YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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**STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA**

**PARASHAT PINCHAS**

**SICHA OF HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN**

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In memory of Rabbi Moshe ben Avraham Shraga Furst z”l

Niftar 17 Tammuz 5771.

Dedicated by his family.

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**The Daily Sacrifices**

Translated by Kaeren Fish

The month of Tammuz is a month of infamy. It includes two dates that commemorate terrible suffering that befell Am Yisrael – the 9th and the 17th. But unlike Av, in which the fasting and mourning over the destruction are followed by our celebration on the 15th of the month, in Tammuz there is not a single joyous day to balance the tragedy.

The Mishna lists five catastrophes we commemorate on the 17th of Tammuz:

Five things happened to our forefathers on the 17th of Tammuz… The Tablets were shattered, and the daily sacrifice (*tamid*) ceased, and the city (Jerusalem) was breached, and Apostamos burned the Torah, and placed an idol in the Temple. (*Ta’anit* 26a)

It is exceedingly difficult to rank these five events in order of importance. Each was terrible in its own way, and had horrible effects in the long term. On the other hand, most people would have little difficulty in declaring the cessation of the daily sacrifice as the least terrible. After nearly two millennia we are used to living without the daily sacrifice and do not feel its absence. But even if we were to try to imagine ourselves in the situation of the people of Jerusalem at the time of the Destruction, there is no comparison between the cessation of the daily sacrifice – the halting of a positive practice – and the other four tragedies.

Indeed, according to some religious approaches, daily practices occupy a secondary position. These approaches emphasize special occasions and climactic moments in contrast to everyday routine. Judaism does not belong to this group of religions. The world of Judaism in general, and Halakha in particular, is based on the idea of the *tamid*. Judaism desires that we relate to the existence and presence of God at every time and in every place, and lays out specific commandments that pertain to a person every day, everywhere, and in every situation: the duties of the heart, the commandments of remembrance, etc.

The daily sacrifice has a dual nature: it is a sacrifice which is brought every day, just as the *musaf* (additional) sacrifice for Shabbat is brought every week. At the same time, offering this sacrifice is part of the fixed routine of the Temple – like the lighting of the lamps and the offering of incense. Owing to its special nature, the *tamid* sacrifice sets down the framework for the sacrificial service in the Temple: all sacrifices are offered between the *tamid* of the morning and the *tamid* at twilight. The *tamid* therefore molds and guides the entire day within the Temple and outside of it.

The centrality of the *tamid* sacrifice in Judaism is also manifest on the purely halakhic level: “Daily sacrifices take precedence over additional sacrifices” (Mishna *Zevachim* 89a). This precedence exists on two levels: there is chronological precedence, as well as precedence in terms of importance: if only one of them can be offered, it is the daily sacrifice.

The picture that arises from the Mishna, according to which the *tamid* paves the way and serves as the groundwork for the *musaf*, is a stark contrast to the conventional way of thinking. In general, people are attracted to that which is festive, special and exceptional; they disdain that which is routine, boring and everyday. The Mishna presents a revolutionary set of preferences: “The *tamid* [sacrifices] take precedence over the *musaf* [sacrifices].”

If we examine the matter in depth, we will see that the Mishna is expressing more than merely the superiority of the *tamid*. It is making a profound statement: without the *tamid*, the *musaf* could not exist. It is inconceivable that the pyramid be inverted, with the *musaf* enjoying preference over the *tamid*.

The Gemara discusses an instance of a clash between two sacrifices, one holier than the other, but the latter more regular than the first:

It was asked: [In a choice between] that which is more frequent and that which is more sacred, which takes precedence? … Come and hear: The *tamid* offerings take precedence over the *musaf* offerings, even though the *musaf* offerings are more sacred! Just as Shabbat affects the *musaf* offerings, does it not affect the *tamid* offerings?! (*Zevachim* 90b)

The character of each day is deeply entrenched in the *tamid* sacrifice of that day. Just as the *musaf* of Shabbat draws from the holiness of Shabbat, so the *tamid* offered on Shabbat also draws from it. A one-time *musaf* can never take preference over the routine *tamid*.

Hence, owing to the centrality of the concept of the *tamid* in our consciousness, we cannot remain impassive in the face of the cessation of this sacrifice. A Christian could manage easily without a daily sacrifice, but the entire world of a *ben Torah* is based on this daily routine, and the deeper significance behind its nullification should frighten us no less – perhaps even more – than the significance of the other tragedies associated with the 17th of Tammuz.

The halting of the *tamid* by imperial decree was an acute loss, but today we face a danger that is far greater: the cessation of the *tamid* out of weariness and neglect, not as a result of some external force. We must realize that something is amiss when we begin to identify with the alien world-view that declares that only the special *musaf* offerings are important, while routine daily expressions and events pale into insignificance and lose their value in our eyes. A Jew has no prosaic moments! He or she must consistently value the prosaic and seek and discern its poetical aspect: “The entire Torah is referred to as ‘song.’” When the level of awareness of and commitment to the *tamid* becomes eroded, the situation is most dangerous.

In our lives as *bnei Torah*, the concept of the *tamid* finds expression in three main areas.

First, “Be ravished always with its love” (*Mishlei* 5:19). Love of Torah, finding expression in daily study, is the clearest expression of the concept of the daily *tamid*. The daily study session is admittedly routine and hence appears from the outside to be no cause for excitement. However, for someone who connects himself and immerses himself in the world of Torah, there is no such thing as a routine day; he is “ravished with its love” constantly. It is not for nothing that a regular study session is called a *seder* (literally, ‘order’), like the *seder ha-temidim* (order of the daily sacrifices); it frames and shapes the entire day.

The second expression of the concept of *tamid* is hinted at by *Chazal* in their assertion that “the prayer services were instituted corresponding to the daily sacrifices” (*Berakhot* 26b). While there is no danger of a complete cessation of the “*tamid*”of prayer, there is certainly a danger of erosion in the quality, intensity, concentration and depth of our prayer. Especially in light of the challenges and threats constantly facing the State of Israel, we must pray, cry out and shake the heavens in supplication. It is especially important at critical times of danger to emphasize and internalize the importance of the concept of the *tamid* in our prayer.

The third area expressing “*tamid*” is Shabbat. Ramban understands the commandment to “Remember the Shabbat day to sanctify it” as a perpetual command that applies not only to Shabbat but also to the rest of the week. As we have seen, the sanctity of Shabbat radiates to the *tamid* offerings of Shabbat just as it does to the *musaf* offerings. We must not belittle the uniqueness of every “routine” Shabbat just because there are also some special, especially festive ones.

The difficult month ahead of us may be transformed into a month of elevation. To counter the cessation of the *tamid* on the 17th of Tammuz, it is up to us to renew and strengthen the *tamid*, specifically during this month, through engaging in Torah, prayer and enhancement of Shabbat. The responsibility rests with each one of us; we must not leave it to others. Our task is to act, to start the momentum towards renewing our ancient glory, “to restore the order of the daily sacrifices and the practice of the additional offerings.”

(This *sicha* was delivered on Rosh Chodesh Tamuz 5760 [2000].)