

5785 - Leviticus 6-8 - Tzav (Command)

OUTDOOR FIRES¹

Rabbi Elazar would give a coin to a pauper and only then he would pray (Bava Batra [The Last Gate] 10a).

The Holy Temple in Jerusalem was a human-like structure: its chambers and furnishings corresponded to the various organs and faculties which make up the human being.⁽¹⁾ As our sages point out, when G-d tells Moses, "they shall make for Me a Sanctuary, and I will dwell within them" (Exo 25:8), G-d does not say, "I will dwell within it" but "within them."⁽³⁾ In other words, **the objective of the Holy Temple is that we apply the awareness and experience of the divine which pervaded this physical edifice to all aspects of our daily life.** So **each of the Temple's vessels, and the services which were performed with them, has its equivalent in the manner in which we live our life and serve our Creator.**

The services performed in the Temple fall under two general categories:

- (a) The "inner services" performed in the *heichal* (sanctuary). These included lighting the menorah, burning the *ketoret* (incense) on the "inner altar" arranging the "showbread" and the rarified service performed on Yom Kippur in the Temple's innermost chamber, the Holy of Holies.
- (b) The "outer services" performed in the *azarah*, the Temple courtyard. Here were brought the *korbanot* (animal and meal offerings) which were offered on the "outdoor altar."

On the individual level, this translates into the two basic domains of human endeavor: (a) **our inner spiritual development**; (b) **our efforts to refine our material self, and our involvements with other people and with the world around us.**

THE PATH OF THE FLAME

Common wisdom would dictate that we should proceed from the inside outward. First, we should deal with the internal needs of our soul, following which we can direct our attention to external matters. Having achieved inner harmony and perfection, we would be in the position to truly influence our surroundings. Tend to the home fires, we often tell ourselves, before concerning ourselves with the illumination of the outside.

But in the Holy Temple, things were done the other way around. The day began by lighting the fire on the "outer altar" which stood in the Temple courtyard. In fact, the law specifically stipulates that both the

"inner altar" and the menorah, which stood inside the Sanctuary, are to be lit from the fires of the outer altar (Yoma 45b).

BEGIN ON THE OUTSIDE

The menorah's seven oil lamps represent the divine wisdom of the Torah; the "inner altar" corresponds to the refinement and perfection of our higher, spiritual faculties. But spiritual gluttony is no less selfish than the physical sort, and one who focuses solely on self-realization and self-fulfillment—even in the most positive and lofty sense—is turning their Temple inside out. **It is true that the more we possess, the more we have to give to others. It is also true that when we are lacking in a certain area, it is extremely difficult to rectify such a failing in our fellow.** Yet certainly the needs of others cannot be ignored until such time as we have attained perfection ourselves.

Furthermore, **we often find that in reaching out to others, the primary beneficiary is oneself. An idea explained to others is now more fully and deeply understood. Helping another in a crisis opens up reserves of faith and fortitude in oneself that one hardly knew existed.**

This is the lesson implicit in the fact that the menorah and the inner altar were lit from the fire out in the courtyard. Reach out to others—to the "other" within yourself (i.e., your material self), **and to the literal others to whom you can contribute some light and warmth.** These external acts of illumination will, in turn, ignite the home fires of your own Temple's inner chambers.

(1) See the essay, "Model Home," in vol. II (Exodus) of *The Inside Story*.

(3) Shaloh, *Shaar HaOtiot, Lamed*.

1. *In other words, the objective of the Holy Temple is that we apply the awareness and experience of the divine which pervaded this physical edifice to all aspects of our daily life.*

a. John 2:18-25 (CJB)

¹⁸So the Judeans confronted him by asking him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove you have the right to do all this?"

¹⁹Yeshua answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again." ²⁰The Judeans said, "It took 46 years to build this Temple, and you're going to raise it in three days?" ²¹**But the "temple" he had spoken of was his body.** ²²Therefore, when he was raised from the dead, his *talmidim* remembered that he had said this, and they trusted in the *Tanakh* and in what Yeshua had said.

²³Now while Yeshua was in Yerushalayim at the *Pesach* festival, there were many people who "**believed in his name**" when they saw the miracles he performed. ²⁴But he did not commit himself to them, for he knew what people are like—²⁵that is, he didn't need

¹ Yanki Tauber, *The Inside Story, Leviticus*, (Meaningful Life Center), pp. 39-41.

anyone to inform him about a person, because he knew what was in the person's heart.

1) *"believed in his name"* What does this mean—people believed that his name was Yeshua? What possible significance could that have? The statement doesn't really make sense. The expression is a Hebrew idiom that means, "many people believed who he was."

b. 1Corinthians 6:12-20

¹²"I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but I will not be mastered by anything. ¹³You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both." The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality (*i.e.*, idolatry) but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. ¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Messiah himself? Shall I then take the members of Messiah and unite them with a (pagan-Temple) prostitute? Never! ¹⁶Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." ¹⁷But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. ¹⁸**Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.** ¹⁹Do you not know that **your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit**, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

- 1) Ancient Corinth was one of the largest and most important cities in ancient Greece (c. 400 BCE). In 146 BCE it was captured and completely destroyed by the Roman army. As a newly rebuilt Roman colony in 44 BCE, Corinth flourished and became the administrative capital of the Roman province of Achaia.
- 2) The command to "flee" is urgent and decisive, suggesting immediate and complete separation from idolatry. In the context of Corinth, a city known for its numerous temples and pagan practices, **idolatry was a pervasive temptation**. The cultural and religious environment **included the worship of gods like Aphrodite (Roman: Venus, the goddess of love, beauty, pleasure and procreation)** and Apollo, which often involved rituals and feasts that believers were tempted to participate in. This echoes the (Hebrew Bible) warnings against idolatry, such as in Exodus 20:3-5, where God commands exclusive worship. The call to flee is not just a physical departure but a spiritual and moral dis-

tancing from anything that compromises one's devotion to God. This aligns with the broader biblical narrative that portrays idolatry as spiritual adultery, a theme seen in books like Hosea. The (Apostolic Writings) further reinforces this in passages like 1John 5:21, where believers are urged to keep themselves from idols.²

2. *On the individual level, this translates into the two basic domains of human endeavor: (a) **our inner spiritual development**; (b) **our efforts to refine our material self, and our involvements with other people and with the world around us.***

a. Why is it hard to be good? It is a question Jewish thinkers have been asking for more than 1,000 years. While the commandments in the Torah and other Jewish texts are laid out pretty clearly, people often have a hard time following them.³

Mussar⁴ (also spelled Musar), a Jewish spiritual practice that gives concrete instructions on how to live a meaningful and ethical life, arose as a response to this concern. Mussar is virtue-based ethics—based on the idea that **by cultivating inner virtues, we improve ourselves**. This is in contrast to most Jewish ethical teachings, which are rule-based. Today, a number of people who do not follow traditional Jewish rules and rituals are attracted to Mussar because it offers opportunities for personal transformation through a Jewish lens.

Mussar masters recognized that simply learning about kindness does not make us more kind. Moreover, they understood that our inner drives, wounds and appetites often manifest as the Yetzer Hara (the Evil Inclination), actively preventing us from behaving as we know we should. One Mussar teacher, Rabbi Elya Lopian (1876-1970), described Mussar as "teaching the heart what the mind already understands."

The word Mussar appears in the Bible 51 times, more than half of them in the book of Proverbs. It carried a connotation of **ethical instruction according to the teachings of the Torah**. In the rabbinic period, texts such as Pirkei Avot carried the thread of personal ethical teachings.

In the medieval period, Mussar became a branch of study fo-

2 https://biblehub.com/study/1_corinthians/10-14.htm

3 <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-musar-movement/>

4 Alan Morinis, *Everyday Holiness: The Jewish Spiritual Path of Mussar*
Barry H Block and Alan Morinis, *The Mussar Torah Commentary: A Spiritual Path to Living a Meaningful and Ethical Life*
Ruchi Koval, *Soul Construction: Shape Your Character Using 8 Steps from the Timeless Jewish Practice of Mussar*

cused on virtue ethics (as opposed to rules-based ethics), **the practice of working to refine one's character to become a better person and closer to God.**

1) Virtue-Ethics—an approach to Ethics that emphasizes an individual's character as the key element of ethical thinking, rather than rules about the acts themselves (Deontology) or their consequences (Consequentialism).⁵

2) Character Qualities/Values⁶

Humility (ענוה [anavah])

Patience (סבלנות [savlanut])

Gratitude (הכרת הטוב [hakarat ha'tov])

Compassion (רחמים [rachamim])

Order (סדר [seder])

Self-Control (מנוחת הנפש [menuchat ha'nefesh])

Honor (כבוד [kavod])

Simplicity (הסתפקות [histapkut])

Enthusiasm (זריזות [zerizut])

Silence (שתיקה [sh'tikah])

Generosity (נדיבות [nedivut])

Truth (אמת [emet])

Moderation (שביל הזהב [shevil ha'zahov])

Loving Kindness (חסד [chesed])

Responsibility (אחריות [achrayut])

Trust (ביטחון [bitchon])

Faith (אמונה [emunah])

Awe (יראה [yirah])

No English translation is accurate. A close association is fear/awe.

b. 2Corinthians 5:16-21

¹⁶So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view.

Though we once regarded Messiah in this way, we do so no longer.

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Messiah, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! ¹⁸All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Messiah and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹that God was reconciling the world to himself in Messiah,

not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰We are therefore Messiah's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Messiah's behalf: **Be reconciled to God.** ²¹God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, **so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

1) Ephesians 2:8-13

⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through (trusting)—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God's handiwork, created in Messiah Yeshua **to do good works**, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

¹¹Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth ... ¹²remember that at that time you were separate from Messiah, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Messiah Yeshua you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Messiah.

2) Ephesians 5:8-10

⁸For you were once darkness, but **now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light** ⁹(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰and **find out what pleases the Lord.**

3) Colossians 2:11-14

¹¹In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Messiah, ¹²having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³When you were dead in your sins and in the un-circumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Messiah. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴having canceled **the charge of our legal indebtedness**, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.

3. *It is true that the more we possess, the more we have to give to others. It is also true that when we are lacking in a certain area, it is extremely difficult to rectify such a failing in our fellow.*

a. Luke 12:13-21

¹³Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." ¹⁴Yeshua replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" ¹⁵Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does

⁵ https://www.philosophybasics.com/branch_virtue_ethics.html

⁶ <https://mussarinstitute.org/what-is-mussar/>

not consist in an abundance of possessions." ¹⁶And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' ¹⁸Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."²⁰But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" ²¹**This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.**"

b. Matthew 7:1-5

¹"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ²For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. ³**Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?** ⁴How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

4. *Furthermore, we often find that in reaching out to others, the primary beneficiary is oneself. An idea explained to others is now more fully and deeply understood. Helping another in a crisis opens up reserves of faith and fortitude in oneself that one hardly knew existed.*

a. תַּנִּן (na-tan—give, put, set).

- 1) It reads the same forward and backward.
- 2) This indicates that **in giving, one also receives.**

b. Reflections on Crisis and Human Resilience⁷

- 1) In times of crisis, the human spirit reveals its most profound dimensions. When we extend ourselves to help others during their darkest moments, we discover hidden strengths within ourselves.
- 2) Our capacity for compassion expands when confronting others' challenges.
- 3) Inner strength emerges most powerfully when supporting those in need.
- 4) The act of helping creates a reciprocal strengthening of both helper and helped.

5) Helping others doesn't just aid them—it reveals and strengthens our own inner resources, often surprising us with capabilities we never knew we possessed.

6) When we reach out to help others:

- a) We tap into previously undiscovered personal strengths.
- b) Our perspective on human capability broadens.
- c) We build stronger community connections.
- d) Our own resilience grows through the experience.

5. *Reach out to others—to the "other" within yourself (i.e., your material self), and to the literal others to whom you can contribute some light and warmth.*

a. Matthew 5:14-16

¹⁴"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

b. Matthew . 6:1-21

¹"Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

²So **when you give to the needy** ...

⁵And **when you pray** ...

¹⁶**When you fast** ...

¹⁹"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

²⁰But **store up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.