

Class 4: The Temple and Pilgrimage: Common Judaism?

Law in Second Temple Judaism
Drisha Institute
Dr. Malka Z. Simkovich
April–May 2024

Exod 23:14–17:

Three times in the year you shall hold a festival for me. ¹⁵You shall observe the festival of unleavened bread; as I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. No one shall appear before me empty-handed. ¹⁶ You shall observe the festival of harvest, of the first fruits of your labour, of what you sow in the field. You shall observe the festival of ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labour. ¹⁷Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD.

Deut 16:16–17:

Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose: at the festival of unleavened bread, at the festival of weeks, and at the festival of booths. They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed; ¹⁷all shall give as they are able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that he has given you.

I. Purity and the Temple

1. Jubilees 21:1–18

¹And in the sixth year of the seventh week of this jubilee Abraham called Isaac his son, and commanded him: saying, 'I am become old, and know not the day of my death, and am full of my days. ² And behold, I am one hundred and seventy-five years old, and throughout all the days of my life I have remembered the Lord, and sought with all my heart to do His will, and to walk uprightly in all His ways. ³ My soul has hated idols, <and I have despised those that served them, and I have given my heart and spirit> that I might observe to do the will of Him who created me. ⁴ For He is the living God, and He is holy and faithful, and He is righteous beyond all, and there is with Him no accepting of (men's) persons and no accepting of gifts; for God is righteous, and executes judgment on all those who transgress His commandments and despise His covenant. ⁵ And do thou, my son, observe His commandments and His ordinances and His judgments, and walk not after the abominations and after the graven images and after the molten images.

⁶ And eat no blood at all of animals or cattle, or of any bird which flies in the heaven. ⁷ And if thou dost slay a victim as an acceptable peace offering, slay ye it, and pour out its blood upon the altar, and all the fat of the offering offer on the altar with fine flour and the meat offering mingled with oil, with its drink offering -offer them all together on the altar of burnt offering; it is a sweet savor before the Lord. ⁸ And thou wilt offer the fat of the sacrifice of thank offerings on the fire which is upon the altar, and the fat which is on the belly, and all the fat on the inwards

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and the two kidneys, and all the fat that is upon them, and upon the loins and liver thou shalt remove, together with the kidneys.

⁹ And offer all these for a sweet savor acceptable before the Lord, with its meat-offering and with its drink-offering, for a sweet savor, the bread of the offering unto the Lord. ¹⁰ And eat its meat on that day and on the second day, and let not the sun on the second day go down upon it till it is eaten, and let nothing be left over for the third day; for it is not acceptable [for it is not approved] and let it no longer be eaten, and all who eat thereof will bring sin upon themselves; for thus I have found it written in the books of my forefathers, and in the words of Enoch, and in the words of Noah. ¹¹ And on all thy oblations thou shalt strew salt, and let not the salt of the covenant be lacking in all thy oblations before the Lord.

¹² And as regards the wood of the sacrifices, beware lest thou bring (other) wood for the altar in addition to these: cypress, bay, almond, fir, pine, cedar, savin, fig, olive, myrrh, laurel, aspalathus. ¹³ And of these kinds of wood lay upon the altar under the sacrifice, such as have been tested as to their appearance, and do not lay (thereon) any split or dark wood, (but) hard and clean, without fault, a sound and new growth; and do not lay (thereon) old wood, [for its fragrance is gone] for there is no longer fragrance in it as before. ¹⁴ Besides these kinds of wood there is none other that thou shalt place (on the altar), for the fragrance is dispersed, and the smell of its fragrance goes not up to heaven.

¹⁵ Observe this commandment and do it, my son, that thou mayst be upright in all thy deeds. ¹⁶ And at all times be clean in thy body, and wash thyself with water before thou approachest to offer on the altar, and wash thy hands and thy feet before thou drawest near to the altar; and when thou art done sacrificing, wash again thy hands and thy feet. ¹⁷ And let no blood appear upon you nor upon your clothes; be on thy guard, my son, against blood, be on thy guard exceedingly; cover it with dust. ¹⁸ And do not eat any blood for it is the soul; eat no blood whatever.

2. 1 Maccabees 1:16–50

¹⁶ When Antiochus saw that his kingdom was established, he determined to become king of the land of Egypt, in order that he might reign over both kingdoms. ¹⁷ So he invaded Egypt with a strong force, with chariots and elephants and cavalry and with a large fleet. ¹⁸ He engaged King Ptolemy of Egypt in battle, and Ptolemy turned and fled before him, and many were wounded and fell. ¹⁹ They captured the fortified cities in the land of Egypt, and he plundered the land of Egypt.

²⁰ After subduing Egypt, Antiochus returned in the one hundred and forty-third year. He went up against Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force. ²¹ He arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, the lampstand for the light, and all its utensils. ²² He took also the table for the bread of the Presence, the cups for drink-offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the gold decoration on the front of the temple; he stripped it all off. ²³ He

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took the silver and the gold, and the costly vessels; he took also the hidden treasures that he found. ²⁴Taking them all, he went into his own land. He shed much blood, and spoke with great arrogance. ²⁵ Israel mourned deeply in every community, ²⁶ rulers and elders groaned, young women and young men became faint, the beauty of the women faded. ²⁷ Every bridegroom took up the lament; she who sat in the bridal chamber was mourning. ²⁸ Even the land trembled for its inhabitants, and all the house of Jacob was clothed with shame.

²⁹ Two years later the king sent to the cities of Judah a chief collector of tribute, and he came to Jerusalem with a large force. ³⁰ Deceitfully he spoke peaceable words to them, and they believed him; but he suddenly fell upon the city, dealt it a severe blow, and destroyed many people of Israel. ³¹ He plundered the city, burned it with fire, and tore down its houses and its surrounding walls. ³² They took captive the women and children, and seized the livestock. ³³ Then they fortified the city of David with a great strong wall and strong towers, and it became their citadel. ³⁴ They stationed there a sinful people, men who were renegades. These strengthened their position; ³⁵ they stored up arms and food, and collecting the spoils of Jerusalem they stored them there, and became a great menace, ³⁶ for the citadel became an ambush against the sanctuary, an evil adversary of Israel at all times. ³⁷ On every side of the sanctuary they shed innocent blood; they even defiled the sanctuary. ³⁸ Because of them the residents of Jerusalem fled; she became a dwelling of strangers; she became strange to her offspring, and her children forsook her. ³⁹ Her sanctuary became desolate like a desert; her feasts were turned into mourning, her sabbaths into a reproach, her honour into contempt. ⁴⁰ Her dishonour now grew as great as her glory; her exaltation was turned into mourning.

⁴¹ Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, ⁴² and that all should give up their particular customs. ⁴³ All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the sabbath. ⁴⁴ And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the towns of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land, ⁴⁵ to forbid burnt-offerings and sacrifices and drink-offerings in the sanctuary, to profane sabbaths and festivals, ⁴⁶ to defile the sanctuary and the priests, ⁴⁷ to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and other unclean animals, ⁴⁸ and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, ⁴⁹ so that they would forget the law and change all the ordinances. ⁵⁰ He added, ‘And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die.’

3. Testament of Levi 9:6–14

⁶ And Isaac called me continually to put me in remembrance of the law of the Lord, even as the ⁷ angel of the Lord showed unto me. And he taught me the law of the priesthood, of sacrifices, ⁸ whole burnt-offerings, first-fruits, freewill-offerings, peace-offerings. And each day he was instructing me, and was busied on my behalf before the Lord, and said to me: Beware of the spirit of ¹⁰ fornication; for this shall continue and shall by thy seed pollute the holy place. Take, therefore, to thyself a wife without blemish or pollution, w bile yet thou art young, and not of the race of ¹¹ strange nations. And before entering into the holy place, bathe; and when you offer the

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¹² sacrifices wash; and again, when you finish the sacrifice, wash of twelve trees having leaves, ¹³ offer to the Lord, as Abraham taught me also. And of every clean beast and bird offer a ¹⁴sacrifice to the Lord. And of all thy first -fruits and of wine offer the first, as a sacrifice to the Lord God; and every sacrifice thou shalt salt with salt.

II. Pilgrimage

1. Tobit 1:1–9

This book tells the story of Tobit son of Tobiel son of Hananiel son of Aduel son of Gabael son of Raphael of the descendants of Asiel, of the tribe of Naphtali, ²who in the days of King Shalmaneser of the Assyrians was taken into captivity from Thisbe, which is to the south of Kedesh Naphtali in Upper Galilee, above Asher towards the west, and north of Phogor.

³ I, Tobit, walked in the ways of truth and righteousness all the days of my life. I performed many acts of charity for my kindred and my people who had gone with me in exile to Nineveh in the land of the Assyrians.⁴When I was in my own country, in the land of Israel, while I was still a young man, the whole tribe of my ancestor Naphtali deserted the house of David and Jerusalem. This city had been chosen from among all the tribes of Israel, where all the tribes of Israel should offer sacrifice and where the temple, the dwelling of God, had been consecrated and established for all generations for ever.

⁵ All my kindred and our ancestral house of Naphtali sacrificed to the calf that King Jeroboam of Israel had erected in Dan and on all the mountains of Galilee. ⁶But I alone went often to Jerusalem for the festivals, as it is prescribed for all Israel by an everlasting decree. I would hurry off to Jerusalem with the first fruits of the crops and the firstlings of the flock, the tithes of the cattle, and the first shearings of the sheep. ⁷I would give these to the priests, the sons of Aaron, at the altar; likewise the tenth of the grain, wine, olive oil, pomegranates, figs, and the rest of the fruits to the sons of Levi who ministered at Jerusalem. Also, for six years I would save up a second tenth in money and go and distribute it in Jerusalem. ⁸A third tenth I would give to the orphans and widows and to the converts who had attached themselves to Israel. I would bring it and give it to them in the third year, and we would eat it according to the ordinance decreed concerning it in the law of Moses and according to the instructions of Deborah, the mother of my father Tobiel, for my father had died and left me an orphan.

2. Philo of Alexandria, *The Special Laws*, 1.67, 70

[Moses] provided that there should not be temples built either in many places or many in the same place, for he judged that since God is one, there should be also only one temple. Further, he does not consent to those who wish to perform the rites in their houses, but bids them rise up from the ends of the earth and come to this temple. In this way he also applies the severest test to their dispositions. For one who is not going to sacrifice in a religious spirit would never bring himself to leave his country and his friends and kinsfolk and sojourn in a strange land, but clearly

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it must be the stronger attraction of piety which leads him to endure separation from his most familiar and dearest friends who form as it were a single whole with himself.

Countless multitudes from countless cities come, some over land, others by sea, from east and west and north and south at every feast. They take the temple for their port as a general haven and safe refuge from the bustle and great turmoil of life, and there they seek to find calm weather, and, released from the cares whose yoke has been heavy upon them from their earliest years, to enjoy a brief breathing space in scenes of genial cheerfulness. Thus filled with comfortable hopes they devote the leisure, as is their bounded duty, to holiness and the honoring of God. Friendships are formed between those who hitherto knew not each other, and the sacrifices and libations are the occasion of reciprocity of feeling and constitute the surest pledge that all are of one mind.

3. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 4.8.7

Let those that live even as remote as the bounds of the land which the Hebrews shall possess come to that city where the Temple shall be, three times in the year, that they may give thanks to God for his benefits and may entreat him for what they shall want in the future; and let them, by these meetings and feastings together, maintain an affectionate connection with one another. For it is a good thing for those that are of the same stock, and under the same institution of laws, not to be unacquainted with each other; which acquaintance will be maintained by thus conversing together, and by seeing and talking with one another, and so renewing the memories of this union; for if they do not thus converse together continually, they will appear like mere strangers to one another.

4. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 14.7.2

And let no one wonder that there was so much wealth in our temple, since all the Jews throughout the habitable earth, and those that worshipped God, nay, even those of Asia and Europe, sent their contributions to it, and this from very ancient times. Nor is the largeness of these sums without its attestation; nor is that greatness owing to our vanity, as raising it without ground to so great a height: but there are many witnesses to it, and particularly Strabo of Cappadocia, who says thus... “there were four classes of men among those of Cyrene; that of citizens, that of husbandmen, the third of strangers, and the fourth of Jews. Now these Jews are already gotten into all cities; and it is hard to find a place in the habitable earth that hath not admitted this tribe of men, and is not possessed by them... the Jews have places assigned them in Egypt, wherein they inhabit, besides what is peculiarly allotted to this nation at Alexandria, which is a large part of that city. There is also an ethnarch allowed them, who governs the nation, and distributes justice to them, and takes care of their contracts, and of the laws to them belonging, as if he were the ruler of a free republic. In Egypt, therefore, this nation is powerful, because the Jews were originally Egyptians, and because the land wherein they inhabit, since they went thence, is near to Egypt.”

5. Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 6.9.3

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Now the number of those that were carried captive during this whole war was collected to be ninety-seven thousand; as was the number of those that perished during the whole siege eleven hundred thousand, the greater part of whom were indeed of the same nation [with the citizens of Jerusalem], but not belonging to the city itself; for they were come up from all the country to the feast of unleavened bread, and were on a sudden shut up by an army, which, at the very first, occasioned so great a straitness among them, that there came a pestilential destruction upon them, and soon afterward such a famine, as destroyed them more suddenly. And that this city could contain so many people in it, is manifest by that number of them which was taken under Cestius, who being desirous of informing Nero of the power of the city, who otherwise was disposed to contemn that nation, entreated the high priests, if the thing were possible, to take the number of their whole multitude. So these high priests, upon the coming of that feast which is called the Passover, when they slay their sacrifices, from the ninth hour till the eleventh, but so that a company not less than ten belong to every sacrifice, (for it is not lawful for them to feast singly by themselves,) and many of us are twenty in a company, found the number of sacrifices was two hundred and fifty-six thousand five hundred; which, upon the allowance of no more than ten that feast together, amounts to two millions seven hundred thousand and two hundred persons that were pure and holy; for as to those that have the leprosy, or the gonorrhoea, or women that have their monthly courses, or such as are otherwise polluted, it is not lawful for them to be partakers of this sacrifice

6. Theodotus Inscription (CIJ 2.1401)

Theodotus, the son of Vettenu, priest and *archisynagogos*, son of an *archisynagogos*, and grandson of an *archisynagogos*, built the synagogue for reading of the Law and for teaching of the commandments, and [he built] the strangers' lodging, the chambers, and the water fittings as an inn for those that need it from abroad, of which (synagogues) his fathers and the elders and Simonides did lay the foundation.

III. Egyptian Jewish Texts on the Jerusalem Temple

1. 2 Maccabees 2:19–23, 5:15–20

2:19–23: ¹⁹ The story of Judas Maccabeus and his brothers, and the purification of the great temple, and the dedication of the altar, ²⁰ and further the wars against Antiochus Epiphanes and his son Eupator, ²¹ and the appearances that came from heaven to those who fought bravely for Judaism, so that though few in number they seized the whole land and pursued the barbarian hordes, ²² and regained possession of the temple famous throughout the world, and liberated the city, and re-established the laws that were about to be abolished, while the Lord with great kindness became gracious to them—²³ all this, which has been set forth by Jason of Cyrene in five volumes, we shall attempt to condense into a single book.

5:15–20: ¹⁵ Not content with this, Antiochus dared to enter the most holy temple in all the world, guided by Menelaus, who had become a traitor both to the laws and to his country. ¹⁶ He took the

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holy vessels with his polluted hands, and swept away with profane hands the votive offerings that other kings had made to enhance the glory and honour of the place.¹⁷ Antiochus was elated in spirit, and did not perceive that the Lord was angered for a little while because of the sins of those who lived in the city, and that this was the reason he was disregarding the holy place.¹⁸ But if it had not happened that they were involved in many sins, this man would have been flogged and turned back from his rash act as soon as he came forward, just as Heliodorus had been, whom King Seleucus sent to inspect the treasury.¹⁹ But the Lord did not choose the nation for the sake of the holy place, but the place for the sake of the nation.²⁰ Therefore the place itself shared in the misfortunes that befell the nation and afterwards participated in its benefits; and what was forsaken in the wrath of the Almighty was restored again in all its glory when the great Lord became reconciled.