

שמיני *Sh'mini* Eighth

[Leviticus 9.1—11.47](#)

[2 Samuel 6.1—7.17](#)

[Luke 7—9](#)



שמיני In [Leviticus 8](#), after sanctifying Aaron and his sons, Moses commands them to remain in the Tabernacle for seven days. This is the 8th day.

Sin Offering First In [Genesis 22.13](#), Abraham offers a ram instead of his son Isaac. In [Exodus 12.22](#), the blood of lambs on doorposts causes the Angel of Death to pass over the homes of **ישראל** *Yisra'el* Israel. Here in [Leviticus 9.3](#), Aaron, who about six months earlier sinned with the Golden Calf, is required to offer a young bull calf for sin. In verse 15, Aaron then offers a goat as a sin offering for the people. The sin offering comes first, then the peace offerings. When we pray, we can follow this example by praying first for forgiveness, and then for fellowship with God. None of us is exempt from needing forgiveness of sin. As [Hebrews 5.1-3](#) explains, even the high priest has to offer a sacrifice for his own sins, then for the sins of the people.

Forgiven, Obedient, and Blessed...Together After the offerings are laid out, Moses promises twice in [Leviticus 9.4 and 6](#) that they will see the glory of **יהוה** *YHVH* the LORD. Nothing happens. In verses 23-24, Moses and Aaron go into the Tent of Meeting, perhaps to work out some lingering resentment over the Golden Calf. They come out and bless the people, and then the fire falls from heaven to consume the offerings—and the people fall on their faces! Together, **ישראל** receives a visual demonstration of forgiveness from sin and fellowship with God. If anyone was wondering, “Can God use Aaron after his sin with the Golden Calf?” God’s answer is, “Yes!”

In the **תורה** *Torah* Law/Instruction portion Counting the Omer, we saw how the disciples visit with **ישוע** *Yehsua* Jesus for 40 days after His resurrection, and then count 10 more days to **שבועות** *Shavuot* Weeks/Pentecost for the gift of the Holy Spirit. In [Acts 2.1-4](#), while they are together in unity in the Temple, fire falls again, this time resting on them.

Usually, obedience is not rewarded with fireworks! If we expect blessing every time we obey, we fall into the prosperity doctrine.



David's Psalm of Unity [Psalm 133](#) is traditionally associated with this portion because it praises unity among brethren, the anointing of Aaron, and God's blessing.

תהלים Chapter 133

א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת, לְדָוִד : 1 A Song of Ascents; of David.

הִנֵּה מָה-טוֹב, וּמָה-נְעִים--
שֵׁבֶת אֲחִים גַּם-יַחַד. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
for brethren to dwell together in unity!

ב כַּשֶּׁמֶן הַטוֹב, עַל-הָרֹאשׁ--
יֵרֵד, עַל-הַזָּקוֹן זָקוֹן-אַהֲרֹן :
שֵׁיֵרֵד, עַל-פִּי מְדוּתָיו. 2 It is like the precious oil upon the head,
coming down upon the beard; even Aaron's
beard, that cometh down upon the collar of
his garments;

ג כַּטֵּל-חֶרְמוֹן-- שֵׁיֵרֵד, עַל-הַרְרֵי
צִיּוֹן : כִּי שָׁם צִוָּה יְהוָה, אֶת-
הַבְּרָכָה-- חַיִּים, עַד-הָעוֹלָם. 3 Like the dew of Hermon, that cometh
down upon the mountains of Zion;
for there the LORD commanded the
blessing, even life forever.

You may recognize the first verse of this psalm from a popular Israeli song:

הנה מה טוב ומה-נעים שבת אחים גם יחד!

Hee-nay mah-tov oo'mah'nayim shevet akh'eem gam ya'khad!

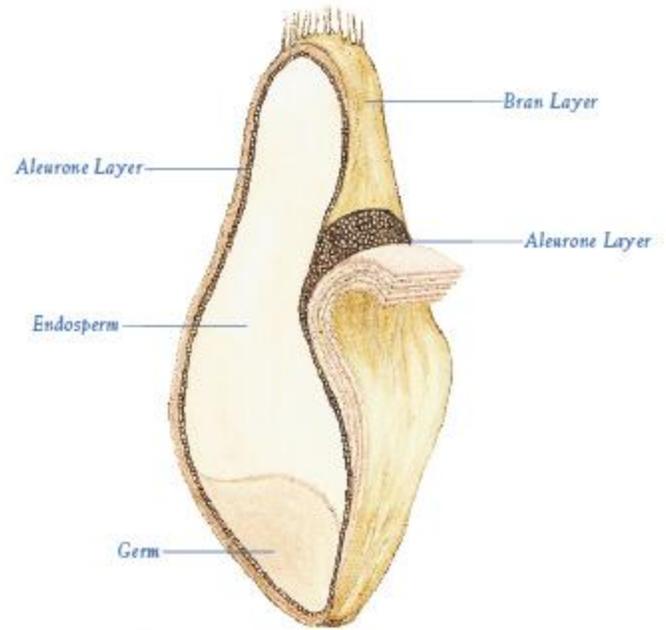
Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity!



Son of Man, Grain of Wheat

Moses in [Leviticus 9.4](#) directs a [מִנְחָה](#) *minkhah* grain offering to be offered before יהוה appears.

One word for son is [בֵּר](#) *bar* son/heir as in the Messianic [Psalm 2.12](#), but another meaning is [בֵּר](#) *bar* grain. In [John 12.23-24](#), יֵשׁוּעַ says that it is time for the *Son* of Man to be glorified, and that a *grain* of wheat must fall to the ground and die in order to reproduce. His Hebrew listeners could have caught the pun and might have made the connection to this portion, when the grain is offered and יהוה appears. Now we as sons/grain of God, [1 John 3.2](#), follow יֵשׁוּעַ.



Unity in the Word vs. Traditions of Men

That day—the same day the fire falls!—[Leviticus 10.1](#) records Aaron's sons [נָדָב](#) *Nadav* Nadab /Generous and [אֲבִיהוּא](#) *Aveehu* Abihu /He is My Father offering strange fire and then getting burned up by יהוה. Glory and judgment the same day, in the midst of unity, because two men have their own ideas of an appropriate offering. Our God is a consuming fire, [Hebrews 12.29](#), quoting [Deuteronomy 4.24](#). God determines what makes an appropriate sacrifice. And good names are not a guarantee of wise children.

A related story is in the Haphtarah portion, [2 Samuel 6.1-7.17](#). David brings the ark of God into Jerusalem, carrying it by oxcart instead of the required poles, [Exodus 25.12-15](#). When the ark might topple, Uzzah puts out a hand to steady it, and God strikes him dead. David is angry over the death of Uzzah. But it is Uzzah's disregard over how to carry the ark properly, according to God's clear instruction, which causes Uzzah's death.

It's not unusual to make our own rules when God has already spoken. This time of year, Easter is celebrated with rabbits and eggs, symbols related to Ishtar/Astarte, the day's namesake and the pagan goddess of fertility. The appropriate biblical feast is First Fruits, the day יֵשׁוּעַ rises from the grave, and which follows Passover, the day יֵשׁוּעַ dies as the perfect Lamb of God. God authorizes First Fruits. But many offer the "strange fire" of Easter instead.

God warns against ignoring His [תּוֹרָה](#), [Ezekiel 22.26](#), by contrasting ignorant priests with ones who keep His [תּוֹרָה](#), [Ezekiel 44.23-24](#). Peter in [1 Peter 2.4-10](#) says that believers are a *holy priesthood*. As holy priests, our calling is to pay attention to the kinds of sacrifices God accepts. Let others keep the traditions of men.

Keeping תורה Many believers think the only test of a prophet is found in [Deuteronomy 18.18-22](#), whether or not what the prophet says comes true. But read [Deuteronomy 13.1-6](#) and you will see another test. If anyone tries to lead people away from God and His commandments, that person is a false prophet. In the example of celebrating Easter rather than First Fruits, most Christians justify this by saying, “Jesus abolished the Law!” Jewish ears hear, “I’m a false prophet and so is Jesus!” In fact, ישוע specifically says that He did not come to abolish the Law, [Matthew 5.17](#).

If ישוע didn’t abolish תורה, should the Church still keep it?

- [Genesis 3.4-7](#) Adam and Eve trust the Serpent’s word over God’s and take and eat from the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*, believing that it will *open their eyes* and *make them wise*. As a result, they die. Their own covering of fig leaves fails. The rest of the Bible is God providing a way of salvation for us.
- [Psalm 19.7-11](#) God provides His תורה as the cure for our wrong choices:
 The תורה of יהוה is perfect, converting the soul (sounds New Testament!)
 The *testimony* of יהוה *makes the simple wise*
 The statutes of יהוה rejoice the heart
 The commandment of יהוה is pure, *enlightening the eyes*
 The fear of יהוה is clean
 The judgments of יהוה are true and righteous
 They are more desirable than gold, sweeter than honey, bring warning and reward
- [Jer. 31.31-34](#) The New Covenant is תורה written on our hearts
- [Ezekiel 36](#) When ישראל comes back to the Land, God gives them a new heart and puts His Spirit in them. This Spirit leads them in God’s statutes.
- [Luke 24.27](#) After the resurrection on the road to Emmaus, beginning with Moses (תורה) and the Prophets, ישוע explains what is written about Him.
- [John 5.39](#) The Scriptures μαρτυροῦσιν *martyreō give testimony* of ישוע.
 When ישוע says this, there is no “New Testament” yet. The Scriptures He refers to are “Old Testament.” תורה is the Written Word; ישוע is the Living Word.
- [Heb. 8.10-12](#) Re: Jeremiah 31, the New Covenant is תורה written on hearts.
- [Rev. 22.11-16](#) ישוע encourages the holy, rewards everyone according to his work, and blesses those who *do His commandments*, earning the right to the *Tree of Life*, while outside are those who break various commandments.

Jews have תורה but don’t have ישוע.

Christians have ישוע but don’t have תורה.

The first to humble himself and learn from the other wins!

—Pastor Mark Biltz

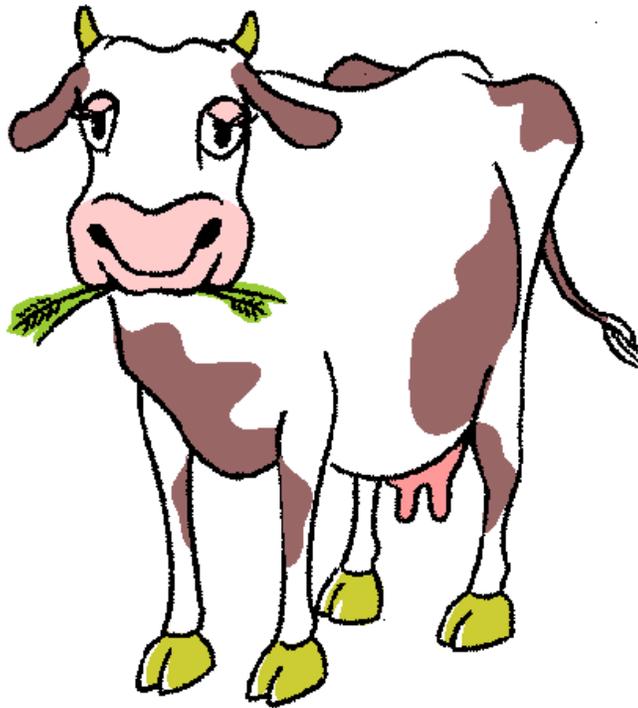


No תורה, No Reward What would the Church be like if it threw out תורה? [Psalm 19](#) says it would have darkened eyes, be foolish, and have no reward. That would appeal to the Serpent, who has been trying to corrupt every gift of God since Creation.

Two brothers are given the opportunity to pick dandelions, one penny for each dandelion, one dollar for each hundred. One brother realizes the opportunity, picks dandelions like crazy, and collects his reward. The other brother doesn't pick any. But when he sees the first brother getting paid, he wants to get paid, too! This is the attitude of many in the Church today. God has literally spelled out the opportunity. Still, many want the rewards without doing the work.

Clean and Unclean Food This portion includes [Leviticus 11](#), which permits eating clean animals that have cloven hooves and chew the cud (such as cattle, sheep, and goats) and prohibits eating animals without those qualities (such as pigs, horses, dogs, and rabbits). Sea creatures with fins and scales may be eaten (such as salmon and trout), but not those without them (such as catfish, clams, oysters, lobsters, crabs, eel, squid, whales, seals, and dolphins). Pretty much all insects are prohibited, except locusts, crickets, and grasshoppers, which I've heard have about twice the protein and half the fat of beef, and one tenth the taste? I don't know—I've never tried one!

As part of the church's historical, determined effort to rid itself of all things Jewish, this list has been tossed out. For reasons why this list should apply to believers today, try the easy read [Holy Cow!](#) by Hope Egan. Openness to God's food laws often follows a general openness to the rest of תורה, and vice-versa.



Being Separate While there are valid health reasons for eating clean food, here health is not the emphasis. The emphasis is to practice **שְׂדֵדָה** *kodesh* holiness/separateness. There are common things, and there are things set apart. Anybody can eat anything. But those who set themselves apart, in the way God has determined, will eat clean food.

In [Genesis 9.1-3](#), the earlier prohibition to eat only fruits, nuts, and vegetables is lifted and God tells Noah that it's OK to eat animals. Noah already knows what is clean and unclean, since God tells him before the flood in [Genesis 7.2](#) to take seven pairs of every טָהוֹר *tahor* ceremonially clean animal, but only one pair of every unclean animal.

[Leviticus 11.4](#) uses the word טָמֵא *tameh* ceremonially unclean. Either way, the emphasis is on ceremonial or ritual purity or impurity, not health benefits.

[Deuteronomy 14.21](#) adds not to eat anything that's found dead, but it's OK to give it to the stranger! Another example of the emphasis being שְׂדֵדָה.

[Leviticus 11.10](#) and forward lists what is שְׂקֵץ *sheqets* abominable/detestable. Sea creatures without fins and scales, birds of prey, and things that creep on the earth are among what is שְׂקֵץ, a word that is more often used to describe worshipping idols.

[Isaiah 66.17](#) lumps together idolaters and those who eat swine, detestable things, and the mouse, saying God will consume them.

Why do pigs get such a bad rap? The traditional explanation is that since pigs have cloven hooves, they appear to be clean like goats and sheep. They walk around and present themselves as acceptable. But since they do not chew the cud, they are unclean. So pigs are a symbol of treachery. As my wife says, they are “abominations in cows’ clothing!”





Bring on the Bacon? Many say that all these verses are undone by [Acts 10](#), Peter's vision of the sheet full of all kinds of unclean animals, and [Acts 15](#), when the Jerusalem Council gives the Gentiles just four laws to live by: abstain from sexual immorality, blood, the meat of strangled animals, and meat sacrificed to idols. Since a pig could have been in that sheet, and since eating pig is not one of the four prohibitions, bring on the bacon, right? Well...consider this:

A primary principle of biblical interpretation is to let the text interpret itself. In [Acts 10](#), Peter, a Torah-observant Jew, refuses three times to eat anything in the sheet.

1. Compare Peter's refusal to [Ezekiel 4.12-15](#). God tells Ezekiel to cook bread with human excrement. Like Peter, Ezekiel balks and God allows him to cook with cow manure instead. Is God testing Ezekiel and Peter in each case?
2. Just as the visitors from Cornelius arrive at Peter's home, the Spirit tells Peter to go with the Gentiles, whom till now Peter considered unclean. In Jewish tradition, the laws about **טהור** and **טמא** carried prohibitions against going into a Gentile's home or eating with a Gentile. We Gentiles miss the significance of this because we don't think of ourselves as **טמא**. And Church history is mostly Gentile history, so the Jewish perspective has been hidden. But this is the context of this passage, and yet the result is that Peter travels and eats with Gentiles.
3. What is Peter's interpretation of his own dream? In [10.28](#), he says that God showed him not to call any *man* impure or unclean. Peter doesn't mention food!
4. How serious is Peter? In [Acts 11.4-18](#), when Peter is accused of going into a Gentile's home and eating, he explains this dream and this interpretation, convincing the Jewish believers that God is *no longer calling Gentiles unclean*.
5. As a result, the Church for the first time opens its doors to Gentiles. Now, 2,000 years later, many Gentiles and Jews don't think Jews belong in the Church!

What is the purpose of James' four rules in [Acts 15](#)? James isn't saying, "This is all the Law you'll ever have to obey," for that would sanction lying, adultery, and murder.

Think again about how detestable the Gentiles were to Jews. They might have sex with a pagan temple prostitute and then go to a synagogue. They did many things repulsive to Jews. James puts four restrictions on Gentiles who wish to fellowship with the (Jewish) Church. Since "Moses is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath," they will get the rest of **תורה** as they continue in fellowship. He says in effect, "Until the Gentiles mature in obeying all the **תורה**, we will at least be able to stand fellowshiping with them if they obey four rules." Instead of a carte-blanche for Gentiles to eat pigs or break **תורה**, this is a selfless act on the part of Jews to submit to God's leading, break a life-long loathing for Gentiles, and welcome them into fellowship. Unfortunately, much of Church history since then does not reflect the Gentiles being as generous toward the Jews.



Peter, Part of a Bible Theme There's a Bible theme in the story of Peter on the roof when he gets this vision:

Dove One root of תורה is תור *tor* turtledove. Only twice in Scripture does a dove visibly play an active role. The first is in [Genesis 8.6-12](#). Noah releases a dove to see if the judgment of the flood is ended. The dove returns empty-beaked. The second time, the dove soars over the waters and returns with an olive branch, which it literally brings as a token of ישוע *Yeshua* Jesus/salvation from the nations (the earth) to the promised seed (ישראל) contained in Noah's son Shem aboard the ark. The third time, the dove does not return because it has found salvation from the destruction of the flood waters. Where? The next time we see the dove is 3,000 years later in [Matthew 3.16](#), when the Spirit descends like a dove on ישוע as He "rises" out of the waters of baptism. The dove ties together the two Covenants—salvation from judgment is found in ישוע.



Dove יונה *Yonah* Jonah/dove is the first prophet sent to Gentiles.

Instead he runs the other way, boarding a ship at יפוה *Yafa* Joppa/Jaffa and traveling over the waters. But after being "dead" in the belly of a huge fish for three days and three nights, he "rises," repents, and keeps his obligation to preach to the Gentiles. Nineveh repents and is saved.

Dove Peter, Simon bar יונה, is praying on a roof in יפוה when he receives this vision. He travels along the waters to Caesarea, becoming the first believer in ישוע to enter the home of a Gentile. Cornelius, a man from the nations, repents and joins with ישראל in ישוע.

Dove Here's the *Babylon* translation of Colombo from Italian to English:

n. Columbus, Christopher Columbus (1446?-1506), Italian explorer and navigator who discovered America in 1492; capital of Ohio (USA) n. pigeon, **dove**

Arguably Jewish, Colombo said in his diary that [Isaiah 11.11](#) motivated his search for islands of the sea, possibly searching for a haven for Jews—in 1492, Jews were forced to convert or leave Spain. This dove sailed across the waters to open America to all nations.

Dove As believers living in the New World, we are indwelt with the Holy Spirit, symbolized by a dove. From passages like [Isaiah 60](#), we know we are to travel over the waters and bring salvation to ישראל. God hid Joseph in Egypt when, [Genesis 41.23](#), a wind from east (Saudi Arabia) brought famine. Believers have been hidden in the New World, which has the power to protect the nations and ישראל from another ill wind from Saudi Arabia—Islam. God hid אסתר *Esther* (prefix א "I will" plus root סתר *satar* conceal = "I will conceal") "for such a time as this," and we have been prepared and hidden by God in this time of trouble for ישראל.

Obedience or Legalism? An argument against obeying the food laws is that doing so is legalistic. After all, as [Ephesians 2.8-9](#) says, we are saved by grace, not Law. Isn't being bound to Old Testament Law just legalism, thinking that we can earn favor with God through works, a violation of grace?

Consider this analogy: If your kitchen is dirty, you can't order the neighbor child to clean it. He's not your family and it's not his responsibility. If the neighbor child were to come over on his own and clean your kitchen, you might be upset or you might be pleased, but doing the dishes wouldn't make him part of your family.

Whom do you order to clean your kitchen? Your own child, who participates in both the blessings and work that come with being a part of your family.



Legalism is thinking that if we do certain works, we can earn a right standing with God. It's like thinking that the neighbor child can become part of your family by cleaning your kitchen. But the only way for a child to become part of your family is to be born or adopted into it. It's the same with God's family. Doing work won't get you in. But once we are in God's family, we have work to do.

Membership Has Its Privileges As an example of being in God's family, look at [Genesis 22.2](#). God says to Abraham, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love..." and *sacrifice him*. At this time, Abraham already has a son, Ishmael, but Ishmael doesn't count! He's not part of God's family. And it's the only son, Isaac, whom Abraham is told to sacrifice.

Isaac doesn't die that day. God provides a substitute ram instead. Other only-sons saved from death are seen in the Bible. [Exodus 12](#) records how the blood of Passover lambs save the eldest sons of **ישראל**. [1 Kings 17.7-24](#) tells the story of Elijah meeting a widow of Zarephath and later raising her only son from the dead. [2 Kings 4.8-37](#) tells of Elisha raising from the dead the only son of a well-to-do woman of Shunem.

The New Testament portion for today includes [Luke 7.11-17](#), when **ישוע** raises from the dead the only son of a widow during a funeral procession in Nain, a town only a short distance from Shunem. Possibly many in Nain at the time of **ישוע** are familiar with the earlier story of Elisha raising the other widow's son from the dead. They realize God is working in their presence—and they want even more to be part of it.

A Hill in Bergen-Belsen When Aaron's sons die in [Leviticus 10](#), he is not allowed to grieve. This portion is usually read around the same time as the annual Holocaust Remembrance Day and the mood of sorrow is appropriate.

The book [Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust](#) tells the story *A Hill in Bergen-Belsen*, about Anna, a young Jewish girl who contracts Typhus. Her friends give her up for dead. She refuses to lie down, afraid that if she does, she will die. She stumbles around the camp, tripping over the dead, until she sees a hill shrouded in mist. Somehow, Anna knows that if she makes it to the top of that hill, she will live. It takes her several hours of crawling, but finally she makes it and collapses on top. She cries for the first time in four years of incarceration, calling out, "Abba," daddy. Her father lays his hand on her head and comforts her, assuring her that her relief will come in a few days.

Four days later, April 15th, 1945, the British liberate Bergen-Belsen. They find Anna among the 60,000 survivors, along with 13,000 unburied dead. Anna learns later that the hill she crawled up was a mass grave where her father had been buried months earlier.



Glossary, in order of appearance

ישראל	<i>Yisra'el</i>	Israel, the people or the Land
יהוה	<i>YHVH</i>	the LORD, holy Name of God, traditionally unpronounced
תורה	<i>Torah</i>	Law/Instruction
ישוע	<i>Yeshua</i>	Jesus/salvation
שבועות	<i>Shavuot</i>	Weeks / Pentecost

הנה מה טוב ומה-נעים שבת אחים גם יחד!

Hee-nay mah-tov oo'mah'nayim shevet akh'eem gam ya'khad!

Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity!

מנחה	<i>minkhah</i>	grain/meal offering
בר	<i>bar</i>	son/heir
בר	<i>bar</i>	grain
נדב	<i>Nadav</i>	Generous/Nadab, son of Aaron
אביהוא	<i>Aveehu</i>	He is My Father/Abihu, son of Aaron
μαρτυρεῶ	<i>martyreō</i>	give testimony
קדש	<i>kodesh</i>	holiness/separateness
טהור	<i>tahor</i>	ceremonially clean
טמא	<i>tameh</i>	ceremonially unclean
שקץ	<i>sheh-qets</i>	abominable/detestable
יונה	<i>Yonah</i>	Jonah/dove
יפוא	<i>Yafo</i>	Joppa/Jaffa