



They rededicated the Temple, so what?

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קִרְבָּנוֹת Qorbanot (adapted from <http://www.jewfaq.org/qorbanot.htm>)

In ancient times, a major component of Jewish ritual was the offering of qorbanot. The word "qorbanot" is usually translated as "sacrifices" or "offerings"; however, both of these terms suggest a loss of something or a giving up of something, and although that is certainly a part of the ritual, that is not at all the literal meaning of the Hebrew word.

The word for an animal sacrifice is actually zevach זֶבַח, which comes from the act of slaughtering, not from the act of giving anything up. The act of worshiping God in physical terms by performing offerings was known as avodah עֲבוּדָה – literally divine service.

The word qorbanot קִרְבָּנוֹת comes from the root קרב Qof-Reish-Beit, which means "to draw near," and indicates the primary purpose of offerings: to draw us near to God.

These rituals were only performed in the Mishkan מִשְׁכָּן and later in the Beit Hamikdash, commonly called "The Temple" though the word mikdash מִקְדָּשׁ really means holy place. Parts of the rituals involved in the offering of qorbanot were performed exclusively by the kohanim (priests). The procedures could not be performed by anyone else and could not be performed in any other place. Sacrificial worship ended completely after the expulsion of Jews from the Temple Mount, around the year 135CE.

Concepts underlying Qorbanot

There are three basic concepts underlying qorbanot: giving, substitution and coming closer.

The first the aspect of **giving**. A qorban requires the renunciation of something that belongs to the person making the offering. Thus, sacrifices are made from domestic animals, not wild animals (because wild animals do not belong to anyone). Likewise, offerings of food are ordinarily in the form of flour or meal, which requires substantial work to prepare.

Another important concept is the element of **substitution**. The idea is that the thing being offered is a substitute for the person making the offering, and the things that are done to the offering are things that should have been done to the person offering. The offering is in some sense "punished" in place of the offeror. It is interesting to note that whenever the subject of qorbanot is addressed in the Torah, the name of God used is the four-letter name indicating God's mercy.

The third important concept is the idea **coming closer**. The essence of sacrifice is to bring a person closer to God.

Purposes of Qorbanot

Contrary to popular belief, the purpose of qorbanot is not simply to obtain forgiveness from sin. Although many qorbanot have the effect of expiating sins, there are many other purposes for bringing qorbanot, and the expiatory effect is often incidental, and is subject to significant limitations.

The purposes of qorbanot are much the same as the purposes of prayer: we bring qorbanot to praise God, to become closer to Him, to express thanks to God, love or gratitude. We bring qorbanot to celebrate holidays and festivals. Others are used to cleanse a person of ritual impurity (which does not necessarily have anything to do with sin: childbirth causes such impurity but is certainly not a sin). And yes, many qorbanot, like many prayers, are brought for purposes of atonement.

The atoning aspect of qorbanot is limited. For the most part, qorbanot only expiate unintentional sins, that is, sins committed because a person forgot that this thing was a sin. No atonement is needed for violations committed under duress or through lack of knowledge, and for the most part, qorbanot cannot atone for a malicious, deliberate sin. In addition, qorbanot have no expiating effect unless the person making the offering sincerely repents his or her actions before making the offering and makes restitution to any person who was harmed by the violation.

Types of Qorbanot

There were many types of qorbanot, but this is a simplified list of the most important types.

עֹלָה Olah: Burnt Offering

Perhaps the best-known class of offerings is the burnt offering. It was the oldest and commonest sacrifice and represented submission to God's will. The Hebrew word for burnt offering is עֹלָה olah, from the root עֹלָה Ayin-Lamed-Hei, meaning to go up. It is the same root as the word aliyah, which is used to describe moving to Israel or being called "up" to the bimah to say a blessing over the Torah. An olah is completely burnt on the outer altar; no part of it is eaten by anyone. Because the offering represents complete submission to God's will, the entire offering is given to God (i.e., it cannot be used after it is burnt). It expresses a desire to commune with God and expiates sins incidentally in the process (because how can you commune with God if you are tainted with sins?). An olah could be made from cattle, sheep, goats, or even birds, depending on the offeror's means.

Burnt offerings were typically performed as part of the daily routine of worship. The morning olah was called Shacharit. And on special feast days and Shabbat there was an additional offering called musaph.

זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים Zevach Sh'lamim: Peace Offering

A peace offering is an offering expressing thanks or gratitude to God for His bounties and mercies. The word זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים sh'lamim is related to the word shalom, meaning "peace" or "whole." A representative portion of the offering is burnt on the altar, a portion (the waive offering) is given to the kohanim, and the rest is eaten by the offeror and his family; thus, everyone gets a part of this offering.

This category of offerings includes thanksgiving-offerings (in Hebrew, Todah, which was obligatory for survivors of life-threatening crises), free will-offerings, and offerings made after fulfilment of a vow. Note that this class of offerings has nothing to do with sin; in fact, the Talmud states that in the age of the messiah (when there is no more sin), this will be the only class of offering that is brought to the Temple.

חַטָּאת Chatat: Sin Offering

A sin offering is an offering to atone for and purge a sin. It is an expression of sorrow for the error and a desire to be reconciled with God. The Hebrew term for this type of offering is chatat חַטָּאת, from the word cheit חַטָּה, meaning "missing the mark." A chatat could only be offered for unintentional sins committed through carelessness, not for intentional, malicious sins. The size of the offering varied according to the nature of the sin and the financial means of the sinner. Some chatatot are individual and some are communal. Communal offerings represent the interdependence of the community, and the fact that we are all responsible for each other's sins. A few special chatatot could not be eaten, but for the most part, for the average person's personal sin, the chatat was eaten by the kohanim.

אֲשָׁם Asham: Guilt Offering

A guilt offering is an offering to atone for sins of stealing things from the altar, for when you are not sure whether you have committed a sin or what sin you have committed, or for breach of trust. The Hebrew word for a guilt offering is asham. When there was doubt as to whether a person committed a sin, the person would make an asham, rather than a chatat, because bringing a chatat would constitute admission of the sin, and the person would have to be punished for it. If a person brought an asham and later discovered that he had in fact committed the sin, he would have to bring a chatat at that time. An asham was eaten by the kohanim.

מִנְחָה Minchah: Food and Drink Offerings

A meal offering (minchah) represented the devotion of the fruits of man's work to God, because it was not a natural product, but something created through man's effort. A representative piece of the offering was burnt on the fire of the altar, but the rest was eaten by the kohanim. A Minchah was offered every afternoon.

There are also offerings of undiluted wine, referred to as nesech נֶסֶךְ.

Other offerings

לֶחֶם פָּנִים The show bread and הַשֻּׁלְחָן The table

In addition to the regular offerings, once a week, twelve special loaves of bread were put on display on a special table, next to the menorah, outside the holy of holies. This bread miraculously stayed fresh for a week and was then eaten by the priests and replaced with fresh loaves. The bread probably retained its freshness as it was oily matzah. No chametz was ever allowed in the sanctuary.

חֻלָּה Challah

In Temple times, whenever one made bread, a portion of dough was taken off and given to the kohanim, so that they had bread to eat. This portion was called challah.

שֶׁמֶן Shemen: Oil and the Menorah מְנֵרָה

One other item was offered as part of sacrificial worship, but not primarily as part of sacrifices themselves. Oil was always part of a minchah, or meal offering, as fine flour was mixed with oil to make a kind of biscuit or oily matzah. This would be pure olive oil (white oil from unripe berries, so nothing like extra virgin olive oil). Of course this oil was also offered in the menorah, which was lit daily.

קְטֹרֶת K'toret: Incense / Spice offering

There were of course two altars in the mishkan / mikdash. The large altar מִזְבֵּחַ הָעֹלָה mizbach ha'olah was for offering animal sacrifices. But there was also a small altar מִזְבֵּחַ הַקְטֹרֶת mizbach hak'toret specifically for spices, just outside the entrance to the holy of holies. A special mix of spices. Different formulas list between four and 13 ingredients for this, and it is forbidden for anyone to mix precisely those ingredients in precisely this way for any profane purpose. The spices were burned on the incense altar every morning and afternoon after daily burnt offerings. On Yom Kippur, this altar was purified by the high priests by sprinkling blood and counting, which we act out symbolically in our own Yom Kippur musaph (the avodah service).

כִּיּוֹר Kiyor: The basin – washing hands

Purity played an important part of sacrificial worship. Priests always ritually washed their hands, and sometimes also their feet, before performing their duties. Certain physical conditions or events also would render a person “tamei” and requiring a process of purification, which normally involved full body immersion (mikveh).



From <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-tabernacle/> and Wikipedia

Transformation 1: The bimah as altar

When sacrificial worship ended, the Rabbis instituted prayers to replace the sacrifices. Service of the heart (avodat haleiv) עבודת הלב replaced physical service (avodah) עבודה as we ask God to accept our prayers as if they were the olot we can no longer perform. This transition took place gradually. The men of the great assembly formulated the Amidah in the 4th century CE, between the destruction of the 1st Temple and the building of the 2nd Temple. The purpose was to help people to find the words to pray. Prior to this, people just prayed with whatever words they thought of. During the 2nd Temple period, synagogues operated at the same time as sacrificial worship in the Temple. Once sacrificial worship ended (around 135CE), the amidah took over completely as the primary method of prayer in Judaism.

There never was a ma'ariv offering, so ma'ariv has its origin in the obligation to say the Shema in the evening. The Amidah was added to ma'ariv later because people felt the need to pray, but this Amidah is usually not obligatory like Shacharit or Minchah.

For Shacharit, Minchah, and musaph, the Amidah is repeated with kedushah, prayers about God's holiness, which is based on the prayers sang by the Levites to accompany the offerings in the Temple. This is why there is no repetition for ma'ariv, as this Amidah does not come from the Temple service.

From the preliminary morning service:

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, יי אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שְׁתֵּהא אֲמִירָה זוֹ חֲשׁוּבָה וּמִקְבֻלָּת
וּמְרָצָה לְפָנֶיךָ, כְּאֵלוֹ הַקְּרָבָנוּ קָרְבַּן הַתָּמִיד בְּמוֹעֲדוֹ וּבְמִקוֹמוֹ וּכְהִלְכָתוֹ.

May it be your will, Lord our God and God of our ancestors, that this speech be correct and received and accepted before You, as if we had brought the daily burnt offering at its correct time and in its correct place according to its correct practice.

From the Avodah section of the Amidah:

רְצֵה, יי אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ, בְּעַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבְתַפְלָתָם, וְהִשֵּׁב אֶת הָעֲבוֹדָה לְדָבִיר בֵּיתְךָ, וְאִשִּׁי
יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּתְפַלְתֵם בְּאַהֲבָה תִקְבַּל בְּרָצוֹן, וְתֵהִי לְרָצוֹן תָּמִיד עֲבוֹדַת יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמָּךְ.

Be pleased, Lord our God, with your people Israel and with their prayers. Return the Service to the holiest place of your House, and receive with love and delight the burnt offerings and prayers of Israel. May the service of your people Israel always please you.

Beit Hamikdash / Mishkan	Synagogue
Mizbach ha'olah / mizbach hak'toret	The bimah, the almemar
Menorah	Neir tamid, menorah-like light
Kiyor / washing basin	Hand-washing basin for kohanim. Washing hands before praying.
Aron	Aron hakodesh
Regular olah (daily, Shabbat and festivals)	Amidah with kedushah
High priest's clothing	Decorations on the sefer Torah

Transformation 2: The table as altar

Probably more important than the bimah in the synagogue, is the table in a Jewish home. The idea that the table substitutes for the altar can be found in the Talmud

Talmud Chagigah 27a (repeated in Menachot 97a and Talmud B'rachot 55a)

For it is written [Ezekiel 41:2]: The altar, three cubits high, and the length thereof two cubits, was of wood, and so the corners; the length thereof and the walls thereof, were also of wood; and he said unto me: 'This is the table that is before the Lord'. — [The verse] begins with the altar and ends with the table! R. Johanan and Resh Lakish both explain: At the time when the Temple stood, the altar used to make atonement for a person; now a person's table makes atonement for him.

From this comes the idea that when we have a meal, it is a holy occasion. We say brachot over food and must recite words of Torah if our meal is not to be considered an abomination.

Mishnah Avot. Chapter 3, Mishnah 3

Rabbi Shimon said: If three have eaten at one table and have not spoken there words of Torah, [it is] as if they had eaten sacrifices [offered] to the dead, as it is said, "for all tables are full of filthy vomit, when the All-Present is absent" (Isaiah 28:8). But, if three have eaten at one table, and have spoken there words of Torah, [it is] as if they had eaten at the table of the All-Present, blessed be He, as it is said, "And He said unto me, 'This is the table before the Lord'" (Ezekiel 41:2)

Today, when we have a festive meal on Shabbat or festivals, we do kiddush over wine and then eat special bread (challah) dipped in salt. We have salt on our challah, because all qorbanot were offered with salt. We smell spices when we do Havdalah. We usually eat meat on our festive occasions.

Sarah's Tent (Midrash Rabbah - Genesis LX:16)

16. AND ISAAC BROUGHT HER INTO HIS MOTHER SARAH'S TENT (XXIV, 67). You find that, as long as Sarah lived, a cloud hung over her tent; when she died, that cloud disappeared; but when Rebekah came, it returned. As long as Sarah lived, her doors were wide open; at her death that liberality ceased; but when Rebekah came, that open-handedness returned. As long as Sarah lived, there was a blessing on her dough, and the lamp used to burn from the evening of the Sabbath until the evening of the following Sabbath; when she died, these ceased, but when Rebekah came, they returned. And so, when he saw her following in his mother's footsteps, separating her hallah in cleanness and handling her dough in cleanness, straightway, AND ISAAC BROUGHT HER INTO THE TENT.

Beit Hamikdash / Mishkan	Home
Mizbach ha'olah / mizbach hak'toret	The table especially on Shabbat and yom tov
Menorah	Shabbat and yom tov and Chanukah candles.
Kiyor / washing basin	Hand-washing before eating bread
The show bread	"Challah" bread on shabbat and yom tov
Challah	Taking challah when making bread
Nesech (wine poured on the altar)	Kiddush wine
Salt on the sacrifices	Salt on the challah
Shelamim / celebratory offerings	Festive "simchah" meals / kiddushim
k'toret	Besamim / spices at havdallah

Sarah's Tent



Sarah had a tent of her own. Every time that the family made camp, Sarah's tent was set up first. Abraham taught men about the One God. Sarah was the women's teacher. Abraham's tent had doors on all four sides so that everyone who was looking for hospitality could easily find their way in. Sarah's tent was where Shabbat was created. Every week Sarah baked *hallah*. Every week Sarah lit Shabbat candles. The smell of the *hallah* lasted from week to week. It was always in the tent. The Shabbat lights burned from one Shabbat until the next set were kindled. The tent always smelled of *hallah*. It was always a place of light.

The *Shekhinah* is the part of God that gets close to people. It is the part that can be our neighbor. God was comfortable with Sarah and her tent. God liked the smell and the light and the peace of Shabbat. The *Shekhinah* would come down in a cloud and rest on Sarah's tent.

When Sarah died, her tent grew dark; the smell of *hallah* began to fade. Isaac was sad. He refused to see anyone.

Abraham sent his servant back to "Padam Aram," the old country, to find a wife for Isaac. The servant picked Rebekkah. When Rebekkah rode into camp, she and Isaac saw each other and fell immediately in love. He took her into his mother's tent. She baked *hallah* and then lit Shabbat candles. The tent smelled of *hallah* again. The tent was filled with light again. The *Shekhinah* came back. Isaac finally found comfort after his mother's death.

Years passed. God was hiding in the seventh heaven and crying. Israel had rejected the commandments. They had made a golden calf. All God's dreams were shattered like the tablets. God needed a way to start over. God needed a new beginning. Then God remembered Sarah's tent. God told Moses to have Israel build a tent and to place within it twelve loaves of braided bread and a light that never went out. The tent would always smell like *hallah*. It would always be a place of light (this was the Mishkan—Tabernacle). God promised that God would come down and be a neighbor just as God had at Sarah's tent (*Gen. R. 60.16*).



Questions

1. What does this story teach us about Sarah?
2. When have you been like her?
3. How can knowing this story help you to know where to point your heart when you say the **אבות והאמהות**?

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