



Sukkat Shalom
B'nai Noach

Torah Reflections: Conversations on the Weekly
Parsha Parshat Tzav 5785 – Sacrifices as Love

Integrating Torah into one's life through reflection and conversation can be an incredibly fun and engaging experience. It's a journey of discovery, where ancient wisdom and timeless teachings come to life in our daily experiences. Through reflection, we have the opportunity to dive deep into the rich tapestry of Torah, extracting profound insights and lessons that resonate with our modern lives. The joy lies in the 'aha' moments, those instances when a Torah verse or story suddenly connects with our personal challenges, aspirations, and values. And when we engage in conversations about Torah with others, it becomes an interactive exploration, where diverse perspectives and interpretations enhance our understanding. These dialogues often spark excitement and intellectual curiosity, making the learning process both enjoyable and fulfilling. Torah becomes a vibrant and dynamic part of our lives, offering not just guidance but also a source of endless fascination, connection, and growth.

NOTE: Don't feel obligated to go through every source or answer all the questions—unless you want to. Even one source, or one question will give you plenty of material for discussion and meditation. Enjoy this!

Some thoughts from the parsha

One of the most challenging concepts in the Torah is the system of animal sacrifices described in the Book of Leviticus. Many modern readers—Jewish and non-Jewish alike—struggle to relate to this ancient form of worship. Yet, if we move beyond the physical details and ask what sacrifice means, we uncover a powerful spiritual truth: sacrifice is about love. If you are familiar with Gary Chapman's *Five Love Languages*, you know that people express and experience love in different ways. Sacrifices are similar to "acts of service".

In Judaism, sacrifice was never meant to be a bribe or a ritualized way to "buy off" G-d. The prophets fiercely criticized those who brought offerings while acting unjustly toward others. True sacrifice had to come from the heart—an offering of devotion, gratitude, and a desire to draw closer to G-d. The Hebrew word for sacrifice, *korban*, literally means "to draw near". It wasn't about fear of divine punishment—it was about connection. Where ancient pagan religions sacrificed out of fear, Judaism taught that sacrifice is the choreography of love: giving up something of value to express commitment, devotion, and relationship.

This idea of sacrifice as love goes far beyond the Temple. It's a reality in every part of meaningful human life:

- A parent who sacrifices sleep or comfort for a child
- A friend who gives time and energy to help someone in need
- A person who gives up personal gain to serve a moral or spiritual calling

In all these cases, love is shown through what we're willing to give—not just materially, but in time, energy, comfort, and attention. That's what makes love real.

Even in modern society, this concept remains crucial. The foundations of our world—families, marriages, communities—only remain strong when people are willing to sacrifice for one another. But today, in a culture focused on self-interest, many of these structures are weakening. Fewer people are marrying, having children, or staying committed through hardship. When sacrifice disappears, love and connection often fade with it.

Judaism survived through centuries of hardship precisely because people were willing to make sacrifices for it. The same is true of any cause or relationship that truly matters. When we give to something beyond ourselves, we strengthen it—and we are strengthened in return.

For Noahides, this teaching offers a deeply relevant message:

- You don't need to bring animal offerings to live a life of sacrifice.
- You live it by what you give—of your time, your energy, your kindness, your truthfulness.
- The greatest offerings today are acts of love, justice, generosity, and integrity.

Now, reflect on the following questions

1. What do you personally associate with the word "sacrifice"? How does that compare to the idea of sacrifice as love?
2. Who or what in your life are you willing to make sacrifices for—and what does that say about your values?
3. Why do you think love and sacrifice are so deeply connected? Can there be one without the other?
4. In what ways can giving—of time, energy, or attention—serve as a modern spiritual offering?
5. How might embracing the idea of sacrifice help strengthen relationships, families, or communities in today's world?