

Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

TZAV

The Shalsholet note (extended in being sung three times up and down) for the Torah reading this week, occurs at the point where Moshe was about to slaughter the EIL HAMILU'IM, the ram required for the consecration of Aharon and his sons as heads of the everlasting dynasty of kohanim. Until then, Moshe Rabeinu himself performed the offerings in the Mishkan. Thereon, that privilege would exclusively belong to Aharon and his descendants, the Kohanim.

The Shalsholet is a rare note. It occurs four times in the Torah and twice in the Navi. Six times in total. The sound of this extended note communicates hesitation, trembling, uncertainty, and even fear. It certainly appears to express that mood in five out of the six occasions where it occurs:

(a) VAYITMAHMAH - and (Lot) lingered. The angels told him to leave S'dom before total annihilation. He hesitated, feeling very reluctant to leave the prosperity and luxury of that city and say goodbye to all he had. They then made up his mind for him.

(b) VAYOMAR - and (Eliezer, servant

of Avraham) said. Would G-d cause the miracle whereby a suitable young lady would appear at the well and, out of genuine care for the stranger, draw bucketfuls of water for his retinue of camels? Hesitation here as well. Rashi implies that Avraham's servant had mixed feelings as this journey would upset plans of his own; that his own daughter should marry Yitzchak. In addition, it may be suggested that although he petitioned G-d in prayer, he feared that prayer may come under the prohibition of "Do not put G-d to the test" (D'varim 6:16).

(c) VAYMA-EIN - And (Yosef) refused to sleep with Potifar's wife. Rashi makes it clear that at least according to one opinion, Yosef hesitated a great deal as to whether to give in to that particular temptation of the moment or not.

(d) V'NIVHALU - and (the people of Bavel) will tremble. The shalsholet speaks for itself. Yeshayahu (13:8) warns that the mighty Babylonian Empire of the period of Churban Bayit Rishon will tremble a great deal as surrounding forces will set to work and utterly destroy her.

(e) VAYOMAR - And (Amos) said: "G-d roars from Zion..." (Amos 1:2). Amos would certainly have trembled at the words G-d put into his mouth to deliver to the people: effectively that they, the people of Yisrael and Yehuda, were no better than the

Goyim! In fact, they were a lot worse than the Goyim: "You are the only people I have known intimately..." (3:2).

Meanwhile, what of the Shalsholet in this parasha? The word VAYISHCHAT - and he slaughtered - occurs three times in the offerings for the consecration of the Mishkan, the first time for the sin offering, the second time for the burnt offering, and the final time for EIL HAMILU'IM, the ram for the consecration for Aharon and his sons. The Shalsholet is found on that final VAYISCHAT only.

For the following reason, possibly. Moshe indeed hesitated and felt in two minds about it. Not when he offered the CHATAT and the OLAH beforehand. But the EIL HAMILU'IM could well have caused him a lot of pain for that would signify the end of his direct involvement in the korbanot - that would pass to his brother Aharon and his children for all time. He could well have felt jealousy that the privilege of the intimate Divine service would no longer be his. He would have sensed his own hesitation, trembling, uncertainty, even perhaps fear. But unlike Kayin with Hevel, or Yosef's brothers with Yosef, he did not succumb to that jealousy although it was not easy for him. Indeed, here G-d tested Moshe Rabeinu, who did not respond with an "after all I've done for the B'nei Yisrael, surely the sacred tasks and

privileges should go to me and my children, not to my brother and his children." He accepted it as G-d's will, even though it could have hurt at the time and it gave rise to the hesitation, trembling, uncertainty and fear that the Shalsholet indeed communicates.

PS - For Shabbat HaGadol: the Haftara for Simchat Torah starts at the very beginning of the Navi with Sefer Yehoshua and the Haftara for Shabbat HaGadol ends with the last chapter of the Navi which is the last chapter of Malachi. That hints at what should go in the middle: two chapters of Navi a day with minor adjustments for non-leap/leap years gets you comfortably to the end of the Navi on Shabbat HaGadol. Then during the summer months, start with T'hilim (goes well with S'firat HaOmer), then Mishlei, then Iyov (fits neatly with Bein HaMetzarim), Daniel, Ezra, and Nechemya (goes nicely with the summer vacation) and get to the end of Divrei HaYamim and at the same time the end of the Chamisha Chumshei Torah by Simchat Torah. If even one person takes the challenge on reading this, I'm delighted. And I hope you're that person!

PPS - For those who spotted that my commentator of this year is the Rashbam, I didn't find anything of his work this week I could readily use as a basis for a D'var Torah. Next Parasha should make up for it! 