



Parashat Pinchas  
Korban Hatamid  
By Rabbi David Silverberg

Parashat Pinchas introduces the *mitzva* of the *korban ha-tamid*, the daily sacrifice offered in the Temple each morning and afternoon (28:1-8). The morning *tamid* was the first sacrifice offered in the *Mikdash* each day.

The Mishna (Yoma 3:1, Tamid 3:1) cites two opinions as to when precisely the morning *tamid* was offered. One view maintained that this sacrifice was offered as soon as light appeared on the eastern horizon, whereas the other opinion claimed that the sacrifice was offered only once light filled the entire eastern sky. Maimonides, both in his commentary to the Mishna and in *Mishneh Torah* (Hilkhos Temidin U-musafin 1:2), follows the second view, and rules that the *tamid* offering took place only once the eastern sky was bright.

As a number of later writers noted, both views in the Mishna maintain that the *tamid* is offered before the point of *neitz ha-chama* – sunrise, when the sun itself appears on the eastern horizon. Generally speaking, any *mitzva* obligation that applies specifically during the daytime should not be performed until after sunrise. The Mishna in Masekhet Megila (20a) lists a number of different *mitzvot* that apply during the day, and writes that they should preferably be performed specifically after sunrise. Although one who performed these *mitzvot* as early as *amud ha-shachar* – when light first appears on the eastern sky – has fulfilled his obligation, the preferred time begins only at sunrise. Yet, when it comes to the morning *tamid* offering, the *kohanim* would offer the sacrifice before sunrise – seemingly before the preferred time-frame.

The *Minchat Chinukh* (401) attributed this unique provision to the principle of “*kohanim zerizin hein*” – the assumption that the *kohanim* serving in the Temple worked with particular diligence and care. According to the *Minchat Chinukh* (and Rashi, in his commentary to Masekhet Megila), the Sages required waiting until sunrise as a safeguard, to ensure that people would not perform daytime *mitzvot* before *amud ha-shachar*. By establishing sunrise as the earliest time for these *mitzvot*, the Sages helped guarantee that even the less careful individuals would perform the *mitzvot* no earlier than *amud ha-shachar*. The *kohanim* in the Temple, however, did not require such a safeguard, and could be trusted to perform the rituals at their proper time. They therefore offered the *tamid* earlier, even before sunrise, as there was no reason to require them to wait until the sun appeared on the horizon.

A different answer emerges from a theory proposed by Rabbi Menashe Klein, in his *Mishneh Halakhos* (13:100). Based upon Maimonides’ comments in Hilkhos Keri’at Shema (1:10), Rabbi Klein asserted that Maimonides defined “*neitz ha-chama*” not as sunrise, but rather as the time when light fills the eastern sky. It thus emerges that the

*tamid* was, in fact, brought at the time of *neitz ha-chama* – the point at which the preferred period for performing daytime *mitzvot* begins. According to Maimonides, Rabbi Klein contended, when the Mishna in Masekhet Megila requires waiting until *neitz ha-chama* before performing daytime *mitzvot*, it actually refers to the time when light fills the eastern sky, and thus the *tamid* offering is no different from other daytime *mitzvot*, as it, too, is performed only at the point of *neitz ha-chama*.

Yet a third answer was suggested by Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (*Iggerot Moshe*, Y.D. 1:180), who claimed that certain *mitzvot* – such as the morning *tamid* – are of such importance that they should be performed even earlier than what we would normally consider the preferred time. Although *Halakha* generally discourages performing daytime *mitzvot* before sunrise, an exception is made for the *tamid* offering, due to its special significance and importance as the first sacrifice offered in the Temple.

Interestingly, Rabbi Feinstein contends that Maimonides adopted an entirely different approach to the provision requiring waiting until sunrise to perform daytime *mitzvot*. Earlier, we encountered the theory that this law was enacted by the Sages to ensure that people would not perform these *mitzvot* too early, before *amud ha-shachar*. However, Rabbi Feinstein notes, when Maimonides codifies this *halakha* in the contexts of *berit mila* (Hilkhhot Mila 1:8) and the sprinkling of the *para aduma* waters (Hilkhhot Para 11:1), he makes no mention of a rabbinic enactment. Rabbi Feinstein infers from Maimonides' presentation that the preference that daytime *mitzvot* be performed specifically after sunrise applies on the level of *de-orayta* – Torah law – and was not enacted later by the Sages.

And yet, despite the fact that delaying the *mitzva* until sunrise constitutes a Torah requirement, this provision is overridden by the concern to offer the *tamid* sacrifice at the earliest possible time. *Halakha* affords such importance to this *mitzva* that it required offering the sacrifice immediately when light filled the eastern sky, before sunrise, even though Torah law normally requires waiting until sunrise. It appears that certain *mitzvot* carry such weight that they must be performed at the earliest time possible, and should not be delayed even to the normally preferred time period.