

Get Clean Before Entering G-d's Home

The Torah warns us (-Exodus 30:20-21), "When they enter the Tent of Meeting, they shall wash with water (from the *kiyor* (-[Link](#))) so that they will not die; or when they approach the altar to serve, to make a fire offering rise up in smoke to G-d, they shall wash their hands and feet so that they will not die." Rashi comments, "When they enter the Tent of Meeting': to bring the incense up in smoke in the morning and in the afternoon, or to sprinkle some of the blood of the bull of the anointed Kohain (High Priest, who erred in his halachic decision and practiced according to that erroneous decision), and the blood of the young goat for (sin offerings for having engaged in) idolatry."

Commentaries ask why Rashi lists examples of service, and answer that Rashi is clarifying that the death-penalty isn't for a vain, "Enter the Tent," but only if the *kohain* did a service while there. However:

- (i) Rashi gives his comment on the words, "When they enter the Tent of Meeting," without the word, "To serve"?
- (ii) More so, Rashi is committed to (-Rashi, Genesis 3:), "only (teach) the simple meaning of the Scripture" --even when in contradiction to the *halachic* (Jewish Law) extrapolation of the verse! Hence, --while *halacha* will extrapolate from the latter, "to serve," to also define the prior, "When they enter the Tent of Meeting," nevertheless,-- being *contraire* to the, "simple meaning of the Scripture," in which the verse is clearly defining two separate cases (with "or when..." being stated after the first, "so that they will not die") Rashi must explain the verse is as even to just, "Enter the Tent of Meeting," is punishable by death?
- (iii) If Rashi feels the need to teach the young student that the *kohain* is not punishable for just vainly entering the Temple without the necessary prerequisites, Rashi should have done so at the earlier (similar) verse of (-Exodus 28:43), "They (the prescribed garments of the *kohain*) shall be worn by Aaron and by his sons when they enter the Tent of Meeting or when (thus, here too, creating two separate cases) they approach the altar to serve in the Holy, so they will not bear iniquity and die"?
- (iv) Even from the, "simple meaning of the Scripture," the student understands that it is not practical to assume that anyone would "vainly enter" the Temple, without a purpose of performing a service. Hence, the, "simple meaning of the Scripture," of, "When they enter the Tent of Meeting," is understood --with no comment from Rashi -- to be speaking of entering to do service!
- (v) If Rashi's intent is to point out that the death-penalty is only applicable when doing a service, Rashi should have simply and briefly said, "When they enter the Tent of Meeting': to serve." Why give examples, and specifically these, when: (a) There are services take took place daily prior to, "bring the incense"? (b) The latter examples of offerings wasn't taught yet to the student? And (c) of what need is there to point out that the service of, "bring the incense," took place both, "in the morning and in the afternoon"?

Hence, it is clear that: (i) Rashi is not defining, "Enter the Tent," as, "To serve". (ii) Rashi is explaining the parameters of, "Enter the Tent," to be speaking specifically of these services (*morning & evening incense, sprinkle some of the blood of the bull of the anointed Kohain and the blood of the young goat for idolatry*).

The Explanation: Rashi is bothered as to why in our verse of, "wash with water," the verse clearly separates the, "Enter the Tent," with its own, "That they will not die," from the, "Approach the altar to serve," with its own, "That they will not die," while concerning the, "They (garments) shall be worn," the verse doesn't? Therefore, Rashi understands: Concerning, "wash with water," "Enter the Tent," and, "To serve," are two different categories, while not so concerning, "They (garments) shall be worn"! By, "Approach the altar to serve," "wash with water," is a detail in the service, and hence, every service needs a separate, "wash with water." While by "Enter the Tent," "wash with water," is a general prerequisite to the entering, and doesn't need a separate, "wash with water," for each service done inside (i.e. set the *Show Breads* on the *Table*, kindle the *Lamps* on the *Menorah*, etc.).

The difference between, "wash with water" --in which there is a difference between "entering," and "serving", and, "They (garments of the *kohain*) shall be worn" --in which there is no difference between "entering," and "serving", is that "They (garments of the *kohain*) shall be worn," is considered a service, in its own right --that the *kohain* is do the service of wearing these garments when doing service--, and hence, there is no difference in category between the service of, "shall be worn," when, "Enter the Tent," or, "Approach the altar to serve". While, "wash with water," is not a service on its own, but a preparation to service. The *kohain* must clean and, "Sanctify his hands and feet," before he can do service. In this, there is an obvious difference between, "Enter the Tent," where only the *kohainim* went --hence, one, "wash with water," would suffice for the entire time, and, "Approach the altar to serve," which was in the courtyard, where there were also *Levites* and *Israelites*, bringing --and observing, "And he shall lean his hand upon the head of"-- their sacrifices --hence, needing a, "wash with water," before every service.

Now, we can understand the specific services listed by Rashi for, "When they enter the Tent." Rashi is listing the times of, "They enter the Tent," which is twice a day: (i) For the first service of the day inside the Tent, which, according to Rashi is, "to bring the incense up in smoke in the morning." Rashi defines the (-*ibid* 30:7), "(*Shall make incense of spices go up in smoke upon it*); every morning when he sets in order the lamps," to mean cleaning the lamps (from the residue of burning all night), which is not considered a service --unlike Maimonides sees the verse to mean kindling the lamps (also) in the morning (and at night). Hence, according to Rashi, the first service inside the Temple was, "Shall make incense of spices go up in smoke." (ii) Rashi feels that just as in verse 7, concerning the morning, it was the service of the incense that was first, so too, in verse 8's "kindles the lights in the afternoon, he shall make it go up in smoke, continual incense," means that the service of the incense was before the kindling the lights. Hence, also by the second time of, "They enter the Tent" --which was in the evening--, the first service was, "to bring the incense up in smoke." Incense is the twice daily set established services of, "When they enter the Tent," after which any other services would not need a separate, "wash with water". However, once Rashi clarifies that the, "wash your hands," of, "When you enter the Tent," is not about (each) Service (separately),

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Rashi then clarifies, that if there arises a reason for an extra, "Enter the Tent," such as to, "sprinkle some of the blood of the bull of the anointed Kohain and the blood of the young goat for idolatry," which are performed on the inner-altar, they would need to again, "wash your hand," before they, "Enter the Tent."

Esoterically Speaking: The concept of, "washing one's hands and feet," is that before one begins to work their *holy service*, one is to cleanse themselves from undesirable things. And there is a difference between the cleansing for the, "outer-altar," and the, "inner-altar." The service of the *outer-altar* is that of sacrifices, which is to rectify and elevate our *inner-animal*. The *inner-altar* is primarily the service of *ketoret* (incense), which is connected to the word *katirah* (Aramaic for *kesher* -knot; tied together), and represents the service of (-Zohar Vol III, 288a), "With one knot I have bound myself with Him, with the Holy One, blessed be He," strengthening our bond with G-d. And so too, it is with the *outer-altar* (place of self-rectification) and *inner-altar* (place of strengthening our bond with G-d) of our heart.

Hence, for the service of the *outer-altar* (dealing with potential evil; rectification) one must constantly be careful to, "wash your hand," before each *service*. However, for the service of the *inner-altar* (dealing with holiness; connection with G-d) one, "wash your hand," before *entering* is sufficient. Nevertheless, even within the service of the *inner-altar*, for the, "to sprinkle some of the blood of the bull of the anointed Kohain, and the blood of the young goat for idolatry," which is about atonement of a negative experience, one must perform a separate, "wash your hand," so that the *descent* bring forth a greater unprecedented *ascent*.