The Order of the Daily Rites in Tannaitic Literature

# Introduction

The Torah prescribes five rites to be performed *tamid*, meaning daily or always: three of them are performed within the Sanctuary: arranging the showbread,[[1]](#footnote-1) cleaning and lighting the candles of the Menorah,[[2]](#footnote-2) and burning incense on the Incense Altar;[[3]](#footnote-3) two of them are performed on the altar in the courtyard: the daily offering[[4]](#footnote-4) and maintaining the fire on the altar.[[5]](#footnote-5) The showbread differs from the rest of the list in that although it must be on the table always; in practice, it is handled only once a week, on Shabbat.

The Torah commands that the daily rites be performed in the morning; some are also performed in the afternoon. There is no clear instruction in Scripture regarding the order of these rites,[[6]](#footnote-6) with the possible exception of the commandment in Leviticus 6, that the arrangement of the fire on the altar should be done before the sacrificial offering;[[7]](#footnote-7) some commentators understand this offering to be the daily offering.[[8]](#footnote-8)

There is also no direct reference to this matter in pre-Tannaitic Jewish literature. For example, in *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book III, Josephus refers to the daily incense and the menorah and writes, “but incense was to be offered twice-a-day, both before sun-rising and at sun-setting. They were also to keep oil already purified for the lamps;”[[9]](#footnote-9) Later, he writes concerning the daily sacrifice, “The law requires, that out of the public expenses, a lamb of the first year be killed every day; at the beginning, and at the ending of the day.”[[10]](#footnote-10) These two quotes taken together might imply that the incense preceded the daily sacrifice, as Josephus writes that it was burned before sunrise, while the daily offering was brought “at the beginning, and at the ending of the day.” However, it is evident that he does not directly address the issue, and it is difficult to determine whether this was indeed his intention.

In contrast, Tannaitic halakha dealt extensively with this matter and sought hints in the verses to the exact order in which the daily services should be conducted. We find different approaches in Tannaitic literature concerning the precise order of the rites,[[11]](#footnote-11) and an analysis of the sources leads to the conclusion that the halakha on this matter was derived from a certain conception of the relationship between human service through sacrifices and the Temple as the dwelling place of the *Shekhinah*.

# The approach of the *Sifra* – the rites performed in the Sanctuary are first.

The expression used by the Torah to describe when a rite is performed in the morning is not identical for all the different rites. Regarding the daily offering, it says (Exodus 29:39):

One lamb you shall offer **in the morning**, and the other lamb you shall offer in the afternoon.[[12]](#footnote-12)

However, regarding the lamps of the Menorah and the incense, it says (Exodus 30:7):

Aaron shall burn on it sweet incense **in the morning, in the morning (*ba-boqer ba-boqer*)**; when he tends the lamps, he shall burn it.

The Torah uses the same expression, every morning (*ba-boqer ba-boqer*),also regarding arranging the wood and keeping the fire burning on the altar, (Leviticus 6:5-6):

And the fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not be put out. And the priest shall burn wood on it in the morning, in the morning (*ba-boqer ba-boqer*),and lay the burnt offering in order on it; and he shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings. A fire shall always be burning on the altar; it shall never go out.

We find the expression “in the morning, in the morning” in other places, unrelated to the daily service, in the Torah and elsewhere in the Bible.[[13]](#footnote-13) Commentators have usually explained that this double expression means a continuous daily action, as explained by the Sforno (Exodus 30:7):

“In the morning in the morning,” like “she spoke to Joseph day by day (*yom yom*)” (Genesis 39:10) and also “in the morning in the morning (*ba-boqer ba-boqer)*,” when he tends the lamps (Exodus 30:7).[[14]](#footnote-14)

Ibn Ezra’s commentary on Exodus 16:21 regarding the manna is an exception. He explains that *ba-boqer ba-boqer* means “in my opinion, before sunrise.” According to his understanding, the double emphasis on the word “*ba-boqer*” refers to immediate action at the beginning of the morning, while the single “*ba-boqer*,” (in the morning) refers to a later time during the morning. According to this interpretation, the daily offering is performed last among the four daily services, while the other rites are performed earlier. This is the approach of the Rabbis, as found in the *Sifra*, Leviticus *Tzav*, 1-2,[[15]](#footnote-15) where a midrash about the order of the daily services concludes that the daily offering is performed last:

And the priest shall burn wood on it “in the morning, in the morning” (*ba-boqer ba-boqer*).” It is said of the wood “in the morning, in the morning” and it is said of the daily offering “in the morning (*ba-boqer*),” and I do not know which should come first. The matter about which “in the morning, in the morning” is said should precede the matter in which only “in the morning” is said. It is said of the wood “in the morning, in the morning,” and it is said of the incense “in the morning, in the morning.” I do not know which should come first. Which enables which? The wood enables the incense, so the wood should precede the incense. It is said of the incense “in the morning, in the morning” and it is said of the lamps “in the morning, in the morning,” and I do not know which should come first. When it says “in the morning, in the morning, when he tends the lamps, he shall burn it,” they juxtaposed a matter to the incense, so the lamps should precede the incense... From where do we know that nothing should precede the daily offering of the morning? It is taught, “on it, the burnt offering.”

This midrash is based on the difference between “in the morning, in the morning” and “in the morning” and interprets it to mean that every rite that has the double formulation precedes those with the single formulation. In light of this, the midrash determines that in principle, the daily offering is later than the rites in which the phrase “in the morning, in the morning” appears. Regarding the other rites, the midrash concludes that the arrangement of the fire precedes everything because it enables the incense – without the fire on the altar, it is impossible to take coals for the incense burning.[[16]](#footnote-16) Tending the lamps precedes the burning of the incense because burning the incense is mentioned in the verse in the context of tending the lamps. To sum up, according to the *Sifra*, the order is as follows: **arranging the fire, tending the lamps, burning the incense, the daily offering, and offering the rest of the sacrifices**. In this order, the rites performed within the Sanctuary precede those performed in the courtyard. Although the arrangement of the fire on the outer altar precedes everything, that is only because it enables the incense. The logic of this order can be understood as reflecting a conception of the rites performed inside the Sanctuary as gestures honoring God who dwells in the Sanctuary, which precede the offering of sacrifices before Him on the altar located in the courtyard.[[17]](#footnote-17)

# The *Sifrei Zuta*’s interpretation - The slaughtering of the daily offering precedes the rites of the Sanctuary

A different approach can be found in a midrash in *Sifrei Zuta* on Numbers:[[18]](#footnote-18)

“Offer in the morning” and it is said later, “Aaron shall burn on it sweet incense every morning; when he tends the lamps, he shall burn incense on it.” But I do not know which precedes. When it says, “The one lamb you shall offer in the morning,” it precedes. Could I be that only its slaughter [precedes]? From where [do we learn] that even the sprinkling of its blood [precedes]? The Torah teaches: “Offer it in the morning.”

It is possible to say that burning the incense precedes the sprinkling of the lamb’s blood, as it already says “the lamb.” And it is possible to say that [burning] the lamb’s fats precedes the burning of the incense, as it already says “Aaron shall burn sweet incense upon it.” What does this teach? It teaches that (the lambs)[[19]](#footnote-19) burning the incense is between the sprinkling of its blood and the burning of its fats.

And we have already merited [to learn] that nothing is offered except on a built arrangement [of wood on the altar]. The verse teaches, “This is what you shall offer on the altar.” If it is to say a built altar, has it not already been said “and you shall sacrifice on it” (Exodus 20:20)? What am I fulfilling by saying “This is what you shall offer on the altar”? Rather, this is the arrangement. From here, that the arrangement precedes all the rites. And the slaughtering of the lamb, then the incense and the sprinkling of its blood, and afterward incense and the sprinkling of its blood and afterward the burning of its fats. And so, “in the morning.”

The *Sifrei Zuta* understands that the verb “you shall offer” (*ta’aseh*), whose object is the daily offering, teaches that it is the first rite and that it precedes even the incense. This reading perhaps derives from the order of the words in the verse: in biblical Hebrew, the usual order is verb, subject, and object. Deviation from this order signifies something. Sometimes it signifies a contrast – this and not something else (see, for example, Deuteronomy 6:13-14), and so they interpreted the verse here “**The** **one lamb** you shall offer in the morning,” and not something else. Another possibility is that the interpretation is based on the superfluous definite article. The Torah could have written “One lamb you shall offer in the morning.” Perhaps the authors of this midrash understood the use of the definite article, “the one lamb” (*’et ha-keves ha-eḥad*) to refer specifically to the daily offering and to indicate that it is offered first in the morning.[[20]](#footnote-20) The midrash continues, considering whether the precedence of the daily offering is only with regard to its slaughter and the sprinkling of its blood or perhaps even applies to the burning of the animal’s parts on the altar. The midrash, apparently based on the expression “in the morning, in the morning” used later in the quoted verse (Exodus 30:7), that the incense still has priority in that it precedes the burning of the flesh and fat of the daily offering.

Regarding the arrangement of the wood on the altar, according to the midrash in *Sifrei Zuta*, it precedes everything, as is learned from the verse “This is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs of the first year, day by day continually.” The order of the rites according to *Sifrei Zuta* is: **arranging the wood, slaughtering the daily offering and sprinkling its blood, burning the incense, and burning the flesh of the daily offering on the altar.**[[21]](#footnote-21)

The approach of the midrash in *Sifrei Zuta* is expressed in the Mishnah in tractate *Tamid*. Chapter 4 concludes with the description of bringing the parts of the daily offering to the altar ramp in preparation for bringing them up onto the altar:

They went and placed them from halfway up the ramp and below, on its western side, and they salted them and descended and went to the Chamber of Hewn Stone to recite the *Shema*.

Afterward, in chapters 5-6, the Mishnah first describes the lighting of the lamps and the burning of the incense, and only later (7:3) the bringing of the parts of the offering up onto the altar.[[22]](#footnote-22)

Several mishnayot in tractate *Yoma* imply that the slaughtering and the sprinkling of the blood of the daily offering precede the burning of the incense and the preparation of the lamps while bringing the parts of the daily offering onto the altar is done last. *Yoma* 1:2 describes the rites performed by the High Priest during the seven days before Yom Kippur:

For all the seven days, he sprinkles the blood, burns the incense, tends the lamps, and offers the head and the leg. And on the other days, if he wishes to perform the offering, he performs the offering, for the High Priest offers a portion first and takes a portion first.

A straightforward reading of the mishnah indicates that there is a division between the rites of the daily offering: the sprinkling of the blood precedes the incense, and the incense precedes the preparation of the lamps, and after both, the parts of the daily offering are offered.

Chapter 3, mishnah 3 in the same tractate details the lotteries that determined which priests performed which rites. This mishna also implies that the slaughter and sprinkling of the blood of the daily offering precede the preparation of the lamps and the rite involving the Incense Altar:

The second lottery: Who slaughters, who sprinkles, who cleans the inner altar, who cleans the menorah, and who elevates the limbs to the ramp.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Chapter 3, mishnah 4, describes the service of the High Priest on Yom Kippur and also implies the same order:

They spread a sheet of fine linen between him and the people, he undressed, went down, immersed, came up, and dried himself. They brought him the golden vestments, and he put them on and sanctified his hands and feet. They brought him the daily offering, he cut it, and someone else completed the slaughter for him. He received the blood and sprinkled it. He entered to burn the morning incense, prepare the lamps, offer the head and the parts, the *ḥavitin* (the High Priest’s bread offering), and the wine.

It must be admitted that the approach of *Sifrei Zuta* and the Mishnah seems artificial and somewhat strange. What is the reason for the division of the rite of the daily offering into two parts, with the slaughter and sprinkling of the blood done first, and the bringing of the parts of the offering onto the altar, reserved for last? It would be reasonable for a rite to be completed once it was started, and only then to move on to the next rite. It appears that the interpretation of *Sifrei Zuta* is an attempt to reconcile the Tannaim’s assumption that the expression “in the morning, in the morning” (*ba-boqer ba-boqer*), used with regard to the incense and the lamps, teaches that these rites should be performed first, with the assumption of the author of the midrash (about which of course more needs to be understood) that the rites on the outer altar should precede the rites in the Sanctuary.

# The significance of the daily offering.

The commandment regarding the daily offering appears in both Exodus 29:38-42, as an appendix to the detailed commandments of the seven-day inauguration of the Tabernacle, and in Numbers 28:2-6, as the opening to the section on the additional offerings.[[24]](#footnote-24) In both instances, the location of the passage teaches us about the great significance of this offering. The passage in Exodus 29:38-42 appears after the commandment of the inauguration days, whose purpose, as explained in the verses throughout chapter 29, was to sanctify both the priests and the altar. In the concluding verses of the chapter, a clear connection is made between the sanctification of the outer altar and the presence of the *Shekhinah* (divine presence) in the Tabernacle (44-45): “I will consecrate the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. I will also consecrate both Aaron and his sons to minister to Me as priests. I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God.” As Knohl has pointed out,[[25]](#footnote-25) the appearance of these verses after the section on the daily offering teaches that the purpose of the daily offering is to manifest the *Shekhinah* in the Tabernacle and to maintain it there. The position of the daily offering passage at the beginning of the section on the additional offerings also highlights the importance of this offering. As Bar-On has pointed out,[[26]](#footnote-26) throughout the entire section on the additional offerings, the Torah repeatedly uses the expression “besides the daily burnt offering,” indicating that the basis for all offerings is the daily offering.

The importance of the daily offering is also evident in numerous sources in Second Temple and Rabbinic literature.[[27]](#footnote-27) Josephus describes the risk that the people took during the Roman siege:

But did still twice a day, in the morning and about the ninth hour, offer their sacrifices on the altar; nor did they omit those sacrifices, if any melancholy accident happened by the stones that were thrown among them; [[28]](#footnote-28)

The Mishnah in tractate *Ta’anit* 4:6 states that among the events that occurred on the 17th of Tammuz which led to the day being established as a fast was the cessation of the daily offering. The comparison of the inability to offer the daily sacrifice to the breaking of the Tablets and the breach of the city (which the Mishnah reports as also having occurred on that day) reveals the great significance of the offering.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Against this background, we can understand why *Sifrei Zuta* and the Mishnah prioritize at least the sprinkling of the blood of the daily offering before the rites performed inside the Sanctuary. The decision to have the slaughter and sprinkling of the blood of the daily offering precede the burning of the incense and lighting of the lamps, rites related to honoring God in the Tent of Meeting,[[30]](#footnote-30) stems from the conception of the daily offering and the service on the outer altar as the main service in the Temple. This approach, while accepting the interpretive assumption that “in the morning, in the morning” teaches about precedence,[[31]](#footnote-31) sought to place the daily offering before the burning of the incense and tending the lamps. Only after the daily offering on the outer altar should one proceed to the rites inside.

The well-known dispute between the Pharisees and the Sadducees (as well as other sects during the Second Temple period), whether the daily offering is funded by public funds should be noted in this context.[[32]](#footnote-32) Regev[[33]](#footnote-33) has explained that the Pharisees’ view, later held by the Tannaim, is that the *Shekhinah*’s dwelling in the Temple as established through the daily offering (as can be inferred from the verses in Exodus 29), depends upon the partnership of the entire nation in the offering, which therefore cannot be a donation from an individual, either Israelites or priests. Indeed, as Knohl has pointed out,[[34]](#footnote-34) the verses in Exodus 29:44-45 depict the *Shekhinah* residing in the Tabernacle before all of Israel, not just Moses. These matters are undoubtedly connected to the Tannaim’s general tendency to involve the people in the Temple.[[35]](#footnote-35) Therefore, the fact that many Tannaim sought to ensure that the daily offering was brought before the rites performed inside the Sanctuary is also related to the tendency of including the people in the Temple service.

# The concept of holiness in Tannaitic thought

Many scholars[[36]](#footnote-36) have pointed out that in the priestly parts of the Torah, God is conceived as literally dwelling in the Temple, and the purpose of the sacrifices is to ensure the ongoing residence of the *Shekhinah* there. The many prohibitions regarding inappropriate contact with the sacred and the commandments about human sanctity and the sanctity of space have been understood in this light.

In contrast, in Deuteronomy, as Moshe Weinfeld has pointed out in detail,[[37]](#footnote-37) has a different concept of holiness: the Book of Deuteronomy diminishes the importance of worship in the Temple and limits it. While it emphasizes the concentration of the sacrificial service to one place, it completely lacks positive commandments related to the Temple, such as public sacrifices, daily Temple service, and a reverent attitude to the Temple. Weinfeld and the scholars who followed him[[38]](#footnote-38) argue that according to Deuteronomy, holiness results from God’s choice of His people, and ritual is not necessary to maintain it the way it is in the Priestly Code. According to Deuteronomy, God does not dwell in the Temple but in heaven (Deuteronomy 26:15), and the people are of greater significance than the priesthood. It is the people as a whole who are obligated to keep the covenant by fulfilling the commandments. Holiness in Deuteronomy is the point of departure, and keeping the commandments is its implication.[[39]](#footnote-39) From this perspective, desecration of the Holy is not central because holiness is not perceived as a concrete entity but as a concept that expresses God’s choice of His people. Eyal Regev[[40]](#footnote-40) has proposed defining the difference between the Priestly Code and Deuteronomy using the terms ‘dynamic holiness’ and ‘static holiness’. According to him, the Priestly Code understood holiness as dynamic, as something that can be easily harmed or desecrated, and therefore must be carefully protected. In contrast, Deuteronomy conceives of holiness as static, fixed, and unchanging due to God’s decision. As a result, it is less dangerous and more accessible. Holiness in Deuteronomy is given, resulting from the covenant between man and God, while in the Priestly Code, it is the ultimate goal of all worship. Regev sees this difference as an expression of two different religious views regarding the relationship between God and man: the Priestly Code expresses an ontological view of the relationship between God and man, such that human actions have a direct influence on reality and nature. In contrast, Deuteronomy expresses a deontological view, whereby human and divine relationships are primarily based on God’s command and human obedience, and human actions do not directly influence spiritual reality.

Regev[[41]](#footnote-41) goes on to argue that the Sadducees maintained the priestly conception of holiness and were concerned with the sanctity of the Temple being harmed, while the Pharisees believed that the Temple’s sanctity was not in constant danger and, with the necessary caution, the conditions for access to the Temple could be more lenient to enable the people’s participation. In several articles,[[42]](#footnote-42) I have shown that this also emerges from a central Tannaitic doctrine that limits the biblical injunction “and the stranger who comes near shall be put to death” to service in the Temple, contrary to the plain meaning of the verses. Moreover, the Rabbis’ understanding that the Temple cannot become impure at all, and the atonement for the impurity of the sanctuary and its sacred things is not in response to impurity in the Temple but to the fundamental contradiction that man creates between impurity and sanctity. All this connects to a broader trend among the Tannaim to identify with the religious conceptions expressed particularly in the Book of Deuteronomy.[[43]](#footnote-43)

The approach of the Mishnah and *Sifrei Zuta* regarding the order of the rites of the daily service appears to be derived from the same fundamental conception that arises in Deuteronomy, according to which God primarily dwells in heaven, and therefore the concern His honor through the rites performed in the Sanctuary is not the main focus. Setting the daily offering at the center of the Temple service highlights the Temple’s role as a place where the people of Israel serve God, and not necessarily God’s dwelling on Earth. It is important to emphasize that this is not a complete adoption of the conception of holiness found in Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy, as mentioned, the laws of sacrifices are barely presented. The Tannaim, while adopting the conception of holiness found in Deuteronomy, did not however accept all its implications. For example, they did not ignore the daily offerings, nor did they ignore the idea of the *Shekhinah*’s presence in the Temple.[[44]](#footnote-44) The Tannaim identified more with the idea found in Deuteronomy that sanctity is not so vulnerable, since “‘Do I not fill heaven and earth?’ says the Lord” (Jer 23:24) and therefore gave particular importance to the offerings on the outer altar.[[45]](#footnote-45) This teaches us cautious we must be when attempting to ascertain the sources of influence of Tannaitic law (and of halakhic conceptions in general). As Regev himself points out, it is clear that the Pharisees and Tannaim did not draw directly and consciously from the conception found in Deuteronomy. It is rather a matter of the fundamental influence of the conception found in Deuteronomy that sanctity is a given and is not so vulnerable. In practice, the Tannaim’s conception of holiness combines the principles arising from the priestly parts of the Torah with those derived from Deuteronomy.

# The approach of the *Sifra* and Rabbi Akiva’s approach.

As mentioned above, we found in the *Sifra* another halakhic approach that has the rites performed in the Sanctuary performed before those on the outer altar. It is possible that the fact that this approach appears in the *Sifra*, a midrash attributed to Rabbi Akiva’s school, is not coincidental. Elsewhere, I have suggested that Rabbi Akiva presents an alternative to the mainstream approach of the Tannaim that emphasizes the inviolability of the Temple’s sanctity. While the biblical conception, such as the verse “And the stranger who comes near shall be put to death” (Numbers 3:51), limits the access of non-priests and, in certain situations, even of priests, to the Tabernacle out of concern for harming the Tabernacle’s sanctity, the prevailing Tannaic conception sought to connect these prohibitions to the service in the Tabernacle and Temple. In contrast, in the well-known story about Rabbi Akiva and the Rabbis who see the destroyed Temple in *Sifrei* Deuteronomy 43,[[46]](#footnote-46) Rabbi Akiva appears to understand the prohibition “And the stranger who comes near shall be put to death” literally:

Once again, they were going up to Jerusalem; when they reached Mount Scopus, they tore their garments. When they reached the Temple Mount and saw a fox coming out of the Holy of Holies, they began to cry, and Rabbi Akiva laughed. They said to him, “Akiva, how can you laugh while we are crying?” He said to them, “Why are you crying?” They said to him, “Shouldn’t we cry over the place where it is written (Numbers 3:51), ‘And the stranger who comes near shall be put to death,’ and now a fox comes out of it? The prophecy (Lamentations 5:17-18) ‘For this, our heart is faint; for these things, our eyes are dim; because of Mount Zion, which is desolate, foxes walk upon it...’ has been fulfilled.”...

The midrash has the Rabbis (Rabban Gamaliel, Rabbi Joshua, and Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah) make a sort of *a fortiori* argument to Rabbi Akiva: Regarding entering the Temple’s location, it is said, “And the stranger who comes near shall be put to death,” and now even worse, an animal comes out of it.” On the surface, their argument, and the verse they quote, make sense only if the commandment is understood literally: a non-priest approaching the Temple risks his life. It is not the service of the non-priest that is problematic, but the very entry. This understanding is also expressed in the dispute of the Rabbis in the *Sifra* regarding the sin of Aaron’s sons. The Tannaim and the Amoraim discuss the nature of the sin of Nadav and Avihu (Leviticus 10:1-3) extensively.[[47]](#footnote-47) In *Sifra Acharei Mot* 1:1,[[48]](#footnote-48) the Tannaim discuss the tension between the verse in Leviticus 10:1, which describes the actions of Nadav and Avihu, who took firepans of incense “and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them,” and the verse in Leviticus 16:1, which mentions only their approach to the Lord as the cause of their death – “when they approached before the Lord and died”:

“They approached before the Lord and died” - Rabbi Yose ha-Gelili says that they died due to the offering, not due to coming close. Rabbi Akiva says that one verse states “They approached before the Lord and died” (Leviticus 16:1), and another verse says “They offered before the Lord profane fire” (Leviticus 10:1). [The third verse] “in their offering before the Lord profane fire” (Numbers 3:4) determines, saying that they died due to the coming close, not due to the offering. Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria says that the offering alone and the coming close alone were enough.

According to Rabbi Yose ha-Gelili, it was Nadav and Avihu’s offering that led to their death. However, Rabbi Akiva believes that their sin was rooted in their very entry to the Holy of Holies.[[49]](#footnote-49) This dispute may reflect two approaches to the sanctity of the Temple: Rabbi Akiva holds that the very intrusion into the place where the *Shekhinah* rests, the Holy of Holies, caused the death of Aaron’s sons, assuming that the *Shekhinah* dwells there in a literal sense. However, Rabbi Yose ha-Gelili believes that merely entering the Holy does not mandate death, but rather specifically performing a service not in accordance with explicit commandments.

It is possible that the approach in the *Sifra* that the rites performed in the Sanctuary take precedence also stems from this view that the sanctity is a concrete presence in the Temple, and as such, the morning services must begin with honoring God in His abode.

This also appears to be connected to the dispute between Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Ishmael and his school, about which Heschel[[50]](#footnote-50) and Kahana[[51]](#footnote-51) have commented in a similar context. In the *Sifra* *Nedavah,*[[52]](#footnote-52) we learn about the location of God’s communication with Moses:

“From the Tent of Meeting” – one might think it’s from the whole house, the Torah teaches: “from above the *kaporet*” (the mercy seat). Or from above the *kaporet*, the Torah teaches: “from between the two cherubim,” the words of Rabbi Akiva.

In contrast, in the *Baraita de-Melekhet ha-Mishkan*,[[53]](#footnote-53) we are taught:

From where did the *Shekhinah* speak with Moses? Rabbi Natan says from the Tent, as it is written, “And you shall put it before the veil.” Rabbi Shimon ben Azzai says from the Incense Altar, as it is written, “And you shall crush some of it very fine.” The student of Rabbi Ishmael says from adjacent to the Altar of Burnt Offering, as it is written, “a continual burnt offering throughout your generations [at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet you to speak with you]” (Exodus 29:42-43).

Heschel notes that, like in other cases, Rabbi Akiva believes that the *Shekhinah* dwells in a literal sense in the Tent of Meeting, just as it descended upon Mount Sinai, while the student of Rabbi Ishmael reflects his teacher’s view that the *Shekhinah* dwells everywhere and the revelation of the *Shekhinah* on the altar is a special place for Moses, but not for the *Shekhinah*, which is not limited to one location. Kahana adopts Heschel’s view and pointed out that this midrash also reflects their dispute regarding the degree of intimacy of Moses’ encounters with the *Shekhinah*.

The debate between the *Sifra* and *Sifrei Zuta* which we have discussed in this article also relates to this dispute: If there is a special place for the *Shekhinah* in the Temple, then it should be addressed first. This is the view of the *Sifra*. In contrast, if “the whole earth is full of His glory” and the Temple is primarily a place for the people of Israel to serve God, then the daily services should begin with the daily offering on the outer altar.

1. Exodus 25:30. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Exodus 27:20. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Exodus 30:8. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Exodus 29:38. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Leviticus 6:6. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In Exodus chapter 40, Moses places the vessels in the Tabernacle from the inside out and performs the daily service; afterwards the cloud rests on the Tent of Meeting. This implies that when Moses performed the daily service for the first time on the day of the Tabernacle’s dedication, he started from the inside out. It is not stated anywhere that this should always be the case, and it is debatable whether Moses’ actions teach how to behave going forward or perhaps because on that day the altar was dedicated and the cloud of the Lord descended upon the Tent of Meeting, the service should begin from the inside. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Regarding this precedence as it appears in the Aramaic Levi Document, see in detail H. Mali, “Priestly Instructions in the Aramaic Levi Document and the Order of the Morning Daily Sacrifice,” *Meghillot* 14 (2018-2019), pp. 119-138 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See J.E Hartley, WBC Leviticus, Dallas Texas, 1992, pp. 96. For an overview of the different interpretations on this matter, see S. Bar-on, “The Development of the Tamid Offering and its Place in the Priestly Calendar of Sacrifices,” *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* (1997), pp. 148 n. 1 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Josephus Flavius, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 3.8.3, William Wheaton translation, https://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/ant-3.html (visited April 13, 2023). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid., 3.10.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Among the Babylonian Amoraim we find especially complex conceptions about the order of the rites. See Babylonian Talmud (hereafter BT) *Yoma* 33a-33b. This matter is beyond the scope of this article. See also J.N. Epstein, *Introduction to the Text of the Mishnah*, p. 681. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. All translations of biblical quotations from the New King James Version with revisions by the author. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. See Exodus 16:21; Exodus 36:3; 2 Samuel 13:4; Isaiah 28:19; Isaiah 50:4; Zephaniah 3:5; 1 Chronicles 23:30; 2 Chronicles 13:11. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See W.H.C. Propp, *Anchor Bible*, Exodus 19-40, New York, 1998, pp. 585; C. Houtman, *The Historical Commentary on the Old Testament,* Exodus, Kampen 1996, pp. 32; M.Tz. Kadari, Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew, Ramat Gan 2006, p. 121 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. According to MS Vatican 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. As is explicitly stated in Leviticus 16:12 regarding the incense on Yom Kippur (and similarly in Numbers 17:1 in the context of the incense offered by Aaron to halt the plague). Regarding the incense offered every day throughout the year, see the midrash in the *Sifra* at the beginning of *Parshat Tzav*, and BT Yoma 45b. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. On the hierarchy of sanctity in the biblical Tabernacle with an emphasis on the distinction between the inner and outer areas, see M. Haran, *The Bible and Its World*, Jerusalem, 2009, pp. 62-69 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. The quote is based on the MS Oxford Bodleian 2637 of Yalqut Shimoni, which was the basis for the edition published by Dov Heyman, Jerusalem 1986, and according to which the text was uploaded to the Hebrew Language Academy’s *Ma’agarim* database.

    . [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Apparently this word should be deleted. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. These suggestions for understanding the midrash in *Sifrei Zuta* I heard from my friend Dr. Hanan Ariel. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. *Sifrei Zuta* does not explicitly address the tending of the lamps. One can suppose, in light of the midrash that deals only with the relationship between the daily offering and the incense, that according to *Sifrei Zuta* the lamps follow the incense, meaning they come after it, and not the other way around. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. On the internal order of tractate *Tamid*, see H. Mali (above, note 000), pp. 151-152. On the fact that the Mishnah describes the burning of the animal parts only in a case where the High Priest sacrifices and not an ordinary priest, see what Mali wrote, ibid., p. 229. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. And so it is in the parallel mishnayot in *Tamid* chapter 2. Admittedly, it is true that in any case there is no precise order here, as the lottery for the incense was done separately, as described in the following mishnah, but it makes sense that the order of the lotteries is based on the order of the rites, with the first lottery, described in the previous mishnah, about the arrangement of the fire on the altar. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. On the differences between the sections, see S. Bar-On, (above n. 000), pp. 148-150. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Y. Knohl, *Temple of Silence*, Jerusalem 1993, p. 180 [Hebrew]. See also B.A. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord*, Leiden 1974, pp. 22-27 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Bar-On (above, note 000), p. 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. See a review of these sources in H. Mali, From Temple to Midrash, Descriptions of the Temple in the Mishnah: History, Editing, and Meaning, Ph.d. dissertation, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan 2018, pp. 185-188. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 14.4.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. See also V. Noam and A. Tal, *Between Josephus and the Rabbis*, Part 1, Jerusalem 2017, pp. 333-335 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. On the meaning of the incense as an expression of the Tannaitic conception of the *Shekhinah*’s presence and as a means of bringing down the *Shekhinah*, see I. Knohl and S. Naeh, “*Milluim Ve-Kippurim*,” *Tarbiz* 62, 1 (1993): 33-34 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The fact that according to this approach it was sufficient that the sprinkling of the blood of the daily offering was the first rite performed can be attributed to the fact that in general, the Tannaic halakhah emphasized in many places that the main part of the sacrificial rite is the sprinkling of the blood, and the offering is still valid even if the parts of the animal are not burned on the altar. See more on this at M. Balberg, *Blood For Thought: the Reinvention of Sacrifice in Early Rabbinic Literature*, Oakland, California 2017, pp. 71-85, 94-103.. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Much has been written about this controversy. See, for example, V. Noam, *Megillat Taanit: The Texts, Their Interpretation, and Their History*, Jerusalem 2003, p. 168 [Hebrew]; Y. Lieber, “Half a Shekel in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *Tarbiz* 31, 1 (1962), pp. 18-22 [Hebrew]; Y. Sussman, “The History of Halakha and the Dead Sea Scrolls — Preliminary Observations on Miqṣat Ma’ase Ha-Torah (4QMMT),” *Tarbiz* 59, 1,2 (1989), p. 66 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. A. Regev, *On the Sadducees and Their Halacha: On Religion and Society during the Second Temple Period*, Jerusalem 2005, p. 134 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Ibid., note 000, p. 180. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. A number of scholars have pointed out that the Pharisaic and Tannaic halacha tended to allow the participation of the people, as much as possible, in what was done in the Temple. The scholars who discussed this explained this tendency of the Pharisees as deriving from a social attitude that seeks to unite the various parts of the people, at least on the pilgrimage festivals – “all Israel are friends.” See E.A. Urbach 1979 pp. \*\*\*\*; Y. Sussman (above, note 000) pp. 66-68; Y. Knohl, “The Polemic of the Sects during the Second Temple Period and the Priestly Schools,” *Tarbiz* 60, 2 (1991), pp. 139-146 [Hebrew]. See a review of this article in Y. Furstenberg, *Purity and Community in Antiquity: Traditions of Halacha between Second Temple Judaism and the Mishnah*, Jerusalem 2016, p. 342, note 56 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. See, for example, Y. Kaufmann, *The History of the Israelite Faith from Ancient Times to the End of the Second Temple Period*, Volume Two, Jerusalem 1969, pp. 473-476 [Hebrew]; Knohl (above, note 000) pp. 140-145; B. Schwartz, *The Torah of Holiness – Studies in the Priestly Torah*, Jerusalem 1999, pp. 255-258 [Hebrew]. On the differences within the priestly sources themselves, see J. Milgrom, *Anchor Bible - Leviticus 1-16*, New York 1991, pp. 60-63; Schwartz, loc. cit., pp. 11-34; Knohl, loc. cit. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. M. Weinfeld, “The Change in the Conception of Religion in Deuteronomy,” *Tarbiz* 31, 1 (1961), pp. 1-17 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. See Schwartz (above, note 000) pp. 259-266; Knohl, (above, note 000), p. 159ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Schwartz loc. cit., p. 260 [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Regev (above, note 000) pp. 238-241. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Regev (above, note 000) pp. 239-238. See the important note by Y. Sussman, “The History of Halakha and the Dead Sea Scrolls — Preliminary Observations on Miqṣat Ma’ase Ha-Torah (4QMMT)”, *Tarbiz* 59 (1989), p. 69 note 226 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Y. Marcus, “Restrictions on Entering the Temple: From the Bible to the Tannaitic Literature,” *Zion* 86, A (2021), pp. 30-5 [Hebrew]; Y. Marcus, “Sin Offerings for ‘Impurity of the Temple and its Holines’ in Tannaitic Literature: Atonement for Sin or Purification of the Temple?” JSIJ 21 (2021), pp. 21-1 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. D. Henshke, “The Acceptance of an Apocryphal Halakha,” *Tarbiz* 65, 2 (1996), p. 225 note 2 [Hebrew]; D. Henshke, “The Sanctity of Jerusalem: The Rabbis and the Sectarian Halakha”, *Tarbiz* 67, 1 (1998), p. 19 and note 54 [Hebrew]; C. Werman, “Consumption of the Blood and Its Covering in the Priestly and Rabbinic Traditions,” *Tarbiz* 63 (1994), pp. 183-173 [Hebrew]; L.H Schiffman, “Sacral and Non-Sacral Slaughter according to the Temple Scroll,” D. Dimant and L. H. Schiffman (eds.), *Time to Prepare the Way in the Wilderness*, Leiden 1995, pp. 69-84. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. See \*\*\*\* [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. On the other hand, it should be emphasized that they did not fully accept the meaning of the verses in Exodus 29, which imply that the role of the daily offering is to bring about the manifestation of the *Shekhinah*, as noted by Knohl (above, note 000), p. 180. See now in more detail in Y. Grossman, *The Law of the Offerings*, Jerusalem, 2021, pp. 399-383 [Hebrew]. The Tannaim understood the value of the daily offering to be derived from the value of the Temple service in general. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. *Sifrei* Deuteronomy 43 (in the edition of A.A. Finkelstein, *Sifrei on the Book of Deuteronomy, with Variants and Notes*, New York and Jerusalem, p. 95 [Hebrew]. See there for parallel sources). Another parallel appears in *Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, fragment from the Cairo Genizah, Cambridge, University Library, T-S Collection, NS, 253, 1. See Aharon Glick, “An Additional Fragment from Mekhilta de-Rashbi,” *Leshonenu* 44/45, B/G (1985), pp. 215-214 [Hebrew]; M. Kahana, *Fragments of Midrash Halakha from the Genizah*, Jerusalem 2005, pp. 268-267 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. See in more detail in Avigdor Shanan, “The Sins of Nadav and Avihu in The Sins of Nadab and Abihu in Rabbinic Literature,” *Tarbiz* 48, 3-4 (1979), pp. 214-201 [Hebrew]; David Flusser*, Second Temple Judaism, Qumran and Apocalypticism*, Jerusalem 2002, pp. 283-278 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. The version of the midrash brought here is based on the conclusion of Mordechai Margaliot, *Midrash Wayyikra (Leviticus) Rabbah*, New York, Jerusalem, 1993, p. 461 note 3 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. This is the language in *Leviticus Rabbah* (Margaliot’s edition, p. 461).. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. See Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Torah from Heaven in the Mirror of the Generations*, Part 1, Jerusalem 1995, pp. 61-59 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. *Sifrei Bamidbar* 3, Jerusalem 2011, pp. 395-392. See there regarding the midrash in *Sifrei Bamidbar* 58 and additional Tannaic sources. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. *Sifra Nedavah* 12, B (Weiss’s edition, p. 17). [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. R. Kirschner, *Baraita de-Melekhet ha-Mishkan*: *a Critical Edition with Introduction and Translation,* Cincinnati, 1992, pp. 218. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)