

Smell & Memory

There are several terms used to describe sacrifices which bear a wider significance, which I often have to explain to my students. The term “Olah,” for burnt-offering, for example, seems to come from the familiar verb denoting “going up.” In other words, the offering in which the entire carcass of the animal (except for the blood, which is poured out as an offering separately, the contents of its digestive system, which are washed out, and, in the case of cattle, the skins) is cut up and burnt up on the altar is called the “goes up [in smoke]” sacrifice.

Another term I often explain is the familiar term we use nowadays to denote our daily afternoon service, which we call “minhah.” I explain that this term comes from a more generally-used term, which is used in both sacrificial and religious as well as in nonreligious contexts. In nonreligious contexts, the term simply means “gift.” Now, to be sure, the gifts referred to as “minhah” were often gifts of consumables like food, for example, in Jacob’s “gift” of food and incense to Pharaoh. There are other terms which denote something inedible “given;” the “minhah” seems to be one of these special food gifts. Furthermore, a “minhah” is often the type of gift “fit for a king,” again like Jacob’s gift to Pharaoh. Hence it’s understandable that such a term is used to refer to sacrifices in-general, since all sacrifices are offered as a “gift” to God, our King of Kings. There is also the specialized meaning of “minhah” in our Parashah, where it specifically refers to offerings made from grain. The Daily Statutory Sacrifice, offered twice daily, once in the morning and once in the late-afternoon, both had an animal component as well as a grain component (flour mixed with oil). Our current use of the term “Minhah” to designate the Afternoon Service is obviously borrowed from the use of the term as a designation for the daily sacrifice, since our Afternoon Service stands in-place of the Afternoon Sacrifice. Why it was that the term for meal-offering came to be associated more with the Afternoon Sacrifice and the Afternoon Service rather than with both Morning and Evening Sacrifices and Services is something I have never fully understood. But perhaps the meal-offerings, being less perishable than meat, could be offered later.

Furthermore, the meal-offering associated with the “Olah” did not seem to have to completely “go up in smoke,” unlike the meat. Only the “Azkarah,” a mere handful or small portion of the meal offering, had to be burnt, it seems; the rest of the grain-offering could be eaten by the priests. Since much of the grain offering was used as food, perhaps the priests’ timetable for eating it was more extended, and this is why the term was more used for the later sacrifice and by extension for our late-day prayer service which stands in its stead. The term “Azkarah” as a term for the small portion of the grain-offering which is actually burnt on the Altar (along with frankincense which is used to “spice-up” its aroma) also merits some attention. This term derives from a term for “memory,” similar to our French-derived term “souvenir.” It is “a small portion to remember by,” a mere “memento” of the whole offering.

It is interesting to me that this term for “memory” is used for the burnt-up “savor” of the offering. Smell and savor are potent bearers of memory for me, and so they have been in Jewish tradition. When we ask God to remember us in our prayers we often invoke the sweet savor of our ancient sacrifices. Like memory, smell is virtually immaterial, and yet it invokes a much larger reality. Smell often indicates something much larger is present or has been present. The same is true of memory, which invokes a “virtual” reality which may be present or which has been present. The smells and savors of cooking food, in particular, bring us powerful memories and feelings of home. And I’ve also observed that the “barbecue” smell of fatty meats burning smells a lot better than pancakes burning. Maybe that’s a reason for burning more meat and fat than grain! But the smell of a good barbecue on the fire will always remind me of home...



Shabbat Vayikra

March 24-25, 2023 | 3 Nisan 5783

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

Hertz: p. 410 | Haftarah: p. 424

Kaplan: p. 498 | Haftarah: p. 1142

Candle Lighting | 6:54 pm

Friday Evening Services | 7:00 pm | Main Sanctuary

Zemirot | 8:15 am

Shahrit | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary

Youth Program | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room

Kiddush | following services | Levy Auditorium

No Shabbat Afternoon class this week.

Evening Services | 6:50 pm | Main Sanctuary

Habdala | 7:48 pm

Weekday Service Times

Mornings:

Sunday: 8:05 am

Monday-Friday: 7:05 am

Evenings:

Sunday-Thursday: 6:30 pm

If you can help out and attend minyan, morning or evening, please contact Z. Edinger.

2023 SPRING FUNDRAISER

WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS:

Seven Iconic Images in the History of Israel,
and the Stories Behind Them

An Important 7-Part Virtual Series by Rabbi Meir Soloveichik
Beginning Monday, April 17

This special series serves as our Congregation's annual Spring Fundraiser and provides essential support to our Congregation.

Sign-up levels from \$250 to \$18,000

Special Offer for Series Underwriters (\$3,600 and up):

Don't worry about missing a livestream; a recording of the lectures will be made available to you.

All sponsors will be recognized in a beautiful content-rich commemorative booklet that will be mailed out after the series.

Sign up at shearithisrael.org/giving/SpringFundraiser2023

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal tob to **Jana & Ari Schottenstein**, upon the birth of a baby boy.

Kol HaKavod to our trustee, **Zoya Raynes**, who co-chaired the Jewish Funders Network annual conference in Arizona this past week.

Thank you to **Gillian & Simon Salama-Caro**, for sponsoring last week's *kiddush*.

Save the Date:

May 21 | 4:00 pm

Mikveh Israel Gala in honor of Rabbi Albert Gabbai

PESAH 5783

Wednesday evening, April 5-Thursaday, April 13

Visit shearithisrael.org/pesah5783 for all our Pesah offerings

Shabbat HaGadol Derasha

Rabbi Meir Soloveichik

Shabbat, April 1 | Following Morning Services

Join our sponsors at shearithisrael.org/shabbat-hagadol.

Readers Wanted!

Women & Girls' Shir HaShirim Reading

On Zoom | In partnership with the women of Mikveh Israel

Sunday, Hol HaMoed Pesah, April 9 | 12:00 noon

Women and girls who would like to participate should contact Mrs. Lisa Robde at lrohde-csi@yahoo.com as soon as possible.

Pesah Picnics on Paved Paradise

April 12 & 13 | Last Days Pesah | After Morning Services | Outdoor Pavilion

Register for just \$5 per person at shearithisrael.org/events/pesah-picnics.

Sponsor a Pesah Kiddush

We will be providing kiddushim on all days of Yom Tob — on the first two days, on Shabbat, and on the last two days — and by sponsoring one, you can provide our community with a delicious spread that will nourish our bodies and uplift our souls (or just give us time to schmooze!)

Visit shearithisrael.org/pesah5783 to sponsor.

COMING UP

Young Families Mets Game Outing

Sunday, April 30 | 1:40 pm | Citi Field

CSI Youth and families are invited to watch the Mets play the Braves! Highly subsidized tickets (limited number available) — Members: \$18, non-members: \$25.

RSVP at shearithisrael.org/mets2023.