

Offerings Without Blemish

Text Study for *Parshat Emor*

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Source Sheet by Chelsea Feuchs

Leviticus 22:17-25

<p>(17) Adonai spoke to Moses, saying: (18) Speak to Aaron and his sons, and to all the Israelite people, and say to them: When any man of the house of Israel or of the strangers in Israel presents a burnt offering as his offering for any of the votive or any of the freewill offerings that they offer to Adonai, (19) it must, to be acceptable in your favor, be a male without blemish, from cattle or sheep or goats. (20) You shall not offer any that has a defect, for it will not be accepted in your favor. (21) And when a man offers, from the herd or the flock, a sacrifice of well-being to Adonai for an explicit vow or as a freewill offering, it must, to be acceptable, be without blemish; there must be no defect in it. (22) Anything blind, or injured, or maimed, or with a wen*, boil-scar, or scurvy—such you shall not offer to Adonai; you shall not put any of them on the altar as offerings by fire to Adonai.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: יַחַדְבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל־בָּנָיו וְאֶל־כָּל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אִישׁ אִישׁ מִבֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִזֶּה־הַגֵּר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרִיב קָרְבָּנוֹ לְכֹל־נִדְרֵיהֶם וּלְכֹל־נִדְבוֹתָם אֲשֶׁר־ יִקְרִיבוּ לַיהוָה לַעֲלֹה: יִטְרַצְנֶכֶם תְּמִים זָכָר בְּבָקָר בְּכֹשֶׁפִים וּבְעֵזִים: כָּל אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ מוּם לֹא תִקְרִיבוּ כִּי־לֹא לְרָצוֹן יִהְיֶה לָכֶם: כִּאֲנֹאִישׁ קִי־יִקְרִיב זָבַח־שְׁלָמִים לַיהוָה לְפֶלֶא־נִדְרָלְ אוֹ לְנִדְבָה בְּבָקָר אוֹ בְצֹאֵן תְּמִים יִהְיֶה לְרָצוֹן פֶּל־מוּם לֹא יִהְיֶה־בּוֹ: כִּבְעוּרָתָ אוֹ שְׂבוּר אוֹ־חַרוּץ אוֹ־יִבֶּלֶת אוֹ גֶרֶב אוֹ יִלְפֶת לֹא־תִקְרִיבוּ אֵלֶּה לַיהוָה וְאִשָּׁה לֹא־תִתְּנוּ מֵהֶם עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה:</p>
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*a boil or other swelling or growth on the skin, especially a sebaceous cyst

- In 3 verses, the requirement to offer an animal without defect or blemish appears 4 times and is followed by a list of examples. Why do you think there is such an emphasis on this rule?
- Does the prohibition of offering blemished animals to God make sense to you? Why or why not?

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

“...it remains remarkable how simply and smoothly the sages were able to construct substitutes for sacrifice, three in particular: prayer, study and tzedakah. Prayer, particularly Shacharit, Mincha and Musaf, took the place of the regular [sacrificial] offerings. One who studies the laws of sacrifice is as if he had brought a sacrifice. And one who gives to charity brings, as it were, a financial sacrifice, acknowledging that all we have we owe to God.”

- Which of the replacements for animal sacrifice—prayer, study, tzedakah—resonates most with you? Does engaging in any or all of these three activities feel like a sacrifice?
- How can we make our prayer, study, and tzedakah perfect and without blemish? What does offering our best look like in these activities?

Leviticus 21:16-17

<p>(16) Adonai spoke further to Moses: (17) Speak to Aaron and say: No man of your offspring throughout the ages who has a defect shall be qualified to offer the food of his God.</p>	<p>וַיִּדְבֹר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר אִישׁ מִזֶּרְעֶךָ לְדֹרֹתָם אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בוֹ מוֹם לֹא יִקְרָב לְהִקְרִיב לְקֹדֶשׁ אֱלֹהֵינוּ:</p>
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- If we all offer sacrifices today, then we all function as the priestly class. What would it mean for us to be without blemish in a modern context?
- How can we balance this text with the understanding that we are all, in some ways, flawed?

Seder Korbanot Hadash (developed by Rabbi Joe Skloot)

<p><i>Olah</i> (עולה)—Because there is something Bigger (Leviticus 1) <i>Minchah</i> (מנחה)—Marking a joyous moment, making a commitment (Leviticus 2) <i>Shelem</i> (שלם)—Sharing one’s abundance (Leviticus 3) <i>Hatat</i> (חטאת)—Acknowledging a mistake in one’s private conduct (Leviticus 4) <i>Asham</i> (אשם)—Acknowledging a mistake in one’s public conduct (Leviticus 5) <i>Todah</i> (תודה)—Expressing gratitude (Leviticus 7) <i>Nesech</i> (נסך)—Truth telling—letting it pour out freely (Numbers 15)</p>
