

# **Dr. Elaine Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 13, Ritual Torah, Part 1**

## **Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

### **1. Abstract of Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 13, Ritual Torah, Part 1, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

**Dr. Phillips' Old Testament Literature Lecture 13 focuses on the Cultic Torah.** The lecture examines sacrifices, the priesthood, and the sanctuary in the Old Testament. **It highlights the significance of ritual and symbolism in ancient Israelite worship, particularly as detailed in the book of Leviticus.** She explains that the three categories of the Torah include Civil, Moral, and Ritual, and how Leviticus focuses on the need for holiness. **The lecture explores the categories of the Torah and offers an overview of the sanctuary, priesthood, and sacrifices.** Finally, the lecture offers New Testament parallels, such as Jesus's role as high priest.

**2. 32 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 13 – Double  
click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the  
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link  
there (Old Testament → OT Introduction → OT Lit).**



**Phillips\_OTLit\_Sessi  
on13.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 13, Ritual Torah, Part 1

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpt of Dr. Elaine Phillips' Old Testament Literature Lecture 13, focusing on the Cultic Torah.

#### **Briefing Document: Dr. Elaine Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Lecture 13, The Cultic Torah**

##### **I. Overview**

This lecture focuses on the Cultic (ritual and ceremonial) aspects of the Torah, specifically sacrifices, the priesthood, and the sanctuary (Tabernacle). Dr. Phillips emphasizes the importance of understanding the symbolism and lessons embedded within these ancient practices, even though our modern worship styles may differ. She also highlights the paradox inherent in the juxtaposition of God's majestic beauty and the "gore and the mess and the horror and the pain that death is" associated with sacrifice. The lecture connects these Old Testament rituals to New Testament themes, particularly the role of Jesus as the ultimate high priest and sacrifice. She stresses that while specific practices have changed, fundamental concepts like the need for a mediator, sacrifice, and reverence for God remain relevant.

##### **II. Key Themes and Ideas**

- **Categories of Torah:** Dr. Phillips reviews the categories of Torah: civil/social, moral/ethical, and ritual/ceremonial. The lecture's focus is on the latter.
- **The Importance of Ritual and Symbolism:** Dr. Phillips argues that ritual is present in all forms of worship, not just liturgical ones. "There's a ritual in every place you're worshiping...You stand up, and the praise band starts...There's ritual, there's stuff that's been designed. It's just as ritualistic there as you have in any kind of liturgical church because we need ritual." First Testament worship is filled with symbolism that provides profound lessons about God and ourselves.
- **Leviticus as a Starting Point:** She notes that Orthodox Jewish children begin their Bible study with Leviticus because it emphasizes the holiness of God. "The reason they start there is something we mentioned the other day, and that is in Leviticus, we see an overarching emphasis on the holiness of God...Do this because I'm holy. You be holy because I'm holy."

- **Outline of Leviticus:** Chapters 1-10: Sacrifices and ordination of the priesthood – *the way to the Holy One*.
- Chapters 11-27: *The way of holiness* – living all of life in the presence of God.
- **Sacred Time and Sacred Space:** Dr. Phillips discusses how certain times and places are set apart for worship and approaching God. She then uses that to point out that not everything is appropriate behavior in a sacred space, like the chapel.
- **The Paradox of Worship:** The sanctuary embodies the beauty and sublimity of God, while sacrifices involve the messy and gruesome reality of death. This paradox is central to understanding the nature of sin and God's willingness to deal with it. "Juxtaposed in this one place is God's majestic beauty represented in what's there and also the gore and the mess and the horror and the pain that death is...We're going to say more about that in a moment, but we're supposed to see that when we see this stuff unfold with regard to sanctuary and sacrifice."
- **Propitiation and Expiation:** These are key concepts related to sacrifice.
  - *Propitiation:* Appeasing God's wrath through the shedding of blood. "Appeasing God's wrath with the shedding of blood...We've forgotten that truly, as Paul says, the wages of sin are death. And so when that animal dies, he's taking my place."
  - *Expiation:* The canceling of sin because of the shed blood. "Expiation refers to the canceling of sin. Because of this blood that has been shed, the sin has been canceled."
- **The Sanctuary (Tabernacle):** Detailed instructions for its construction are given in Exodus 25-40, emphasizing its importance.
  - It represents God's intent to dwell in the midst of his people, despite their sin (the Golden Calf incident).
  - The Hebrew words for the sanctuary give insight into its purpose:
    - *Mikdash* (sanctuary): A place set apart.
    - *Mishkan* (dwelling place): Where God dwells as a neighbor to us.
    - *Ohel Moed* (Tent of Meeting): Where God met with Moses.
  - The sanctuary is a step towards restoring the relationship between God and humanity that was broken in Eden. It prepares the people for the incarnation.

- Dr. Phillips quotes John 1:14 "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth", noting that "dwelt" is translated as "tented" and emphasizes how this connects to the Tabernacle.
- Structure: Frames of acacia wood, surrounded by curtains to symbolize being set apart. Inside there is the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place separated by a curtain with cherubim.
- Most Holy Place contains the Ark of the Covenant. "The tablets of the covenant were kept in this chest. That's why it's called the Ark."
- The cover of the Ark is called the atonement cover.
- The north side of the Most Holy Place contains the table with bread.
- The south side of the Most Holy Place contains the lampstand.
- An altar for incense was placed right next to the curtain, separating the Most Holy Place and the Holy Place. The incense serves as a protective covering.
- Outside in the courtyard there is a large altar for the sacrificial animals.
- There is also a basin or laver between the altar and the Tabernacle for the priest to clean himself before entering the Tabernacle.
- **Priests and Levites:** Levites are responsible for carrying and caring for the tabernacle and, later, the temple. They also serve as teachers, singers, and musicians.
- Priests offer the sacrifices and are responsible for teaching the Torah.
- **The High Priest:** His clothing symbolizes his role as mediator between God and the people.
- *Ephod:* A garment with the names of the sons of Israel engraved on the shoulders, signifying that the high priest carries them into God's presence.
- *Breastpiece:* Contains 12 stones representing the 12 tribes, worn over the heart.
- *Urim and Thummim:* Located in a pocket within the breastpiece, used to make decisions in difficult cases. Their exact nature is unknown. "Exodus 28 says that Aaron will bear the means for making decisions. And that's what the urim and thummim were."

- *Robe*: A purple robe with bells and pomegranates.
- *Turban*: Engraved with "Holy to the Lord."
- *White Linen Underclothes*: An indication of purity.
- **Ordination**: A carefully orchestrated process that emphasizes the importance of doing everything "just right."
- The Nadab and Abihu incident serves as a cautionary tale against spontaneous worship that disregards God's commands.
- **Restrictions for Priests**: These regulations emphasize God's holiness and the need for the priests to reflect that in their lives. Examples include restrictions on mourning practices, drinking while officiating, trimming beards, marriage requirements, and physical defects.

### III. Implications and Application

- **Continuity and Change**: While specific rituals have changed with the coming of Christ, the underlying principles of sacrifice, mediation, and reverence for God remain relevant.
- **Jesus as the Ultimate High Priest**: Dr. Phillips emphasizes that Jesus fulfills the role of high priest and offers the ultimate sacrifice.
- **Praying in Jesus' Name**: This is not merely a formality but reflects the theological truth that Jesus is our intercessor.
- **Reverence for God**: Echoing Annie Dillard, Dr. Phillips reminds us of the need to approach God with reverence and awe, rather than becoming too casual or familiar. She cites Hebrews 12:28-29: "Since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."

#### IV. Quotes

- "There's a ritual in every place you're worshiping...There's ritual, there's stuff that's been designed. It's just as ritualistic there as you have in any kind of liturgical church because we need ritual."
- "The reason they start there is something we mentioned the other day, and that is in Leviticus, we see an overarching emphasis on the holiness of God...Do this because I'm holy. You be holy because I'm holy."
- "Juxtaposed in this one place is God's majestic beauty represented in what's there and also the gore and the mess and the horror and the pain that death is...We're going to say more about that in a moment, but we're supposed to see that when we see this stuff unfold with regard to sanctuary and sacrifice."
- "Appeasing God's wrath with the shedding of blood...We've forgotten that truly, as Paul says, the wages of sin are death. And so when that animal dies, he's taking my place."
- "Expiation refers to the canceling of sin. Because of this blood that has been shed, the sin has been canceled."
- "The tablets of the covenant were kept in this chest. That's why it's called the Ark."
- "Exodus 28 says that Aaron will bear the means for making decisions. And that's what the urim and thummim were."
- "Since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."
- "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth"

## 4. Study Guide: Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 13, Ritual Torah, Part 1

### The Cultic Torah: A Study Guide

#### Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What are the three categories of Torah discussed in this lecture, and what does each category concern?
2. Why does Dr. Phillips suggest that all worship involves ritual, regardless of denomination?
3. Why do some Jewish traditions begin the study of the Bible with Leviticus?
4. What is the overarching theme of Leviticus chapters 1-10?
5. Describe the paradox inherent in the First Testament worship practices involving the sanctuary and sacrifices.
6. Explain the concepts of "propitiation" and "expiation" in relation to sacrifices.
7. How does Hebrews 9:22 relate to the shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sins?
8. What are the three Hebrew terms used to describe the sanctuary, and what does each term mean?
9. What is the significance of the cherubim in relation to the sanctuary and the Garden of Eden?
10. What do the ephod and breastplate worn by the high priest symbolize?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. The three categories of Torah are civil/social, moral/ethical, and ritual/ceremonial. Civil/social Torah concerns how people function in society. Moral/ethical Torah concerns imperatives applicable across cultures and time, while ritual/ceremonial Torah concerns worship practices.
2. Dr. Phillips asserts that all worship involves ritual because every worship setting has designed structures to guide thoughts and move people into a position to

worship. This includes everything from standing for praise songs to specific elements of liturgical services.

3. Some Jewish traditions start with Leviticus because the book has an overarching emphasis on the holiness of God, establishing a foundational understanding necessary for studying the rest of the Bible. Sacrifices are one way this holiness was approached.
4. Leviticus chapters 1-10 concern the sacrifices and the ordination of the priesthood, specifically focusing on the way to approach the Holy One. This section emphasizes how to approach God in sacred times and spaces.
5. The paradox is that the sanctuary is made of beautiful materials, representing God's sublime nature, while sacrifices involve blood, guts, and death, caused by sin. This juxtaposition highlights both God's majesty and the horror of sin.
6. Propitiation refers to appeasing God's wrath through the shedding of blood, while expiation refers to the canceling of sin through that same blood. One refers to appeasing God's wrath, the other to cancelling sins.
7. Hebrews 9:22 states that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins. This highlights the necessity of sacrifice for atonement, which ultimately culminated in Christ's sacrifice.
8. The terms are *mikdash*, *mishkan*, and *Ohel Moed*. *Mikdash* (sanctuary) means to be set apart, *mishkan* is the dwelling place of God (neighbor to us), and *Ohel Moed* (Tent of Meeting) is where God met with Moses and Aaron.
9. Cherubim are symbolic of going back to the tree of life and remind us of Eden, as well as serve to protect and guard the presence of God. They remind of the separation from God's presence after the fall in the Garden of Eden.
10. The ephod with the names of the sons of Israel engraved on the shoulders represents the high priest carrying the people into God's presence. The breastplate with 12 stones representing the 12 tribes symbolizes the high priest carrying the children of Israel over his heart as he goes into the presence of God.



## Essay Questions

1. Discuss the implications of the sanctuary being built after the covenant ceremony, and how the golden calf incident impacts the understanding of God's intent to dwell among the Israelites.
2. Explain how the structure and furnishings of the Tabernacle (Holy Place and Most Holy Place) symbolically prefigure the coming of Christ and the restoration of humanity's relationship with God.
3. Compare and contrast the roles and responsibilities of the priests and Levites in the First Testament.
4. Analyze the clothing of the high priest, explaining how each garment and its components represents the high priest's role as a mediator between God and the people.
5. Critically evaluate the concept of "sacred space" as presented in the lecture, drawing connections to contemporary worship practices and the potential for both reverence and familiarity in approaching God.

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Cultic Torah:** The part of the Torah that deals with religious practices and rituals, including sacrifices, priesthood, and the sanctuary.
- **Civil/Social Torah:** Laws and rules pertaining to how people function in society, including legal and societal regulations.
- **Moral/Ethical Torah:** Moral imperatives and principles that are considered applicable across cultures and time periods.
- **Ritual:** A set of actions, often repetitive and symbolic, performed according to a prescribed order, typically within a religious or ceremonial context.
- **Symbol:** Something that represents or stands for something else, often conveying a deeper meaning or concept.
- **Holiness:** The state of being sacred, pure, and set apart, often associated with God and religious objects or spaces.
- **Paradox:** A statement or situation that appears self-contradictory but contains a deeper truth or meaning.

- **Propitiation:** The act of appeasing or pacifying a deity through sacrifice or other means.
- **Expiation:** The act of atoning for or canceling out sin or wrongdoing.
- **Sanctuary (Mikdash):** A sacred or holy place, set apart for worship or religious purposes.
- **Tabernacle (Mishkan):** The portable dwelling place of God among the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings.
- **Tent of Meeting (Ohel Moed):** A specific area within the Tabernacle where God met with Moses and, later, Aaron.
- **Ark of the Covenant:** A sacred chest containing the tablets of the Ten Commandments.
- **Atonement Cover (Kippurah/Kippurit):** The lid of the Ark of the Covenant, considered the place where atonement was made.
- **Cherubim:** Winged angelic beings that guarded sacred places and represented the presence of God.
- **Ephod:** A vest-like garment worn by the high priest, with engraved stones on the shoulders representing the tribes of Israel.
- **Breastpiece:** A decorative piece worn by the high priest over the heart, containing twelve stones representing the tribes of Israel, as well as the Urim and Thummim.
- **Urim and Thummim:** Objects kept in the breastpiece of the high priest, used for seeking divine guidance or making decisions.
- **Anointing:** The act of smearing with oil, symbolizing consecration, setting apart, or empowerment for a specific purpose.
- **Levites:** Members of the tribe of Levi, who were responsible for assisting the priests in the Tabernacle and later the Temple.
- **High Priest:** The chief religious official responsible for leading worship and mediating between God and the people.
- **Ordination:** The process of formally consecrating or appointing someone to a religious office or role.

## 5. FAQs on Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 13, Ritual Torah, Part 1, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Old Testament Cultic Torah: An FAQ

- **What are the three categories of Torah, and how does "Cultic Torah" relate to them?**
- The Torah can be broadly categorized into Civil/Social, Moral/Ethical, and Ritual/Ceremonial (Cultic). Civil/Social Torah deals with societal functioning, moral/ethical Torah with imperatives applicable across cultures and times, and ritual/ceremonial Torah (Cultic Torah) with specific practices related to worship, sacrifices, the priesthood, and the sanctuary. Cultic Torah focuses on approaching God through designated sacred times and spaces.
- **Why is Leviticus, a book often avoided, so important in the Jewish tradition, especially for children beginning their biblical studies?**
- Leviticus emphasizes the holiness of God, a theme that permeates the entire book. The sacrificial system and all the regulations surrounding it are designed to underscore God's holiness and the need for purity in approaching Him. This focus on holiness makes Leviticus a foundational text for understanding the relationship between God and humanity.
- **What is the paradox inherent in the First Testament worship practices involving the sanctuary and sacrifices?**
- The paradox lies in the juxtaposition of the sanctuary's beauty and majesty, representing God's sublime nature, with the bloody, messy reality of animal sacrifices. The gore and horror of death, resulting from sin, contrasts sharply with the awe-inspiring environment of the sanctuary. This paradox serves to illustrate the gravity of sin and God's willingness to address it.
- **What is "propitiation" and "expiation" in the context of First Testament sacrifices, and why are these concepts important?**
- Propitiation refers to appeasing God's wrath through the shedding of blood, acknowledging that sin deserves death. Expiation refers to the cancelling of sin as a result of the shed blood. These concepts are crucial because they highlight the consequences of sin and the means by which God's wrath is averted and sin is forgiven through sacrifice.

- **What are the key purposes of the sanctuary (Tabernacle/Temple) in the Old Testament, and how does it relate to the concept of "Immanuel"?**
- The sanctuary served as a physical dwelling place for God among the Israelites, a step towards restoring the relationship lost after the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. It was a place set apart for approaching God in His holiness. It also prefigured the incarnation, the concept of "Immanuel," or "God with us," fulfilled in Jesus Christ.
- **What is the significance of the Ark of the Covenant and its contents within the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle?**
- The Ark of the Covenant housed the tablets of the testimony, representing the covenant between God and Israel. Its cover, the atonement cover (kippurah), symbolized the place where atonement for sin was made. The cherubim overshadowing the Ark further emphasized God's presence and the connection to the Garden of Eden.
- **What are some key symbols and meanings associated with the priests' garments, particularly the ephod and breastplate?**
- The priests' garments were symbolic of their role as mediators between God and the people. The ephod had the names of the sons of Israel engraved on the shoulders, signifying that the high priest carried the people's burdens into God's presence. The breastplate, with its 12 stones representing the 12 tribes, was worn over the heart, symbolizing that the high priest held the people close to his heart as he ministered before God. The Urim and Thummim helped the high priest make decisions.
- **What are some distinctions between the roles of priests and Levites, and what restrictions were placed on priests?**
- While both priests and Levites were responsible for teaching Torah, the priests were specifically tasked with offering sacrifices. The Levites, on the other hand, assisted in carrying and caring for the tabernacle and later served as teachers, singers, and musicians in the temple. Priests were subject to certain restrictions, such as prohibitions against mourning practices, drinking alcohol while officiating, trimming beards, marrying non-virgins, and having physical defects, to ensure they upheld God's holiness.