of Israel" (Ro 9:6), only **those who are eagerly waiting for** Yeshua to return can have assurance that they will be delivered.³

³ Stern, D. H. (1996). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Heb 9:14–28). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.