

**Potomac Torah Study Center**  
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**NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning almost 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his recent untimely death.**

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**Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from [www.PotomacTorah.org](http://www.PotomacTorah.org). Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah.**

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Sefer Shemot ended with a statement that God's presence (His cloud) covered the Ohel Moed (tent of meeting). When the cloud rose above the Mishkan, B'Nai Yisrael would embark on their journeys. When the cloud rested again, they would stop (Shemot 40:36-73; also Bemidbar 9:17). All of Sefer Vayikra, which we start reading this week, takes place next to the Mishkan, at the foot of Har Sinai. B'Nai Yisrael do not depart from this location until BEMIDBAR 10:11.

At the end of Sefer Shemot, once God's presence returned to the Ark, not even Moshe could enter the Ohel Moed, unless God called for him to do so (Shemot 40:35). Vayikra opens with God calling to Moshe to come near him, to the Ohel Moed (1:1). Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks points to Rashi's comment on 1:1, that Vayikra means that God called to Moshe in love to come close to His presence.

All of Sefer Vayikra takes place while B'Nai Yisrael were living next to Hashem's presence (His cloud). Vayikra therefore focuses on the special rules that B'Nai Yisrael had to follow while living next to God. Anyone ritually impure could not approach the area of the Mishkan or participate in the rituals (korbanot). Anyone who came too close to God's presence would die immediately, because a human could not survive in God's realm.

Vayikra opens with ways that a human could come close to God (korbanot) and instructions for how the kohenim would perform the sacrifices (Tzav). The Sefer next goes to the dedication of the Mishkan and the events of that day (Shemini). Caught up in the spirit of the dedication, Aharon's two oldest sons bring their fire pots and incense to the Ohel Moed during the dedication of the Mishkan (without God commanding them to do so). A fire from Hashem immediately consumes and kills them (10:1-2). The remainder of Sefer Vayikra goes through the rules (of ritual purity) that make a person worthy of coming close to God: use of the mouth (eating), bodily purity, marriage and sexual relations, time (Shabbat and Yom Tovim), land (Israel), and vows.

Vayikra is the central Sefer in the Torah, and the center of Vayikra is Acharei Mot, which includes the one time a human other than Moshe could come close to God and survive. On Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol would make special preparations, bring incense in his fire pot within the curtain separating the Holy of Holies, and his incense would form a cloud (smoke) that would mingle with God's presence (God's cloud over the Ark). This mingling was the closest that any human, other than Moshe, could approach God and survive.

The korbanot, or sacrifices, all involved burning a kosher animal, bird, or flour – so the smoke would rise toward the sky (clouds), a symbol of God's realm. This smoke was an essential way in which an individual could feel close to God. For an animal sacrifice, the Kohen would collect the animal's blood, and throw, pour, or sprinkle the blood on the alter. This ritual with blood parallels the sacrifice at Har Sinai the day of the Revelation. Moshe poured half of the animal's blood on the alter and threw the rest toward the people. In the Torah, blood represents the soul or life force of a living being. Blood indicates that our soul (blood) comes from and belongs to God. The ritual with blood reminded the people that the animal represented the person offering the sacrifice.

The rules of the korbanot actually greatly limited the amount of sacrifice of life compared to the religions of the time (Jewish and pagan). Human sacrifice was not permitted. All sacrifices had to take place at one central place (Mishkan and later the Temple). Since the destruction of the Second Temple, 1950 years ago, there has not been a location where our religion permitted sacrifices. (Prayer and mentioning the sacrifices have replaced the sacrifices). For the Jews of 1950 years ago, not being able to perform sacrifices and thereby come close to God was a devastating loss. Many Jews today prefer prayer and feel uncomfortable considering returning to sacrifices when we can finally rebuild the Temple. I believe that the better one understands the concept of korbanot as a way to come close to God, the more comfortable he or she is with the idea of returning to this system, once we rebuild the Temple.

My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, always preferred to lead his Torah discussions on a parsha of laws rather than a narrative parsha (about people and events). Yeshivas traditionally started teaching the youngest students with Sefer Vayikra rather than Bereshis. The deeper one goes into Sefer Vayikra, the more fascinating the material becomes. If part of the Torah seems boring,

the answer is to delve deeper and discover why it really is exciting. The Devrei Torah in my package this week seem to me to be especially fine. Read, learn, and see why the material really is fascinating.

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**Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Nossan ben Pessel, Gedalya ben Sarah, Mordechai ben Chaya, Baruch Yitzhak ben Perl, David Leib HaKohen ben Sheina Reizel, Zev ben Sara Chaya, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, HaRav Dovid Meir ben Chaya Tzippa; Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Amoz ben Tziviah, Reuven ben Masha, Moshe David ben Hannah, Meir ben Sara, Yitzhok Tzvi ben Yehudit Miriam, Yaakov Naphtali ben Michal Leah, Rivka Chaya bat Leah, Tova bat Narges, Zissel Bat Mazal, Chana Bracha bas Rochel Leah, Elisheva Chaya bas Leah, Leah Fruma bat Musa Devorah, Hinda Behla bat Chaya Leah, Beyla bat Sara, Nechama bas Tikva Rachel, Miriam Chava bat Yachid, Ruth bat Sarah, and Tova bat Narges, all of whom greatly need our prayers.**

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Hannah & Alan

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### **Drasha: Parshas Vayikra: Sins of Greatness** by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky © 2002

[Please remember Mordechai ben Chaya for a Mishebarach!]

This week the Torah teaches us about sins and offerings. It tells us about how a human is supposed to respond to misdeeds. It tells us about all types of people who make mistakes and sin. High Priests and princes as well as simple Jews are subject to failures and so, in addition to penitence, each sinner on every level must bring an offering.

When referring to the average sinner the Torah teaches the halacha by beginning the laws with the words, "If a man shall sin" or "when a man shall sin." It uses the Hebrew word "im," (Leviticus 4:27) or "ki" (Leviticus 5:21). However when it comes to "a prince amongst the tribes" who is the sinner, the Torah uses a different expression. It does not use the standard words for if and when, rather it uses a totally different expression - "asher."

"Asher nasi yecheta — if that a prince sins, and commits one from among all the commandments of Hashem that may not be done — unintentionally — and becomes guilty" (Leviticus 4:22).

The word asher, is quite similar in fact to the word "ashre," It means praiseworthy. That point is not lost on the Talmudic sages. Rashi quotes the Sifra, "If that a prince hath sinned: The word "Asher" is connected in meaning with "Ashrei" - which means praiseworthy. The verse implies the following connotation: Praiseworthy and fortunate is the generation whose prince (king) takes care to bring an atonement sacrifice even for his inadvertent misdeeds."

That is surely praiseworthy, especially to those of us who live in a generation pock-marked with scandals of denials and cover-ups. But if that is the case, why not use the term "asher" in reference to the bringing of his pertinence, not referring to the sin itself? Isn't it the admission of guilt that merits praise, not the actual misdeed? There are many variations to this story. The basic premise, however, is well known.

**In the city of B'nai Beraq there are many Bar Mitzvah celebrations every Shabbos. It became very difficult for Rav Yaakov Yisrael Kanievski, the elder sage known to world Jewry as the Steipler Gaon to attend every Bar Mitzvah. In fact, he was old and weak and hardly had the strength to go to shul. One week, a Bar Mitzvah boy was honored with the maftir. Immediately after the davening, the Steipler Gaon was standing there in line, waiting to wish him Mazal Tov.**

**The Steipler Gaon bent down and began conversing in earnest with the neophyte member of the adult Jewish community. It seemed to the hushed crowd that this was much more than a perfunctory Mazel Tov wish.**

**The boy paled as he shook his head several times in amazement. "Of course, Rebbe!" he exclaimed. "Of course! There is no question. I feel terrible that the Rebbe felt he had to discuss this with me!"**

**The Steipler thanked the young boy, wished him Mazel Tov again, blessed him, and left the shul.**

The entire congregation was shocked. What could the Steipler have wanted?

“Let me explain,” began the boy. “Six years ago I was davening in this shul with a very large siddur (prayer book). The Steipler approached me and chided me for learning Gemara in the middle of the Tefilah. I showed him that it was a Siddur and that I actually was davening. He apologized and left.

Today the Steipler came to my Bar Mitzvah and reminded me of the story. He explained to me that even though he apologized for his mistaken reprimand six years ago, it was not enough. Since, at the time, I was a child under Bar Mitzvah, I did not have the frame of mind to truly forgive him. Even if I did forgive him, it had no halachic validity. The Steipler found out when my birthday was and waited for six years until my Bar Mitzvah. Today, I am halachically old enough to forgive him, and so, he came back today to ask my forgiveness!”

Sometimes the praise of our leaders is not the fact that they bring a sin offering, but rather in the entire sin and absolution process. It is important for us to understand, not only that they ask forgiveness, but what they did wrong and how they rectified their misdeed. We are praiseworthy when we have leaders that understand what is considered wrong, and openly teach us through their actions how to respond. When the process is comprehensive, then the combination of the mistake and the absolution can be considered praiseworthy, for they are acts we can all learn from.

Good Shabbos!

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### **Vayikra: Sacrifices? What Sense Does that Make?** by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2016, 2020

The second half of the book of Shemot focused on creating the Mishkan as a Sanctuary in which God Godself could dwell among the Children of Israel. In contrast, the book of Vayikra focuses on what is done in that Sanctuary: first and foremost, the bringing of sacrifices. What is the connection between sacrifices and the Temple? The Torah seems to be telling us that sacrifices are the primary means to serve and connect to God, and that this connecting is best done in the Temple, where God’s presence dwells. But how are we to understand animal and grain sacrifices as a means of connecting to God, let alone as the primary means?

As modern people, it seems to us like a very bizarre way to worship an infinite God. What does God need with our sacrifices? Isn’t such a messy and bloody act, one that takes an animal’s life no less, the furthest thing possible from an elevated religious act of worship? At the same time, we must acknowledge that it was the primary form of worship in the ancient world. Did it answer a universal human need, something relevant even for us today, or was it part of a primitive, less intellectually and spiritually developed society.

Given that the Torah commands obligatory communal and individual sacrifices (and allows for non-obligatory, free will sacrifices), it stands to reason that a traditional Jewish approach would seek to find intrinsic value in these animal sacrifices. Rambam (Maimonides), however, coming from a strong rationalist perspective, says otherwise in his Guide to the Perplexed (section III, chapters 31 and 46). He states that worshiping God through animal sacrifices is not ideal, but the people at the time of the Giving of the Torah could not conceive of any other form of worship. If they would have been forced to choose between worshiping God with prayer and worshiping pagan gods with sacrifices, they would have chosen the latter. Thus God conceded to them their need to use sacrifices but demanded that they be brought to God in a way that did not lead to idolatry.

This approach, which resonates with most modern people, still raises some questions. First, as a traditional Jew who believed in the eternal bindingness of the mitzvot, how could Rambam suggest that sacrifices had outlived their purpose? If he did not believe that they would continue to be binding in the future, why did he write all the laws of sacrifices in his Yad Hachazaka? And doesn’t this take away from the concept of the perfection of the Torah? Rambam himself answers the latter question, saying that God does not change the nature of people, and a perfect Torah is one that is perfectly suited for the realities of where people are. Sometimes, says Rambam, we have to consider where the mitzvot are pointing us rather than seeing them as describing an ideal, final state. This is quite provocative, and we have discussed it at greater length elsewhere.

Ramban (Nahmanides), in his Commentary to the Torah (Vayikra, 1:9), takes great issue with Rambam’s approach and, besides arguing the specifics and bringing proof texts to contradict Rambam, argues against the idea that sacrifices, so central to worship in the Torah and already practiced by Adam and Noach, should not have intrinsic value. He states that the significance of the sacrifices can be understood as symbolic and psychological, and he sees the sin-offering as the primary sacrifice. Accordingly, he states that when a person sees the animal slaughtered, the blood thrown on the altar, and the entrails burned up, he reflects and takes to heart the greatness of his sin, how he has sinned both in thought and deed, and how he deserves to die. Ramban also gives a kabbalistic explanation, seeming to indicate that the sacrifices have a theurgic and metaphysical impact on God’s relationship to the world.

It should be noted that Ramban’s emphasis on the sin-offering seems misplaced, given that the olah, the burnt offering, seems to be the primary form of worship. It was the sacrifice of Kayin and Hevel and of Noach, and in the Temple the olah is the twice-daily communal sacrifice and the core of the musaf sacrifices brought on Shabbat and Yom Tov. The Chinukh (Mitzvah 95) addresses this

problem, and extends Ramban's symbolic and psychological approach to non-sin offering sacrifices and other details and rituals of the sacrifices.

There seems to be one thing missing from all these explanations, a point implicit in Rambam and hinted at in the Chinukh. The religious value of sacrifices would seem, at its core, to be that indicated in the first sacrifice of the Torah, that of Kayin and Hevel. The verse states: "Kayin brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to the Lord. And Hevel also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat of it" (Breishit, 4:3-4). That is, the primary sacrifice is the olah, the burnt offering, the giving of something fully to God. It is taking the fruit of one's labor, what one values highly and feels deeply connected to, recognizing that this comes from God and giving it back to God to demonstrate and internalize this mindset. This is why the idea of sacrificing one's children—or the command of akeidat Yitzchak—fits into this model. It is taking the "giving of what is most dear" to the ultimate extreme.

Understood this way, the sin offering uses this principle to achieve forgiveness and expiation. We say in the u'Netaneh Tokef prayer that "u'teshuva u'tefillah u'tzedakah ma'avirin et ro'ah ha'gezeirah," that repentance, prayer, and charity eliminate the stern decree. In the same way, a korban — which is an intense and personal form of charity, of giving of oneself, of giving what is most dear—accompanied by the verbal confession of the sin-offering can achieve atonement.

It may be that this is most hard for us to relate not because of the concept of giving things that we treasure to God, but because 1) we don't relate this way to animals. Ethical issues aside, given how little most of us have to do with livestock and slaughtering, we are aesthetically repulsed by the idea of slaughtering animals. And 2) we would like our donations to religious causes to be used more practically, not in a merely symbolic way. While both of these are true and reflect different sensibilities from those of the past, we can still understand the core human need that sacrifices addressed in the time of the Temple.

The importance of using something physical in our worship is a related point. As physical beings, it is often hard for us to connect to an infinite, non-physical God. Just as Rambam explains that we need to use anthropomorphic and anthropopathic terms as a means of describing or relating to God, most of us need a form of worship that has a physical component. Sacrifices gave this to people. The reason this physical mode took the form of sacrifice was discussed above, but this framing helps us understand Rambam's point of saying that sacrifice is to prayer what prayer is to intellectually connecting to God. The ultimate form of worship for Rambam is a purely non-physical, intellectual connection. Most people, however, can't handle that. They need something more connected to human concerns and actions: petitionary prayer, fasting, and the very act of praying. While necessary for most, says Rambam, this is not the ideal.

The question that persists, though, is, given that we are human, why describe what we need as less than ideal? We are not angels or pure intellects, so for us, as physical beings, prayer might be the best way to connect to God. And when praying, how many of us have not felt that we could connect more strongly if there was a more physical component? Wearing a tallit or tefillin can help, as can shokeling; it feels like we are connecting more if we are doing more.

The need to find meaningful ways to connect and the importance of the physical remain as true today as they did in the time of the Temple. If for us, animal sacrifice is not the way, we should still be honest about our deep human need to find a way to connect to God, and we should work at developing those paths in the absence of sacrifices.

Shabbat Shalom.

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## **Vayikra -- Frum and Full of Hope**

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine ©2020 Teach 613

There was a woman whom I knew when I was growing up in Monsey, who had become observant later in life. She lived in neighboring Spring Valley and she was quite knowledgeable and devoted. But she lacked some of the background lingo that goes along with growing up in the observant community.

She related to me, how she was once on a plane going to Israel, and in the midst of a pleasant conversation someone asked her, "Are you Frum?"

She replied, "Spring Valley," thinking that she was being asked, where she was from. Remarkably, although she was fully observant by that time, the word "Frum" was not in her vocabulary.

The word "Frum," meaning "observant" is a term which is used quite commonly today. It is an all encompassing term referring to one's observance in areas such as Shabbos, Kashrus, and where we send our children to school. But in more recent times it has borne other, more sophisticated terms, capturing one's background. "FFB" is Frum From Birth, while "BT" is Baal Teshuva, referring to one who has chosen the path of observance sometime later in life.

A Rebbe of mine in Lakewood, cautioned that these abbreviations dare not be the end all, catch phrases, that define us. After all, Frum From Birth might actually be more like FFH, or Frum From Habit, and BT might actually be better expressed as FFC, Frum From Choice.

In fact, living in an observant community all one's life might actually make it more challenging to appreciate the differences between "Halacha", actual binding Jewish law, and "Habit," things that we do, just because that's the way we do things. That is, until COVID-19.

With the presentation of coronavirus, we have all had to rethink things that we do, and why we do them. Before shopping, we need to ask ourselves, "Is this really a necessary outing?" Even weddings, when weddings were still allowed, required some deep, soul searching, and due consideration.

It was in the early days of the quarantine, when weddings could still occur, but travel was limited, the number of people that may be invited was limited, and a 6 feet social distance was being imposed, that word got out of a Kallah who would be getting married without her mother. Not only would her mother from LA not be flying in, but the Chassan's mother, due to age and health considerations, would be observing social distance from even close family members. She would not be standing with her son and daughter-in-law under the Chuppa. One of my children turned to me and blurted out in astonishment, "Does it still work? Does the marriage still work, even if the mother and mother-in-law are not there with them under the canopy?"

I assured my children that the marriage would still be valid, and that we are living through unusual times where we must pay close attention to the basics of Halacha, even if we have strong feelings, perceptions, and even well-grounded customs of how things should be done.

The situation of the coronavirus-- as painful and as unwanted as it certainly is-- has brought upon us a remarkable situation. It has bestowed upon us the ability to think. Although we, in the frum community, have developed systems for everything, from Bris pillows, to centerpiece Gmachs, to the exact gift that must be given in the Yichud room, the situation we currently find ourselves in has caused us to think.

**In this week's Parsha, we find the opening word, "Vayikra," to be written with a small letter Aleph, to call attention to the difference between whether the word would be written with or without the letter Aleph. Vayikra, with the Aleph, means a Calling, as in, "Hashem called to Moshe." Vayiker, however, (when written without the Aleph) means a happenstance, something that occurred by mistake, chance, or out of mere habit. The ongoing task of the Jew is to make sure that our relationship with Hashem does not slip into habit, but rather always remains a Calling.**

As one Rabbi expressed it, in what is hopefully an apocryphal story, a congregant once asked him a most painful question. The congregant asked, "I have my Tefillin on my arm, in position. But I can't remember if I am ready to put them on, because it is before the prayers, or I am taking them off, because I have already prayed." Owch. That would indeed, be Frum From Habit.

Indeed, in the Tochacha (rebuke), Hashem identifies a style of observance of "Keri- Happenstance." "This is just the way we do it." That is observance out of habit. The Torah describes it as, "You did not serve Hashem with happiness," but rather out of habit, "because you had everything."

But when a person does not have everything, when there is no Minyan to go to at the regular time, and there is no Yeshiva available to attend in the normal routine, and we decide to daven and learn anyway, then a person begins to experience the personal motivation of "A Calling," a chosen relationship with Hashem.

Consider the words of Dovid HaMelech in Tehllim (42), "As a deer longs for water, so does my soul long for a relationship with You." Contemplate the words of yearning that we sing in Yedid Nefesh, "Majestic, Beautiful, Radiance of the universe, my soul pines for Your love. Please, G-d, heal my soul by showing her the pleasantness of Your radiance. Then she will be strengthened and healed... for it is for so very long that I have yearned to see the splendor of Your Strength." Good habits are good. But good habits must be infused with yearning, deep thinking, and emotion.

The coronavirus crisis has brought upon us tragedies and inconveniences. It has highlighted our vulnerabilities as humans in a global way. We pray fervently for cure and healing on so many levels. But as we live through it, we also can embrace the situation as any life challenge. It is an opportunity to pay attention to habits and make sure that we are observant, not as "Vayiker" a mere habit, but rather as "Vayikra," a beloved Calling. It is a time to look forward emboldened to become "Frum and Full of Hope."

With all blessings best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos!

## Rav Kook Torah Vayikra: The Goal of Sacrifices

Sacrifices are not an innovation of the Jewish people. Noah also offered sacrifices to God. However, not all offerings are equal. The Midrash employs the following parable to illustrate this idea:

*"There was once a king who hired two chefs. The first chef cooked a meal that the king ate and enjoyed. Then the second chef cooked a meal that the king ate and enjoyed. How can we know which meal the king enjoyed more? When the king subsequently commanded the second chef, 'Make for me again the dish that you prepared,' we realize that the second meal was the king's preferred dish."*

In other words, by the fact that God commanded the Jewish people to offer sacrifices, we know that God prefers their offerings to those which Noah initiated on his own accord.

But how do we evaluate the relative worth of different sacrifices? What distinguishes the service of Israel from that of Noah?

### Two Goals of Offerings

The key to assessing an offering is to examine its purpose. The more elevated the goal, the more acceptable the offering. Noah's objective in offering sacrifices after the Flood was very different than that of the Jewish people. Noah sought to preserve the physical world, to protect it from Divine retribution. Noah's offerings achieved their goal — "God smelled the appeasing fragrance and said to Himself, 'Never again will I curse the soil because of man'" (Gen. 8:21).

The offerings of the Jewish people aspire to a far greater objective. Their goal is to enable Israel to merit heightened levels of Divine providence and prophecy. The Torah explicitly sets out the purpose of the Temple service: "Make for Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in their midst" (Ex. 8:25).

### Fragrance and Bread

The difference between Noah's offerings and those of Israel is reflected in the metaphors that the Torah uses to describe them. Noah's offerings had an "appeasing fragrance," while those of Israel are referred to as "My bread." What is the difference between a fragrance and food?

When an animal consumes vegetation, the plant life is absorbed into the animal and becomes part of it. In this way, the plant has attained a higher state of being. When a human consumes an animal, the animal is similarly elevated as it becomes part of that human being. This transformation to a higher state through consumption parallels bringing an offering with the objective of attaining a higher state of existence. The offerings of the Jewish people are called "My bread," since the magnitude of change to which they aspire — perfection as prophetic beings — is similar to the transformations of plant to animal and animal to human.

The offerings of Noah, on the other hand, had only an "appeasing fragrance." They produced a wonderful scent and appealed to the natural senses, but they did not attempt to effect a fundamental change in nature. Their purpose was to maintain the world, to refine humanity within the framework of its natural moral and intellectual capabilities.

In fact, the offerings of the Jewish people encompass both of these objectives. They are described both as "appeasing fragrance" and as "My bread," since we aspire to perfection in two areas — natural wisdom and Divine prophecy.

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Midbar Shur, pp. 155-158.)

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### The Power of an Adam By Yitzi Hurwitz\* © Chabad 2020

The Book of Leviticus begins, "And He called to Moses, and He spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, to say. Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: Adam [a man] from among you that will bring an offering to G d, from animals..."<sup>1</sup>

There are many questions that can be asked on these verses. We will touch on a few.

This is the beginning of the laws of sacrificial offerings to G d. Rashi<sup>2</sup> tells us that before every time G d spoke to Moses, He first called him, as a sign that He cherished him. However, it is only here, regarding offerings that Scripture mentioned that He called him. Why?<sup>3</sup>

According to the Midrash,<sup>4</sup> this was the first time that Moses was called to the Tent of Meeting since it was first erected, and the glory of G d had filled it. Perhaps that is why it mentions that G d called him, being the first opportunity to do so in this setting.<sup>5</sup> But this brings up another question: Why were the laws of offerings the first laws to be taught from the Tent of Meeting?<sup>6</sup>

Since these are the first, we can conclude that they are most important. Even the Talmud<sup>7</sup> calls the book of Vayikra "Hachamur Shebeseform," the most important of the books.<sup>8</sup> Note also that it is the third of the five books, the middle of the Torah, a place that connotes significance.

Also, the first word of the first verse, Vayikra ["and he called"], is written in the Torah with a small letter alef. What is the significance of this?

The second verse says, "Adam [a man] from among you that will bring an offering." Why doesn't it just say, "If you bring an offering?" We would certainly know that it refers to a person. What is the significance of saying that an adam is bringing it?

The Zohar says,<sup>9</sup> "We, Israel, have the merit that G d calls us adam, as it says, 'adam [a man] from among you that will bring.' What is the reason He calls us adam? Because it is written,<sup>10</sup> 'And you who are attached to G d, your G d...' " Now we can understand why our verse specifically says "adam," because it is the adam part of us, our attachment to G d, that makes it possible for us to bring sacrificial offerings, as will be explained.

The Midrash<sup>11</sup> says that the reason G d commanded the Jewish people to bring offerings is because they are attached to Him. This, then, is the meaning of the verse, "Just as a belt is attached to the hips of a person..."<sup>12</sup>

Although they both speak of attachment to G d, they are talking about two different kinds of attachment. The Midrash is talking about an attachment like a belt; although it is attached, it is not truly one with the wearer. This is called the attachment of vessels; something could completely fill the vessel, but is not truly attached. The Zohar, on the other hand, speaks of an essential attachment, in which we are one with G d. This is called the attachment of lights, where the source of light and the light emanating from it are one.

They are referring to different aspects of sacrificial offerings. The Midrash is referring to the sacrifice itself, which is brought to sustain the world, as the Talmud Yerushalmi<sup>13</sup> says on the verse,<sup>14</sup> "To plant the heavens and to establish the earth,"--this refers to the sacrifices. And the Korban Haeda<sup>15</sup> explains: "Through the sacrifices, the [natural] rules of the world are sustained." But what gives us the ability to bring offerings that will sustain existence? It is the fact that we are essentially one with G d and, therefore, higher than the world. Since we are higher than the world, one with G d, we have an effect on its very existence.

How does bringing a sacrificial offering sustain the world? In Kabbalistic teaching, the whole world is divided into four biological kingdoms. There are:

- **domem:** inanimate objects like rocks, sand and water.
- **Tzomeach:** vegetation.
- **Chai:** living creatures.
- **Medaber:** people who have conversation.

All were represented in sacrificial offerings.<sup>16</sup> The inanimate object was the salt that accompanied every offering. Vegetation was the wood that burned on the altar. Also, offerings were generally accompanied by wine libations, cakes made of flour and sometimes oil, all of which are from the vegetable kingdom. The living creature was the animal that was offered. And then there was the person who brought the offering. By all parts of the world being represented in the offering that was raised to G d, the whole world is energized.

It is specifically the adam part of us that is one with G d. There are four names for man in Hebrew: adam, ish, enosh and geveir.<sup>17</sup> Adam is the highest name, representing the G dly part of us, as it says, "And G d created the adam in His image..."<sup>18</sup> It is the part of us that is one with G d and, therefore, higher than existence, and able to affect existence. This is why the verse specifically says "adam," because it is the adam that can bring a sacrifice and sustain the world.

This differentiation between lights and vessels are found by Torah and mitzvot<sup>19</sup> as well. Doing mitzvot attaches us to G d like vessels, and the study of Torah attaches us like lights. Prayer is a mitzvah. The daily prayers were established in the place of the actual sacrifices, to sustain existence. But it is the study of Torah that gives us the ability to bring prayers that can affect the world.

Now we can understand why the first transmission from G d to Moses in the Tent of Meeting was regarding the sacrificial offerings. The main purpose of the Tent of Meeting was the transmission of the Torah, and the main purpose of the Torah is accomplished through sacrifices. The purpose of Torah is to affect the world around us, making it into a home for G d.<sup>20</sup> And sacrifices do this in two ways: Firstly, by the offering itself, taking a mundane animal and offering it up to G d, it's transformed into an object of holiness. The second way is, as mentioned above, through the sacrifices, which affect the whole world.

Although the Torah is G d's wisdom and it seems almost sacrilegious to suggest that it has anything to do with this mundane physical world, that is only true about the Torah itself. But consider the source of the Torah, G d's infinite essence, which has no bounds, not even that it can't be connected to the physical world, and that He desires to have a dwelling in this lowly limited physical world. This is the true essence of the Torah as well, then every mundane physical part of existence becomes significant and essentially connected with the Torah.

How do we draw G d's unlimited essence into the world? How is it possible for us to be an adam, revealing our essential oneness with G d's essence, and affect the world in the way of sacrificial offerings?

Through selflessness and humility, we allow G d's unlimited essence to come through. This is learned from the first word of the parsha, Vayikra, ["and He called"]. Why are we not told the name of the Caller?

This is because it is G d's infinite essence, which is beyond any name or description, that called to Moses.

Why was Moses able to draw this great level of G dliness into the world? Because of his selflessness and humility, which is symbolized by the small aleph in the word Vayikra.<sup>21</sup>

We all have a little bit of Moses in us, and that comes with the ability to be selfless and humble. If we tap into that, we can also draw G d's unlimited essence into the world and make the mundane holy.<sup>22</sup>

Through our collective effort, we will make this world into a home for G d's unlimited essence and usher in the coming of Moshiach. May he come soon. The time has come.

#### **FOOTNOTES:**

1. Leviticus 1:1-2.
2. Rashi to Leviticus 1:1.
3. This question is asked by the Rebbe Rashab in Hemshech 5672, volume 2, p. 910.
4. Midrash Tanchuma Shemot 1 and 8, Bahaalotecha 6. Zohar Vayikra 3b. Midrash Lekach Tov to Exodus 40:36.
5. Ramban to Leviticus 1:1.
6. This question is asked by the Rebbe Rashab in Hemshech 5672 volume 2 p. 910.
7. Talmud, Berachot 18b, also see Tosafot ad loc.
8. See Ramban's opening to the book of Vayikra; he calls it Sefer Hakorbanot, the Book of Sacrifices.
9. Zohar volume 2 p. 86a.
10. Deuteronomy 4:4.
11. Vayikra Rabbah 2:4.
12. Jeremiah 13:11.
13. Talmud Yerushalmi, Taanit 4:2. Also in Zohar volume 3 p. 35a.
14. Isaiah 51:16.
15. Korban Haeda to Talmud Yerushalmi, Taanit 4:2.
16. Eitz Chaim, shaar 50, chapter 2.
17. Zohar volume 3 p. 48a.
18. Genesis 1:27.
19. Kitzurim V'haarot chapter 23, p. 105 and on. Hemshech 5672 volume 1 chapter 179, p. 366 and on.



20. Midrash Tanchuma Nasso 16, Bechukotai 3. Bereishit Rabbah end of chapter 3. Bamidbar Rabbah chapter 13 par. 6. Tanya chapter 36.

21. This idea, that the small Aleph represents Moses's selflessness, was told by Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi to his grandson the Tzemach Tzedek, when he was 3 years old. (Sefer Hasichos 5700 p. 68. Brought and explained in Likkutei Sichot volume 17, first sicha on Vayikra.

22. Based on Maamar Vayikra El Moses 5732, Torat Menachem Sefer Hamaamarim Meluket volume 3 pp. 115-121.

\* Spiritual leader at Chabad Jewish Center in Temecula, CA. Rabbi Hurwitz, a victim of ALS, is unable to speak or talk. He uses his eyes to write his weekly heart felt message on the Parasha.

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## **Vayikra: How We Became a Holy Nation**

by Rabbi Moshe Wisniefsky\*

Leviticus is the third, and thus central, book of the Five Books of Moses. As such, its content forms the core of the Torah; in this sense, the Books of Genesis and Exodus can together be considered its prelude and the Books of Numbers and Deuteronomy its postlude.

The Book of Genesis describes why there had to be a Jewish people living in the Land of Israel. There was an original vision for creation, an opportunity that was missed; this set into motion a downward spiral of history that made it necessary for G-d to isolate a faithful core of humanity--Abraham's family--to preserve, bear, and eventually re-announce His message to the world. The Book of Exodus describes how this family was made into "a kingdom of nobles and a holy nation," and how the mechanisms whereby this nation could indeed bring the Divine Presence down to earth (i.e., the Torah, repentance, and the Tabernacle) were set up. The Book of Leviticus records the details of exactly how this end is to be achieved.

This notion is eloquently expressed by the very first word in the book, from which the whole book takes its Hebrew name: Vayikra, meaning "and He called." The prefixed "and" immediately connects the beginning of Leviticus with the end of Exodus: "Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting since the cloud had rested on it and G-d's glory filled the Tabernacle." Since Moses could not enter himself, G-d called out to him, thereby enabling him to enter and bear the experience of His Glory in order to hear His message. This indicates that the events recorded in the Book of Exodus were intended to set the stage for G-d to call Moses and convey to him the contents of the Book of Leviticus. Furthermore, the usual way the Torah opens its descriptions of G-d talking to Moses is with the ubiquitous phrase, "G-d spoke to Moses, saying." In the opening of the Book of Leviticus, however, before the variant of this phrase--"G-d spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying"--the Torah informs us that whenever "G-d spoke to Moses," He first "called out to Moses," implying that His communications with Moses were not merely for the purpose of laying down His law for humanity, but in order to call out to us, imploring us to respond, asking us to treat the laws of the Torah not merely as dry obligations but as our common meeting-ground with Him. To emphasize this point, this opening phrase is not worded "G-d called out" but "He called out," referring to G-d's very essence, not to any aspect of Him that can be defined by any of His Names. It is G-d's essence that calls out to us in the Book of Leviticus.

Thus, although there is very little "action" in the Book of Leviticus, it is here that the real "action" takes place: the inner life of the individual soul and the soul of the community in their communion with G-d. It is significant that Leviticus is not only the middle book of the Torah but the third book, for the number three expresses the essence of the Torah. The Torah is composed of three parts--the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets, and the Writings; it was given in the third month--Sivan; it was given to a nation of three classes--Priests, Levites, and Israelites; it was given after three days of preparation; and it was taught to the people by three siblings--Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

The number three signifies the synergy that results from the paradoxical but harmonious combination of the two elements of a duality, and this is the very essence of the Torah: it takes two opposing entities, the physical and the spiritual, and creates from them a third--the peaceful fusion of the mundane and the holy.

From Kehot's Chumash, Synagogue Edition

\* An insight from the Rebbe.

With heartfelt wishes for good health and safety for one and all--Gut Shabbos ad Gut Chodesh,  
Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman  
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## Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

### The Pursuit of Meaning

The American Declaration of Independence speaks of the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Recently, following the pioneering work of Martin Seligman, founder of Positive Psychology, there have been hundreds of books published on happiness. Yet there is something more fundamental still to the sense of a life well-lived, namely, meaning. The two seem similar. It's easy to suppose that people who find meaning are happy, and people who are happy have found meaning. But the two are not the same, nor do they always overlap.

Happiness is largely a matter of satisfying needs and wants. Meaning, by contrast, is about a sense of purpose in life, especially by making positive contributions to the lives of others. Happiness is largely about how you feel in the present. Meaning is about how you judge your life as a whole: past, present and future.

Happiness is associated with taking, meaning with giving. Individuals who suffer stress, worry or anxiety are not happy, but they may be living lives rich with meaning. Past misfortunes reduce present happiness, but people often connect such moments with the discovery of meaning. Furthermore, happiness is not unique to humans. Animals also experience contentment when their wants and needs are satisfied. But meaning is a distinctively human phenomenon. It has to do not with nature but with culture. It is not about what happens to us, but about how we interpret what happens to us. There can be happiness without meaning, and there can be meaning in the absence of happiness, even in the midst of darkness and pain.[1]

In a fascinating article in *The Atlantic*, 'There's more to life than being happy'[2], Emily Smith argued that the pursuit of happiness can result in a relatively shallow, self-absorbed, even selfish life. What makes the pursuit of meaning different is that it is about the search for something larger than the self.

No one did more to put the question of meaning into modern discourse than the late Viktor Frankl. In the three years he spent in Auschwitz, Frankl survived and helped others to survive by inspiring them to discover a purpose in life even in the midst of hell on earth. It was there that he formulated the ideas he later turned into a new type of psychotherapy based on what he called "man's search for meaning". His book of that title, written in the course of nine days in 1946, has sold more than ten million copies throughout

the world, and ranks as one of the most influential works of the twentieth century.

Frankl knew that in the camps, those who lost the will to live died. He tells of how he helped two individuals to find a reason to survive. One, a woman, had a child waiting for her in another country. Another had written the first volumes of a series of travel books, and there were others yet to write. Both therefore had a reason to live.

Frankl used to say that the way to find meaning was not to ask what we want from life. Instead we should ask what life wants from us. We are each, he said, unique: in our gifts, our abilities, our skills and talents, and in the circumstances of our life. For each of us, then, there is a task only we can do. This does not mean that we are better than others. But if we believe we are here for a reason, then there is a tikkun, a mending, only we can perform, a fragment of light only we can redeem, an act of kindness or courage, generosity or hospitality, even a word of encouragement or a smile, only we can perform, because we are here, in this place, at this time, facing this person at this moment in their lives.

"Life is a task", he used to say, and added, "The religious man differs from the apparently irreligious man only by experiencing his existence not simply as a task, but as a mission." He or she is aware of being summoned, called, by a Source. "For thousands of years that source has been called God." [3]

That is the significance of the word that gives our parsha, and the third book of the Torah, its name: Vayikra, "And He called." The precise meaning of this opening verse is difficult to understand. Literally translated it reads: "And He called to Moses, and God spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying..." The first phrase seems to be redundant. If we are told that God spoke to Moses, why say in addition, "And He called"? Rashi explains as follows:

And He called to Moses: Every [time God communicated with Moses, whether signalled by the expression] "And He spoke", or "and He said", or "and He commanded", it was always preceded by [God] calling [to Moses by name]. [4] "Calling" is an expression of endearment. It is the expression employed by the ministering angels, as it says, "And one called to the other..." (Isaiah 6:3).

Vayikra, Rashi is telling us, means to be called to a task in love. This is the source of one of the key ideas of Western thought, namely the concept of a vocation or a calling, that is, the choice of a career or way of life not just because you want to do it, or because it offers certain benefits, but because you feel

summoned to it. You feel this is your meaning and mission in life. This is what you were placed on earth to do.

There are many such calls in Tanach. There was the call Abraham received, telling to leave his land and family. There was the call to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:4). There was the one experienced by Isaiah when he saw in a mystical vision God enthroned and surrounded by angels:

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8)

One of the most touching is the story of the young Samuel, dedicated by his mother Hannah to serve in the sanctuary at Shiloh where he acted as an assistant to Eli the priest. In bed at night he heard a voice calling his name. He assumed it was Eli. He ran to see what he wanted but Eli told him he had not called. This happened a second time and then a third, and by then Eli realised that it was God calling the child. He told Samuel that the next time the voice called his name, he should reply, 'Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.' It did not occur to the child that it might be God summoning him to a mission, but it was. Thus began his career as a prophet, judge and anointer of Israel's first two kings, Saul and David (1 Samuel 3).

When we see a wrong to be righted, a sickness to be healed, a need to be met, and we feel it speaking to us, that is when we come as close as we can in a post-prophetic age to hearing Vayikra, God's call. And why does the word appear here, at the beginning of the third and central book of the Torah? Because the book of Vayikra is about sacrifices, and a vocation is about sacrifices. We are willing to make sacrifices when we feel they are part of the task we are called on to do.

From the perspective of eternity we may sometimes be overwhelmed by a sense of our own insignificance. We are no more than a wave in the ocean, a grain of sand on the sea shore, a speck of dust on the surface of infinity. Yet we are here because God wanted us to be, because there is a task He wants us to perform. The search for meaning is the quest for this task.

Each of us is unique. Even genetically identical twins are different. There are things only we can do, we who are what we are, in this time, this place and these circumstances. For each of us God has a task: work to

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perform, a kindness to show, a gift to give, love to share, loneliness to ease, pain to heal, or broken lives to help mend. Discerning that task, hearing Vayikra, God's call, is one of the great spiritual challenges for each of us.

How do we know what it is? Some years ago, in *To Heal a Fractured World*, I offered this as a guide, and it still seems to me to make sense: Where what we want to do meets what needs to be done, that is where God wants us to be.

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**Rabbi Hershel Schachter**

#### **The Correct Behavior When Dealing with Danger**

Many have the mistaken impression that the Jewish religion places much emphasis on death and respect for the dead; after all, we recite kaddish, yizkor, observe shiva, and yahrzeit, etc. This is a gross misunderstanding. The respect that we show for the dead is a carryover from the respect that we show for the living. The Gemorah (Kesubos 17a, see Shitah Mekubetzes) tells us that whenever there is a conflict between kovod ha'chayim and kovod ha'meisim, kovod ha'chaim takes precedence. When the chevra kadisha brings in the aron at a funeral, everyone stands up. People mistakenly think that we stand up out of respect for the niftar, but in many cases we never stood up for him when he was alive, so why should we stand up for him now that he passed away? The Bartenurah (Mishnayos Bikurim 3:3) explains that we are not standing up out of respect for the niftar but rather out of respect for the members of the chevra kaddisha who are presently involved in the fulfillment of a mitzvah. The respect for the living is based on the premise that all human beings were created b'tzelem Elokim. When the Torah requires us to demonstrate kovod ha'meis, it means that even after the person passed away and no longer has tzelem Elokim, i.e. a neshama, we still have to act respectfully towards the body because it used to have a tzelem Elokim.

Of the six hundred and thirteen mitzvos, one of the most important is the mitzvah of v'chai bohem v'lo sh'yomus bohem (Yoma 85b). Not only does the halacha require that if there is a sofek sakanah we must violate almost all of the mitzvos in the Torah to save a life, but we are also required to do so even if there is only a s'fek s'feika, a remote possibility (Yoma 85a). The Gemorah (ibid) adds that even if the likelihood is that by violating Shabbos or whatever other aveira we most probably will not be saving anyone's life, we still do not abstain from the action due to that likelihood (rove - majority).

When Bnei Yisroel were traveling in the midbar for 40 years, the weather conditions were such that there was a slight sakanah in performing bris milah. Most of the sh'votim did not fulfill the mitzvah except for sheivet Levi[1]. They had an Orthodox rabbi among them, i.e. Moshe Rabbeinu. Why didn't all the shevatim ask him what to about this sofek

sakanah? If it is a real sofek sakanah he should not have permitted sheivet Levi to perform the mitzvah despite their pietistic protests, and if the sofek sakanah was so insignificant that it simply should have been dismissed, why didn't he insist that all the shevatim perform the mitzvah of milah?

The Gemorah (Yevamos 12b) tells us that the answer is to be found in Tehillim (116:6), "Shomer p'soyim Hashem." Whenever there is a slight sofek sakanah that is nowhere near fifty-fifty[2], the halacha declares that it depends on the attitude of the patient. If the patient whose life is at risk (or the parent of the patient who is responsible for his well-being) is personally not nervous about the danger, then the halacha does not consider it a sofek sakanah; we apply "Shomer p'soyim Hashem." But if the patient whose life is at risk is nervous and concerned about the sofek sakanah, then the halacha requires us to act based on, "V'chai bohem v'lo sh'yomus bohem", and the sofek sakanah takes precedence over almost all of the mitzvos of the Torah. Shevet Levi had bitachon, and therefore were not concerned, and therefore for their children it was not considered a sofek sakanah, but with respect to the other shevatim who were concerned it was in fact a sofek sakanah, so every shevet was acting k'din.

However, if one individual is not concerned, but the nature of the sakanah is such that everyone is interdependent and the individual who personally is not nervous may possibly spread a disease to others who are concerned about its spread, then the concept of Shomer p'soyim Hashem does not apply. The individual who is not concerned does not have the right to determine for the others who are concerned that there is no sakanah for them.

The Rakanti[3] relates that one of Ba'alei Ha'tosfos was deathly sick before Yom Kippur and the doctors warned him that if he fasts he will certainly die but if he eats on Yom Kippur there is a slim chance that he may survive. He decided to fast, and of course he died. All of the Ba'alei Ha'tosfos were upset over his decision and felt that he went against the halacha.

If a terrorist threatens to kill me unless I violate one of the mitzvos of the Torah, the halacha usually is that pikuach nefesh takes precedence over most of the mitzvos in the Torah. What if an individual wants to put up a fight knowing that he may well lose his life but thinks that by being moser nefesh he will fulfill the mitzvah of kiddush Hashem? This matter was a famous dispute amongst the Rishonim. The Rambam's opinion is that one may not volunteer to give up his life al kiddush Hashem when not required by halacha because this is tantamount to suicide[4]. Many other Rishonim disagreed with the Rambam. However, if there is no terrorist pressuring me to violate my religion, but there is merely a dangerous situation of sickness then all of the

## **Likutei Divrei Torah**

Ba'alei Ha'tosfos agreed with the Rambam that it would not constitute a midas chassidus to ignore the sakanah[5].

In determining what is a sakanah and what is not, the practice of the Tanoim always was to follow the doctors of their generation. Every so often the Rambam would take a stand on a medical issue against what it says in the Gemorah and the Chasam Sofer (Teshuvos, Yoreh Deah #101) explains that the Rambam was a doctor and he did exactly as the Tanoim did, namely, to follow the doctors of his generation. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 331:9) also says explicitly that we follow the doctors of our generation even in contradiction to the medicine recommended in the Gemorah. We should certainly do the same as the Rambam and the Shulchan Aruch and follow the doctors of our generation in determining what is considered a sakanah and what is not considered a sakanah.

Some well-meaning individuals have blown out of halachic proportion the significance of tefillah b'tzibur and talmud Torah b'rabim and have opted to ignore the sofek sakanah presented by the corona virus when in conflict with these two most important mitzvos. We live in a generation where many b'nei Torah tend to exaggerate the significance of Torah and tefillah. Although their intention is certainly l'shaim Shomayim, we must all keep in mind that when paskening shailos, one may not rely on an exaggeration.

All exaggerations by definition are sheker - a misrepresentation of the truth of the Torah. Rav Chaim Volozhiner signs off quite a few of his teshuvos saying, "Keil Emes, Nosan lanu Toras Emes, u'bilti el ho'emes einu - the true God gave us the true Torah, and we only look for the truth." Any exaggeration in the area of Torah and halacha is clearly a misrepresentation of our religion. The commentaries on Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 157) refer to the comments of the Maharshal in his sefer Yam Shel Shlomo (Bava Kamma 38a) that to misrepresent a law of the Torah constitutes an aveira related to avodah zarah[6] and as such would be subject to the principle of yeihoreig v'al ya'avur.

With respect to a sofek sakanah the halacha clearly requires that we go extremely l'chumrah. Especially religious Jews, who know that they are charged with a mission in life, should certainly be extremely machmir on matters of sofek sakanah.

Although every word of a poem appears in the dictionary, the poet conveys an idea by putting the words in a certain order. So too, different people can have the same ideas and the same principles, but if you put them in a different arrangement you have changed the whole understanding if each one of the principles[7]. Once you exaggerate the significance of any particular mitzvah, you have misrepresented the whole picture of kol haTorah kula.

[1] See Rashi, Devarim 33:9.

[2] See Achiezer, volume 1, #23,2.

[3] Siman 166; see Teshuvos Dvar Yehoshua, vol. 2 #94

[4] Hilchos Yesodei haTorah, 5:1.

[5] See Mishna Berura 328:6.

[6] Because we believe that the Torah is a description of the essence of G-d, misrepresenting the Torah is tantamount to misrepresenting G-d Himself

[7] Thoughts 1:22, by Blaise Pascal

Editor's note: more on this topic from Rav Schachter, as well as Dr. Daniel Berman and Rabbi Dr. Aaron Glatt, can be found at: .

[http://www.torahweb.org/audio/rsch\\_031920.html](http://www.torahweb.org/audio/rsch_031920.html)

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### Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

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“He [God] called to Moses, and the Lord spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting saying...” (Leviticus 1:1) So opens the third book of the Pentateuch, the book known as *Torat Kohanim*, the book of the priest-ministers of the Divine Sanctuary, the guardians of the rituals connecting Israel to God. Indeed, this book in Hebrew is, like the others, called by its opening word, *Vayikra*.

And herein lies a problem. Each of the other four books is called by its opening words, but in those instances the opening words have great significance.

*Bereishit* [Genesis] is the beginning, the moment in which God called the world-creation into being; *Shemot* [Exodus], the names of the family members who came down to Egypt, and the exile-slavery experience which transformed them from a family into a nation with a national mission of universal freedom; *Bamidbar* [Numbers], the desert sojourn of a newly freed people who had to learn the responsibilities of managing a nation-state before entering their promised homeland; and *Devarim* [Deuteronomy], the farewell words and legacy of Moses, the agent of Hashem.

But what is the significance of *Vayikra* – God “calling out” to Moses, as the name for a Biblical book? Did not God call out to Moses from the time that he came onto the scene of Jewish history? And why is it specifically this time that Moses chose to express his modesty, the word is spelled with a small alef, as if to record that God merely “chanced upon him” (*Vayiker*), but had not specifically called out to him? I believe that the answer lies in the very strange concluding words of the last portion of the Book of Exodus, towards the end of *Pekudei*: “The cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting, for the cloud rested upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle...” (Exodus 40:34-35)

We saw in last week’s commentary the majestic words of the Ramban (Nahmanides), explaining how the Book of Exodus concludes the Jewish exile with the glory of the Lord resting upon – and filling – the Tabernacle.

Was it not Moses who asked God to reveal His glory to him? Was Moses not the supreme individual in human history who came closer to the Divine than anyone else, who “spoke to God face to face,” whose active intellect actually kissed the active intellect of the *Shechina*? Then why is Moses forbidden from entering the Tent of Meeting? Moses should have entered straightaway, precisely because the glory of God was then filling the Tabernacle!

Apparently, the Bible is teaching a crucial lesson about Divine Service: God wants human beings to strive to come close to God, but not too close. God demands even from Moses a measured distance between Himself (as it were) and human beings. We must serve Him, but not beyond that which He commands us to do. In Divine Service, we dare not go beyond the laws He ordains that we perform.

There is no “beyond the requirements of the law” in the realm of the laws between humans and God.

God understands the thin line between *kadosh* and *kadesh*: Divine service and diabolical suicide bombers, fealty to the King of all Kings and fanatic sacrifice to Moloch. Hence not only does our Bible record the commands God gave to Moses regarding the construction of every aspect of the Divine Sanctuary (*Truma* and *Tetzaveh*) but it painstakingly informs us again and again in *Vayakhel* and *Pekudei* that those orders were carried out exactly as they had been commanded, no less and no more: “Moses did according to everything that the Lord had commanded, so did he do” (Ex. 40:16).

This is why, further on in the Book of Leviticus God metes out a stringent death penalty upon Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, when they bring before the Lord a “strange fire which they had not been commanded to bring” (Lev. 10:1) in the midst of national fervor of exultant song. Moses even explains this tragic occurrence by saying, “of this did the Lord speak, saying ‘I will be sanctified by those who come [too] close to Me.’” Too close to God can be more dangerous than too distant from Him, if over-zealous Fanaticism is what measured Divine service turns into!

This is why both the Rambam (Maimonides) and the Ramban interpret the commandment par excellence in interpersonal human relationships, “You shall do what is right and good” (Deut. 6:18), to necessitate going beyond the legal requirements, to make certain that you not act like a “scoundrel within the confines of the law,” whereas in the area of Divine-human relationships, you dare not take the law into your own hands; our legal authorities are concerned lest your motivation be *yuhara*, excessive pride before God, religious “one-upmanship, which too early may overtake the sober humility of the all-too eager zealot.”

## Likutei Divrei Torah

Thus the sacred Book of *Vayikra*, the book which features our religious devotion to the Lord, opens with Moses’s reluctance to enter the Tabernacle of the Lord unless he is actually summoned to do so by God.

His humility is even more in evidence when he records only in miniature the final letter alef in the word *Vayikra*, as if to say that perhaps the call he had received by God was more by accident than by design.

Indeed, the Midrash (*Tanhuma* 37) teaches that the small amount of unused ink which should have been utilized on the regular-sized alef of the Torah (as it were), was placed by God on Moses’s forehead; that ink of humility is what provided Moses’s face with the translucent glow with which he descended from Mount Sinai (Ex. 34:33-35).

Fanatic zealots are completely devoid of humility; they operate with the fire without rather than the radiant light from within, the light of glory which suffused Moses entire being, the truest rays of splendor which express the sanctity beyond deeds and beyond words.

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### The Person in the Parsha Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb Forgiving Fallibility

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“I was wrong. I am sorry. Please forgive me.” These are rare words indeed, but I heard them pronounced clearly by a woman I once worked for, and whom I still admire.

She was the superintendent of a small school district just outside of Washington, DC. Several of the school districts in that geographical area were under a federal court order to guarantee desegregation of the races in the public schools. Believe it or not, the court found that even as late as the early 1970s, proper integration of the races was still not achieved in many of these schools.

The superintendent, whom I will call Dr. Cassidy, had selected a group of school system employees to serve as part of a specially trained team to deal with the tensions in the community that were caused by the implementation of this court order.

I was then working as a school psychologist in this school district, and was one of those chosen to serve on this team. We had spent several weeks training for this sensitive human relations project. She had initially assured us that federal funding for our salaries was guaranteed, and that we could be confident that our jobs were secure once certain formalities were finalized.

One Monday morning we were summoned to an urgent meeting. She informed us that the funds were not available, and that we would be denied not only our future salaries, but even remuneration for the time we had already

spent. It was then that she uttered the words, “I was wrong. Please forgive me.”

I have subsequently witnessed many situations in which a leader made a terrible mistake impacting upon the lives of others. But, almost invariably, those leaders shirked responsibility, blamed others, or concocted ludicrous excuses for their failures. Very few had Dr. Cassidy’s courage.

This week’s Torah portion, Parshat Vayikra (Leviticus 1:1-5:26), describes an individual who demonstrated just such courage, and who indeed was expected to do so.

Chapter 4 of our Torah portion lists a number of individuals who occupied special roles in the ancient Jewish community. They included the High Priest; the judges of the central court or Sanhedrin; and the Nasi, or chieftain. Of the latter, we read:

“In case it is a chieftain who incurs guilt by doing unwittingly any of the things which by the commandment of the Lord his God ought not to be done, and he realizes his guilt... He shall bring as his sin offering a male goat without blemish... Thus the priest shall make expiation on his behalf for his sin, and he shall be forgiven.” (Leviticus 4:22-26)

The Hebrew for the first phrase in the above quotation, “in case”, is “*asher*”. Rashi notes the similarity between the word “*asher*” and the word “*ashrei*,” or “fortunate.” Based on that similarity he comments: “Fortunate is the generation whose leader is concerned about achieving forgiveness for his unintentional transgressions. How much more so will he demonstrate remorse for his intentional misdeeds.”

Fortunate indeed is the community which is blessed with leadership that can acknowledge error unambiguously. Even more fortunate is the community whose leaders ask for forgiveness.

Our commentators note that it is to be expected that leaders will commit moral errors. Rabbi Obadiah Sforno, the medieval Italian physician and Torah scholar, comments that it is unavoidable that men in positions of power will sin. He quotes the phrase in Deuteronomy 32:15 which reads, “*Jeshurun* grew fat and kicked,” indicating that when one becomes “fat” with power he will “kick” sinfully. How similar is this insight to Lord Acton’s famous quote: “Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

If the Torah assumes that misdeeds by leaders are unavoidable, it also expects that those leaders will humbly acknowledge their misdeeds and beg forgiveness for them. That is the lesson of the passage in our Torah portion.

However, the process cannot end with the leader’s apologies. His followers must accept

his sincere regret, and, much more difficult, must bring themselves to forgive him. In the passage in our parsha, it would seem that it is the Almighty who forgives a leader, and not necessarily the people.

My personal experience has taught me that just as it is difficult for people, especially those in power, to confess their shortcomings and to appeal for forgiveness, so is it all the more difficult for people to grant forgiveness to those who have offended them.

Yet, our sages point out that the Almighty wants us to be as forgiving as He is. Thus, there is a verse in the book of the prophet Micah which reads, “Who is a God like You, forgiving iniquity and remitting transgression...?” Upon this verse, the Talmud comments: “Whose iniquities does God forgive? Those of he who remits the transgressions of others.” (Talmud Bavli, Rosh Hashana 17a).

So, let’s return to the story with which I began this column. Dr. Cassidy proved herself to be capable of confessing that she was mistaken, and of asking us to forgive her. But I also remember our reaction, the reaction of the small group of hard workers who learned that they were not only out of a job, but would not even be getting paycheck that they earned.

Our reaction was one of great anger. I imagine that the feelings in the room were close to those of a lynch mob. We vented some of those feelings, but then moved on to feelings of frustration and impotence. We asked Dr. Cassidy to leave the room so that we could plan our next step rationally, which she did.

I won’t report on the details of the long discussion which ensued. Suffice it to say that we moved from anger and frustration to acknowledging Dr. Cassidy’s good intentions, to empathizing with her dilemma, and finally, as a group, deciding to express to her our understanding and forgiveness.

She reentered the room, and was visibly touched by our compassionate response

I must conclude by telling you dear reader, that although happy endings are generally confined to fairy tales, this particular story did have a happy ending.

Perhaps emboldened by the support she felt from our group, Dr. Cassidy renewed her efforts to obtain the grant from the federal agency, enlisted the assistance of several regional congressman, and obtained the funds available for this training program.

The lessons of ordinary life often parallel the lessons of the Torah. For a society to advance, its leaders must be self-aware and courageous enough to recognize and confess their failures, and to seek forgiveness from those whom they have affronted. Equally important, those who

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have been affronted most find it in their hearts to sincerely forgive.

Then, and only then, can problems be solved, and greater goals achieved.

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### Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

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#### We Follow the Torah’s Teaching, Whether It Makes Scents or Not!

The pasuk in this week’s parsha says, “When a soul will bring a meal-offering to Hashem, his offering shall be of fine flour; he shall pour oil on it and place frankincense on it.” [Vayikra 2:1] The Korban Mincha needed to contain three ingredients: It needed to contain sol’es [fine flour]; it needed to contain shemen [oil]; and it needed to contain levona [a type of spice that makes it sweet smelling]. The Torah then adds [Vayikra 2:11] “Any meal offering that you offer to Hashem shall not be prepared leavened, for you shall not cause to go up in smoke from any leavening or any honey as a fire-offering to Hashem.” All Mincha offerings must be made as matzah – therefore any seor [a leavening agent] and any devash (not literally bee’s honey but any fruit juice or any sweet ingredient like honey) may not be part of the recipe.

Parshas HaKetores, which is part of the morning prayer’s preliminary recitations, contains the teaching of the Tanna Bar Kappara that not only are we prohibited from adding devash to a Korban Mincha, but we are also prohibited from adding it to the daily incense offering (the Ketores) in the Beis HaMikdash. “Had one put a kortov (a trace amount) of fruit-honey into it, no person could stand (in the Temple Courtyard) because of its (malodorous) aroma.” The Ketores is made up of eleven difference spices. Bar Kappara teaches that if someone were to add devash to any of the different spices, it would make such a bad scent that no one could stand it. (This is the explanation according to some commentaries.) The Braisa there finishes off “And why did they not add thereto devash? It is because the Torah teaches, “For any leaven and any devash, you are not to burn from them a fire-offering to Hashem.”

This seems to be a very peculiar statement. The Braisa just got finished saying that a person cannot add fruit-honey because if someone did, no one would be able to take the smell. Then the Braisa says, “Why don’t they in fact add devash? It is because the Torah said not to!” We have two disparate reasons given here – each of which would seem to make the other reason totally redundant.

I believe this is an example of the well-known Sifrei, which teaches that a person should NOT say “I do not like (the taste of) pig.” We are living in the great State of Maryland which is world famous for its crabs. If you have ever smelled crabs cooking – which I have – one can truthfully say “No one can stand there because of its (malodorous) aroma.” It is the worst smelling thing. I sometimes pass by the fish aisle in the supermarket and see the

lobsters, the shrimp, and the oysters. They are ugly! And yet everyone talks about the delicacies of shellfish. I have heard Baalei Teshuva tell me that the hardest thing for them to give up when they became Torah-observant was not chazer [pig]. The hardest thing for them to give up was shellfish. So even though I am tempted to say “I cannot stand crabs” according to the teaching of Sifrei, I am supposed to say, “I would desire them, I love crabs but what can I do? My Father in Heaven decreed upon me that I am not allowed to eat them.” This is the correct attitude.

This teaching of Bar Kappara is an example of the same principle. In fact, if someone added fruit-honey to the Ketores, we would not be able to stand there because of the scent. However, the reason why we do not add fruit-honey is because the Torah prohibited it and therefore we would not do it even if it smelled fantastic.

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetsky connects a very cute little story to this idea. There was a ShopRite supermarket in Lakewood for many years. At this ShopRite, there was a frum woman standing in line behind a non-Jewish woman, who was shopping with her little son. As we all know, supermarkets put candy right next to the checkout counters and the non-Jewish woman's son started throwing a temper tantrum because his mother would not buy him a certain candy bar that he saw in the checkout aisle. Finally, the woman said to her son, “It is not kosher!” The boy said to his mother “What do you mean ‘It is not kosher’? — It says on the wrapper that it is delicious.”

At that point, the woman turned to the frum woman behind her and said, “I do not understand something. Every time when you people go into the store and your children want something at the checkout counter, you say ‘It is not kosher’ and that is the end of the discussion. Does that not just mean that it does not taste good?” The frum woman explained to her that kosher has nothing to do with how it tastes. It is just that we are allowed to eat kosher and we are not allowed to eat non-kosher. This was a difficult concept for the non-Jewish person to understand. It says explicitly on the label that it is delicious, so what kind of problem is it that “it is not kosher”?

This is the interpretation of Bar Kappara's “bottom line”: We do not add fruit-juice to the Ketores because the Torah teaches ‘Don't sacrifice from it a fire-offering to Hashem.’ End of discussion. It does not matter if the smell is malodorous or irresistible — That is academic. We do as the Torah commands us.

#### **Dvar Torah**

#### **Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis**

Why was one of our main sacrifices called ‘Olah’? Like ‘olah’ or ‘aliyah’ it means ‘going up’, but it is usually translated as ‘a burnt offering’. In parashat Vayikara we are given all the details of the olah. The Midrash Tanchuma tells us that it is known by this name because it

is a voluntary offering, and therefore it is superior to all other offerings. Rashi, however, says that since the olah was a burnt offering and the smoke went up to heaven, that is why it is called an olah. The Ramban says that the olah is given to atone for sins which rise up into our minds, tempting us to do what we otherwise would not. Later on, when we regret it, and we bring the sacrifice.

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch tells us that the term olah does not relate to the animal or the process, but rather through the person who brings the sacrifice — one becomes elevated through the experience of bringing this sacrifice. I believe that all of these perushim enable us to understand the essence of all sacrifices.

Sacrifices in temple times provided us with an opportunity to volunteer, to come forward, to engage in ‘korban’, from the word ‘karov’ (close), whereby we became closer to the Almighty. It was through the korban that we established that connection between ourselves and Heaven. It was through the korban that we were able to atone for our sins and to make ourselves into better people. The person bringing the korban witnessed the slaughtering of an animal and that had a deep effect on him.

I recall from the time when I was training to be a shochet and when I shechted animals in the abattoir, in addition of course, to contemplating the mortality of the animal, I would think about my own mortality. Thank God I am alive, but who knows for how long! It's all in the hands of God. I always emerged from those experiences thinking about how I should utilise every precious moment of life for sacred purposes. That was the essence of the korban — it was a most dramatic experience through which a person came closer to Hashem and resolved to improve their ways.

In our times, without a temple, it is tefilla (prayer) which takes the place of the korban. Similarly, through our tefillot we step forward to engage with Hashem and connect with Heaven. We have an opportunity to atone for our errors and most importantly of all, we can elevate ourselves through tefillah, to become better people, to shape a better world for the sake of our future.

#### **OTS Dvar Torah: Rabbi Eliahu Birnbaum** **God seeking man, and man seeking God**

God doesn't merely expect people to turn to Him. He makes an overture to them and calls out to them. God is not passive in this world — He reveals his presence.

The third book of the Five Books of Moses opens with the word ‘Vayikra’, a word with a broad and profound connotation. The name of this book in Hebrew is also ‘Vayikra,’ based on the first word in the text, though it is called Leviticus in other languages, based on a Greek word meaning “the work of the Levites.” Parshat Vayikra begins with Hashem appealing to Moshe on a personal level, using a rather amiable expression: “And He called unto

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Moses.”

“And He called to Moses, and the Lord spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying...” What does this appeal mean? On the simplest level, Hashem was making contact with Moses by opening a channel of communication for transmitting information and content. Yet what's particularly important about Hashem's appeal isn't the language used, but rather, the relationship between the two sides in this dialogue.

I feel that there's something unique and wonderful about the word ‘Vayikra.’ It isn't coincidental that this book begins with an appeal. It does so to teach us one of the basic principles of Jewish faith. None other than the Holy One, Blessed Be He appeals to Moses. God doesn't merely expect people to turn to him — He makes an overture to them and calls out to them. As we learn from the Midrash, Hashem contacts Moses directly. At first, He calls out, and then, He speaks:

“And He called out to Moses, and not [as He called out to] Abraham, for [in the case of] Abraham, it is written: ‘And the angel of Hashem called out to Abraham.’ The angel calls out, and ‘the speech spoke.’ Here, however, R. Abin said: the Holy One, Blessed Be He, said: I am the one who called out, and I am the one who spoke, as it is said (in Isaiah 48): ‘I, yea I spoke, I even called him, I brought him, and his way prospered.’” (Shmot Rabbah, 1:9)

The relationship is seemingly mutual. People have the power to seek out Hashem, call out to Him, and speak to Him, though the divine presence is also active and sets out to seek man, call out to him and converse with him.

Interestingly, Hashem's appeal has an organized structure: the appeal comes first, and then, the talking. The Gemara explains: “Why does the verse mention calling before speaking, and God did not speak to him at the outset? The Torah is teaching etiquette: A person should not say anything to another unless the other calls him first.” (The Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Yoma, page 4b)

The Book of Leviticus teaches us that Hashem is not strictly confined to the world of halacha. He doesn't simply sit in heaven or a royal palace. The Holy One, Blessed Be He, created the world and is present in this world. He reveals his presence in this world through ‘Vayikra,’ i.e. by calling out to man, and through ‘payedaber’ — and He spoke — i.e. Hashem spoke in a personal tone: “Then Hashem would speak to Moses face to face, as a man would speak to his companion” (Exodus 33:11). The Holy One, Blessed Be He, is the God of history. He is interconnected with humanity. He is part of history, and He cares about mankind. Even before man calls out to Hashem, Hashem calls out to man, reveals Himself to man, and speaks to him. Hashem's appeal to man isn't confined to merely the historical and transcendental levels — it's a face-to-face encounter. Judaism believes that

the encounter with divinity isn't a negation of either divinity or humanness when something new is created. Rather, it is a way toward forging a deep spiritual partnership.

In Parshat Vayikra, Hashem turns to man, and each of these appeals also involves a choice – a person's choice to accept this appeal. However, to hear Hashem's appeal, you need to listen, and to be sensitive. At times, a person can be both blind and deaf to an appeal from heaven. We need to synchronize our earthly frequencies to receive messages from God, in order to hear and listen to His appeal and to what He is saying to us.

I feel that this model for the relationship between God and human beings can also be an appropriate model for interpersonal relationships. I find it disheartening that for Israeli society and the Jewish people in the Diaspora, the truth has become a tribal matter. We have come to live in separate societies, and each of us has become preoccupied with our own worlds and our own beliefs and opinions. We never stop to look at those who are unlike us or think or behave differently, and we never call out to them. I believe that if we adopt the divine model embodied by the words Vayikra and Vayyedaber, and if we begin calling out and getting to know each other, if we start talking, hearing, and listening to each other, we'll be on our way to building an exemplary society and a strong Jewish people, even if we don't all think or believe in the same views or values.

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#### **Dvar Torah 2: TorahWeb.Org**

**Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky**

#### **Korbanos: Gift vs. Obligation**

Vayikra begins by laying down the laws of korbanos, the Temple offerings or "sacrifices" as colloquially [but quite inaccurately] translated. The second passuk details a few general disqualifications that limit what animals may be used for a korban in all types of korbanos. "Of the cattle" invalidates animals upon whom bestiality has been performed, "of the sheep" eliminates those animals designated for animal worship or those animals who had killed a person, and so on. The exclusions listed are specific to korbanos and are derived directly from the grammatical form employed [i.e. the word "of", such as in "of the sheep", implies that some of a given set of animals are acceptable, but not all.]

The very first disqualification that is learned from these pesukim, however, presents two difficulties. The very first passuk says, "a man who will offer up a korban", which is explained to teach us that, "just as the first man [i.e. Adam] did not offer stolen animals [as korbanos], for everything belonged to him, so too when you bring a korban, you may not bring a stolen [animal as a] korban."

This is doubly troubling. First of all, the prohibition of using stolen goods for the purpose of a mitzvah applies to all mitzvos and could have been taught in the context of any

mitzvah. Why, then, would this universal disqualification be the first one listed for korbanos? Shouldn't something uniquely relevant to korbanos have been listed first? Secondly, at first glance it seems to be a stretch, contrived even, to assume that "adam - a man" refers specifically to Adam harishon and his ownership of all animals in the world. What does this seemingly far-fetched allusion mean?

In order to understand the unique impropriety of stolen korbanos, we must define the world of korbanos vis-a-vis all other mitzvos.

Imagine I hire a workman to fix something in my house and then discover that he used stolen goods to do so. Although I will be very upset and feel that he had committed a terrible wrong, his wrongdoing does not contradict the essence of our transaction. I paid him to fix something, and he did so. But now let us picture someone giving a close friend an expensive stolen item as a gift, or a chosson giving a kallah a stolen diamond ring. In these cases, the misdeed strikes at the heart of the very gift. The very essence of a gift is giving of oneself to another, i.e. taking the time and effort that I've invested in earning money and giving it to another in the form of a gift. The giving of oneself is totally absent when presenting a stolen gift, and thus such a gift has no redeeming value whatsoever.

The world of avodas Hashem has two major components: obligations and voluntary opportunities. Mitzvos are, first and foremost, commandments. A person who does a mitzvah, even if there are shortcomings in its performance, still has done his duty. But then there are korbanos, which are "offerings." Although some korbanos are obligatory, the quintessential korban is a voluntary offering, the equivalent of a "gift." This is evidenced by the fact that Rashi explains that the very first part of Vayikra is speaking specifically about a voluntary korban. This would indicate that the quintessential form of korban is indeed the voluntary gift, while the obligatory korbanos comprise a special subcategory. It therefore makes sense that the first disqualification listed for korbanos is a stolen korban, for this negates the essence of the korban. It is almost as if the passuk is meant to read, "if man offers of himself a korban", and if there is no "self" in the korban being offered, there is absolutely no korban to speak of. Offering a stolen animal is not an ancillary offense, or even the violation of a prerequisite; rather it is a distortion of what a korban is supposed to be! Adam was the only person in the world and thus its exclusive owner, and therefore his bringing a korban was, by definition, giving of himself, and that serves as the prototype of what a korban is supposed to be.

This gives us insight into why the nevi'im, when castigating Klal Yisroel for their sins, kept harping on their korbanos. For when a person is negligent in some of his duties, he is

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not excused from the rest of his duties, and certainly is not to be faulted for fulfilling them! If one does not wear tefillin, he will not be excoriated for wearing tzitzis! But korbanos are "extra-credit." As such, if a person is negligent in his basic obligations, and yet offers korbanos, the korbanos are seen as a cynical attempt to curry favor with Hashem instead of doing what is right. If we steal, act unjustly, and do not care for the weak, we are still doing what is right when we blow shofar and eat matzah; the wrongness of our misdeeds and the correctness of our mitzvos are independent of each other. But when we dare offer "gifts" to Hashem while also engaging in wrongdoing, then the negative connotations of our misdeeds corrupt the korbanos themselves.

This is something to consider when we are engaged in activities that are lifnim mishuras hadin. As long as a person is focused on doing what is required min hadin, then his shortcomings do not directly affect his mitzvos. But if a person goes lifnim mishuras hadin in some areas while being grossly negligent in others, his lifnim mishuras hadin becomes a travesty and highlights his wrongdoings, chas v'shalom.

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#### **Torah.Org Dvar Torah**

**by Rabbi Label Lam**

And He called to Moshe, and HASHEM spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying, Speak to the Children of Israel, and say to them: When a man from you brings a sacrifice to HASHEM; from animals, from cattle or from the flock you shall bring your sacrifice. (Vayikra 1:1-2)

a man: Why is the term "man" used here? It alludes to Adam the first man on earth and it teaches us that just as Adam the first man never offered sacrifices from stolen property since everything was his, so too you must not offer sacrifices from stolen material. (Rashi)

A critical factor in a Korban - a Sacrifice is that it should belong to the person that is bringing it. Why is that so? Maybe the reason is too obvious, but it still bears spelling out. If we are already willing to learn from the Korban of Adam, from ancient history, then perhaps we can travel not so far back and discover some other ingredients of a successful Korban.

"And it was from the end of days, Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground; and Hevel also he brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the choicest. HASHEM turned to Hevel and to his offering, but to Cain and his offering He did not turn." (Breishis 4:3-5) What made Hevel's Korban more acceptable to HASHEM than Cain's? We can learn from what's said and what's not said there.

Why is the introduction to Cain's offering preceded by the words, literally, "And it was from the end of days"? This may be intimating Cain's motive for initiating the concept of a Minchah, a gift for HASHEM. Death had

come into the world because Adam and Chava ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. No one had died yet but the fuse of time was lit and the clock began to count down. Even if a person would live a thousand years, eventually he would die.

I heard many years ago from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, “Any number no matter how large is still infinitely shy of infinity.” After the passage of time on this earth a person goes to a world of infinity to be with HASHEM. His motive was that, “I had better groom a relationship with He with Whom I will be spending eternity. It’s not too soon to begin to send gifts.” It’s a noble ideal. He brought from the fruit of ground, but there is no mention of what quality fruit or the real nature of his connection with Whom he is attempting to relate. It becomes clear though when Hevel brings his gift.

Hevel took Cain’s great idea to the next level and beyond, “Hevel he also brought himself of the firstlings of his flock and of the choicest.” There are two important descriptions here that are not found Cain’s offering. Hevel’s was the prime and the choicest. The absence of any adjectives by Cain’s Minchah implies that his were not. He brought the bruised fruit. Obviously his relationship to HASHEM was not of primary importance to him. HASHEM is the ultimate afterthought. There’s another area entirely where Hevel surpassed Cain. The verse reads, “V’Hevel hevi gam hu” – “and Hevel also he brought...” There is an extra pronoun here that is calling out for an explanation. The Kotzker Rebbe explained that Hevel brought himself. This is born out in the verse, “HASHEM turned to Hevel and to his offering.

Both his offering and his heart were found to be worthy. We learn here that there are two parts a gift. One is the quality of the gift and then there is the heart of the giver. When a husband gives his wife a gift, the note is the Neshama of the gift. Just a diamond without a tender word is cold. A flowery note with a mere picture of a single rose is insultingly cheap. Together, though, the quality of the gift and a thoughtfully worded note show just how beloved is the beloved.



### **In My Opinion A Long Journey**

#### **Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog**

I traveled to America last week in order to spend the holiday of Pesach with my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Because of the troubles associated with the Coronavirus, it was very difficult to obtain a plane reservation. However, a number of resourceful people in Israel arranged a charter flight through El Al on behalf of yeshiva students and young women in Israeli seminaries. Since they could no longer stay in their dormitories they were forced to go home. So, I found myself, through the great influence of 'protectia,' in a business class seat on that flight.

There were a few hundred young women from the seminaries on the flight as well as some young couples and about a dozen little babies. As you can imagine, the flight was not a silent one.

It took 12 hours, and I really feel that the amount of patience shown by the stewards and stewardesses on El Al was exemplary – with people congregating in the aisles, and since babies are babies. One of the babies, about two and a half years old, a very precocious girl, marched up and down the aisle and refused to sit for most of the trip. However, she was very attracted to me and kept on climbing up on my lap whether she was invited to do so or not.

Now, the line between children who are annoying and children who are cute is a very thin one. So after a period of time, when things were about to become more annoying, I discovered, when the mother came over to once again retrieve her from my lap, that the child was related to me.

The child is a great grand-niece of mine through the Levine side of the family. Well, once she became a relative, annoying became cute and we had a very pleasant flight, even though she came back numerous times in order to sit on my lap. The flight generally was full of such incidents. Whenever you fly on a plane, you never know who you're going to meet or how that meeting will have an effect upon you.

Because I had my great grand-niece accompanying me, I spent most of the flight reminiscing about my lifetime and my relatives. Since the flight was long, there was plenty of time to do so. I think that it is one of the hallmarks of advanced years that one is always reviewing incidents, people and events, mistakes and triumphs, hopes and fulfillment of plans that occurred during one's lifetime.

Whether or not this is healthy for one's psyche is debatable, but I have spent a great deal of time over the past years looking backwards and reminiscing. Nevertheless, I have many projects that I want to complete and many things that I want to see and events that I want to experience. So, though I plan for the future, the past is omnipresent and always looming in my thoughts.

When I landed in the United States, because of the Coronavirus, I had to undergo a health inspection. They took my temperature, looked me over, asked a few innocuous but, I assume, important questions, and cleared me for entry into the United States. All of this took about two hours. The line was enormous as literally thousands of people had come in during those hours at JFK airport in New York and they were being processed one by one.

Since I was on the plane with the seminary women, you can only imagine the amount of luggage that was coming around the carousel. It took at least an additional half hour for my lonely bag to appear but, thank God, it did appear. Eventually I was able to leave the airport and was brought safely to my daughter's home here in Woodmere, New York. Here I am in splendid isolation because everything in also shut down. There's no synagogue, no restaurants, just the way it used to be when the native Americans controlled this area of the world.

I am confident that all of this will pass in good time and in good stead just as it will pass in Israel, but the experience really is a chastening one for all of us. It teaches us how puny and insignificant we are and how we are given over to psychological pressures, fears, panic, and how wildly our imaginations can work.

I want to commend the government for doing whatever it can to prevent the spread of this pandemic and to manage it so that it has emerged more slowly, making dire cases more treatable. And up until this time, thank God, we have done very well in recovering from it, at least physically. The other effects will last undoubtedly for years, but that also will pass. So, let us look forward to a brighter future and to a wonderful Pesach holiday, and I will continue to inform you about conditions here as I check to find out about conditions back in Israel.

Shabbat Shalom

Berel Wein

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### **Weekly Parsha Vayikra**

#### **Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog**

In this week's Torah reading, the Torah describes for us the rituals of offering sacrifices in the temple. Our generation and our society are far removed from the concept of animal sacrifices and, because of this, the Torah reading somehow does not really speak directly to us.

Already in the 13th century, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon offered the idea that we have to view sacrifices for the value that they entail and not so much for the rituals themselves. Even though one of the six sections of the Mishnah and the Talmud concerns itself almost exclusively with the laws and rituals of animal sacrifices, this has become more of a theoretical and scholarly exercise, without it having any practical effect upon our lives.

When the temple will be rebuilt, then all these things will become actualized once more, but for now they are theoretical. Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, said that the idea of sacrifice was that the person offering the sacrifice should see his own self as being the sacrifice.

This means that one must sacrifice one's desires, habits, lifestyle and all sorts of other pleasures to the service of God and of Israel. This type of sacrifice certainly remains alive and necessary today as well, and it entails the ability to give away what we think is ours for a cause that we believe to be greater and nobler than our own personal needs and wants.

Because of this, the concept of sacrifices has cogency and meaning for each one of us. If we look at our lives, we see that every day we make choices in which ultimately lie the sacrifice of oneself, one's interests, and one's own desires, for a higher cause.

There are many different types of sacrifices listed in this week's Torah reading. There is a sacrifice that is a complete donation to God where the man or woman bringing the sacrifice really has no immediate or material benefit. This altruism was reserved usually for public sacrifices that were offered twice a day in the temple.

There are sacrifices, however, that are very personal. There are sacrifices that are meant to atone for sins and only we know which sins we have committed. There are sacrifices for wrongdoing when we are not even certain if the wrongdoing occurred. Because of this, we are constantly involved in reassessing our lives and rethinking events and policies that we have subscribed to.

People change during their lifetime and hopefully they mature and see things in a different light. The idea of sacrifice for sins passed makes for a stronger present and a brighter future. There are also sacrifices of thanksgiving. That is a sacrifice of one's own ego. In this instance we have to acknowledge that we found ourselves in terrible difficulty, in great danger and we survived and emerged from the crisis....with help. We must admit that we did not do it on our own.

We are thankful to others and we are thankful to our creator for having allowed us to be able to survive the issue, that is a sacrifice of ego. No one wants to admit that we need help from others. We all desire to be self-sufficient in the broadest sense of the word. But life teaches us that none of us are completely self-sufficient, that all of us are dependent upon others.

Then there are sacrifices that mark our holidays that are, so to speak, ritual sacrifices imposed upon us by history. The sacrifice of the paschal

lamb is the outstanding example of this. We cannot proceed with the future unless we are aware of the past and are aware of the sacrifices of the past that enable us to even contemplate a future, a better future.

All these ideas are encompassed in the ritual laws of the sacrifices introduced in this week's Torah reading. The Torah reading begins by God calling out to Moshe. The same word in Hebrew that represents calling out also represents glory and honor. Because of that, when we hear God calling out to us, governing our behavior and thoughts, then we are aware of the glory and honor of being part of the people of Israel. Everyone should stay healthy and cheerful. I look forward to seeing you soon.

Shabbat Shalom,  
Rabbi Berel Wein

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## **The Prophetic View of Sacrifice (Vayikra 5780)**

### **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**

Sacrifices, the subject of this week's parsha, were central to the religious life of biblical Israel. We see this not only by the sheer space devoted to them in the Torah, but also by the fact that they occupy its central book, Vayikra.

We have not had the sacrificial service since the destruction of the second Temple almost 2000 years ago. What is deeply relevant today, however, is the critique of sacrifices we find among the Prophets of the first Temple. That critique was sharp and deep and formed many of their most powerful addresses. One of the earliest was delivered by the Prophet Samuel: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obedience to the Lord's command? Surely, obedience is better than sacrifice, compliance than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22).

Amos said in the name of God: "If you offer Me burnt offerings—or your meal offerings—I will not accept them; I will pay no heed to your gifts of fatlings ... But let justice well up like water, righteousness like a never-ending stream" (Amos 5:21-24). Likewise Hosea: "For I desire goodness, not sacrifice; obedience to God, rather than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6).

We find a similar critique in several Psalms. "Were I hungry, I would not tell you, for Mine is the world and all it holds. Do I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" (Ps. 50:8-15). "Lord, open my lips, and let my mouth declare Your praise. You do not want me to bring sacrifices; You do not desire burnt offerings. True sacrifice to God is a contrite spirit; God, You will not despise a contrite and crushed heart" (Ps. 51:17-19).

Jeremiah seems to suggest that the sacrificial order was not God's initial intention: "For when I freed your fathers from the land of Egypt, I did not speak with them or command them concerning burnt offerings or sacrifice. But this is what I commanded them: Do My bidding, that I may be your God and you may be My people; walk only in the way that I enjoin upon you, that it may go well with you" (Jer. 7:22-23).

Strongest of all is the passage at the beginning of the book of Isaiah that we read on Shabbat Chazon (before Tisha b'Av): "'What need have I of all your sacrifices?' says the Lord. 'I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of My courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to Me'" (Is. 1:11-13).

This entire line of thought, sounded by many voices and sustained across centuries, is extraordinary. The people were being criticised not for disobeying God's law but for obeying it. Sacrifices were commanded. Their offering was a sacred act performed in a holy place. What then aroused the Prophets' anger and rebuke?

It was not that they were opposed to sacrifice as such. Jeremiah foresaw the day when "People shall come from the towns of Judah and from the environs of Jerusalem ... bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, meal offerings and frankincense, and bringing offerings of thanksgiving to the House of the Lord" (Jer. 17:26).

Likewise Isaiah: "I will bring them to My sacred mount and let them rejoice in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices shall be welcome on My altar, for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (Is. 56:7).

They were not criticising the institution of sacrifices. They were criticising something as real now as it was in their time. What distressed them to the core of their being was the idea that you could serve God and at the same time act disdainfully, cruelly, unjustly, insensitively or callously toward other people. "So long as I am in God's good graces, that is all that matters." That is the thought that made the Prophets incandescent with indignation. If you think that, they seem to say, then you haven't understood either God or Torah.

The first thing the Torah tells us about humanity is that we are each in the image and likeness of God Himself. Therefore if you wrong a human being, you are abusing the only creation in the universe on which God has set His image. A sin against any person is a sin against God.

In the first mission statement of the Jewish people, God said about Avraham, "For I have chosen him that he may instruct his children and his posterity to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is just and right" (Gen. 18:19). The way of the Lord is to act justly and righteously toward your fellow human beings. In context, this meant that God was inviting Avraham to pray on behalf of the people of Sodom, even though he knew that they were wicked and sinners.

It is specifically in the book of sacrifices, Vayikra, that we find the twin commands to love your neighbour as yourself, and love the stranger (Lev. 19:18, 33-34). The sacrifices that express our love and awe of God should lead to love of the neighbour and the stranger. There should be a seamless transition from commands between us and God to commands between us and our fellow humans.

Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah and Jeremiah all witnessed societies in which people were punctilious in bringing their offerings to the Temple, but in which there was bribery, corruption, perversion of justice, abuse of power and the exploitation of the powerless by the powerful. The Prophets saw in this a profound and dangerous contradiction.

The very act of bringing a sacrifice was fraught with ambiguity. Jews were not the only people in ancient times to have temples, priests and sacrifices. Almost everyone did. It was precisely here that the religion of ancient Israel came closest, outwardly, to the practices of their pagan neighbours. But the sacrificial systems of other cultures were based on totally different beliefs. In many religions sacrifices were seen as a way of placating or appeasing the gods. The Aztecs believed that sacrificial offerings fed the gods who sustained the universe. Walter Burkert speculated that the ancient Greeks experienced guilt when they killed animals for food, so they offered sacrifices as a way of appeasing their consciences.

All these ideas are alien to Judaism. God cannot be bribed or appeased. Nor can we bring Him anything that is not His. God sustains the universe: the universe does not sustain Him. And wrongs righted by sacrifice do not excuse other wrongs. So intention and mindset were essential in the sacrificial system. The thought that "If I bring a sacrifice to God, He will overlook my other faults" – in effect, the idea that I can bribe the Judge of all the earth – turns a sacred act into a pagan one, and produces precisely the opposite result than the one intended by the Torah. It turns religious worship from a way to the right and the good, into a way of easing the conscience of those who practice the wrong and the bad.

To serve God is to serve humanity. That was the point made memorably by Micah: "He has told you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: To do justice, to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:6-8). Jeremiah said of King Josiah: "He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know Me? says the Lord" (Jer. 22:16). Knowing God, said Jeremiah, means caring for those in need.

Maimonides said essentially the same at the end of The Guide for the Perplexed (III, 54). He quotes Jeremiah: "Only in this should one glory: that they have the understanding to know Me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I

delight,' says the Lord" (Jer. 9:23). To know God is to know what it is to act with kindness, justice and righteousness.

The danger of the sacrificial system, said the Prophets, is that it can lead people to think that there are two domains, the Temple and the world, serving God and caring for one's fellow humans, and they are disconnected. Judaism rejects the concept of two disconnected domains. Halachically they are distinct, but psychologically, ethically and spiritually they are part of a single indivisible system.

I believe that to love God is to love our fellow humans. To honour God is to honour our fellow humans. We may not ask God to listen to us if we are unwilling to listen to others. We may not ask God to forgive us if we are unwilling to forgive others. To know God is to seek to imitate Him, which means, said Jeremiah and Maimonides, to exercise kindness, justice and righteousness on earth.

Shabbat Shalom

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### **Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Vayikra (Leviticus 1:1-5:26)**

#### **By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin**

Efrat, Israel – "He [God] called to Moses, and the Lord spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting saying..." (Leviticus 1:1)

So opens the third book of the Pentateuch, the book known as *Torat Kohanim*, the book of the priest-ministers of the Divine Sanctuary, the guardians of the rituals connecting Israel to God. Indeed, this book in Hebrew is, like the others, called by its opening word, *Vayikra*.

And herein lies a problem. Each of the other four books is called by its opening words, but in those instances the opening words have great significance.

*Bereishit* [Genesis] is the beginning, the moment in which God called the world-creation into being; *Shemot* [Exodus], the names of the family members who came down to Egypt, and the exile-slavery experience which transformed them from a family into a nation with a national mission of universal freedom; *Bamidbar* [Numbers], the desert sojourn of a newly freed people who had to learn the responsibilities of managing a nation-state before entering their promised homeland; and *Devarim* [Deuteronomy], the farewell words and legacy of Moses, the agent of Hashem.

But what is the significance of *Vayikra* – God "calling out" to Moses, as the name for a Biblical book? Did not God call out to Moses from the time that he came onto the scene of Jewish history? And why is it specifically this time that Moses chose to express his modesty, the word is spelled with a small alef, as if to record that God merely "chanced upon him" (*Vayiker*), but had not specifically called out to him? I believe that the answer lies in the very strange concluding words of the last portion of the Book of Exodus, towards the end of *Pekudei*: "The cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting, for the cloud rested upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle..." (Exodus 40:34-35)

We saw in last week's commentary the majestic words of the Ramban (Nahmanides), explaining how the Book of Exodus concludes the Jewish exile with the glory of the Lord resting upon – and filling – the Tabernacle. Was it not Moses who asked God to reveal His glory to him? Was Moses not the supreme individual in human history who came closer to the Divine than anyone else, who "spoke to God face to face," whose active intellect actually kissed the active intellect of the *Shechina*? Then why is Moses forbidden from entering the Tent of Meeting? Moses should have entered straightaway, precisely because the glory of God was then filling the Tabernacle!

Apparently, the Bible is teaching a crucial lesson about Divine Service: God wants human beings to strive to come close to God, but not too close. God demands even from Moses a measured distance between Himself (as it were) and human beings. We must serve Him, but not beyond that which He commands us to do. In Divine Service, we dare not go beyond the laws He ordains that we perform.

There is no "beyond the requirements of the law" in the realm of the laws between humans and God.

God understands the thin line between *kadosh* and *kadesh*: Divine service and diabolical suicide bombers, fealty to the King of all Kings and fanatic sacrifice to Moloch. Hence not only does our Bible record the commands God gave to Moses regarding the construction of every aspect of the Divine Sanctuary (*Truma* and *Tetzaveh*) but it painstakingly informs us again and again in *Vayakhel* and *Pekudei* that those orders were carried out exactly as they had been commanded, no less and no more: "Moses did according to everything that the Lord had commanded, so did he do" (Ex. 40:16).

This is why, further on in the Book of Leviticus God metes out a stringent death penalty upon Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, when they bring before the Lord a "strange fire which they had not been commanded to bring" (Lev. 10:1) in the midst of national fervor of exultant song. Moses even explains this tragic occurrence by saying, "of this did the Lord speak, saying 'I will be sanctified by those who come [too] close to Me.'" Too close to God can be more dangerous than too distant from Him, if over-zealous Fanaticism is what measured Divine service turns into!

This is why both the Rambam (Maimonides) and the Ramban interpret the commandment *par excellence* in interpersonal human relationships, "You shall do what is right and good" (Deut. 6:18), to necessitate going beyond the legal requirements, to make certain that you not act like a "scoundrel within the confines of the law," whereas in the area of Divine-human relationships, you dare not take the law into your own hands; our legal authorities are concerned lest your motivation be *yuhara*, excessive pride before God, religious "one-upmanship, which too early may overtake the sober humility of the all-too eager zealot."

Thus the sacred Book of *Vayikra*, the book which features our religious devotion to the Lord, opens with Moses's reluctance to enter the Tabernacle of the Lord unless he is actually summoned to do so by God. His humility is even more in evidence when he records only in miniature the final letter alef in the word *Vayikra*, as if to say that perhaps the call he had received by God was more by accident than by design.

Indeed, the Midrash (*Tanhuma* 37) teaches that the small amount of unused ink which should have been utilized on the regular-sized alef of the Torah (as it were), was placed by God on Moses's forehead; that ink of humility is what provided Moses's face with the translucent glow with which he descended from Mount Sinai (Ex. 34:33-35).

Fanatic zealots are completely devoid of humility; they operate with the fire without rather than the radiant light from within!, the authorities light of glory which suffused Moses entire being, the truest rays of splendor which express the sanctity beyond deeds and beyond words.

Shabbat Shalom!

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### **Vayikra: The Inner Light of Destruction**

#### **Rav Kook Torah**

Flooding, wars, earthquakes - every day we are bombarded with news of catastrophe and disaster. Is this how God envisioned His world? How can we relate to the many destructive forces in the world?

The offering of a *korban* in the Temple culminated in the ritual of *zerikat ha-dam*, as the kohen sprinkled the animal's blood - its life-force - around the Altar.

"He will slaughter [the offering] near the Altar's base, on the north side before God. The kohanim, descendants of Aaron, will then dash its blood all around the Altar." (Lev. 1:11)

What is the significance of the offering being slaughtered on the northern side of the Temple compound? Why does the verse note that the kohanim are "descendants of Aaron" - is that not well-known? And why does it say the blood was dashed all around the Altar, when in fact it was just sprinkled twice, on the two diagonally opposite corners of the Altar?

Concealed Before God

Slaughter is an act of severe judgment. When performed on an offering, it serves to connect all the terrible decrees, disasters, and destruction that take place in the world to the hidden Divine rule of the universe.

Everything emanates from the secret ways of the merciful God. All is ultimately good, leading to blessing and kindness.

From our limited perspective, slaughtering is held in low regard. It is thus performed near the base of the Altar. But it conceals a hidden light of kindness. The offering was slaughtered tzafoonah lifnei Hashem. Literally, this means "on the northern side, before God." But the word tzafoon also means 'hidden,' so the verse may be translated as "concealed - before God alone."

The task of revealing the inner light in the forces of destruction was given to the kohanim, the descendants of Aaron. Why the emphasis on Aaron's lineage? Aaron was renowned for his compassion and kindness. "Be a disciple of Aaron: Love peace and pursue peace; love people, and draw them to Torah" (Avot 1:12). Aaron's descendants inherited the special qualities necessary to uncover this hidden light.

The Temple service teaches us that destruction of life has a place even in the holiest of services. It is precisely due to their connection to the highest level - the most all-encompassing perspective of reality - that phenomena which appear inexplicable and destructive from our limited outlook may be seen as contributing to the world. Our physical perception can discern only a sliver of reality; it is severely limited in terms of time, space, and true understanding of events. We lack knowledge of the overall context, and are unable to see the full picture.

The method the kohanim used to dash the blood is a fitting metaphor for our superficial perception. The physical eye only sees a partial reality, broken and disconnected. It sees the kohen dashing blood on two opposite corners. But on a higher plane, the vision is continuous and complete. The sprinkling encompasses the entire Altar.

Thus the compassionate children of Aaron, as they performed the service of zerikat ha-dam around the Altar, provided a glimpse of the hidden source of good and kindness in the universe.

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**Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Vayikra**

**For the week ending 28 March 2020 / 3 Nisan 5780**

**Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - [www.seasonsofthemoon.com](http://www.seasonsofthemoon.com)**

**Parsha Insights**

**A Special Calling**

**"And He called..." (1:1)**

It's been a while since I was in New York City. But whenever I go there, I always think of the verse in Tehillim, Psalms, that says, "And the land, He has given to the sons of man." The avenues that stretch to the limit of vision, the feeling of the human dynamo that is New York. I was walking along Central Park East, just by 62nd Street, and I saw some road works and realized how they can build skyscrapers of more than a hundred stories. In London and in Jerusalem, dig into the ground and you will find soil with some rocks. In Manhattan, try and dig into the ground and your spade will bounce back with a hefty ring as it hits solid black granite. And it was that solid granite that has been hewn to form the two memorials to the nearly three thousand people who were murdered by the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11th 2001.

As you approach the memorial you see all the names of all those who fell victim. Each name is engraved on a metal wall surrounding two vast chasms in the ground where the buildings stood; into those chasms pours an enormous and continual four-sided waterfall, and at that bottom of those chasms are smaller abysses into which the water pours, and of those you cannot see the bottom. It seems like a flood of tears constantly pouring into the depths of the world. What makes the monument so impressive is its sheer scale. I tried to take a video of it, but when I played it back it conveyed nothing of the feeling that I experienced. There are some things you just can't film, you can't video. Scale is not just size. It is the yardstick of my relationship to the creation. When you film something, you lose that point of reference, even if you include a human being to indicate scale.

In our world, the ultimate measurement is the measure of a man. So many of the measurements of the Torah and our Sages relate to the human being — the tefach — a hand's-breadth; the amah — the distance

from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger, the zeret — the length of the small finger. There is a way that Hashem speaks to us that is beyond language; there is a language of the emotions, the 'still small voice' that speaks to us as a language of connection, of chiba. As Rashi mentions when commenting on the first word in this week's Parsha, Vayikra, "And He called..." — "an expression of affection." Rashi says that the angels call to each other using this phrase. But maybe the only creation to whom Hashem 'calls' — the only creation that is attuned to that special broadcast of the emotions — is Man.

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**Parshas Vayikra: Forgiving Fallibility**

**Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb**

"I was wrong. I am sorry. Please forgive me."

These are rare words indeed, but I heard them pronounced clearly by a woman I once worked for, and whom I still admire.

She was the superintendent of a small school district just outside of Washington, DC. Several of the school districts in that geographical area were under a federal court order to guarantee desegregation of the races in the public schools. Believe it or not, the court found that even as late as the early 1970s, proper integration of the races was still not achieved in many of these schools.

The superintendent, whom I will call Dr. Cassidy, had selected a group of school system employees to serve as part of a specially trained team to deal with the tensions in the community that were caused by the implementation of this court order.

I was then working as a school psychologist in this school district, and was one of those chosen to serve on this team. We had spent several weeks training for this sensitive human relations project. She had initially assured us that federal funding for our salaries was guaranteed, and that we could be confident that our jobs were secure once certain formalities were finalized.

One Monday morning we were summoned to an urgent meeting. She informed us that the funds were not available, and that we would be denied not only our future salaries, but even remuneration for the time we had already spent. It was then that she uttered the words, "I was wrong. Please forgive me."

I have subsequently witnessed many situations in which a leader made a terrible mistake impacting upon the lives of others. But, almost invariably, those leaders shirked responsibility, blamed others, or concocted ludicrous excuses for their failures. Very few had Dr. Cassidy's courage.

This week's Torah portion, Vayikra (Leviticus 1:1-5:26), describes an individual who demonstrated just such courage, and who indeed was expected to do so.

Chapter 4 of our Torah portion lists a number of individuals who occupied special roles in the ancient Jewish community. They included the High Priest; the judges of the central court or Sanhedrin; and the Nasi, or chieftain. Of the latter we read:

"In case it is a chieftain who incurs guilt by doing unwittingly any of the things which by the commandment of the Lord his God ought not to be done, and he realizes his guilt... He shall bring as his sin offering a male goat without blemish... Thus the priest shall make expiation on his behalf for his sin, and he shall be forgiven." (Leviticus 4:22-26)

The Hebrew for the first phrase in the above quotation, "in case", is "asher". Rashi notes the similarity between the word "asher" and the word "ashrei", or "fortunate". Based on that similarity he comments: "Fortunate is the generation whose leader is concerned about achieving forgiveness for his unintentional transgressions. How much more so will he demonstrate remorse for his intentional misdeeds."

Fortunate indeed is the community which is blessed with leadership which can acknowledge error unambiguously. Even more fortunate is the community whose leaders ask for forgiveness.

Our commentators note that it is to be expected that leaders will commit moral errors. Rabbi Obadiah Sforno, the medieval Italian physician and

Torah scholar, comments that it is unavoidable that men in positions of power will sin. He quotes the phrase in Deuteronomy 32:15 which reads, "Jeshurun grew fat and kicked", indicating that when one becomes "fat" with power he will "kick" sinfully. How similar is this insight to Lord Acton's famous quote: "Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely."

If the Torah assumes that misdeeds by leaders are unavoidable, it also expects that those leaders will humbly acknowledge their misdeeds and beg forgiveness for them. That is the lesson of the passage in our Torah portion.

However, the process cannot end with the leader's apologies. His followers must accept his sincere regret, and, much more difficult, must bring themselves to forgive him. In the passage in our Parsha it would seem that it is the Almighty who forgives a leader, and not necessarily the people.

My personal experience has taught me that just as it is difficult for people, especially those in power, to confess their shortcomings and to appeal for forgiveness, so is it all the more difficult for people to grant forgiveness to those who have offended them.

Yet, our sages point out that the Almighty wants us to be as forgiving as He is. Thus, there is a verse in the book of the prophet Micah which reads, "Who is a God like You, forgiving iniquity and remitting transgression...?" Upon this verse the Talmud comments: "Whose iniquities does God forgive? Those of he who remits the transgressions of others." (Talmud Bavli, Rosh Hashana 17a).

So, let's return to the story with which I began this column. Dr. Cassidy proved herself to be capable of confessing that she was mistaken, and of asking us to forgive her. But I also remember our reaction, the reaction of the small group of hard workers who learned that they were not only out of a job, but would not even be getting paycheck that they earned.

Our reaction was one of great anger. I imagine that the feelings in the room were close to those of a lynch mob. We vented some of those feelings, but then moved on to feelings of frustration and impotence. We asked Dr. Cassidy to leave the room so that we could plan our next step rationally, which she did.

I won't report on the details of the long discussion which ensued. Suffice it to say that we moved from anger and frustration to acknowledging Dr. Cassidy's good intentions, to empathizing with her dilemma, and finally, as a group, deciding to express to her our understanding and forgiveness. She reentered the room, and was visibly touched by our compassionate response.

I must conclude by telling you dear reader, that although happy endings are generally confined to fairy tales, this particular story did have a happy ending.

Perhaps emboldened by the support she felt from our group, Dr. Cassidy renewed her efforts to obtain the grant from the federal agency, enlisted the assistance of several regional congressman, and obtained the funds available for this training program.

The lessons of ordinary life often parallel the lessons of the Torah. For a society to advance, its leaders must be self-aware and courageous enough to recognize and confess their failures, and to seek forgiveness from those whom they have affronted. Equally important, those who have been affronted must find it in their hearts to sincerely forgive.

Then, and only then, can problems be solved, and greater goals achieved.

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**Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Vayikra**  
*Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya*

Learning to be Happy with our Portion from an "Out of Order" Rashi Vayikra begins with the words: "He called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying: Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: When a person (Adam) from among you will bring an offering to Hashem; from the animals – from the cattle and from the flocks you shall bring your offering." [Vayikra 1:1-2].

Rashi explains that this ambiguous opening "When a person from among you will bring a sacrifice..." implies that the Torah is speaking of a voluntary sacrificial offering (korban nedavah). Rashi questions why the Torah uses the generic word Adam when speaking about the subject who brings the offering. Rashi answers that this expression calls to mind Adam, the first man, and thereby teaches: Just as Adam did not bring offerings from stolen property (because he owned all animals in the world), so too, you shall not bring offerings from property that does not belong to you.

It is interesting that although the first word in the pasuk is "Adam" (from which Rashi derives the lesson that one cannot bring a stolen animal as a sacrifice) and the next two words are ki yakriv — when he will offer – (from which Rashi learns that we are speaking about a voluntary offering), Rashi reverses the sequence when presenting these two lessons. Rashi first presents the lesson learned from the second and third words of the pasuk (ki yakriv) and only subsequently presents the lesson learned from the first word in the pasuk (Adam). Why did Rashi, the extremely precise master of Biblical interpretation, do that?

The super-commentaries of Rashi all ask this question. The Kli Yakar gives somewhat of an ingenious interpretation: Elsewhere [Bamidbar 19:14] Chazal teach that the word "Adam" refers to the Jewish people, not the nations of the world. Hence, had I only seen the words "Adam ki yakriv" (when a person will bring...) my initial inclination would be to think that the pasuk is only referring to Jews. However, then Rashi says that we are speaking about voluntary offerings and we know that Gentiles can bring voluntary offerings. Given then that we are speaking about voluntary offerings, the word Adam cannot be coming to teach us that the pasuk is referring exclusively to Jews. It must be teaching us something else. So now that Rashi taught us that we are speaking about voluntary offerings by expounding the words "ki yakriv," it now becomes necessary for Rashi to expound the word Adam as teaching us that the offerings cannot be from stolen property.

The Tolner Rebbe has a different approach to explain these apparently out-of-sequence comments by Rashi. To appreciate his insight, however, we need to introduce one additional difficulty: Why was it necessary to expound the word "Adam" to teach that a person may not bring a stolen animal as a sacrifice? The truth of the matter is there are several other Talmudic sources for this halacha. Why does Rashi seemingly ignore these Talmudic sources prohibiting the offering of stolen property, rather quoting a less authoritative Medrashic source?

The Tolner Rebbe explains that there are two categories of people. There is the type of person that no matter what he has and no matter how much he has, he never has enough. Shomo Hamelech said about such a person: "One who loves money will never be satisfied with money..." [Koheles 5:9]. A person can have everything under the sun, but if he has such a nature that he is never satisfied no matter what he has, he will never be happy. Someone out there has a better house; someone has a better car; someone has a better boat; someone has a private airplane. There is always more to be had. If someone does not learn how to be satisfied with what he has, he will always be lacking.

On the other hand, there is another type of extremely poor person. He has very little. However, his nature is (to use Mishnaic language) to be a "Sameach b'Chelko" (happy with his lot in life). He does not sense the lack. He does not feel the want. This is the type of individual that the Mishna calls a truly rich person [Avos 4:1]. A person can have a multi-million-dollar portfolio with every luxury item a person could imagine and feel that he is lacking; another can be on the verge on bankruptcy and feel that he has everything he could possibly need. Those are the two types of people in the world.

Which is the type of person who brings a Voluntary Offering? It is the second type of person who brings a Korban Nedava. It does not hurt him. It does not bother him to part with his money. This type of person willingly wants to make a donation, show his appreciation to the Almighty and bring a voluntary offering.

These two personalities, with which we are all familiar, are personified by the Biblical personalities of Yaakov and Eisav. Yaakov Avinu tells his brother "I have everything." [Bereshis 33:11]. Eisav concedes only

“I have a lot” [Bereshis 33:9]. If a person can only admit “I have a lot,” it indicates that he is always lacking something. If a person’s attitude is “I have everything” then he is never lacking.

The type of person who brings a Korban Nedava has the attitude: I have enough. I can share. I can pay back. I can give this animal of mine to the Ribono shel Olam.

Rashi first explains that we are speaking of a voluntary offering. Then Rashi says, “Do you know what type of person brings a voluntary offering? Someone who is like Adam. Adam felt no need to steal. He felt no need to take from somebody else because everything was his. We can emulate that type of person by being satisfied with what we have and thereby demonstrating the willingness to give.

Rashi here is not speaking about halacha. He is not trying to teach us the specific Biblical exegesis that teaches that someone may not bring an offering from stolen property. The Talmud teaches that in a number of places when addressing the ‘cheftza of the mitzvah’ (i.e. – the halachic status of the monetary ownership of the item with which one fulfills the commandment). Here Rashi is not interested in telling us about the ‘cheftza’. Rather he is interested in telling us about the ‘gavra’ (the moral status of the individual who brings the item with which the mitzvah is performed). What type of mensch brings a voluntary offering? It is the type of person who feels “I have enough already.”

The paradigm – the model – for such action was the first man, Adam haRishon. He had everything and felt no urge or need to steal. One who can emulate that attitude can bring a korban nedava.

This is why Rashi wrote the second comment first and the first comment second. Rashi must first explain that the pasuk is speaking of the situation of a Voluntary Offering. He then goes on to explain the proper attitude a person has while bringing a voluntary offering. What is the philosophy of a Korban Nedava? What type of person brings such a sacrifice? Rashi answers by telling us that it is a person like Adam who in fact accurately felt “I have everything.”

#### The Lowly Salt Teaches an Elevated Lesson

The other comment I would like to share is on the pasuk “You shall salt your every meal-offering with salt; you may not discontinue the salt of your G-d’s covenant from upon your meal-offering – on all your offerings shall you offer salt.” [Vayikra 2:13] Rashi explains the requirement that all the sacrifices must have salt added to them: “For a covenant has been made with salt since the Six Days of Creation, for the lower (earthly) waters were promised to be offered on the Mizbayach in the form of salt ...”

This was a consolation prize, so to speak. When the Ribono shel Olam split the waters of creation, some waters stayed down on earth in the oceans, rivers, and lakes, while other waters ascended to Heaven. The “lower waters” felt jealous. Hashem, so to speak, made a “deal” with the “lower waters” so they would not feel so cheated by their lack of spiritual mission in creation. The salt – which was a key component of the lower waters – would also be close to the Almighty – because of the law that all sacrifices must be accompanied by salt.

One may ask, however, it seems that it is the water – not the salt – that needs the consolation prize and the compensation for the role of the “upper waters”. Why the emphasis here on the salt?

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky makes a very interesting comment: Rashi — says in Tractates Kesuvos and Shabbos – that salt was made in olden times as follows: They would dig an inlet. The ocean water would come in. It would evaporate and salt was left behind. Salt is the lowest of the low. The water that evaporates eventually goes back up to Heaven. The salt is left behind here on earth!

The Ribono shel Olam is trying to tell the water that “I appreciate the lowest of the low.” Not only will the water participate in the Korbonos (as is the case on Succos with the Water Libations) but even the salt of the water, the last earthly residual of the water after the water itself evaporates – that too is part of the sacrificial service.

The message, Rav Yaakov says, is an important lesson in the Jewish concept of spirituality. Spirituality is not always found in the “Higher Worlds”. A person can achieve Ruchniyus (spirituality) even with the

lowest of the low. The lowly salt, which remains from water that evaporates, can also play a role in spirituality. The consolation to the water was not just that the lower waters have a spiritual role to play in this world. More than that! Even the water’s salt component – the last material residue after water “evaporates to the heavens” – has a spiritual role to play in this world. And so too, any person can achieve spiritual heights in this material world, no matter in what situation he finds himself.

*Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com*

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#### *chiefrabbi.org*

##### **Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis**

##### **Dvar Torah: Vayikra**

Why do we add salt to our bread at the commencement of our meals?

In Parshat Vayikra the Torah tells us ‘al kol korbancha takriv melach’ – ‘you must offer salt together with every one of your sacrifices’. Rabenu Bachya brings Tosfot in mesechet Pesachim, Daf 94a, who explains that there are three types of area in this world. We have inhabited places, deserts, and the seas and rivers.

The Torah was given to us in a desert. Our Temple was built in an inhabited area. And Hashem gave recognition to the waters of the world by instructing us to use salt in our sacrifices because salt is ever present in the waters of the sea.

There is a further extraordinary dimension of salt. Salt is NaCl – sodium chloride. No one would think about placing sodium or chlorine on our tables. But remarkably the fusion of the two produces salt, a staple element of our diet and one of the great preservatives of food.

The salt that we have on our tables for our meals serves as an ongoing reminder that there are some things that we will never be able to work out. As clever and as advanced as we are within our sophisticated age, nonetheless, there are some things that will always be beyond our understanding. The mystery of salt sends us a reminder of Hashem’s mastery over our world and our ongoing indebtedness to him for the world that he has created – the world that he maintains and food that is on our plates – each and every day.

Shabbat shalom

*Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.*

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#### *blogs.timesofisrael.com*

##### **Vayikra: Sanctity Versus Power**

##### **Ben-Tzion Spitz**

*We thought, because we had power, we had wisdom. - Stephen Vincent Benet*

The beginning of the Book of Leviticus details a variety of sacrifices that are brought by different people for different sins. Two individuals are singled out in the list of sinners and they are prescribed different sacrifices. One personality is the Kohen Gadol (the High Priest); the other is the King.

The Meshech Chochma on Leviticus 4:21 analyses the differences between these two personalities. The Kohen Gadol is the most sacred role in Israel. He and only he is the one with the task, the burden and the great honor of entering the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur. He represents the holiest person, in the holiest place at the holiest time in a unique annual communion with God, that when successful, conveys forgiveness to the entire people of Israel.

In Biblical times, the Kohen Gadol also wore the Urim Ve’tumim, the special breastplate with the twelve precious stones that enabled a very specific but powerful communication between God and the leadership of Israel. The bottom line is that the Kohen Gadol represented the pinnacle of sanctity and closeness to God. Because of this closeness, any sin that the Kohen Gadol committed, even if it was inadvertent, would be considered by the public as purposeful.

The King, on the other hand, was considered all too human. Because of his excess power, it was presumed that he would err more than your average citizen. That is why he was given additional strictures above those of non-Kings, such as the prohibition of accumulating too much wealth, too many horses or too many wives, and his need to carry a Torah scroll on him at all times.

The people, knowing well the King's likelihood to blunder and to show poor judgment, would know that any sins of his are indeed mistakes and they would be more careful not to imitate such mistakes.

The Meshech Chochma adds that this is the reason why we don't appoint Kohens as Kings (a reminder of the ultimately catastrophic Hasmonean monarchy – the combination of Kohens and kingship ended in disaster). The Kohen who is meant to be more attuned to divine service will turn away from God because of the royal power he gets. His arrogance will remove his fear of God. And if this Kohen King sins, the people may follow his example, considering him a holy man.

On the other hand, the Meshech Chochma continues, the people likewise can affect their king. When the people sin, the king can very likely be influenced by them and follow in their ways. The converse is likewise true: if the people are good and follow God, the king will be strengthened and encouraged to do the same.

May we never confuse holiness with power.

*Dedication: To all those working on a COVID-19 vaccine and cure.*

*Shabbat Shalom*

*Ben-Tzion Spitz is a former Chief Rabbi of Uruguay. He is the author of three books of Biblical Fiction and over 600 articles and stories dealing with biblical themes.*

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### **Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz - Vayikra 5780**

#### **Let's Heed the Call!**

This Shabbat, we begin reading the third book of the Bible: the book of Vayikra, Leviticus.

It seems likely that in light of the situation around the world due to the spread of the coronavirus, we will not be able to pray in synagogues as we follow the directives of the authorities. We are obligated to take these directives seriously and follow them responsibly. Where told to do so, people should pray at home, thus preserving their own health and that of others. Many of those who come to the synagogue every Shabbat and listen to the weekly portion being read will not be able to do so this Shabbat. Therefore, it is advisable to read the parasha from a Bible while adding a special prayer for those who are sick, "Shabbat should afford you a respite from crying out in pain and you shall soon be healed."

The book of Leviticus deals mostly with halachot (Jewish laws) pertaining to the Temple: laws of sacrifices, purity and impurity, special laws for the kohanim (priests) and more. For this reason, Chazal refer to this book as *Torat Kohanim*, Torah of the Priests. But during the last few centuries, it has become customary to refer to the books of the Bible according to the first words of each book, so this book is called *Vayikra*. Midrash HaTanna'im (midrash written by rabbinic sages from the 1st and 2nd centuries) on Leviticus is also called *Torat Kohanim* or *Sifra*, and it clarifies verses, examines them, and learns from them. Let's see what the sages learned from the first verse in the book of Leviticus:

"And He called (*vayikra*) to Moses, and the Lord spoke (*vayedaber*) to him from the tent of meeting" – We are hereby taught that the voice was "cut off" and would not be heard outside the tent of meeting. Could it be because [the voice] was low? It is, therefore, written (Numbers 7:89): "And he heard the voice" – the distinctive voice described in Scripture (Psalms 29:47): "The voice of the Lord, in power; the voice of the Lord, in glory. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon... The voice of the Lord hews out flames of fire, etc." Why, then, (if the voice is so vast) is it written "from the tent of meeting"? We are hereby taught that the voice was "cut off" and did not travel beyond the (the confines of) the tent of meeting.

(*Sifra*, Diburrah D'Nedavah, 2)

This midrash is briefly referred to in Rashi's commentary on this verse: "The [Divine] voice emanated and reached Moses' ears, while all [the

rest] of Israel did not hear it." If so, this was a unique and amazing phenomenon. An incredibly and strong voice was heard by one person only: Moses. What was the meaning of this?

The founder of the Hasidic movement, Rabbi Yisrael "Ba'al Shem Tov" (Ukraine 1700-1760) wrote about this with piercing wisdom. He said that the great voice, the voice of G-d, was heard in each person's heart. There is no one who cannot hear G-d speaking to him, with His voice coming through Torah, through history, through various events, through reality – Man hears G-d but it is his responsibility to listen and recognize the voice. Moses was on such a high level that he could hear G-d's voice giving him the commandments of the Torah. Other who could not recognize G-d's voice weren't able to hear it.

How relevant this all is to our current situation, unfortunately. Modern man who was accustomed to controlling the forces of nature, suddenly finds himself out of control. The coronavirus is wreaking havoc on humanity, and the support systems we became used to leaning on are suddenly unstable: the support of routine, of work, financial support, activities, science, public bodies, social support, and the support of leisure. World order has been so undermined, it leads us all to ask an important question: What support can we confidently count on?

The entire Bible, from its first page to its last, conveys this message: G-d speaks to man. Listen to Him! We are all going through an extremely challenging time, especially those who aren't well. Let us be those who can recognize G-d's voice through the events around us. Let us be those who learn the lessons we are being taught. Let us be those who comprehend that the coronavirus is not just a natural phenomenon but a call for repair and progress.

Wishing everyone – the Jewish nation and all of humanity - good health!!

*The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.*

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### **Shema Yisrael Torah Network**

#### **Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Vayikra**

**פרשת ויקרא תש"פ**

#### **אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן**

#### **When a man among you brings an offering. (1:2)**

Unlike pagan offerings and the "dogma" surrounding that form of worship, *korbanos* which are mandated by Hashem are not meant to influence the Almighty. Pagan sacrifice was meant to appease their pantheon of gods and other imaginary idol figures. Humans were taught to believe that by offering various forms of sacrifices to the gods, they would succeed in dissipating his anger. How fortunate are we that we have been blessed with minds that comprehend that such an idea is ludicrous. When we distance ourselves from Hashem through sin, we must seek an avenue of return, a medium for narrowing the distance that we have created. The Hebrew term *korban* is derived from *karov*, close, to/ come close. Our goal (mission in life) is to come as close as possible to Hashem. When we offer an animal on the Altar, we are, by our actions, expressing our intention to bring our material side closer to Hashem. Thus, the *korban* experience teaches us that we are to take the physical/material base aspect of ourselves, and sanctify it to Hashem. The esoteric aspect of *korbanos* is beyond the scope of this *dvar Torah*.

A young man who had fought in the Vietnam War informed his parents that, now that the war was over, he was coming home. He had to address a few issues before he left, and then he would come home. He added that he had a friend who was a war hero who would be accompanying him as a house guest. Would they mind?

The parents were excited to hear from their son and only too happy to acquiesce to hosting his friend. He then explained to his parents that he had "forgotten" to mention that his friend had been seriously wounded in a heavy firefight, during which he had been instrumental in saving his platoon. His face was badly disfigured, and his leg was damaged. In addition, he suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. When the parents heard this, they quickly recanted their invitation, opting instead to contribute to the young man's therapy.

Weeks passed, and after hearing nothing from their son, they decided to visit the base where he was staying. When they arrived, they were informed that no one by their son's name either was on active duty or had returned from Vietnam. Perhaps they should inquire at the hospital. They visited the hospital and after being directed from one staffer to another, they discovered that their son was in the serious burns unit – refusing visitors. Parents never give up. They went to the unit and demanded to see their son. After all, they had just spoken to him a few weeks ago. The physician in charge of his case said that it was precisely a few weeks ago that their son had succumbed to a deep melancholy and had refused to speak to anyone. They insisted that he allow them to visit. The doctor added one condition: that they do not upset his patient. They entered his room and took one look at their son, and they realized why he was refusing to see or speak to anyone. He was the imaginary friend whom they had refused to host. He was feeling them out to see what their reaction would be to their son who had been disfigured on the battlefield. They cried, they pleaded. He would not listen. They explained that while they were not prepared to host a stranger, their own flesh and blood was always welcome, under any circumstances, regardless of his condition.

End of hypothetical story. Hashem dispatches us to this world, in which we must battle the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination. Throughout life, the battle is severe, and we sustain a number of serious hits. We fall prey to the wiles of the *yetzer hora*, and the sins which we commit damage our spiritual persona. Our entire spiritual image is disfigured, much like the soldier who had survived a firefight with the enemy. As a result, we distance ourselves from Hashem, figuring that that He would never welcome us back. What we forget is that we are His children, and a Father never closes the door on his son.

Hashem asks that we make the first move. This is the idea behind *korbanos*. He wants to see if we are prepared to return, to remember that He is a loving Father, and we are returning to our rightful home, where we belong. We are ashamed. Our sins have so disfigured us that we are no longer recognizable. Our identity has changed. Perhaps it might make a difference to strangers. A father, however, always welcomes his child home, regardless of his transformation.

Today, we no longer have the ritual sacrifices that were once offered in the Temple which is no longer extant. We still have prayer. Let us plead to Hashem. The right words will open the door. But we no longer know how to pray. “We have forgotten the words. Hashem, now what should we do?” The Almighty replies, “Weep. Tears will always pierce the Heavens.” Our Heavenly Father waits for us to overcome our shame and return to Him. The light is on; the door is open, but we must know and ask if we may enter. The answer will be, “Yes.”

#### אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן

#### When a man among you brings an offering. (1:2)

The word *korban* is derived from *karov*, close/near. A *korban* brings us closer to Hashem. The *Navi Hoshea* (6:6) states, “For I (Hashem) wanted *chesed*, acts of lovingkindness, and not a *korban*.” *Chesed* is being presented as being on par with *korbanos*, but also as being better than *korbanos*. *Chesed* brings about atonement, but *chesed* has an advantage that exceeds the *korban* effect. *Maharal (Nesivos Olam/Nesiv Gemilus Chassadim)* explains that *chesed* elevates a person, granting him a higher level of spirituality, while a *korban* does not. As *Horav Tzvi Kushelevsky, Shlita*, puts it: “*Chesed* elevates a person above his natural earthliness by allowing him to emulate Hashem when he performs kindness to others.” In other words, a *korban* atones; *chesed* causes a person to grow. Furthermore, when one performs acts of *chesed*, he achieves greater connectivity with Hashem. When one connects with the Ruler of the kingdom, the forces that want to take him down desist out of fear of offending the Ruler. So, too, when one emulates Hashem by performing *chesed*, he becomes one of His people. The forces of evil and impurity leave him alone.

The *Maharal (Netzach Yisrael 36)* writes that one who attaches himself to Torah and *chesed* becomes untouchable. He explains that evil cannot rule over someone who is attached to consummate good.

Torah is goodness in a non-physical sense, while *chesed* is goodness in a physical, tangible sense. One who pursues both—Torah and *chesed*—is impregnable. He will be spared from the *Chevlei*, birth pangs, of *Moshiach*.

The *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, encourages us to do evil because it is evil. Indeed, Hashem refers to the *yetzer hora* as evil (*Talmud Succah 52A*). *Chazal (Berachos 61B)* compare the *yetzer hora* to a fly. Flies gravitate to the decayed, to the decomposed, to the dirty objects. Flies are not attracted to clean, pristine objects. Evil is attracted to evil; pure good is not a magnet for evil. It actually makes sense. Evil seeks to blend in; thus, it is drawn to its own kind. It distances itself from inherent good, because it attracts too much attention.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* concludes with our mission statement: Develop your goodness; increase your Jewish identity as a Torah Jew by studying Torah and carrying out acts of lovingkindness. [Torah defines *chesed* as acts of lovingkindness that adhere to Torah guidelines. An activity might be “kind,” but still not necessarily stand under the rubric of *chesed*.]

#### והיה כי יחטא ואשם והשיב את הגזילה אשר גזל

#### So it shall be when he will sin and become guilty, he shall return the robbed item that he robbed. (5:23)

The thief brings his guilt-offering only after he has appeased the victim by returning the stolen goods. Hashem's forgiveness follows after the thief has made his peace with his victim. Everyone wants to be observant, repent and return to good, spiritual standing. Hashem is not interested in pardoning one who has no respect for the feelings of his fellow Jew. Furthermore, one who steals indicates that he has no faith in Hashem's ability to provide for his needs. By his very actions, such a person demonstrates that he is more concerned with his own needs than with the feelings of others. His guilt-offering is certainly not sincere. Hashem responds only to heartfelt, sincere pleas for forgiveness.

Returning the stolen item is not always simple. First, one may have spent or used it. Second, he originally took it because he was in need. If the situation has not changed, to return it would place him in greater need. The following story is inspiring and gives us something to think about. A young man was the product of an American modern, Jewish background. (*Shabbos* was respected; his mother lit candles before they went out for the evening; meat and dairy foods were separated – at home; *Yom Kippur* was observed with the traditional fasting; *Passover* consisted of a family *Seder* together, regardless of the distance necessary to travel; integrity was paramount in the marketplace; business ethics and moral integrity of all sorts were not only preached, but adhered to; an elementary day school education, followed by high school was mandatory, and then off to work.) Upon his graduation from school, followed by marriage, this young man's father gave him start-up money to open his own business to provide for his family. He chose to enter the Styrofoam /plastic cup business. Apparently, everyone seemed to be earning a living in this field. The problem was the competition. The larger, more successful companies sold packaged multi-color cups, while his were standard white or clear. The markup was not much; one had to sell high volume in order to do well in this business.

The standard package was 150 cups per box. Due to the heavy competition, he was forced to lower his prices just to remain in business. This, of course, lowered his profit margin. One day, an idea dawned on him: if he would put 149 cups in the box instead of the 150, no one would notice. People did not open the package to count the cups. The altered weight was so minimal that no one took note. His profit margin was steadily rising. That one cup made quite a difference. After three months, he realized that one more cup (148) would not make a difference. No one noticed anyway. One year after his package “altering” scheme began, he was selling 146 cups at the price of 150 and realizing a healthy profit margin.

One year later, business was still good, but nothing like he had expected. His primary profit margin was a lie, as he was selling 146 cups for the price of 150. His family was unaware of his dishonesty.



What people did not know did not hurt them – so he thought. Life was changing in his Jewish community. People were actually moving towards the right, towards greater religious commitment and observance. His children's school upgraded their Jewish studies program, as did their synagogue. Now there were adult outreach classes in which attendance was in vogue. Their children were doing well; in fact, the entire family became much more traditional. Their son asked to have his *bar mitzvah* celebrated in *Eretz Yisrael*. The parents were not adverse to moving to the right. It was change, but they felt that change was for the better. The father attended *minyan* daily, and the mother attended Torah classes. They decided to make their pilgrimage to *Eretz Yisrael* in honor of their son's *bar mitzvah*. This would be a trip with religious meaning. Everything seemed to be moving in the right direction (religiously). There still was one issue that gnawed at the father: The cups he had been selling all of these years. His financial success was based upon fraud. As he moved toward greater religious commitment, he could no longer live with this lie. To this end, on the last day of their trip, he asked the rabbi leading their tour if he could arrange a meeting with a leading *posek*, *halachic* arbiter. He had a question of serious *halachic* significance for which he required guidance.

An appointment was made with the *posek*, preeminent *posek* of the generation, *Horav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv*, *zl*. He sat before *Rav Elyashiv* and related his business dealings of the last years, how he had cheated his customers. What could he do to repent? "I am aware that my customers are gentiles, but stealing is stealing, regardless of the religion of the victim." The *Rav* did not immediately reply. He sat for a few moments ruminating over the question. During this time, the questioner felt like digging a hole in the ground below him and climbing in, so shameful and anxious was he. *Rav Elyashiv* finally looked up and said, "What you did was wrong. From now on, instead of putting 150 cups in the package, you are to put 154 cups."

The response troubled him; after all, who is to say that the next customer was one of those who had earlier been a victim? The tour director told him that one does not question *Rav Elyashiv's* decision. He accepted it and made up his mind that as soon as he returned, he would insert four extra cups in every package. He knew quite well that in the future he would be taking a loss on every package of cups. On the other hand, he realized that he was essentially returning the profit he had illicitly made over the years. Four cups multiplied by 10,000 packages equals 400,000 cups, which was a hefty sum. This is what he was about to lose.

His accountant could not figure out why, despite brisk sales, the company was losing money. He obviously had no clue that they were putting in four extra cups (when, in the past, they were excluding four cups). The situation was becoming increasingly more serious, to the point that one morning, following *Shacharis*, he broke down in bitter weeping over his financial concerns. He did not go to work that day, and instead he relied on his general manager to attend to the orders. At 11:00 in the morning, Joe, his manager called him and asked, "Where are you celebrating?" "What are you talking about?" he asked. "What am I celebrating?" "You mean that you really do not know?" Joe asked. "You must come to the office immediately. Regardless of your physical condition, drive or take a taxi, but come down right away." He had no desire to leave the comfortable depression of his home. He wanted to sulk all day and not speak with anyone, but Joe had insisted. He could not refuse him.

He trudged into his office like one going to his own funeral. He was not in a very good mood. Joe sat with the daily newspaper. He held up an article which he wanted his boss to read. The article was an expose of the plastic cup industry, in which the author wrote that just about everyone was not supplying the correct amount of cups. Some were missing one cup; others, two; with some excluding up to seven cups. The one exception to this rule was Mr. Jacobs (our hero's name), who was exceptionally accommodating to his customers. He he was adding four cups to each package! He would rather give extra than be short!

The rest of the story is to be expected. As a result of the newspaper article (and *Rav Elyashiv's* advice), business quadrupled. Everyone bought only "Jacobs' cups." His business grew exponentially, spreading to other products. Today, his children study in the finest *yeshivos*. His home is strictly kosher. *Tznius*, modesty, and *chesed*, acts of lovingkindness, are the hallmarks of his home, all because he followed the advice of the *gadol hador*. His repentance was sincere. His restitution was in accordance with the *psak* of the *gadol hador*. He had erred, and repented. Hashem had accepted his restitution.

**ואם נפש אחת תחטא בשגגה מעם הארץ**

**If an individual person from among the people of the land shall sin unintentionally. (4:27)**

The sin-offering of a *yachid*, individual, which is brought for an inadvertent sin (for a *mitzvah* whose intentional prohibition carries the punishment of Heavenly excision, *kares*), is always a beast (female goat or sheep) and does not vary up and down (*oleh v'yoreid*) according to the wealth or poverty of the one who sinned. The *Sefer HaChinuch* explains the *shoresh ha'mitzvah*, root of the commandment, as in all *korbanos*, to abase and bring the sinner to humility over the sin which he committed. As *Shlomo HaMelech* says in *Mishlei* (16:18), "Pride precedes destruction, and arrogance comes before failure." Humility is the greatest safeguard from downfall. After all, when one holds himself to be low, he cannot fall very far.

Sin brings one to humility. When *Aharon HaKohen* approached the *Mizbayach*, Altar, and the opportunity to represent *Klal Yisrael* in performing the service of the Golden Calf (from the corners of the *Mizbayach*, *keren* – corner, *keren* – horn), the image frightened and subdued him, because he had played a role in creating the Golden Calf. It was certainly inadvertent and meant to save the people, but, nonetheless, he felt responsible, and, as a result, inadequate to represent the nation.

*Moshe Rabbeinu* took note of *Aharon's* reluctance. He understood the reason he was demurring. He heartened and emboldened him, when he said, "Approach the Altar. Hashem designated you (specifically), due to your reluctance, born of humility." One who is truly humble is best suited to serve Hashem, to ascend the ladder of distinction. It was precisely because of *Aharon's* unpretentiousness that he was chosen to serve. Hashem does not want a leader who is arrogant. A leader who is full of himself has no room for his people.

Genuine spirituality can only flourish in a setting of humility. The *Baal Shem Tov* teaches that when one is meek, deferential, submissive – when he is not obsessed with himself - he will more easily recognize and acknowledge that his existence is fragile and that, without Hashem, he has absolutely no chance of survival. Whatever success he might ever enjoy will always be attributed to Hashem, because he knows that he alone is nothing. Humility leads one to prayer, because without Hashem, he cannot make it. Humility is authentic, or it is not humility. It is an approach to living as a Jew, with the constant awareness that one submits himself to a Higher Authority. *Aharon HaKohen* felt himself imperfect. Thus, he was the perfect person to become *Klal Yisrael's* representative in the *Mishkan*.

Being aware of one's fragility – both physical and spiritual - sparks one to serve Hashem with greater sincerity and trust. Everything that he does is genuine and meaningful. The *Rav HaKollel*, Chief Rabbi of New York, *Horav Yaakov Yosef*, *zl*, was a *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, whose brilliance and erudition catapulted him above all other candidates for the position of Chief Rabbi. At the time, he was the de-facto *Rav* of Vilna. Sadly, his tenure was marred by much strife, since not all of the fifteen most prominent *shuls* to have originally supported him could maintain harmony with regard to their selection. Indeed, *Rav Yosef* was accorded great honor only twice during his tenure: When he arrived, to the outstanding welcome of 100,000 people, and fourteen years later at his funeral, which was attended by an estimated 120,000 people.

During his last year, the Chief Rabbi spent most of his time in seclusion, suffering from depression, as a result of the merciless diatribe fomented

by his antagonists and the early onset of Alzheimer's disease. He was only fifty-nine years old. On *Shabbos Shuvah* of that year (1902), he asked to deliver the traditional *drasha*, lecture, which focused on repentance, character refinement and *mitzvah* observance as a prerequisite for the *yemei ha'din*, days of judgment. Having been out of the public eye for some time, the announcement of his first public *drasha* brought out a huge crowd to the *Bais Medrash HaGadol* of the Lower East Side. He donned his *tallis* (a tradition before delivering the *drasha*), ascended to the *bimah*, lectern, and began with the opening words: "The Rambam in *Hilchos Teshuvah*..." He stopped, as the greatest fear (of any speaker) was realized: he forgot what he wanted to say. Here stood before them one of the most brilliant minds of the generation, a man who once had the entire *Talmud* and Codes at his fingertips, who was well-versed in all areas of Torah scholarship, and he could not remember what he wanted to say.

The Chief Rabbi waited a few (long) moments, composed himself and began to speak. "*Morai v'Rabbosai*, the *drasha* which I had planned to deliver has sadly slipped my mind. However, there is one thought I would like to share with you. The *Mishnah* says, "When Rabbi Yehudah HaNassi died, *anavah*, humility, passed (with him). There was no one who was so humble as Rebbe". Rav Yosef said, 'This is not true, for I am still alive!' (In other words, Rav Yosef said, concerning himself, 'I am still alive, and I will wear the mantle of humility.'").

"Is this humility, for Rav Yosef to declare concerning himself that he is humble? We must keep in mind the fact that Rav Yosef, who was the leader of the generation, and the *Rebbe* of *Rava* and *Abaya*, became blind during his old age and forgot his learning. His students, *Rava* and *Abaya*, were constantly reminding him of his teachings. Thus, Rav Yosef was intimating that, as long as he was alive, he was a living example of why a person should never be arrogant about his self-worth. For what is man? A frail, sad, helpless mortal, who, at any moment can lose everything, when his physical and/or mental faculties cease to function.

"How can a human being think that he is 'something'? Humility has passed? Take one look at me. I forgot my *drasha*! Is there any more compelling and poignant *drasha* than this? When one looks at me, he sees the frailty and fragility of a human being!"

Need we say more?

### Va'ani Tefillah

תהי לרצון תמיד עבודת ישראל עמך

*U'sehi l'ratzon tamid avodas Yisrael Amecha*

**May the service of Your People Yisrael always be favorable to You.**

In this context, *avodah*, service, does not refer to the *korbanos*, offerings, that comprised the service in the *Bais HaMikdash*. *Horav Shimon Schwab*, זל, explains that we substitute our *tefillos*, prayers (*U'neshalmah parim sefaseinu*, "Let our life substitute for bulls," *Hoshea* 14:3.) We ask Hashem that He fully accept our humble prayers. We do not understand the esoteric nature of *korbanos*, nor are the sanctuaries in which we pray in any way comparable to the *kedushah*, sanctity of the *Bais HaMikdash*. Nonetheless, we ask Hashem that He accept *avodas Yisrael*, our *tefillah* for the return of *Kiddush Hashem* to the world. Only a return of *Kiddush Hashem* will dissipate and remove the *chillul Hashem* that prevails presently in the world. In order for this to occur, we / all of *Klal Yisrael* must first recognize His Name. Once that takes place, the rest of the world will follow our example. After all, we really cannot expect the current morally bankrupt society in which we live to accept what so many of our co-religionists refuse to acknowledge. So, we pray for them and for us. That's what brothers do.

*In memory of our beloved parents*

*Rabbi Dr. Avrohom Yitzchok Wolf Rebbetzin Anna Moses*

*Sruly and Chaya Wolf and Family*

*Ari and Rivky Wolf and Family*

*Abba and Sarah Spero and Family*

*Pesach and Esther Ostroy and Family*

*Sruly and Chaya Wolf and Family*

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*prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum*

First of all,

period of the omer, keeping the second day of Yom Tov and other aspects of many people answered the e-mail I sent out last week including some of my perspectives on the current situation. I apologize personally to each of you who responded for not being able to answer the many communications I have received.

Second of all, there are a number of articles on the laws of the Seder, chometz, kitniyos, Yom Tov, the mourning Pesach on the website RabbiKaganoff.com. Try using the search words chometz, kitniyos, matzoh, Pesach, sefirah or Yom Tov for the appropriate topics. They worked for me.

Third of all, I planned this article for the week of Rosh Chodesh Nisan way before I realized that most of us will probably not be able to be guests at other people's homes for Pesach. The article still has a lot of value.

### Being a Good Guest

#### Or The Halachic Etiquette when Visiting Someone's House

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Since many of us will be guests at other people's houses for the Seder or for some other time during Pesach, it seems like an opportune time to discuss the laws pertaining to being a guest in someone else's house.

Some of these rules are fairly self-explanatory. For example, a guest should not bring another guest with him (*Bava Basra* 98b).

A guest should feel that whatever the host serves and prepares is in his honor. The Gemara explains, "What does a good guest say? How hard the host worked for me! How much meat he brought! How much wine he served! How many dainty dishes he prepared! And all this he prepared for me!"

On the other hand, what does a bad guest say? "Did the host work for me? I ate only one roll and one piece of meat and drank only one cup of wine. All the work he did was done for his wife and children!"

#### A STRANGE CONVERSATION

In the context of learning proper etiquette, the Gemara (*Pesachim* 86b) records the following unusual story. Rav Huna the son of Rav Nosson visited the house of Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak, where apparently Rav Huna was not known. His hosts asked Rav Huna, "What is your name," to which he replied "Rav Huna." They then offered him to sit on the couch, although everyone else was sitting either on the floor or on benches, and the couch was reserved for special guests. Rav Huna did not decline the honor and sat on the couch. Subsequently, they brought him a kiddush-sized cup full of wine, which he immediately accepted and drank in front of them, but he paused once in the middle of drinking. Rav Nachman's household, which included talmidei chachamim, felt that Rav Huna's responses to their invitations were inappropriate. They proceeded to pepper him with questions about his behavior. (Since he had identified himself as a talmid chacham, all of his acts could teach a halachic lesson. However, they felt that he had not acted correctly; it was therefore appropriate to ask him to explain his behavior.) The conversation that ensued is the source of many halachos.

"Why did you introduce yourself as 'Rav Huna?'" they first asked. Is this an appropriate way to identify oneself?

Rav Huna responded: "That is my name."

"Why did you sit on the couch, when we offered?" They felt that it would have been proper for him to refuse the honor, politely, and to sit on the floor with everyone else (*Tosafos*).

Rav Huna retorted by quoting the now famous halachic adage, "Whatever the host asks you to do, you should do (see *Mesechta Derech Eretz Rabbah* 6:1)."

The hosts continued, "When we offered you the cup, why did you accept it the first time we offered it?"

To which Rav Huna replied, "One may refuse a small person, but one should not refuse the request of a great person."

The hosts then inquired, "Why did you drink the small cup of wine we gave you in two gulps, rather than drink it all at once?"

Rav Huna countered, "The earlier authorities taught us that only a guzzler drinks a whole cup of wine at once, and that arrogant people drink a cup with three sips. The proper way to drink a cup of wine is in two swallows (*Mesechta Derech Eretz Rabbah* 8)."

Finally, his hosts asked, "Why did you not turn your face when drinking?" in their opinion, a talmid chacham should not eat or drink in the presence of many people (*Gemara* and *Rashi*, *Bechoros* 44b). To this Rav Huna replied that only a bride should be so modest; for anyone else, this is not considered modesty (*Rashi*, *Pesachim* 86b).

#### WHAT DID THEY MEAN?

In the course of this perplexing conversation, Rav Huna taught his hosts (and us) several halachos germane to proper etiquette that need to be understood properly.

We will now dissect the conversation between these scholars to understand its underlying lessons.

1. He identified himself as “Rav Huna.” Isn’t this a conceited way of introducing oneself? Why would Rav Huna, a great Torah scholar and tzadik, have done this? The source of this halacha (Nedarim 62a) reads as follows:

Rava pointed out that two verses seem to contradict one another. In one verse, Ovadiah says to Eliyahu, Your servant has feared Hashem from his youth (Melachim I 18:12), implying that it is appropriate to make a true statement about one’s spiritual accomplishments. On the other hand, Mishlei (27:2) declares, Someone else should praise you, but not your mouth. Rava explains that the pasuk in Mishlei applies when there are people present who can notify others that this person is a talmid chacham. Since the members of Rav Nachman’s household were unaware that Rav Huna was a talmid chacham, it was appropriate for him to bring this to their attention (Meiri; Maharsha). By doing to, he receives the benefits that he deserves, and people will not be punished for treating him disrespectfully because they did not realize that he is a talmid chacham (Rosh, Nedarim 62a).

It is noteworthy that when Rav Huna explained why he had identified himself as Rav Huna, the Gemara quotes him as saying baal hashem ani, which Rashi seems to explain as meaning, this was always my name. However, this is not the usual way in either Hebrew or Aramaic of telling someone one’s name or appellation. Alternatively, the words baal hashem ani can be interpreted as meaning, I am well known by that name, which implies that he was a well-known personage, although he was apparently unknown by the members of Rav Nachman’s household (see Meiri). Thus, he was responsible to inform them who he was, so that they not treat him disrespectfully.

#### WHY NOT SIT ON THE COUCH?

2. The hosts proceeded to inquire about his next act:

“Why did you sit on the couch when we invited you?” Apparently, they felt that it was inappropriate for him to sit on the couch, and he should have politely refused the honor. To this inquiry Rav Huna replied, “Whatever the host asks you to do, you should do.”

Did the hosts indeed want him to sit in the finest seat in the house, or were they simply being polite? Is the host’s offer genuine, or does he really prefer that I refuse the offer? It is not unusual to face this type of predicament.

Rav Huna answers that when the host’s intent is unclear, one should assume that his offer is sincere and do as he suggests.

There is a clear exception to this rule. When one suspects that the host cannot afford his offer and is only making it out of embarrassment, one should not accept his offer. This is referred to as a seudah she’ainah maspek lebaalah, lit., a meal insufficient for its host (Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah 4:4; also see Chullin 7b and Rashi).

#### DO WHAT THE HOST ASKS

Why should one do whatever the host requests?

Here are two interpretations to explain the reason for this statement of Chazal:

A. A nonpaying guest should do whatever the host asks him to do, since this is a form of payment for services rendered. In return for free accommodations, the guest should reciprocate by performing the tasks and errands the host requests (Bach, Orach Chayim 170).

In a sense, this parallels the modern practice of presenting the host with a gift. (One can find halachic sources for this practice in the Sefer Orach Meisharim 18:2.) The gift reciprocates the host’s kindness. However, the host often prefers different favors, such as babysitting, rather than a box of chocolates that his waistline can do without, or an additional bouquet of flowers that will soon wilt. Therefore, one’s reciprocation can consist of doing appropriate favors for the host.

In a similar vein, if one has the opportunity to reciprocate hospitality, one should do so (Orach Meisharim 18:2). However, neither host nor guest may specify in advance that the hosting will be reciprocal because of concerns of ribbis, prohibited paying and receiving interest on a loan (Rema, Orach Chayim 170:13), since the one who hosts first has, in essence, extended his hospitality as a loan to the other!

#### A DIFFERENT APPROACH

B. Courtesy dictates that a guest in someone’s house should respect his host and fulfill his requests as master of the house (Levush). Rav Huna ruled that not honoring the host’s desire to honor his guest challenges the host’s authority. By sitting on the couch and accepting the honor, the guest affirms his host’s authority to honor whomever he wishes in his home. In many societies, turning down a host’s offer of a cup of tea or coffee is considered insulting. If one is unaware of local custom, one should follow Chazal’s instructions as Rav Huna did.

#### IF THE HOST HAS DIFFERENT KASHRUS STANDARDS

What happens if the host and the guest interpret the laws of kashrus in different ways? Must the guest follow the host’s request to join him for a meal?

If the guest follows a stricter halachic opinion than the host, the guest should apprise the host. The host may not serve the guest food that does not meet the guest’s standard, unless the food is obviously something he may not eat (Shach,

Yoreh Deah 119:20). For example, if the guest observes cholov yisroel fully and the host follows the poskim who permit unsupervised milk when you can assume that it is cow’s milk, the host may not cook anything that does not meet the guest’s standards without telling him. However, he may place food on the table that is obviously not cholov yisroel. Similarly, if the guest notifies the host that he uses only food with a specific hechsher, the host may not serve him food that violates this standard.

Once a halacha-abiding host knows his guest’s standards, the guest may assume that the host is accommodating his standards and may eat whatever is served without further questions (Shach, Yoreh Deah 119:20). This is included in Chazal’s adage, whatever the host asks you to do, you should do, since it is offensive to question the host’s standards. Offending people is always halachically reprehensible, and certainly when they are doing you a favor.

#### PERSONAL CHUMROS

On the other hand, if the guest has a personal halachic stringency that he would rather not divulge, he should not violate his chumrah and he is not required to divulge it (Shaarei Teshuvah 170:6; Ben Yehoyada).

Generally, one should be modest when it comes to any chumrah (Birkei Yosef, Orach Chayim 170:6). One should also always be aware that taking on personal chumros may not be a good idea, and one should discuss the matter with a gadol prior to observing a chumrah. (See the important discussion on this point in Michtav Mei’Eliyahu Volume 3 pg. 294.)

#### EXCEPT LEAVE

Our editions of the Gemara Pesachim 86b have two Hebrew words appended to the end of the statement, whatever the host asks you to do, you should do. The additional words are, chutz mi’tzei, except leave, and therefore the passage reads, whatever the host asks you to do, you should do, except leave. It is unclear if these words are an authentic part of the text; they are not mentioned in Mesechta Derech Eretz, the source of the original statement. Some authoritative commentators (Meiri) take exception to it, and both the Tur and the Shulchan Aruch omit it. The Meiri reports that these words are an incorrect textual emendation added by scoffers and should be disregarded.

Nevertheless, other authorities (Bach, Magen Avraham, Ben Yehoyada) accept these words as part of the text and grapple with different possible interpretations.

What does this text mean? I found numerous interpretations of this text, including six different interpretations in one sefer (Ben Yehoyada) alone! Several of these approaches assume that performing whatever the host requests means reciprocating his favors, the first approach I mentioned above. According to these approaches, the words chutz mitzei mean that the guest is not expected to perform any inappropriate activity for the host. This would include the host asking the guest to run an errand for him outside the house. Since it is unacceptable to ask someone to run an errand in a city with which he or she is unfamiliar, the guest may refrain from doing so (Bach, Orach Chayim 170).

Nevertheless, if the host requests the guest to do something that he would ordinarily not do because it is beneath his dignity, he should perform it anyway (Birkei Yosef, Orach Chayim 170:5).

#### THE STRANGE CONVERSATION

We now revert to explaining the original conversation that transpired between Rav Huna and his hosts.

3. The hosts continued, “When we offered you the cup, why did you accept it the first time we offered it?”

To which Rav Huna replied, “One may refuse a small person, but one should not refuse the request of a great person.”

#### THE INCONSISTENT ANGELS

This particular rule of etiquette is based on a passage in parshas Vayeira. When Avraham Avinu invited the angels to dinner, they immediately accepted, whereas when his nephew Lot invited them, they initially turned him down. Only after he begged them repeatedly did they accept his invitation (Breishis 15:1-5, 16:1-3). Why did they accept Avraham’s invitation immediately and initially turn down Lot’s offer? The Gemara (Bava Metzia 86b) answers because of this rule -- one may refuse a small person, but one should not refuse a great person.

This halacha has ramifications for other, non-guest situations. When someone is asked to lead the services in shul (usually called to daven before the amud), he should initially decline the offer, as a sign of humility. However, if a great person, such as the rav of the shul, asks one to lead the services, one should immediately agree.

#### TWO GULPS?

4. The hosts now inquired, “Why did you drink the small cup of wine we gave you in two gulps, rather than drink it all at once?”

Rav Huna countered, “The earlier authorities taught us that only a guzzler drinks a whole cup of wine at once, and arrogant people drink a cup with three sips. The proper way to drink a cup of wine is in two swallows” (Mesechta Derech Eretz Rabbah 8).

A reviis-size cup of wine, which is about three ounces, should be drunk in two sips; not all at once, and not in more than two sips. It is preferable to drink about half the cup each time, rather than to drink most of it and leave just a small sip for

afterwards (Magen Avraham 170:12). If the cup is smaller, the wine is very sweet, or the person drinking is very obese, one may drink the entire cup at one time (Pesachim 86b, as understood by Magen Avraham 170:13). When drinking beer, one may drink a greater amount in each gulp, since beer is less intoxicating than wine; and this is certainly true when drinking non-alcoholic beverages (Magen Avraham 170:13). On the other hand, if the drink is very strong, one may drink it much more slowly (Aruch Hashulchan 170:9). Thus, it is appropriate to take small sips of whiskey or other strongly intoxicating beverages.

#### TURNING YOUR FACE?

5. Finally, his hosts asked, "Why did you not turn your face when drinking?" To this, Rav Huna replied that only a bride should be so modest. What is this exchange about?

A talmid chacham should not eat or drink in the presence of many people (Gemara and Rashi, Bechoros 44b). The hosts felt that Rav Huna should not have eaten in their presence without turning to the side, so that they could not see him eat. Rav Huna held that the halacha that a talmid chacham should not eat or drink in the presence of many people does not apply when one is eating a meal together with other people. However, a bride should not eat in a way that other people see her eating, even if they are all participating together in a festive meal (Tosafos, Bechoros 44b s.v. ve'ein). Therefore, Rav Huna replied that only a bride should be so modest; for anyone else, this is not considered modesty (Rashi, Pesachim 86b).

The halacha is that one should not eat in the street or marketplace (Kiddushin 40b); on the other hand, one should not stare at someone who is eating or at the food that he is eating, because it embarrasses him or her (Rambam, Hilchos Brachos 7:6; Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 170:4).

As we see, Chazal had tremendous concern that a person act appropriately in all circumstances, and even more so when we are a guest in someone else's home. Certainly, these are lessons that we should always apply in our daily lives.

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## CORONA CRISIS

Baruch Rabinowitz

Two of our children asked a very good question over the last couple of days...What would Zeidy a"h have said about that which we are all living through now – the locking down of schools and shuls and stores, the staying in our homes. My wife Miryam put things in perspective as she contemplated our current situation through the eyes of her father, Rav Akiva Eiger Schlusel zt"l, an einikel of Rav Dovid the Av Bais Din of Munkacz and son of Reb Chaim Yechezkel the Rosh Hakohol. He was in Munkacz during the war and spent 3 months hiding in a bunker and many months "on the run".

What might he say if he was here today??

You are restricted where to go and how many people can congregare but you can stay at home and be in your own bed?? No bunker?? No ghetto?? No sleeping with animals in a barn?

You can go to sleep at night and expect to find yourself and your family in the same place in the morning?

You have enough food in your home weeks to survive for a few?? No rationing of a few grains of barely per person per day??

You have water- fresh water to drink and don't need to limit it?? You don't have to boil it first?

You can go to a bathroom and flush away and don't need to use a pail in a corner with other people around??

You can go outside to get food and there is food to be gotten??

You can go outside to get food and you won't be shot dead if discovered??

You can take a shower??? With soap?? Warm water too?

You have Tallis and Tfillin and could daven as long and as loud as you want and not be afraid of being discovered?

You can gather on your own porches and sing Kabbolas Shabbos and let it fill the whole street?

You can have a Shabbos seuda and have real chicken soup - not a little salt in water and leave the rest to imagination??

Real fish??? Fresh???

Challah and bread..... soft and chewy, not hard and moldy?? White and not coarse black??

You can get more than one slice a day?? You don't have to hide it from other people?

You can think about making plans for next month or even next year and have a reasonable chance of keeping those plans?

Heat??? You can feel your fingers and toes when you wake up?

You have air conditioning? You don't feel suffocated by the heat and stench?

You have shoes??? No holes?? More than one pair?? Really?

You have seforim to learn from?? All types of seforim?? So you can be locked up for weeks and months won't die of boredom....?!

You have access to shiurim by phone and/or by computer??

You have a way to keep in touch with the outside world and at least know that there is an outside world?

You can actually know what is happening out there??

You can be in touch with family and see how they are doing??

You never think that maybe you are from the last ones alive??

If you need medicines, you can really get them??

You are planning to make a seder with real wine and real Matza? Shmura??? You have a choice of bakeries??? Regular or Whole wheat?? Spelt?? Oat?

You have enough kzaysim for whatever shiur you desire?? For each person?

You have marror?? Regular or Pre- checked? Enough for each?

You have chicken? Meat too?

Fresh Veggies?? Non moldy potatoes? Potato peels with something inside?

Wine?? Dry, semi, sweet? 4 cups for each?? Large cups? Grape juice too?? Mevushal and non?? Choice of wines by regions and country?

There's nothing to complain about. All is ok...

---

לע"נ

שרה משה בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה

ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה

## **D'var Torah Parshas Vayikra**

In this week's Parsha we begin to learn of one of the most difficult topics to relate to and understand in today's times - sacrifices. In today's world, where temples and offerings are found almost exclusively in history books and exotic lands, we struggle to understand the experience and purpose of offerings and worship. Yet this seemingly distant and archaic practice retains a prominent place in our modern lives. It is the focus of the entire book of Vayikra/Leviticus which we begin studying this Shabbos. Every holiday we read the Torah portion describing that day's sacrifices, and it is the central theme of the holiday prayers. In our daily prayers we begin the final section of the Shemoneh Esrei/Silent Devotion with our yearning for the rebuilding of the Temple and to again serve G-d in that fashion. We have Fast Days throughout the year marking the stages of the Temple's destruction, and for three weeks each summer intensely mourn its absence in our lives. As such, it behooves us to study the words of our sages and our traditions to better understand the Torah perspective on the Temple and the experience of sacrifices. We must try to gain some bearing and insight into the world of sacrifices, and why it remains such a central theme in our lives and traditions to this very day.

One traditional source who expounds on the world of the Temple and the sacrifices is the Sefer Hachinuch (Mitzvah 95). The Sefer Hachinuch notes how all of the commandments are ultimately for the purpose of our own benefit and reward. As is stated in Parshas Eikev, (Devarim 10: 12-13) everything Hashem asks of us, He asks "לֵטוֹב לָךְ" - "that it should be good for you". All the commandments, he explains, enable us to become G-dly, by guiding and preparing us to lead lives of meaning and depth rather than lives of passion. The more G-dly we become, the more fitting we are to ultimately receive the great bounty of the World to Come. The Temple, therefore, is not intended as place where G-d can dwell among us, but rather as a place where we can bring G-d into our minds and into our lives. The Temple is an area devoid of outside influence and distractions, a place where one can focus on G-d and on G-d alone, where one can contemplate the meaning of life, and inspire one's self to see the meaning and value in the spirituality in one's own world.

The Sefer Hachinuch explains further that the sacrifices are intended to further the Temple experience, through our actions and words. We are to take meal items, representing the physical passions of this world, and engage in specific procedures and statements requiring our focus and attention. The items are then either burnt, with no trace of their physicality left, or given to G-d's servants the Kohanim/Priests. When we would focus properly on these messages, we deepened our recognition of the ephemeral nature of physical pleasure and in contrast the lasting depth and fulfillment of spiritual development and personal growth.

The Sefer Hachinuch then states an astounding and timely concept. Through this devotion itself, he says, we achieve the purpose of all of the commandments - becoming receptacles for G-d's blessings and bounty. It is the devotion to a life of meaning and personal development which makes us G-dly and enables us to receive G-d's blessings. At this time when so much of the physical world has come to a standstill, the Sefer Hachinuch is teaching us that we now have the opportunity to truly live. We must take full advantage of this time to focus on what life means to us, on who we want to be, and how we can live that life. In that merit, may we see the end of this challenging time, and even the ultimate redemption - may it be soon in our days.

## **Parsha Points To Ponder**

### **Parshas Vayikra**

- ❖ In the first word of the Parsha - "ויקרא" - "And He called" the last letter is written small. Rash"i explains that this is because Moshe did not want to highlight how Hashem was calling him directly, and wanted to write "ויקר" - "and He happened upon". Hashem, therefore, allowed Moshe to write the letter small. What difference does it make to Moshe how big the letter is in the Sefer Torah? It is read the same way, and everyone knows what it truly says, no matter the size of the letter.
- ❖ Chapter 1 Verse 1: The Torah generally tells us that Hashem spoke to Moshe, without mention of any prior calling. Why does the Torah tell us now that Hashem called to Moshe and then spoke to him?
- ❖ Chapter 2 Verses 1-16: Why does the meal offering have so many variations for how to offer it?
- ❖ Chapter 4: Why does a person's public status impact the sin offering he brings for a private sin?
- ❖ Chapter 5 Verses 1-5: What is the connection between withholding testimony, entering the Temple while ritually impure, and violating one's oath?
- ❖ Chapter 5 Verses 1-13: Why do these sins have a special dispensation for one who has financial need?

## **Parsha Discussion Meeting Details**

- A phone/video conference using Zoom is scheduled for 10:30 am Sunday morning.
- For video conferencing, one may need to download and install the Zoom software.
- For video conferencing, there is a Zoom app available to use on a smartphone.
- To join the conference by video please use the following link: <https://zoom.us/j/9446820075>.
- To join the conference by phone please call 301 715 8592, and enter meeting ID 994 682 0075#.

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**PARSHAT VAYIKRA**

Does God need our "korbanot"?

Or, would it be more correct to say that we 'need' to bring them, even though He doesn't need them?

In an attempt to answer this 'philosophical' question, this week's shiur undertakes an analysis of Parshat Vayikra to show how its specific topic of "korbanot" [sacrificial offerings] relates to one of the primary themes of the Bible.

**INTRODUCTION**

The Mishkan certainly emerges as a primary topic in **both** the books of Shmot and Vayikra, and hence, it would only be logical to assume that its underlying purpose must be thematically important. To appreciate that purpose, we must first note a very simple distinction that explains which details are found in each book.

In Sefer Shmot, the Torah explains **how to build** the mishkan, and hence Shmot concludes (in Parshat Pekudei) with the story of its assembly. In contrast, Sefer Vayikra explains **how to use** the mishkan, and hence Parshat Vayikra begins with the laws of the korbanot - i.e. instructions regarding the sacrifices that will be offered there.

Even though this distinction explains why Sefer Vayikra discusses korbanot in general, it does not explain why the Sefer begins specifically with the laws of korban **ola** [the burnt offering]; nor does it explain the logic of the progression from one type of korban to the next. In our shiur, we begin with a technical analysis of its internal progression - but those conclusions will help us arrive at a deeper understanding of the purpose of korbanot in general.

**AN OUTLINE for PARSHAT VAYIKRA**

In our study questions, we suggested that you prepare an outline of chapters one thru five, by identifying the primary topic of each individual 'parshia'. The following table summarizes our conclusions. Before you continue, study it carefully (with a Chumash at hand), noting how the section titles provide an explanation of the progression of its topics.

[Note how each 'parshia' corresponds to one line in our chart. Note also that each asterisk (\*\*) in the outline marks the beginning of a new 'dibra', i.e. a short introduction for a new instruction from God to Moshe [e.g. "va-yedaber Hashem el Moshe..."]. Note as well how the outline suggests a short one-line summary for each parshia, as well as a title for each section. See if you agree with those titles.]

**PARSHAT VAYIKRA - THE KORBAN YACHID**

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**I. KORBAN NEDAVA - Voluntary offerings (chaps. 1-3)**

**A. Ola** (the entire korban is burnt on the mizbeich)

1. 'bakar' - from cattle
2. 'tzon' - from sheep
3. 'of' - from fowl

**B. Mincha** (a flour offering)

1. 'solet' - plain flour mixed with oil and 'levona'
2. 'ma'afeh tanur' - baked in the oven
3. 'al machvat' - on a griddle
4. 'marcheshet' - on a pan (+ misc. general laws)
5. 'bikkurim' - from wheat of the early harvest

**C. Shlamim** (a peace offering, part is eaten by the owners)

1. bakar - from cattle
2. tzon - from sheep
3. 'ez' - from goats

[Note the key phrase repeated many times in this unit:  
 "isheh reiach nichoach I-Hashem."]

**II. KORBAN CHOVA - MANDATORY OFFERINGS**

**A. \* CHATAT** (4:1-5:13)

**1. for a general transgression**

[laws organized according to violator]

- a. 'par kohen mashiach' (High Priest) - a bull
- b. 'par he'elem davar' (bet din) - a bull
- c. 'se'ir nassi' (a king) - a male goat
- d. 'nefesh' (layman) a female goat or female lamb

**2. for specific transgressions ('oleh ve-yored')**

- a. a rich person - a female goat or lamb
- b. a poor person - two birds
- c. a very poor person - a plain flour offering

**B. \* ASHAM** (5:14-5:26) - animal is always an 'ayil' (ram)

1. 'asham me'ilot' - taking from Temple property
2. 'asham talui' - unsure if he sinned
- [Note the new dibbur at this point / see Further iyun.]
3. \* 'asham gezeilot' - **stealing** from another

[Note the key phrase repeated numerous times in this unit:  
 "ve-chiper alav... ve-nislach lo."]  
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Let's explain why we have chosen these titles.

**TWO GROUPS: NEDAVA & CHOVA**

First and foremost, note how our outline divides Parshat Vayikra into two distinct sections: 'korbanot nedava' = voluntary offerings and 'korbanot chova' - mandatory offerings.

The first section is titled "nedava", for if an individual wishes to voluntarily offer a korban to God, he has three categories to choose from:

- 1) An OLA - a burnt offering [chapter one];
- 2) A MINCHA - a flour offering [chapter two]; or
- 3) A SHLAMIM - a peace offering [chapter three]

Note how these three groups are all included in the first "dibbur" - and comprise the "nedava" [voluntary] section.

In contrast, there are instances when a person may transgress, thus obligating him to offer a sin offering - be it a "chatat" or an "asham" (depending upon what he did wrong).

The two categories (chapters 4 and 5) comprise the second section, which we titled "chova" [obligatory].

The Chumash itself stresses a distinction between these two sections not only the start of a new dibbur in 4:1, but also the repetition of two key phrases that appear in just about every closing verse in the parshiot of both sections, stressing the primary purpose of each respective section:

In the nedava section: **"isheh reiach nichoach I-Hashem"**

["an offering of fire, a pleasing odor to the Lord"]

See 1:9,13,17; 2:2; 3:5,11,16];

In the chova section: **"ve-chiper a'lav ha-kohen..."**

[the kohen shall make expiation on his behalf...] -

See 4:26,31,35; 5:6,10,13,16,19,26]

With this background in mind, we will now discuss the logic behind the internal structure of each section, to show how (and why) the **nedava** section is arranged by category of offering and the type of animal, while the **chova** section is arranged by type of transgression committed, and who transgressed.

**NEDAVA - take your pick**

If an individual wishes to offer a korban nedava, he must first choose the category that reflects his personal preference. First of all, should he prefer to offer the entire animal to God, he can

choose the **ola** category; but should he prefer (for either financial or ideological reasons) to offer flour instead, then he can choose the **mincha** category. Finally, should he prefer not only the animal option, but would also like to later partake in eating from this korban - then he can choose the **shlamim** category.

Once the individual has made this general choice of either an **ola**, **mincha**, or **shlamim** - next, he can pick the sub-category of his choice.

For example, should one choose to offer an **ola** - which is totally consumed on the **mizbeiach** - then he must choose between cattle, sheep, or fowl.

The Torah explains these three options (in the first three parshiot of chapter 1), including precise instructions concerning how to offer each of these animals.

Should the individual choose a **mincha** - a flour offering - instead, then he must select from one of the five different options for how to bake the flour, corresponding to the five short parshiot in chapter two. In other words, he can present his offering as either flour (mixed with oil), or baked in an oven ("ma'afe tanur), or fried on a skillet ("al machvat"), or deep fried ("marcheshet"). Should the flour offering be from the wheat of the early harvest ("minchat bikkurim"), it must first be roasted and ground in a special manner (see Ibn Ezra 2:14).

Finally, should he choose the **shlamim** option- a peace offering - then he must select between: cattle ("bakar"); sheep ("kvasim"); or goats ("izim") - corresponding to the three individual parshiot in chapter three.

It should be noted as well that the laws included in this **korban nedava** section also discuss certain procedural instructions. For example, before offering an **ola** or **shlamim**, the owner must perform the act of 'smicha' (see 1:4, 3:2,8,13). By doing "smicha" - i.e. resting all his weight on the animal - the owner symbolically transfers his identity to the animal. That is to say, he offers the animal instead of himself (see Ramban).

One could suggest that the act of smicha reflects an understanding that the korban serves as a 'replacement' for the owner. This idea may be reflective of the korban **ola** that Avraham Avinu offered at the **akeida** - when he offered a ram in place of his son - "**ola** tachat bno" (see Breishit 22:13).

### CHOVA - if you've done something wrong

As we explained earlier, the second category of Parshat Vayikra discusses the "korban **chova**" (chapters 4 & 5) - an obligatory offering that must be brought by a person should he transgress against one of God's laws. Therefore, this section is organized by **event**, for the type of sin committed will determine which offering is required.

The first 'event' is an unintentional transgression of 'any of God's mitzvot' (see 4:2 and the header of each consecutive parshia in chapter 4). Chazal explain that this refers to the unintentional violation ('shogeg') of any prohibition of the Torah - that had the person transgressed intentionally ("meizid"), his punishment would have been 'karet' (cut off from the Jewish nation).

[This offering is usually referred to as a 'chatat kavu'a' (the fixed chatat).]

Should this transgression occur ("b'shogeg"), then the actual animal that must be brought depends upon **who** the sinner is. If the **kohen gadol** (high priest) sins, he must bring a bull ("par"). If it is the political leader ("nasi"), he must bring a male goat ("se'ir"). If it was simply a commoner, he must bring either a she-goat or lamb ("se'ira" or "kisba").

[There is also a special case of a mistaken halachic ruling by the 'elders' [i.e. the 'sanhedrin' - the supreme halachic court], which results in the entire nation inadvertently sinning. In this case, the members of the sanhedrin must bring a special chatat offering - known as the "par he'elem davar shel tzibur". See 4:13-21.]

In chapter five we find several instances of specific transgressions that require either a "chatat" or an "asham".

The first category begins with a list of three specific types of transgressions, including - the case when a person refuses to provide witness (see 5:1), or should one accidentally enter the Temple (or Mishkan) while spiritually unclean ('tamei' / see 5:2), or should one not keep a promise (to do/ or not to do something) made with an oath ('shvu'at bitui' / see 5:4).

Should one transgress in regard to any one of these three cases (detailed in 5:1-4), the specific offering that he must bring depends on his income. If he is:

- a) rich - he brings a female lamb or she-goat;
- b) 'middle class' - he can bring two birds instead;
- c) poor - he can bring a simple flour offering.

Interestingly, this korban is categorized as a "chatat" (see 5:6,10,13), even though the Torah uses the word "asham" [guilt] in reference to these acts (see 5:5). It makes sense to consider it a "chatat", because in the standard case (i.e. if the transgressor be rich) - the offering is exactly the same animal as the regular chatat - i.e. a female goat or sheep.

Furthermore, note that these psukim (i.e. 5:1-13) are included in the same "dibbur" that began in 4:1 that discussed the classic korban "chatat", while the new "dibbur" that discusses the korban "asham" only begins in 5:14!

The rabbis refer to this korban as an "oleh ve-yored" [lit. up and down] as this name relates to its graduated scale - which depends entirely upon the individual's financial status.

One could suggest that the Torah offers this graduated scale because these specific transgressions are very common, and hence it would become rather costly for the average person to offer an animal for each such transgression.

The final cases (from 5:14 till the end of the chapter) include several other categories of transgressions - that require what the Torah refers to as a korban **asham** - a guilt offering. In each of these cases, the transgressor must offer an ayil [a ram], including:

- when one takes something belonging to hekdesch ('asham me'ilot' / 5:14-16)
- when one is unsure if he must bring a **chatat** ('asham talui'), i.e. he is not sure if he sinned.
- when one falsely denies having illegally held possession of someone else's property ('asham gezeilot' / 5:20-26), like not returning a 'lost item' to its owner.

### THE GENERAL TITLE - KORBAN YACHID

We titled the entire outline as **korban yachid** - the offering of an individual - for this entire unit details the various types of korbanot that an **individual** (=yachid) can (or must) bring. Our choice of this title reflects the opening sentence of the Parsha: "**adam** ki yakriv..." - **any person** should he bring an offering to God..." (see 1:2).

The korban yachid stands in contrast to the korbanot tzibbur - the public offerings - which are offered by the entire congregation of Israel (purchased with the funds collected from the machatzit ha-shekel). The laws relating to korbanot tzibbur we first found in Parshat Tezaveh in regard to the daily "olat tamid" offering. They continue with the special offering that the nation brings (collectively) on the holidays, as detailed primarily in Parshiot Emor (Vayikra chapter 23) and in Parshat Pinchas (Bamidbar chapters 28-29).

### WHICH SHOULD COME FIRST?

Now that we have explained the logic of the internal order of each section, we must explain why the laws of korban **nedava** precede those of korban **chova**. Intuitively, one would have perhaps introduced the **compulsory** korban before the **optional** one.

One could suggest that Parshat Vayikra begins specifically with the korban nedava since these korbanot in particular reflect the individual's aspiration to **improve** his relationship with God. Only afterward does the Torah detail the korban chova, which **amends** that relationship (when tainted by sin). Additionally, perhaps, the korban **nedava** reflects a more **ideal** situation, while the obligatory sin-offering seeks to rectify a problematic situation.



We may, however, suggest an even more fundamental reason based on the 'double theme' which we discussed in our study of the second half of Sefer Shmot.

Recall from our previous shiurim that the mishkan served a dual purpose:

- A) to perpetuate the experience of Har Sinai (emphasized by Ramban); and
- B) to atone for chet ha-egel (emphasized by Rashi).

#### (A) REENACTING HAR SINAI

Recall how the covenantal ceremony that took place at Har Sinai (when Bnei Yisrael accepted the Torah) included the public offering of "**olot**" & "**shlamim**" (when the declared "na'aseh v'nishma" / see Shmot 24:4-7). In fact, in that ceremony we find the very **first** mention in Chumash of a korban **shlamim**, suggesting a conceptual relationship between the korban **shlamim** and Har Sinai.

[Note also that Chumash later refers to the korban shlamim as a 'zevach' (see 3:1 & 7:11). The word zevach itself is also used to describe a feast, generally in the context of an agreement between two parties. For example, Lavan and Yaakov conduct a zevach after they enter into a **covenant** ('brit') agreeing not to harm each other (see Br. 31:44-54). Today, as well, agreements between two parties are often followed or accompanied by a lavish feast of sorts (e.g. state dinners, weddings, business mergers, etc.). Therefore, one could suggest that by offering a **zevach shlamim**, an individual demonstrates shows his loyalty as a **joint** partner in a covenantal relationship with God.]

The korban **ola** also relates to Ma'amad Har Sinai, based not only on the above parallel, but also based on a key phrase - "isheh reiach nichoach l-Hashem" - that the Torah uses consistently in its description of the korban **ola**. [See 1:9,13,17.]

This exact same phrase is also found in the Torah's description of the "**olat tamid**", the daily congregational offering, as inherently connected to Bnei Yisrael's offerings at Har Sinai:

"**Olat tamid** ha-asuya **BE-HAR SINAI**, le-reiach nichoach isheh l-Hashem" (see Bamidbar 28:6).

Similarly, in Parshat Tetzaveh, when the Torah first introduces the **olat tamid** and summarizes its discussion of the mishkan - we find the exact same phrase:

"... le-**relach nichoach** isheh l-Hashem... **olat tamid** le-dorateichem petach **ohel mo'ed**..." (Shmot 29:41-42)

Hence, by offering either an **ola** or a **shlamim** - the efficacious reminders of Ma'amad Har Sinai - the individual reaffirms the covenant at Har Sinai of "na'aseh v'nishma" - the very basis of our relationship with God at Ma'amad Har Sinai.

[One could also suggest that these two types of korbanot reflect two different aspects of our relationship with God. The **ola** reflects "yirah" (fear of God), while the **shlamim** may represent "ahava" (love of God).]

Recall also that the last time Bnei Yisrael had offered **olot** & **shlamim** (i.e. before chet ha-egel) was at Har Sinai. But due to the sin of the Golden Calf, God's **shechina** had left Bnei Yisrael, thus precluding the very possibility of offering korbanot. Now that the mishkan is finally built and the **Shchina** has returned (as described at the conclusion of Sefer Shmot), God's **first** message to Bnei Yisrael in Sefer Vayikra is that they can once again offer **olot** & **shlamim**, just as they did at Har Sinai - at not only as a nation, but also as individuals.

This observation alone can help us appreciate why the very first topic in Sefer Vayikra is that of the voluntary offerings - of the korban **ola** & **shlamim**, and hence it makes sense that they would precede the obligatory offering of chatat & asham.

#### (B) KORBAN CHOVA - BACK TO CHET HA-EGEL

In contrast to the 'refrain' of 'isheh reiach nichoach' concluding each korban **nedava**, we noted that each korban

**chova** concludes with the phrase "ve-chiper alav ha-kohen... ve-nislach lo". Once again, we find a parallel to the events at Har Sinai.

Recall our explanation that Aharon acted as he did at "chet ha-egel" with the best of intentions; only the results were disastrous. With the **Shchina** present, any transgression, even should it be **unintentional**, can invoke immediate punishment (see Shmot 20:2-4 & 23:20-22). Nevertheless, God's attributes of mercy, that He declares when He gives Moshe Rabeinu the second "luchot", now allow Bnei Yisrael 'second chance' should they sin - i.e. the opportunity to prove to God their sincerity and resolve to exercise greater caution in the future.

We also find a textual parallel in Moshe Rabeinu's statement before he ascended Har Sinai to seek repentance for chet ha-egel: Recall how Moshe Rabbenu told the people:

"Atem **chatatem chata'a** gedola... ulai **achapra** be'ad **chatatchem**" (Shmot 32:30; read also 32:31-33).

Later, when Moshe actually receives the thirteen /midot ha-rachamim' on Har Sinai along with the second luchot (34:-9), he requests atonement for chet ha-egel:

"... ve-**salachta** le-avoneinu u-le**chatoteinu**..." (34:9).

This key phrase of the korban **chova** - "ve-chiper alav... ve-nislach lo" - may also relate to this precedent of God's capacity and willingness to forgive. The korban **chova** serves as a vehicle by which one can ask forgiveness for sins committed "b'shogeg" and beseech God to activate His "midot ha-rachamim" [attributes of mercy] to save them for any punishment that they may deserve.

Therefore, we may conclude that the korban **nedava** highlights the mishkan's function as the perpetuation of Ma'amad Har Sinai, while the korban **chova** underscores the mishkan's role as means of atonement for chet ha-egel.

#### WHO NEEDS THE 'KORBAN'?

With this background, one could suggest that the popular translation of korban as a sacrifice may be slightly misleading. Sacrifice implies giving up something for nothing in return. In truth, however, the 'shoresh' (root) of the word korban is k.r.v., 'karov' - to come close. Not only is the animal brought 'closer' to the mizbeich, but the korban ultimately serves to bring the individual **closer** to God. The animal itself comprises merely the vehicle through which this process is facilitated.

Therefore, korbanot involve more than dry, technical rituals; they promote the primary **purpose** of the mishkan - the enhancement of man's relationship with God.

In this sense, it becomes rather clear that it is the individual who needs to offer the "korban" - as an expression of his commitment and loyalty to his Creator. Certainly it is not God who needs to consume them!

For the sake of analogy, one could compare the voluntary offerings [the korban nedava] to a gift that a guest brings to his host.. For example, it is only natural that someone who goes to another family for a shabbat - cannot come 'empty handed'. Instead, the custom is to bring a small gift, be it flowers, or wine, or something sweet. Certainly, his hosts don't need the gift, but the guest needs to bring something. But the reason why they are spending quality time together is for the sake of their relationship. The gift is only a token of appreciation - nonetheless a very important act.

#### TEFILLA KENEGED KORBANOT

In closing, we can extend our study to help us better appreciate our understanding of "tefilla" [prayer before God].

In the absence of the Bet ha'Mikdash [the Temple], Chazal consider 'tefilla' as a 'substitute' for korbanot. Like korbanot, tefilla also serves as a vehicle through which man can develop and strengthen his relationship with God. It is the individual who needs to pray, more so that God needs to hear those prayers

As such, what we have learned about korbanot has meaning even today - as individual tefilla should embody **both** aspects of

the korban yachid: **nedava** and **chova**.

Tefilla should primarily reflect one's aspiration to come closer to God - an expression of the recognition of his existence as a servant of God. And secondly, if one has sinned, tefilla becomes an avenue through which he can amend the tainted relationship.

Finally, tefilla, just like the korbanot of the mishkan, involves more than just the fulfillment of personal obligation. Our ability to approach God, and request that He evoke His "midot ha-rachamim" - even should we not be worthy of them - should be considered a unique privilege granted to God's special nation who accepted the Torah at Har Sinai, provides an avenue to perfect our relationship. As such, tefilla should not be treated as a burden, but rather as a special privilege.

shabbat shalom,  
menachem

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#### FOR FURTHER IYUN -

A. In regard to the nature of the laws in Parshat Vayikra; even though they primarily focus on the details of what the **owner** must do with his korban, this section also details certain procedures that can be performed only by the kohen. Even though we may have expected to find those details in Parshat Tzav (that discusses the korbanot from the kohen's perspective), one could explain that these details are included here for the kohen's functions as 'shaliach' (emissary) of the owner. Ideally, the owner should bring the korban himself. However, in light of the events at chet ha-egel, God decided to limit this work to the kohanim, who were chosen to work in the mikdash on behalf of the rest of the nation (see Devarim 10:8).

B. Although korban mincha is not mentioned at Har Sinai, it may be considered a subset of the general ola category. Namely, the mincha may be the korban ola for the poor person who cannot afford to bring an animal. Note that the 'olat ha-of' is connected to korban mincha by a parsha stuma. The olat ha-of, too, is a special provision for one who cannot afford a sheep.

C. The two basic levels of kedushat korban explain why the ola precedes the shlamim in the discussion in our parsha. The greater the portion offered on the altar, the higher the level of kedusha:

- 1) Kodshei Kodashim - the highest level of kedusha:
  - ola**: cattle, sheep, and fowl.  
The entire korban ola is burnt on the **mizbeiach**.
  - mincha**: the five various ways to present the fine flour.  
The 'kmitza' (a handful) is burnt on the **mizbeiach**;  
The 'noteret' (what is left over) is eaten by the **kohen**.
- 2) Kodashim Kalim - a lower level of kedusha
  - shlamim**: cattle, sheep, and goats.  
The fat surrounding the inner organs go onto the **mizbeiach**.  
The 'chazeh ve-shok' (breast and thigh) go to the **kohen**, while the meat that remains may be eaten by the **owner**.

D. Leaving aside the difficulty in pinpointing the precise difference between sins requiring a chatat and those requiring an asham, it seems clear that a korban asham comes to encourage a person to become more aware of his surroundings and actions. For example, if one is unsure whether or not he sinned, his korban (asham talui) is more expensive than the korban chatat required should he have sinned for certain. The Torah demands that one be constantly and acutely aware of his actions at all times, so as to avoid even accidental wrongdoing.

E. Note that the phrase '**reiach nichoach**' does appear once in the second (korban **chova**) section (4:31), in the context of a **chatat** brought by a layman ('**me-am ha-aretz**').

The reason may lie in the fact that the layman may choose which animal to bring for his **chatat** - either a female goat ('**se'irat izim**') or a female lamb. Therefore, if he chooses the more expensive option - the goat - his offering bears some **nedava**

quality, thus warranting the description '**reiach nichoach**'.

Another difference between a lamb and a goat: is that a lamb has a fat tail, which prevents one from identifying the animal's gender from afar. Therefore, one looking upon this korban from a distance might mistake it for an **ola** (which is always male, as opposed to the layman's **chatat** which must be female). A goat, by contrast, has a thin tail, thus allowing one to easily determine the animal's gender and hence its status as a **chatat**. Therefore, by bringing a goat rather than a lamb, the sinner in a sense broadcasts his sin and repentance. This perhaps renders the **chatat** a nedava of sorts, in that the sinner sacrifices his honor in order to demonstrate the principle of repentance ('**lelamed derech tshuva la-rabim**').  
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#### F. ASHAM GEZEILOT (a mini-shiur)

The last korban dealt with in the parsha, korban asham, atones for three general categories of sins:

5:14-16 Accidental use of 'hekdeshe' - known as asham me'ilot;

5:17-19 When one is unsure if he sinned at all - known as an asham talui;

5:20-26 Several cases for which one brings an asham vadai.

Although all three categories require the transgressor to offer an asham, the final parsha (5:20-26) begins with a new dibbur! This suggests a unique quality latent in this final group. Indeed, the sins in this category all involve intentional transgressions (be-**meizid**) against someone else. The previous cases of asham, by contrast, are inadvertent sins (be-**shogeg**) against God.

It would be hypocritical for one who sins **intentionally** against God to bring a korban. The korban chova is intended for a person who strives for closeness with God but has inadvertently sinned. The obligation to bring a korban teaches him to be more careful. Why should the Torah allow one who sins intentionally against God the opportunity to cover his guilt? The mishkan is an environment where man develops spiritual perfection, not self-deception.

Why, then, would the Torah provide for a korban asham in cases of **intentional sin**?

This group, known as an 'asham gezeilot', deals with a thief who falsely avows his innocence under oath. The Torah grants the thief-perjurer atonement through an asham, but only after he first repays his victim with an added one-fifth penalty.

Why should a korban be necessary at all? The victim was repaid and even received a bonus. Why should God be involved?

The standard explanation is that the thief sinned against God by lying under oath. Although this is undoubtedly the primary reason for the necessity of a sacrifice, one question remains: why does he bring specifically an **asham**? All other instances of perjury require a **chatat** oleh ve-yored (see 5:4)!

A textual parallel between this parsha and a previous one may provide the answer. The parsha of "asham gezeilot" opens as follows:

"nefesh ki techeta, ve-**ma'ala ma'al b-Hashem** ve-kichesh be-**amito**..." (5:21).

This pasuk defines the transgression against one's **neighbor** as 'me'ila b-**Hashem**' [taking away something that belongs to God]! This very same phrase describes the first case - 'asham me'ilot', unintentional embezzlement of 'hekdeshe' (Temple property / see 5:14-16):

"Nefesh **ki timol ma'al b-Hashem** - ve-chata bishgaga..."

This textual parallel points to an equation between these two types of asham: unintentional theft of hekdeshe and intentional theft of another person's property. [Note that both require the return of the principal and an added penalty of 'chomesh'.]

The Torah views stealing from a fellow man with the same severity as stealing from God! From this parallel, the Torah teaches us that unethical behavior towards one's neighbor taints one's relationship with God, as well.

[See also Tosefta Shavuot 3:5!]

# Parshat Vayikra: Animal Sacrifice? The Shelamim

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

**This week we will look at two fundamental questions:**

1) Are sacrifices a concession or an ideal? Does Hashem allow them or demand them? Sources to be discussed:

- a) Rambam (Maimonides), Guide to the Perplexed 3:32
- b) Rambam, Guide 3:46
- c) Midrash VaYikra Rabba 22:8
- d) Ramban (Nahmanides), VaYikra 1:9

2) What is the Torah's attitude toward killing animals for food? Sources to be discussed:

- a) Bereshit (Genesis) 1:29-30 -- Mission statement I to humanity
- b) Bereshit 9:3-4 -- Mission statement II to humanity
- c) Bereshit 4:4 -- Hevel's sacrifice
- d) Bereshit 8:20 -- No'ah's sacrifice
- e) VaYikra (Lev.) 3 -- the shelamim I
- f) VaYikra 7 -- the shelamim II
- g) VaYikra 17 -- the shelamim III
- h) Devarim (Deut.) 12 -- slaughter for meat

## **SACRIFICES: IDEAL OR CONCESSION?**

Many of us have wondered about the purpose of the korbanot (offerings to Hashem, including animal sacrifices), especially from Hashem's end: Does He really want them? If so, why? If not, why does He command us to offer them?

## **THE RAMBAM: CONCESSION:**

In the Guide of the Perplexed 3:32, the Rambam begins his discussion of korbanot by observing that human nature cannot change overnight. In order for people to change, they must be gradually introduced to new situations and new rules. If suddenly presented with unfamiliar demands, they simply reject them. Hashem is aware of this, of course, so when He calls upon the newly freed Bnei Yisrael to become his "kingdom of priests and holy nation," He knows that He will have to transform the people gradually. Since the people are deeply entrenched in the idolatrous practices of the nations (see Ezekiel 18) of which they have become part -- Egypt in particular -- Hashem knows that transferring their theological loyalty from the gods they worship to Himself must be done gradually and smoothly to succeed. If the people are used to worshipping their gods by offering sacrifices, then the way to establish their permanent knowledge of and loyalty to Hashem is to have them sacrifice to Hashem instead of to their former gods. Of course, Hashem does not have much use for sacrifices Himself and would not have commanded them if He had His "druthers," but He is willing to accept them because He is patient and understanding of human frailties.

Lest we reject the Rambam's theory on the grounds that the Torah would not have gone to all the trouble of the great detail of the korbanot for such a paltry purpose, the Rambam offers an example to demonstrate that Hashem is willing to go to plenty of 'trouble' to allow for the people's weaknesses. When Hashem leads the people out of Egypt, He takes them the 'long way,' purposely bypassing the shorter route since it would lead through the land of the Philistines. Hashem sees that these people, slaves yesterday, cannot magically become warriors today and be willing to encounter the trained forces of a hostile nation -- they might just turn back in fear and return to Egypt. In the same way, the Rambam argues, Hashem knows that telling Bnei Yisrael to worship Him without sacrifices would be like telling us nowadays that we are not to pray or try in other ways to communicate with Hashem; instead, we are to worship Hashem solely by meditating on Him.

It is worth noting that VaYikra Rabba 22:8 records a point of view which seems to express the same idea as the Rambam expresses here.

## **THE RAMBAN: IDEAL:**

The Ramban (VaYikra 1:9) reports the Rambam's position, vehemently rejects it, and then articulates his own view. He reports, based on Guide of the Perplexed 3:46, that the Rambam believes that korbanot are intended only as a polemic against idol worship; for example, since the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Hindus worship sheep, rams, and cows respectively and therefore do not kill these animals, we are commanded to slaughter these very animals to our God to show our rejection of the veneration of these animals.

The Ramban's objections to the Rambam's idea:

1) The Torah records in many places that the korbanot create a "pleasing smell" when they burn; this clearly shows that Hashem is pleased by them and does not just tolerate them.

2) If the whole idea is to show to ourselves (and the world) that we reject these animals as gods, then the most direct way for the Torah to accomplish that would have been to command us to slaughter and eat these animals (something which their true worshippers would never do) -- not to slaughter these animals as \*sacrifices.\* Sacrificing these animals might lead people to believe that we \*agree\* that these animals represent the heavenly constellations of the lamb and ox, and that we are worshipping these constellations.

3) No'ah offers sacrifices when he emerges from the ark after the floodwaters subside. Since there are no Egyptians and Chaldeans yet in the world, the Rambam's theory cannot explain why Hashem seems pleased with the sacrifices. Hevel also offers a sacrifice, and certainly there are no idol worshippers to worry about at that time.

[Of course, it is possible to respond to some of these arguments in various ways. The Ramban's second objection to the Rambam's position seems especially weak, as the Ritva points out in Sefer ha-Zikkaron: the reason it would not have been enough for the Torah to command us to eat the above animals is because, as the Rambam says in 3:32 (which the Ramban does not cite -- he cites only from 3:46), the people were entrenched in the practice of sacrificing and could not be deflected from it. That being the case, Hashem decided that as long as they were sacrificing, they might as well use the opportunity for a polemic against idol worship -- i.e., by sacrificing the animals worshipped by others. The Ritva and Abravanel also deal with the Ramban's other questions.]

The Ramban himself offers two explanations for korbanot: one mystical, which we will leave for others to explain, and one symbolic: Bringing a korban communicates to the bringer that in truth, he himself ought to suffer the fate of the korban for his sin. He leans on the animal ("semikha"), using the same hands as performed the sin; he confesses his sin with the mouth that may have committed it; he burns the innards and kidneys because his own innards and kidneys guided him to his lusts (the kidneys are seen in Tanakh as the seat of the moral conscience); he burns the legs because his own legs brought him to sin; he sprinkles the blood to show that his own blood should be spilled to expiate his sin.

As attractive as some aspects of this explanation may seem, it is also highly problematic for some sacrifices. While it may explain the expiatory korbanot, such as the hattat and asham -- brought to attain forgiveness for sins -- it certainly does not explain the shelamim, for example, which is brought to express joy, celebrate, mark the creation of a covenant, and the like. One who brings a shelamim may have been motivated by the joy of graduating college, for example; this has nothing to do with sin (unless you are somewhat right-wing, of course) and requires no expiation. Perhaps even more convincing, the celebrant \*eats\* the shelamim! Certainly, if the korban is meant to represent me and my suffering the death penalty, it is particularly strange that I am allowed to enjoy the flesh which is supposed to represent my own executed corpse!

## **KILLING FOR FOOD:**

We now move to our second issue this week: What is the Torah's attitude toward killing animals for food? Although Parashat VaYikra, which is all about sacrifices to Hashem, may seem like an unlikely place to focus on this issue -- after all, the topic is killing animals to offer them to Hashem, not killing them to feed ourselves -- we will see where the issue comes up in our context.

If you stretch back to Bereshit perek (chap.) 1 you will recall the "Mission statement" with which Hashem charges humanity: He created them be-tzelem Elokim -- in the image of Hashem -- meaning that they are gifted with the potential necessary to fulfill the goals of creating ("be fruitful and multiply"), controlling ("fill the land and conquer it"), and behaving morally (represented by the prohibition to kill animals for food). Although it has recently become popular to see tzelem Elokim as a description of the inherent \*nature\* of a human being, from the way tzelem Elokim is used by the Torah it appears that that is only half the story. Tzelem Elokim is a \*demand\*, not a description; it is a state we are commanded to achieve. [For details I will be happy to forward to you the shiur on Parashat Bereshit.]

Before very long, humanity sinks deep into evil, failing the tzelem Elokim mission completely. Hashem, seeing that the tzelem Elokim project has fallen apart, destroys all of the failed tzelem Elokims (after all, the whole purpose of their existence is to reflect Hashem; if they fail that, they have no purpose) except the one person who shows some promise: No'ah. Eventually, the floodwaters subside and No'ah emerges to reestablish human and animal life on dry land. Hashem marks the recreation of the world and humanity in particular by commanding No'ah with "Mission statement II" in Bereshit 9. This mission statement largely duplicates the first one, with several marked differences -- including that permission is given to kill animals for food!

As we discussed in Parashat Bereshit and Parashat No'ah, Hashem lowers His standards after the flood. He 'realizes' that humanity as a whole cannot maintain the high standards He had originally set, so He relaxes the standards and begins the process of selecting individuals to found a nation which will accomplish the mission properly. But, significantly, Hashem has not simply thrown out the old goals completely. Originally, humanity was to show respect for life by not killing it for food. Now, although He permits No'ah to kill animals for food, Hashem insists that their blood may not be eaten, since blood, throughout Tanakh (the Bible), represents life or the life force. Eating blood, symbolically, means consuming the life-force/soul, and this is something humans can never do.

Lest the animal rights activists among us jump to the conclusion that the Torah's original intent is that humans never ever kill animals for any purpose, it is worth noting that even during the period in which the higher standard was in force, killing animals was permitted for sacrificial purposes. Thus Hevel brings an animal sacrifice to Hashem (4:4), who is pleased with the offering and rejects Kayyin's offering of fruits; and thus No'ah brings animal sacrifices to Hashem just after exiting the ark (8:20), before he has been given permission to eat animals. Of course, the bringers of these sacrifices do not eat any portion of the offering -- the Torah explicitly calls No'ah's offering an "ola," a totally fire-consumed offering, and it is likely that the same is true of Hevel's korban. Why is it OK to kill

animals for korbanot but not for food? Perhaps because serving Hashem is more important than eating meat, so taking animal life is justified for the former but not for the latter. Apparently, life can be used for some instrumental purpose, but the instrumental purpose must be very important.

### **THE SHELAMIM:**

We now come to Parashat VaYikra and the korban shelamim, which will connect with the issue of killing for meat. First we will talk about what a shelamim is and some of the details of how it is brought.

### **THE NAME:**

What does "shelamim" mean? I have found enough possibilities to convince me that no one is really sure:

- 1) From "shalom" (peace): it makes everyone happy because everyone gets a piece of it (i.e., Hashem, the kohanim, and the owner of the korban) -- Tosefta Zevachim 11:1, Sifra, Nedava 16:2.
- 2) From "shalom" (hello): it is like a greeting to Hashem, like saying "shalom."
- 3) From "shalem" (complete): you bring it when \*you\* feel shalem, whole, complete, sound, as opposed to when, for example, you are in mourning -- Sifra, Nedava 16:3.
- 4) From "shalem" (complete): you bring it to join with Hashem in a meal, and this gives you completion.
- 5) From "shilem" (to pay): the korban repays Hashem for blessings -- Rashbam 3:1.
- 6) From Akkadian "salimu," (covenant): as we will see, the shelamim is often brought to seal or celebrate a covenant.
- 7) From Akkadian "sulmanu" (gift): the korban is a gift to Hashem.

### **THE PURPOSE:**

What is the purpose of the shelamim? Since it is a voluntary korban, under what circumstances would it be appropriate to volunteer a shelamim? VaYikra perek 7 offers several possibilities:

- 1) A "neder": It is worth noting that when Hazal use the term 'neder,' they mean that one has simply promised to bring a korban. When Tanakh uses the term 'neder,' it often is referring to a case where a person made a "deal" with Hashem. The person promises to give something to Hashem if Hashem does something for the person. Examples:
  - a) Bereshit 28:20-22 -- Ya'akov, on his way to Lavan's house, dreams a vision of Hashem speaking to him from atop a ladder with angels ascending and descending. Hashem promises to protect Ya'akov and return him safely home. When Ya'akov awakens the next morning, he builds an altar, pours oil on it to consecrate it, and then makes a deal with Hashem: If Hashem will come through on the promises He has made to Ya'akov in the dream, Ya'akov will in turn give various gifts to Hashem.
  - b) Yonah 1:16, 2:10 -- Yonah is commanded by Hashem to go to Ninevei, a non-Jewish city, and warn the people to repent lest Hashem destroy them. Yonah refuses the command and boards a ship headed elsewhere. Hashem storms the seas, the ship is endangered, it is discovered that Yonah is the cause of the storm, and he is tossed overboard. In order to gain Hashem's favor, the sailors make "nedarim" to bring shelamim if Hashem saves them. Later, in the belly of the fish, Yonah scoffs at the sailors' promises, declaring that they are not truly faithful to Hashem, but that he, Yonah, will indeed keep his neder. The implication is that Yonah, too, has made a deal with Hashem, promising to bring a korban if Hashem saves him.
- 2) Nedava -- designating a specific animal as a korban.
- 3) Toda: a thanksgiving offering. According to Hazal, the Toda is not really included in the shelamim category, because it has different requirements. But in VaYikra 7, the toda appears subsumed or closely related to the shelamim, so we will mention it here. Hazal say that it is brought under four circumstances:
  - a) return from a sea voyage
  - b) return from a desert journey
  - c) recovery from a serious illness
  - d) release from prison

What all of these have in common is that they are happy occasions. The shelamim is a korban brought to express joy, to celebrate, to thank. For example, we find that there is a shelamim (or several) at the following events in Tanakh:

- 1) When covenants are made:
  - a) Bereshit 26:30 -- between Yitzhak and Avimelekh
  - b) Bereshit 31:54 -- between Ya'akov and Lavan

c) Shemot 24:5, 11 -- between Hashem and Bnei Yisrael at Sinai

2) Occasions of individual or national celebration:

- a) Shemot 18:12 -- Yitro offers olot and zevahim to Hashem and then shares the meal with the elders.
- b) BeMidbar 10:10 -- shelamim are to be brought on days of joy, hagim, Rosh Hodesh.
- c) Devarim 27:7 -- when the people cross into Israel for the 1st time, they are to bring shelamim.

Since the "ola," the completely burned offering, and the shelamim are both brought voluntarily, why would one decide to bring a shelamim as opposed to an ola? The shelamim is eaten by the common people: the kohanim receive certain parts of it and the rest of the meat is eaten by the owner of the korban and his invitees. Only the helev (certain types of fat) is burned on the Mizbe'ah as an offering to Hashem. On the other hand, the ola is completely burned on the mizbe'ah; no part of it is eaten, so it does not provide meat for a feast to celebrate the joyous occasion. This does not mean that the ola is brought only under non-joyous circumstances -- VaYikra 22:17-19 and other examples show that an ola can be the form of a neder or nedava, which can certainly be expressions of joy. Other sources complete the picture and show that the ola is a multi-purpose korban which can be motivated by many different occasions or feeling. But the ola does not provide a feast, while the shelamim does.

As a general point, it is worth noting that the shelamim and the ola both appear in the Torah prior to VaYikra; this means that these types of korbanot were known beforehand and were not 'invented' by the Torah. Before the Torah, there were two multipurpose korbanot -- the ola and shelamim -- the ola being especially suited to serious occasions, such as in order to achieve forgiveness for sins, and the shelamim especially suited to celebrations. The hattat and asham ("sin-offering" and "guilt-offering"), on the other hand, are 'new' korbanot which the Torah introduces for expiation of certain sins. We may cover these korbanot next week.

### **OFFERING A SHELAMIM (5 easy steps):**

The purpose of bringing a shelamim is to express good feelings: joy, thanks, celebration, completion of an agreement, achievement of a goal. The details of the bringing of the korban hold important lessons for us, and here we begin to focus on the question with which we began -- the Torah's attitude toward eating meat. What is the actual process of bringing a normal shelamim?

1) Semikha: The owner lays his hand on the animal. This is understood in different ways by different commentators:

- a) To transfer sin to the korban
- b) To show ownership of the korban
- c) To identify with the korban

The possibility that seems most likely is that it signifies ownership. This is shown by the fact that there is no semikha for communal korbanot (except in two cases, which are explainable), since no one in particular owns the korban; it belongs to the community. Also, semikha cannot really be to transfer sin, since the shelamim requires semikha even though it has nothing to do with expiation for sin.

2) Shehita (slaughtering): can be done by anyone, not necessarily a kohen.

3) Zerikat ha-dam (sprinkling blood on the mizbe'ah).

4) The korban is skinned and cut apart; the kohen puts the helev etc. on the fire on the mizbe'ah.

5) The kohen takes his portion of the korban and eats it; the owner takes his portion and eats it.

### **THE FAT OF THE MATTER:**

Before we look at the evidence for what the Torah thinks of eating meat, we will consider for a moment the helev, the fat offered to Hashem. The helev is fat located under the skin and around organs. It is thick and easy to remove, unlike 'shuman' (permitted fat), which is entwined with the muscles. Paradoxically, modern sources tell us that helev is inedible, or at least not usually eaten, although it can be used in cooking and for other purposes (Rabbi Shalom Carmy mentioned to me that since it is prohibited to eat helev, heretics used to take candles made of helev and eat them -- on Yom Kippur, when all eating is forbidden anyway -- in order to show their total disrespect for the Torah).

The fact that helev is not really edible, or not much good to eat, raises a question: If the reason the helev is forbidden to eat is because it is supposed to be offered to Hashem, and the reason why things are offered to Hashem is because they are the best, how can helev qualify, since it is either inedible or at least not the choice part by any standard?

Perhaps things are offered to Hashem not because of their \*practical\* worth, but for what they symbolize. Helev and blood are both offered to Hashem even though helev is inedible and blood is certainly not normally drunk for enjoyment and not considered the 'best part' of the animal. We will get to the blood in a moment, but as far as helev goes, it seems to represent \*richness\* in the ways it is used in Tanakh:

1) Bereshit 45:18 -- Paro invites Yosef to bring his family down to Egypt, where he will provide them with the "helev ha-aretz" -- the "fat of the land," the richness of the land.

2) BeMidbar 18:12 -- The kohanim are presented by Hashem with the "fat of the wine and fat of the oil," the best or richest parts.

3) Devarim 32:14 -- Hashem warns the people that they will eventually become fat and complacent when they consume all of the good Hashem will offer them in Eretz Yisrael, including the "helev kilyot hita" -- the fat of the kernels of grain.

## **BLOOD AND THE SHELAMIM:**

Note that the shelamim section in VaYikra 3 ends with a prohibition to eat blood and helev. Note that this prohibition appears again in the shelamim section in VaYikra 17! And the blood prohibition appears *\*again\** in connection with the shelamim in VaYikra 17. Why does the blood prohibition seem to dog the shelamim in particular? Perhaps it is because the shelamim is the korban from which the common people can eat, so there is the most likelihood for confusion and mistakes here (i.e., the inadvertent ingestion of blood).

But there may be another reason as well. If one of the primary thrusts of the shelamim, especially as opposed to the ola, is to provide animal meat for a feast, then when the Torah cautions us not to eat blood, it is doing the same thing it did when it permitted meat to No'ah: "Yes, you can eat meat, but do not eat the blood!" The blood represents life, as these prohibitions in VaYikra repeatedly confirm explicitly -- and blood must not be eaten. What VaYikra adds is that blood spilled in the context of a korban must be offered to Hashem. This requirement can be understood in many ways, as we will see.

## **LIMITED LOCATIONS:**

VaYikra 17 prohibits slaughter except at the Ohel Mo'ed. But it remains unclear if the prohibition refers to sacrificial slaughter or even to profane slaughter. Does the Torah mean that if I want to offer a korban shelamim, I must bring it to the Ohel Mo'ed and offer it to Hashem there and not on my backyard altar, or does it mean that I cannot slaughter an animal in my backyard for any reason, even for meat, and can get meat only by making my animal a korban shelamim at the Ohel Mo'ed?

This question is debated by R. Akiva and R. Yishmael in Hullin 16b. R. Akiva says that the Torah in VaYikra 17 was only demanding that all *\*korbanot\** be brought to the Ohel Mo'ed; as the Torah warns in VaYikra 17, the people had been bringing sacrifices to demons (which they understood were represented by goats and are therefore referred to as *'se'irim'*). The best way to prevent this was to demand that all sacrifices be brought at the Ohel Mo'ed under the supervision of the kohanim, who would presumably help insure that the sacrifice was headed for the right God. R. Yishmael, on the other hand, says that the Torah was prohibiting profane slaughter completely. The permission that had been given to No'ah long ago to eat meat was being severely limited. From now on, meat could be obtained only by offering the animal as a shelamim at the Ohel Mo'ed. It is clear that R. Yishmael also is working with the reason given in the Torah -- that the people were sacrificing to demons; he differs with R. Akiva only in his claim that the Torah prohibited all slaughter, not just home-performed sacrifice, because he feels that even profane slaughter might lead to sacrifices to the demons.

Or perhaps not -- perhaps R. Yishmael focuses on the ethical question with which we began: Is it OK to kill for food? Originally, the Torah said no (to Adam); to No'ah, it said yes ("but don't eat the blood!"); now, the Torah takes a middle position, permitting meat but only if provided by a sacrifice to Hashem. An echo of this position is perhaps also discernible in the fact that when the Torah warns the people not to slaughter animals in VaYikra 17, it says that if they do so, "dam shafakh" -- one who does so has spilled blood, has murdered. This is clearly an ethical/moral issue, not connected (or not obviously so) to the fear that slaughter might become pagan sacrifice. If so, then what the Torah is doing in VaYikra 17 is calling the Bnei Yisrael to a higher moral standard than the rest of humanity; everyone else can slaughter for meat, but we may do so only if the slaughter is justified as a form of avodat Hashem, service of Hashem -- as a korban.

In any event, everyone agrees that profane slaughter eventually becomes permitted, as Devarim 12 clarifies. But, as we might expect, R. Akiva and R. Yishmael interpret Devarim 12 differently. R. Akiva, who believes that profane slaughter has always been permitted and that VaYikra 17 only prohibited private sacrifice, understands that Devarim 12 is telling Bnei Yisrael that when they perform profane slaughter, they must do so through the process of shehita, while during the entire period of their wanderings in the desert, they were permitted to simply stab the animal to death. R. Yishmael, on the other hand, understands that Devarim 12 is telling the people that they can now engage in private slaughter (although sacrifices can be brought only at the Mishkan/Mikdash).

This makes for a fascinating disagreement: R. Akiva believes that Devarim 12 represents a moral step up -- now the people cannot simply stab the animal to death and must instead kill it through shehita, which many understand as the most painless available way to kill the animal, while R. Yishmael may believe that it is a moral step down -- now the people can return to killing for meat and no longer must subsume this act in an act justified as divine worship. R. Yishmael's most likely rationale is that once the people conquer the land, settle it, and spread out over hundreds of miles -- the reality assumed by Devarim 12 -- it becomes simply impractical to demand that all slaughter be done only in the Mishkan/Mikdash. On the other hand, when Bnei Yisrael are travelling through the desert, with everyone grouped around the Mishkan fairly densely, the ideal of making every meat meal a sacrifice to Hashem is achievable. [Of course, one could also say -- as the Rambam does in the Guide -- that the prohibition of slaughter/sacrifice in the desert was repealed later by the Torah because only during the earlier period were the people prone to bringing sacrifices to the demons. Later on they overcame these habits and therefore were permitted to slaughter at home.]

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**SEFER VAYIKRA - INTRODUCTION**

Most of us find Sefer Vayikra rather boring - at least until we reach Parshat Kedoshim.

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**WHAT MAKES SEFER VAYIKRA UNIQUE**

Before we begin our study, we must first clarify how (and why) Sefer Vayikra is 'structurally' different from the other books of Chumash.

In general, when we study Chumash, we encounter two basic types of passages. They can either be:

- 1) **narrative** - i.e. the ongoing 'story' of Chumash; or
- 2) **commandments** - 'laws' that God commands Bnei Yisrael

Up until Sefer Vayikra, Chumash has essentially been narrative, i.e. the story of how God chose the Jewish nation, took them out of Egypt and gave them the Torah. For example, Sefer Breishit begins with the story of Creation and continues with the story of God's 'bechira' (choice) of Avraham Avinu and his offspring to become His nation. The few mitzvot that we do find in Sefer Breishit (e.g. 9:1-7, 32:32) are presented as part of that ongoing narrative.

Similarly, Sefer Shmot begins with the story of the Exodus and Bnei Yisrael's subsequent journey to Har Sinai. Surely, we find numerous mitzvot in Sefer Shmot; however, each set of laws is imbedded within the ongoing story. For example, the laws of Pesach (12:14-20) are presented as part of the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, and the Ten Commandments (& the laws of Parshat Mishpatim / see 20:1-23:19) constitute an integral part of the story of the covenant between God and His nation at Ma'amad Har Sinai. [Note from 24:3-7 how those laws become the Sefer Ha-brit.]

Sefer Vayikra is radically different, as it not only begins with a set of commandments [mitzvot], the entire book (with the exception of two short narratives) is a collection of various mitzvot! In other words, the ongoing narrative of Chumash that began in Sefer Breishit and continued with Sefer Shmot **does not** continue in Sefer Vayikra. Instead, that narrative resumes in Sefer Bamidbar - with the story of how Bnei Yisrael prepare to leave Har Sinai (after the Mishkan has been built). Sefer Vayikra appears to stand alone, as it constitutes a book of laws, spanning a wide range of laws (mostly relating to the Mishkan and "kedusha" [holiness]).

As Sefer Vayikra is a book of laws (and not a story), our shiurim will focus on which specific types of laws are found in this book, as well as the significance of their order and progression.

**THE LONE NARRATIVES**

Before we discuss the mitzvot, we should mention the two narratives that we do find in Sefer Vayikra:

The first is that of the mishkan's dedication ceremony - chapters 8 thru 10, including the story of the seven day "milu'im" ceremony and the special korbanot that were offered on the 'eighth day' ["yom ha'shmini"], followed by the story of the tragic death of Nadav and Avihu. In our study of that narrative, we will show how that story actually 'belongs' at the end of Sefer Shmot, while suggesting a reason why it was recorded in Sefer Vayikra instead.

The second is the brief story of the "mekallel", who was executed for blaspheming God (see 24:10-23). We will show how that story actually forms an introduction to a certain set of mitzvot. In other words, when we do find a narrative in Sefer Vayikra, we will explain how and why it was included to provide us with a better understanding of the commandments that follow that story.

**TORAT KOHANIM**

If our above assumption (that Vayikra is essentially a book of laws) is correct, then it is very understandable why Chazal refer to Sefer Vayikra as "Torat Kohanim" [the law guide for the priests]. At first glance, it certainly appears that most of its laws are targeted for those who officiate in the Bet ha-Mikdash. [See first Ramban on Vayikra.]

Likewise, this also explains why the laws in Vayikra should progress in thematic order, and not necessarily in the chronological order of when they were first given.

[Note how the laws (given earlier to Moshe) in Parshat Behar (see 25:1) are recorded much later than the laws given to Moshe from the ohel mo'ed in Parshat Vayikra (see 1:1).]

Even though the name 'Torat Kohanim' implies that the mitzvot of Sefer Vayikra will relate primarily to mishkan related laws, nonetheless we do find numerous laws that discuss other topics (e.g. Parshat Kedoshim). Furthermore, we will also find many other laws regarding the mishkan in other books of Chumash, especially in Sefer Bamidbar. Therefore, it would be difficult to conclude that Sefer Vayikra deals exclusively with mishkan related laws.

So what makes Sefer Vayikra unique?

To answer that question, we will search for a central theme that will thematically connect all of the mitzvot in Sefer Vayikra and explain their progression.

**THE THEME OF SEFER VAYIKRA**

To accomplish this task, we will follow a methodology that begins by first identifying 'units'. Usually, each set of mitzvot can be categorized as belonging to a single topic - thus forming a 'unit'. After identifying these units, we will discuss the logic of the progression from one unit to the next. By doing so, we hope to be able to answer such questions as:

- Why does the sefer begin with the laws of korbanot?
- Why are the korbanot outlined twice (in Vayikra **and** Tzav)?
- Why does the book abruptly switch topics in the middle of Acharei Mot, from the mishkan to 'arayot' [in chapter 18]?
- Why does the sefer include Parshat Kedoshim, which has little - if anything - to do with korbanot, but a lot to do with the laws that were already discussed in Parshat Mishpatim?
- Why does Vayikra conclude with the laws of 'shmitta' and 'yovel', that discuss how we are not permitted to work the land once every seven years?

In the shiurim to follow, we will attempt to answer these questions (and more).

**A SPECIAL BOOK**

In closing, one general remark concerning the relationship between Sefer Vayikra and our study of Chumash thus far, and hence the importance as the 'central' book of the 'Five Books'.

In Sefer Breishit we saw how God entered into a covenant with Avraham Avinu in order that his offspring ["zera"] would become a nation dedicated to the representation of His Name. To facilitate that goal, God entered into a covenant with the Avot, promising both a special Land ["aretz"], and a long historical process to become that nation (i.e. 'brit bein ha-btarim' / see Br. 15:6-18).

Sefer Shmot began as God began His fulfillment of that covenant by redeeming Bnei Yisrael from Egypt, and giving them the Torah at Sinai - i.e. the laws that would help establish this special nation. The unfortunate events at chet ha-egel constituted a 'breach', raising the question if this special relationship could continue.

Fortunately, God declared His attributes of mercy, thus enabling Bnei Yisrael an avenue for repentance, as reflected in their collective effort to construct of the mishkan. The return of God's Shechina to the mishkan at the conclusion of Sefer Shmot served as a climax, for it showed that this covenantal relationship had returned to its original level.

It is precisely at this point - when God's Shechina returns - where Sefer Vayikra begins. Before Bnei Yisrael continue their



journey towards Eretz Canaan (as will be discussed in Sefer Bamidbar), God commands them with an additional set of mitzvot that will not only provide a guide for how they can use the mishkan, but will also facilitate their becoming God's special nation - a "mamlechet kohanim ve-goy kadosh" (see Shmot 19:5-6).

In this sense, Sefer Vayikra constitutes more than simply a technical list of the various rituals performed in the mishkan. As we will show, the laws of Sefer Vayikra will focus on the very nature of Am Yisrael's relationship with God, at both the individual and national level.

In our shiur this week on Parshat Vayikra, we will focus on the first unit of laws in Sefer Vayikra, that deals primarily with 'korbanot' [sacrifices], to show how those laws relate to this general theme.

Till then, shabbat shalom,  
menachem

## FOR FURTHER IYUN - A FEW IMPORTANT CLARIFICATIONS

### A. RAMBAN'S SHITTA

Despite our observation that Sefer Vayikra is basically a book of **mitzvot**, it is important to note that a brief narrative introduces each set of mitzvot.

For example, most mitzvot begin with the classic header:

"And God spoke to Moshe saying..."

["va-yedaber Hashem el Moshe leimor.."]

[see 4:1; 5:14,20; 6:12 etc.]

Sometimes, God directs His dibbur to Aharon, as well:

"And God spoke to Moshe **and** Aharon saying" (see 11:1, 13:1).

In some occasions, the opening phrase may even tell us **where** these mitzvot were given to Moshe. Two classic examples:

1) In the ohel mo'ed -

"And God called to Moshe and spoke to him from the **ohel mo'ed** saying: speak to Bnei Yisrael..." Vayikra (1:1);

2) At Har Sinai -

"And God spoke to Moshe at **Har Sinai** saying..." (25:1).

[the first pasuk of Parshat Behar/ see also 7:37-38, 16:1, 26:46, and 27:34.]

Therefore, 'technically speaking,' one could still consider Sefer Vayikra 'narrative-based,' and perhaps even a continuation of Sefer Shmot. In other words, Parshat Vayikra opens with the **first** dibbur that Moshe received from the ohel mo'ed, once the mishkan was completed (see shiur on Parshat Pekudei); and then records the mitzvot Hashem issues from that point onward.

[This is more or less Ramban's shitta, who maintains 'yesh mukdam u-me'uchar ba-Torah'. See the lengthy Ramban on Vayikra 25:1 (till the end)!]

In truth, however, the two examples mentioned above could demonstrate quite the opposite, i.e. that the mitzvot in Sefer Vayikra are not presented in chronological order. According to 1:1, the first set of mitzvot is transmitted from the **ohel mo'ed**, and thus this dibbur must have occurred only **after** the mishkan was built. However, the mitzvot in chapter 25 were given on **Har Sinai** (see 25:1), and therefore must have been given **before** the **ohel mo'ed** (1:1) was built! [See also 26:46 & 27:34.]

Further proof may be drawn from Parshat Tzav. Although, as mentioned, the first set of mitzvot in Sefer Vayikra was given from the **ohel mo'ed** (chapters 1->5, see 1:1), the Torah tells us that God taught Moshe the next set of mitzvot (chapter 6->7 / Parshat Tzav) on **Har Sinai** (see 7:37-38) - **before** the mishkan was built! Nevertheless, Sefer Vayikra juxtaposes them, evidently because of their **thematic** connection (i.e. they both discuss the laws of korbanot).

[Note that Ramban on 7:38 seems to disagree. Iy"h, his shitta will be discussed in greater detail in our shiur on Parshat Tzav.]

### B. SIGNIFICANT HEADERS

As noted above, a brief header introduces each set of mitzvot.

In most cases, these introductions make no mention of **where** these mitzvot were given to Moshe, only that "God spoke to Moshe saying..."

When the Torah does offer this information, the commentators will always find significance latent within the Torah's specification in this regard. (For example, see 25:1 - Rashi, Ramban, & Chizkuni.)

Similarly, certain parshiot in the middle of the sefer, such as the laws of Yom Kippur (16:1/ "acharei mot..."), were given in the wake of a certain event. These laws must have been given to Moshe only **after** the mishkan was constructed, while other laws may have actually been given earlier, on Har Sinai, but recorded only later on in Sefer Vayikra.

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYIKRA • 3 NISAN 5780 MARCH 28, 2020 • VOL. 27 NO. 20

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### A Special Calling

*"And He called..." (1:1)*

It's been a while since I was in New York City. But whenever I go there, I always think of the verse in *Tehillim*, Psalms, that says, "*And the land, He has given to the sons of man.*" The avenues that stretch to the limit of vision, the feeling of the human dynamo that is New York. I was walking along Central Park East, just by 62nd Street, and I saw some road works and realized how they can build skyscrapers of more than a hundred stories. In London and in Jerusalem, dig into the ground and you will find soil with some rocks. In Manhattan, try and dig into the ground and your spade will bounce back with a hefty ring as it hits solid black granite. And it was that solid granite that has been hewn to form the two memorials to the nearly three thousand people who were murdered by the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11th 2001.

As you approach the memorial you see all the names of all those who fell victim. Each name is engraved on a metal wall surrounding two vast chasms in the ground where the buildings stood; into those chasms pours an enormous and continual four-sided waterfall, and at that bottom of those chasms are smaller abysses into which the water pours, and of those you cannot see the bottom. It seems like a flood of tears constantly pouring into the depths of the world. What makes the monument so impressive is its sheer scale. I tried to take a video of it, but when I played it back it conveyed nothing of the feeling that I experienced. There are some things you just can't film, you can't video. Scale is not just size. It is the yardstick of my relationship to the creation. When you film something, you lose that point of reference, even if you include a human being to indicate scale.

In our world, the ultimate measurement is the measure of a man. So many of the measurements of the Torah and our Sages relate to the human being – the *tefach* – a hand's-breadth; the *amah* – the distance from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger, the *zeret* – the length of the small finger. There is a way that Hashem speaks to us that is beyond language; there is a language of the emotions, the 'still small voice' that speaks to us as a language of connection, of *chiba*. As Rashi mentions when commenting on the first word in this week's Parsha, *Vayikra*, "And He called..." – 'an expression of affection.' Rashi says that the angels call to each other using this phrase. But maybe the only creation to whom Hashem 'calls' – the only creation that is attuned to that special broadcast of the emotions – is Man.

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# TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

## Vayikra : Shabbat 16:22

### Why Eight Days?

*“What is Chanuka?”*

The *gemara* asks this question after a halachic discussion of the Rabbinical mitzvah to light the Chanuka lamps for eight days. Rashi explains the *gemara*’s question to mean: “For *which* miracle was Chanuka established as a holiday (i.e. the miraculous military victory or the miraculous eight days that the Menorah remained lit in the Beit Hamikdash using one day’s amount of oil)?”

The *gemara*’s answer emphasizes the military miracle, which may perhaps indicate the principal basis for enacting the mitzvah. However, regardless of the reason, the mitzvah to light lamps for Chanuka for eight days seems puzzling. If the reason is to commemorate the miraculous military success, then one day should be appropriate (like Purim). And if the reason is to recall the miracle of the Menorah, lighting for seven nights would seem logical. There was enough pure oil for it to naturally burn for the first day, so that the miracle was only for seven days! (Last week, regarding the Rabbinical ban on reading by the light of a lamp on Shabbat, we addressed the topic of “revealed reasons for a mitzvah.”)

Here are eight possible answers, among more than a hundred that the commentaries offer:

1. They divided one night’s oil into eight portions. Miraculously, each portion lasted an entire night.
2. The Greeks ransacked the Temple many days in search of oil to defile. Despite their strength and numbers they overlooked one flask. A few weak, battle-weary Jews found it immediately.
3. Seven days commemorate the miracle of the oil, and one day commemorates the miracle that a few weak Jewish soldiers defeated the mighty Greek legions.
4. Wanting the oil to last, they made the wicks one-eighth of the normal thickness. Nevertheless, the flames burned just as brightly as if the wicks had been the normal thickness.
5. The golden Menorah in the Temple was ritually impure. So were all the Jewish soldiers, having come in contact with death on the battlefield. Therefore, they were forced to make a temporary earthenware Menorah, because earthenware is more resistant to impurity. But earthenware is porous, and when it’s new it absorbs a small but significant part of any oil put in it. Therefore, one night’s oil for a gold Menorah was not sufficient for an earthenware Menorah because some of the oil is lost to absorption.
6. In one account, the text reads “and there wasn’t enough (oil) it to burn *even* one day...”
7. Chanuka occurred in the year 3622 (139 BCE). Calendar calculations and other historical sources indicate that the 25th of Kislev, the first day of Chanuka, fell on Shabbat that year. Therefore, they needed to light the Menorah before sunset of Friday night, and consequently needed a little more than a night’s-worth of oil.
8. The commandment to light the Menorah with pure oil is written in the Torah (Leviticus, chapters 23 and 24) immediately after the commandment to observe the Succot festival for 8 days (7 days of Succot followed by Shemini Atzeret). Our Sages saw this as a Divine hint that Chanuka should be for 8 days.

• *Shabbat 21b*

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# Q & A

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## Questions

1. Who does the word "*eilav*" in verse 1:1 exclude?
2. Name all the types of animals and birds mentioned in this week's Parsha.
3. What two types of sin does an *olah* atone for?
4. Where was the *olah* slaughtered?
5. What procedure of an animal-offering can a non-kohen perform?
6. Besides the fire the *kohanim* bring on the altar, where else did the fire come from?
7. At what stage of development are *torim* (turtledoves) and *bnei yona* (young pigeons) unfit as offerings?
8. What is *melika*?
9. Why are animal innards offered on the altar, while bird innards are not?
10. Why does the Torah describe both the animal and bird offerings as a "satisfying aroma"?
11. Why is the term "*nefesh*" used regarding the flour offering?
12. Which part of the free-will *mincha* offering is burned on the altar?
13. The Torah forbids bringing honey with the *mincha*. What is meant by "honey"?
14. When does the Torah permit bringing a leavened bread offering?
15. Concerning *shelamim*, why does the Torah teach about sheep and goats separately?
16. For most offerings the *kohen* may use a service vessel to apply the blood on the *mizbe'ach*. For which *korban* may he apply the blood using only his finger?
17. Who is obligated to bring a *chatat*?
18. Where were the remains of the bull burned while in the wilderness? Where were they burned during the time of the *Beit Hamikdash*?
19. What two things does a voluntary *mincha* have that a *minchat chatat* lacks?
20. What is the minimum value of a *korban asham*?

*All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.*

## Answers

1. 1:1 - Aharon.
2. 1:2, 14; 3:12 - Cattle, sheep, goats, turtledoves (*torim*), and doves (*bnei yona*).
3. 1:4 - Neglecting a positive command, and violating a negative command which is rectified by a positive command.
4. 1:5 - In the *Mishkan* Courtyard (*azarah*).
5. 1:5 - Ritual slaughter.
6. 1:7 - It descended from Heaven.
7. 1:14 - When their plumage turns golden. At that stage, *bnei yona* are too old and *torim* are too young.
8. 1:15 - Slaughtering a bird from the back of the neck using one's fingernail.
9. 1:16 - An animal's food is provided by its owner, so its innards are "kosher." Birds, however, eat food that they scavenge, so their innards are tainted with "theft."
10. 1:17 - To indicate that the size of the offering is irrelevant, provided your heart is directed toward G-d.
11. 2:1 - Usually, it is a poor person who brings a flour offering. Therefore, G-d regards it as if he had offered his *nefesh* (soul).
12. 2:1 - The *kometz* (fistful).
13. 2:11 - Any sweet fruit derivative.
14. 2:12 - On Shavuot.
15. 3:7 - Because they differ regarding the *alya* (fat tail). The lamb's *alya* is burned on the altar but the goat's is not.
16. 3:8 - The *chatat*.
17. 4:2 - One who accidentally transgresses a negative commandment whose willing violation carries the *karet* (excision) penalty.
18. 4:12 - a. Outside the three camps  
b. Outside Jerusalem
19. 5:11 - *Levona* and oil.
20. 5:15 - Two *shekalim*.

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# SPECIAL FEATURE

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## The Frog Virus?

— *Thoughts on the current coronavirus pandemic*

by Rabbi Reuven Laufer

If anyone would have told you a half-a-year ago that in a few months, China — the first, second or third (depends on who you ask!) most powerful nation in the world — would be closed up, that their economy would be in freefall and that their citizens would be dying by the thousands — not only that, but that the *whole world* was being sucked into the problem involuntarily — the only plausible scenario that would have made any sense to explain it would have been some kind of a war. Six months ago the only conceivable reason for being able to imagine such a thing happening would have been, at worst, a nuclear war, or, at "best," a chemical war between the mightiest nations in the world. And yet all of the above — plus more — has been achieved without any warfare — no nuclear, chemical or biological attacks — it has all happened because of the "flu." It sounds absolutely nonsensical. But it is our present reality. It sounds absolutely improbable — completely beyond imagination. And yet it is true.

No one can possibly say for sure why this is happening and why it is happening right now. But I keep coming back to a thought from Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch in his commentary on the Torah. He asks one of those questions that are so simple and, yet, I never seem to think of them! He asks: Why, during the second of the Ten Plagues, did G-d send frogs, of all things? After all, frogs are not very threatening. Rabbi Hirsch answers that that is exactly the reason — frogs are ridiculous! They don't hurt anyone, they are not dangerous, and yet they brought the mightiest empire in the world at the time to its knees. Frogs! Why? To show the Egyptians the absurdity of believing that they are masters over their own strength and power. The Torah calls such a philosophy, "*kochi v'otzem yadi*" — "my strength and the might of my hand," see Deuteronomy 8:17. And yet, comical frogs managed to dismantle the might of the Egyptian empire — and all without having to go to war.

It seems to me that what is happening now is eerily similar. The whole world is grinding to a halt — economies all over the world are being enormously damaged, people are dying all over the world, millions of people are being put into isolation and quarantine — and all because of this "flu." It is as if this has become the Plague of Frogs of our time. Maybe, just maybe, G-d is letting us know that He's in charge. Not us. Yes, human beings can destroy the world many times over with their awesome nuclear power and their even larger egos. But right now it is not nuclear fallout that everyone is concerned about. It is finding the right vaccination and treatment for a virus that should not seem to be affecting us — at least not in this horrific manner. And yet it is.

And all this is happening in the month of Adar — a month that symbolizes our complete and absolute reliance on G-d. And it is the month that comes right before the Festival of Passover — the festival that is referred to as the Festival of Freedom.

Who knows? If we listen carefully enough, could that be the footsteps of the Mashiach that we can hear?

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# PARSHA OVERVIEW

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The Book of *Vayikra* (Leviticus), also known as *Torat Kohanim* – the Laws of the Priests – deals largely with the *korbanot* (offerings) brought in the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting). The first group of offerings is called *korban olah*, a burnt offering. The animal is brought to the Mishkan's entrance. For cattle, the one bringing the offering sets his hands on the animal. Afterwards it is slaughtered and the *kohen* sprinkles its blood on the altar. The animal is skinned and cut into pieces. The pieces are arranged, washed and burned on the altar. A similar process is described involving burnt offerings of other animals and birds. The various meal offerings are described. Part of the meal offering is burned on the altar, and the remaining part eaten by the *kohanim*. Mixing

leaven or honey into the offerings is prohibited. The peace offering, part of which is burnt on the altar and part is eaten, can be either from cattle, sheep or goats.

The Torah prohibits eating blood or *chelev* (certain fats in animals). The offerings that atone for inadvertent sins committed by the *Kohen Gadol*, by the entire community, by the prince and by the average citizen are detailed. Laws of the guilt-offering, which atones for certain verbal transgressions and for transgressing laws of ritual purity, are listed. The meal offering for those who cannot afford the normal guilt offering, the offering to atone for misusing sanctified property, laws of the "questionable guilt" offering, and offerings for dishonesty are detailed.

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## LETTER AND SPIRIT

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*Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Herschman*

### Unblemished Service

One of the first laws we learn about offerings is that the animal must be *tamim* – “whole.” An animal which has a defect – a “*ba'al mum*” – may not be brought to the altar. This includes an external defect that will not heal with time. Even though the animal may be healthy and hearty, a tiny defect such as a pierced eyelid or defective cartilage in the ear is sufficient to render the animal unfit.

Later we will learn of similar defects that disqualify a *Kohen* from serving in the Beit Hamidkash. What is the message conveyed by these criteria?

The prophet Malachi's fiery condemnation of the offering of blind, lame and sick animals gives us a straightforward answer. (Malachi 1:8-12) Malachi censures the priests as representing the table of G-d as detestable and something of which one would not wish to partake. In their eyes, the Sanctuary did not deserve to receive the best and the freshest – the vitality that man has to offer. Instead, they degraded the Sanctuary to the level of a hospital, a home for the crippled, founded solely for those whose lives have been shipwrecked. To them, religion became a shelter for life's castoffs, who can find no other place.

A similar rebuke is given by the prophet Hoshea, where the priests would await misfortune and grief of their “believers.” (Hoshea 10:5). It was not the joyous and happy ones, but the blind, the lame, and the weak who would go on pilgrimages to the house of G-d. To them, religion was a consolation for the suffering and the disadvantaged, and had little to contribute to a vibrant and active life.

Not so! Religion is *not* the opiate of the masses!

Our offerings must be whole, without blemish. We bring our complete (*tamim*) selves to the service of G-d. We turn to Him not only in distress, but also in joy; not only in illness, but also in health; not only in fear, but also in tranquility. Indeed, the active joyous and healthy state is the primary condition for our relationship with G-d!

In these trying days, where fear and illness has swept the entire globe, it is all too obvious Whose hands our lives are in. We turn to G-d, weakened by insecurity, panic, and illness. And we should. But when this pandemic subsides, please G-d, may it be speedily, may we remember that our primary service of G-d is with our full health and communal vibrancy.

*Sources: Commentary, Vayikra 1:2*

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## ASK!

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Debra from NJ asked:

Dear Rabbi,

*I'm at an early stage of considering becoming observant in Jewish lifestyle and practices, but something is on my mind that I think holds me back. If I go ahead and follow Jewish Orthodoxy, will I be looked down upon as a "second class citizen" by others who were born observant? Maybe this shouldn't bother me, but it does. Thanks.*

Dear Debra,

I can't promise you what exact reaction you'll get from every single Orthodox Jew, but I can tell you, from my experience, that the correct Jewish attitude towards one who decides to become Torah observant is the accepted attitude of the observant community everywhere.

Rabbi Abahu said in the Talmud, "In a place where *ba'alei teshuva* (returnees to Torah observance) stand, not even one who was always completely righteous can stand." Rabbi Abahu bases this well-known teaching on a verse in the writings of the Prophet Isaiah (57:19). A different Talmudic Sage disagreed with Rabbi Abahu and said that one who never transgressed is first (as one might very well think should be the case based on logic).

Nevertheless, the Rambam rules according to the view of Rabbi Abahu that the newly observant is more lofty (Laws of Repentance 7:4): "Our Sages stated, 'In the place where *ba'alei teshuva* stand, even the completely righteous are not able to stand.' The level of *ba'alei teshuva* transcends the level of those who never sinned at all, since they overcome their inclination to transgress more so than a righteous person who never sinned."

Rashi explains that the power of the returning Jew is so great that no one is worthy of standing (in a spiritual sense) "in front of him" or along with him in his unique spiritual place.

Another explanation for the higher level of the *ba'al teshuva* is given by Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler. He enlightens us on the apparent paradox of why one who returns after transgressing occupies a greater place of honor than one who was righteous his entire

life. The purpose of the Creation — and especially Mankind — is to express the glory of the Creator. The righteous do this by always fulfilling the will of the Creator by themselves, so to speak. On the other hand, one who sins and then repents and returns to the way of God reveals another dimension of Divine glory. He shows that with the acceptance of merciful assistance from God to help begin his return, he is able to make a great effort to successfully conquer his previously unbeatable inclination to transgress.

Another way to help understand this teaching of Rabbi Abahu is the following: One who eats on the day preceding Yom Kippur is attributed as if he fasted for two days. Why? After a person eats on one day, it is often even harder for him to refrain from this activity of eating on the next day. He is accustomed to eating. In a similar fashion, since a *ba'al teshuva* has eaten from "forbidden fruits" by transgressing, it makes refraining from sin that much harder. Therefore, when he repents, does *teshuva* and returns to the way of God, he stands in a place where a person who never transgressed cannot reach. (Torah Temimah)

A personal observation, if you don't mind. As one who has taught and interacted with *ba'alei teshuva* over the years, there are numerous times when I have heard the same reaction from students who have returned after going to eat Shabbat meals with host families who have been life-long observant:

"What a surprise! I am a *ba'al teshuva* (or in the process of becoming one) and look up to someone who is an FFB (*frum*-from-birth) as my spiritual superior. However, my hosts told me that they love to invite *ba'alei teshuva* into their homes since it greatly inspires them to improve their spiritual growth when they see how a Jew has changed to become observant, often with some degree of self-sacrifice. *They* look up to *me* for inspiration!"

I have no doubt, however, that in truth they all look up to *each other*. They all help one another in every way possible in their ongoing efforts to follow the ways of the Torah and share in much happiness and success.



# Parshiot Vayikra-Tzav: The Korban Minchah

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

## I. OVERVIEW OF SEFER VAYYIKRA

Sefer Vayyikra is devoted to the subject of Shekhinah - God's Presence among the Jewish People. The Sefer can be broken up, in broad strokes, into the following sections:

Ch. - Topic

1-7: Korbanot (offerings)

8: Investiture of Kohanim

9-10: Inauguration of the Mishkan

11-15: Various Sources of Impurity

(which render one unfit to participate in Mishkan-related activities)

16: Purification of the Mishkan (Yom haKippurim)

17: Laws Related to Offerings

18-20: Sanctity of the People

21-22: Sanctity of the Kohanim

23: Festivals (and their "Mishkan" aspect)

24: Additional Offerings

25: Sanctity of the Land

26: Covenantal Blessing and Warning

27: Sanctified Objects

Parashot Vayyikra and Tzav overlap two of these topics (Korbanot and Investiture of the Kohanim); we will focus on the first of these - and on the first seven chapters of Vayyikra.

## II. VAYYIKRA & TZAV: DIFFERENT PRESENTATIONS

Although we have listed the first seven chapters under the title "Korbanot", there is a significant difference in the presentation of the Korbanot in Parashat Vayyikra (Chapters 1-5) and that in Parashat Tzav (Chapters 6-7) (which, at a cursory glance, seem to be somewhat redundant). Whereas the presentation in Vayyikra comes from the non-Kohanic perspective - i.e. from the point of view of the "bringer" of the offering - the presentation in Tzav is Kohanic in function. Each of the Korbanot is introduced with the phrase \*Zot Torat ha...\* - "this is the instruction regarding [the offering] of ...". In Parashat Vayyikra, the emphasis is on what types of circumstances would motivate the bringing of an offering, what type of animal (or grain) is brought etc. In Tzav, the focus is on the procedure of the officiant Kohen once the offering has been brought.

## KORBANOT: DEFINITIONS AND CATEGORIES

The word Korban is traditionally translated as "sacrifice". Regardless of what the original meaning of "sacrifice" was (it probably comes from a combination of Latin words - meaning "to make holy"), its common usage bears little - if any - resemblance to the ideology - or etymology - of a Korban. In conventional English, a sacrifice is something given up in exchange for nothing - but on behalf of a noble cause (e.g. defense of country, raising children etc.) The word Korban, on the other hand, comes from the Hebrew root "K\*R\*B" - meaning "to come close". A Korban is a vehicle for Man to come close to God. For purposes of this shiur, we will either refer to these offerings as Korbanot (plural of Korban) or as "offerings".

There are, generally speaking, two types of Korbanot: Zevachim (lit. "slaughtered") and Menachot (grain offerings). Although we will focus on the Korban Minchah, a brief overview of Zevachim is in order - and it will help us understand the phenomenology of the Korban Minchah with greater insight.

## ZEVACHIM: AN OVERVIEW

There are four basic types of Zevachim. (My thanks to the Judaic Seminar list, from whose archives I copied this synopsis)

**1 OLAH:** "ascend", seems to refer to this sacrifice's distinctive feature, that the offering is completely burnt on the altar (except for the hide, which is given to the participating priest), thus it totally "ascends" to God. Only male animals or doves or pigeons (male or female) are acceptable.

**2. SH'LAMIM:** from "shalem" or "shalom", presents many possible interpretations. It may express a sense of "well-being"; "wholeheartedness" with God; a gift of "greeting" to God; or perhaps "completeness" (altar, donor and priest all sharing in it). Male or female animals are acceptable but not birds. Certain fat and internal organs are placed on the altar by the kohanim. The remainder, almost the whole animal, is permitted to be eaten. In Vayyikra Chapter 7, the Torah ordains that any pure person is permitted to



partake of the Sh'lamim, thus allowing the donor to share it with family and invitees. Eating the Sh'lamim is permitted during the day and night of the offering and the day following and was not restricted to the sanctuary precincts. The "todah" (thanksgiving offering) - a Sh'lamim subdivision - is an exception in that it is only allowed to be eaten the day of its offering and the night following. Kohanim receive the breast and the right thigh.

An individual's olah and Sh'lamim are voluntary offerings. Although their names may connote certain purposes, and expiation was mentioned in connection with the olah, the reasons why one may bring an olah are not provided. [Note that Hazal do provide several explanations for the 'Olah - notably, that it is a form of expiation for neglected Mitzvot Aseh.]

**3. HATTAT:** "sin-offering", refers only to unintentional sins, generally those that had they been done intentionally are culpable of "karet". Carelessness and inadvertence indicate laxness as concerns one's responsibilities; such transgressions defile the sanctuary. The hattat, bringing purification and expiation to the sanctuary, is a mandatory part of the unintentional sinner's repentance process. With the exception of the Asham brought for withholding testimony, intentional sins can not be expiated by means of a sacrifice.

Four classes of hattat, varying according to the offender's status and without reference to the particular transgression, are itemized - those of:

- a) the Kohen Gadol;
- b) the whole community of Israel (explained by the sages as based on a high court directive);
- c) the Nasi (including the king);
- d) any individual.

From the sanctuary perspective the first two classes reflect a graver transgression, impacting the spiritual welfare of the nation, and require an elaborate ritual involving a young bull, a blood-sprinkling ritual on the parokhet veil in the Ohel Moed and upon the incense altar as well as upon the bronze altar, and burning the complete bull on the ash heap outside the camp. The latter two classes of hattat lack these stringencies. After all, the Nasi is not an official religious leader. He brings a male goat while the private individual brings a female goat or ewe. Male Kohanim eat from these latter offerings within sanctuary precincts.

Three particular transgressions of omission that require a hattat offering for expiation are also listed:

- a) one who withheld testimony despite having heard an adjuration to testify;
- b) various cases of being impure in a span of forgetfulness (and entering the sanctuary or eating sacred items); and
- c) inadvertently violating an oath.

Depending on financial ability, one either brings a female sheep or goat, two birds or a measure of flour. In the latter case, oil and frankincense are not added, reflecting the somber nature of the offering.

**4. ASHAM:** "guilt-offering" of a ram, referring to three specific classes of violations:

- a) asham me'ila - an unintentional misappropriation for personal use of sanctuary property. The violator makes full restitution and pays a penalty of one fifth in addition to the sacrifice
- b) asham taluy - the contingency asham - when one has a doubt if he committed an unintentional transgression that had he been certain he did transgress unintentionally would require a hattat and
- c) asham g'zelot - a trespass against God in that one lied under oath, defrauding his fellow man concerning a deposit, loan, stolen article, found article, etc.

When the defrauder chooses to repent, he restores the lost capital to the owner, adds a fifth as penalty and brings an asham sacrifice. Although the sin was intentional, when the violator came forth himself to repent by making restitution and paying a penalty, he is allowed the expiation sacrifice. Bamidbar 5:5-10 contains a supplement to this asham legislation.

Before addressing the fifth type of Korban - the Minchah - we will look at two approaches among the Rishonim as to the meaning behind Korbanot (specifically Zevachim).

### III. RAMBAM AND RAMBAN ON KORBANOT

Rambam, in his philosophic work Moreh Nevuchim (The Guide for the Perplexed), devotes a good deal of discussion to the topic of Ta'amei haMitzvot (the rationale behind the Mitzvot). Most of the third (and final) section of the Guide contains a study of many of the ritual Mitzvot and prohibitions found in the Torah. Rambam's general approach (unlike that of Rashi as noted in the beginning of this week's special reading, Bamidbar 19) is that every Mitzvah is driven by a specific and deliberate rationale. Much of the thinking behind ritual prohibitions (e.g. Sh'a'atnez, meat & milk), according to Rambam, can best be understood against the background of Canaanite pagan practice at the time of the Torah. Since the pagans practiced such rituals as cooking a kid in its mother's milk, performing cult-worship in clothes made of a wool-and-linen mix etc., the Torah prohibited these practices to separate us from them and their idolatrous practices.

In his discussion of the rationale behind Korbanot, Rambam similarly follows a path of reasoning guided by historic considerations:

"It is impossible to go from one extreme to the other suddenly. Therefore man - according to his nature - is not capable of abandoning suddenly that to which he was deeply accustomed ... As it was then the deeply-ingrained and universal practice that people were brought up with to conduct religious worship with animal sacrifices in temples ... God in His wisdom did not see fit to command us to

completely reject all these practices - something that man could not conceive of accepting, according to human nature which inclines to habit ... He therefore left these practices but transformed them from their idolatrous associations ... that their purpose should be directed toward Him. Thus, He commanded us to build a sanctuary for Him with an altar to His name and offer sacrifices to Him... In this way idolatry was blotted out and the great foundation of our faith - the existence and oneness of God - was established. This was accomplished without confusing people's minds by prohibiting the worship they were accustomed to and which alone they were familiar with ... God doesn't choose to change man's nature with a miracle ... As sacrificial worship is not a primary intention ... only one Temple has been appointed ... in no other place is it allowed to sacrifice ... to limit such worship within bounds that God did not deem it necessary to abolish it ... because of this the prophets often declared that the object of sacrifices is not very essential and that God can dispense with them..."(Guide III:32). [It should be noted that this approach stands in stark contrast to that taken by Rambam in the Mishneh Torah. Scholars have attempted to harmonize these approaches with varying degrees of success.]

While this approach has a certain attraction - especially in assuaging our modern sensibilities which are easily ruffled by the picture of animal offerings - it carries with it considerable difficulties. First of all, this places the entire scope of Korbanot in the realm of a temporary exigency born out of a regrettable situation. The implication of this is that Korbanot do not belong to the realm of the ideal - and, as such, have no place in our vision for the Messianic future. There are two additional challenges to this approach, voiced by Ramban. After quoting Rambam's approach, Ramban challenges:

"But these words are mere expressions, healing casually a severe wound and a great difficulty, and making "the Table of the Eternal polluted", [as if the offerings were intended only] to remove false beliefs from the hearts of the wicked and fools of the world, when Scripture says that they are "the food of the offering made by fire, for a pleasing odor." Moreover, [if the offerings were meant to eliminate] the foolish [ideas] of the Egyptians, their disease would not thereby be cured. On the contrary, it would increase the cause of sorrow, for since the intention of the above-mentioned wicked ones was to worship the constellations of the sheep and the ox, which according to their opinion possess certain powers [over human affairs], and which is why they abstain from eating them in deference to their power and strength, then if these species are slaughtered to the Revered Name, it is a mark of respect and honor to [these constellations]. These worshippers themselves were in the habit of so doing, as He has said: "And they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices unto the satyrs," and those who made the [golden] calf sacrificed to it. Now the Rambam mentions that the idolaters used to sacrifice to the moon on the days of new-moon, and to the sun when it rose in a particular constellation known to them from their books. The disease of idolatry would surely have been far better cured if we were to eat [these animal-deities] to our full, which would be considered by them forbidden and repugnant, and something they would never do.

"Furthermore, when Noah came out of the ark with his three sons, there were as yet no Chaldeans or Egyptians in the world, yet he brought an offering, which was pleasing to God, as concerning it Scripture says: "And the Eternal smelled the pleasing odor"... Yet there was as yet not the slightest trace at all of idol-worship in the world... The Scriptural expression concerning the offerings is "My food which is presented unto Me for offerings made by fire, for a pleasing odor unto Me" (Bamidbar 28:2). Far be it that they should have no other purpose and intention except the elimination of idolatrous opinions from the minds of fools.

"It is far more fitting to accept the reason for the offerings which scholars (Ibn Ezra?) say, namely that since man's deeds are accomplished through thought, speech and action, therefore God commanded that when man sins and brings an offering, he should lay his hands upon it in contrast to the deed [committed]. He should confess his sins verbally in contrast to his [evil] speech, and he should burn the inwards and the kidneys [of the offering] in fire because they are the instruments of thought and desire in the human being. He should burn the legs [of the offering] since they correspond to the hands and feet of a person, which is analogous to the blood in his body. All these acts are performed in order that when they are done, a person should realize that he has sinned against his God with his body and his soul, and that "his" blood should really be spilled and "his" body burned, were it not for the loving-kindness of the Creator, Who took from him a substitute and a ransom, namely this offering, so that its blood should be in place of his blood, its life in place of his life, and that the chief limbs of the offering should be in place of the chief parts of his body. The portions [given from the sin-offering to the priests], are in order to support the teachers of the Torah, so that they pray on his behalf. The reason for the Daily public Offering is that it is impossible for the public [as a whole] to continually avoid sin. Now these are words which are worthy to be accepted, appealing to the heart as do words of Agadah. (Commentary on the Torah: Vayyikra 1:9)

In summary, whereas Rambam views Korbanot as a historical exigency, Ramban sees them as [close to] ideal, reflecting man's obligation or need to vicariously offer himself on the altar - the image of which will surely stir him to repentance. As we explained earlier (in the shiur on Parashat Vay'chi this year), the act of Semikhah (laying the hands on the animal immediately prior to slaughtering it) is the vehicle through which the person transfers his "energy" to the animal, thus effecting the substitute-offering.

Although there are some theological and philosophical (as well as historical) difficulties with this approach, there is one which comes directly from our text. How does Ramban explain a Korban Minchah - which cannot possibly constitute a human substitute and where the law of Semikhah does not apply?

Besides this problem, there are several textual "flags" in the Torah's commands regarding the Korban Minchah which we will address.

#### IV. KORBAN MINCHAH

A Minchah, meaning "tributary gift" to God, is the fifth type of Korban. Although in other parts of Tanakh the term "Minchah" is applied to offerings of both agricultural produce and animals (B'resheet 4:3-4; Sh'muel I 2:15-17), in Korbanic legislation it strictly refers to grain offerings. Generally, it is comprised of semolina wheat (solet) and olive oil with some frankincense spice (levonah) added. It could be offered in several varieties: raw, oven-baked in either a thick or thin preparation, or fried either on a griddle or deep-fried in a pan. A fistful is burnt on the altar and the remainder eaten by male priests within sanctuary precincts.

The laws of the Minchah are delineated in Vayyikra, Chapter 2 - and later, from the Kohanic perspective, in 6:7-11. [It is recommended that you read these sections before continuing].

There are several textual anomalies in this section:

1) Unlike the first chapter, which describes the "Korban Olah" (and later sections describing the other Zevachim), the section on the "Korban Minchah" is introduced with the phrase "v'Nefesh ki Takriv". A "Nefesh" (which means soul in Rabbinic Hebrew) means "a person" in Biblical Hebrew. The specific orientation of the word is "life-force", as we see in Vayyikra 17:11, "The Nefesh of all flesh is

in the blood". Why is the Minchah uniquely described as being brought by a Nefesh?

2) The "Kometz" (fistful) of the Minchah which is burned on the altar is called an \*Azkarah\* - commemoration. What is this commemoration and what is being remembered?

3) In 2:11, the Torah prohibits a leavened Minchah - or the use of any leavening or sweetening agent on the altar. Why is Hametz to be distanced from the Mikdash?

4) Within the context of the Korban Minchah, the Torah commands us to salt every Minchah - with the \*Melach B'rit Elohekha\* (The salt of the covenant of your God - 2:13). What is the significance of salt - specifically within the context of the Korban Minchah?

There are two other questions, both related to the issue of Hametz:

5) Although the Torah forbade the use of leavening in preparing a Minchah, we are commanded to offer a communal Minchah on Shavuot composed of two loaves (known as Minchat Sh'tei haLechem - specifically made of Hametz (Vayyikra 23:17). Why the exception?

6) There is one other exception to the Hametzless-Minchah rule: the loaves which accompany the Korban Todah (a subset of Sh'lamin). In Vayyikra 7:12-13, the Torah commands us to bring (40) loaves as an accompaniment to the Korban Todah (thanksgiving offering) - and ten of them must be Hametz! Again - why the exception? (See M. Menachot 5:1, where these two are presented as the only two exceptions.)

## V. RAV BIN-NUN'S APPROACH

Regarding the sh'tei halechem, I'd like to share the synopsis of an approach developed by R. Yo'el Bin-Nun. The complete thesis is found in Megadim 13:25-45. This synopsis was put together by Shalom Holtz for the Virtual Beit Midrash of Yeshivat Har Etzion:

The key difference between Hametz and Matzah lies in how sophisticated the wheat has become through production. Hametz is wheat in its most complex form. It is the goal of the wheat grower and the final stage to which the wheat-growing process can be taken. Matzah, on the other hand, is bread in its most basic form, at the beginning of the bread-baking process. These physical characteristics of Hametz and Matzah shed light on several mitzvot which govern their consumption, including the prohibition of Hametz on Pesach.

Because of its simple nature, Matzah is considered "lechem oni," bread of poverty. A poor person, one who cannot afford to bring the wheat to its most advanced form of Hametz, bakes Matzah. The Israelites are commanded to eat matzot and maror, together with the korban Pesach, in order to remember the poverty and slavery they experienced in Egypt.

It would seem more appropriate that with the redemption from Egypt would come a commandment to eat Hametz. Just as the Matzah has symbolized the Israelites' state of poverty and enslavement, Hametz would be an appropriate symbol of their newly-obtained freedom and prosperity, for Hametz is the food of the wealthy. However, the instructions for the days which commemorate the period immediately following the exodus commands exactly the opposite: not only a commandment to eat Matzah but also a ban on Hametz. "Throughout the seven days unleavened bread shall be eaten; no leavened bread shall be found with you, and no leaven shall be found in your territory (Shemot 13:7)." What, then, is behind this prohibition and the parallel obligation?

Matzah symbolizes that the exodus from Egypt is only the beginning of the redemption process. After the night of the korban Pesach, the Israelites are not fully redeemed. Matzah, bread at the beginning of the process of its production, serves as a reminder that the exodus is just the beginning of a journey, a long hard road through the desert, with the goal far in the distance.

The process which begins at the exodus culminates in two other major events: the giving of the Torah and the entrance into the Land of Canaan. The mitzva of bikkurim, the offering of the first-grown fully-ripe fruits, commemorates both of these events in Jewish history. The holiday marking the beginning of the harvest of the wheat crop, Shavuot, falls out on the same date as the giving of the Torah, the sixth of Sivan. A major component of the ceremony of the offering of the bikkurim, which commemorates the arrival in the Holy Land, is mikra bikkurim, the recitation of Devarim 26:5-10. These verses constitute a declaration of thanks for a successful crop grown in the Land of Israel. The mitzva of bikkurim, which commemorates the dual conclusion of the redemption process, includes a positive commandment regarding Hametz. The meal-offering brought with the bikkurim, known as minchat shtei ha-lechem, is an offering of two loaves of leavened bread. This sacrifice of Hametz on Shavuot represents the completion of the process begun on Pesach, which was symbolized by the matzot.

The "maggid" section of the Haggada is centered on the recitation of the midrashic interpretation of mikra bikkurim. However, the reading is limited to the first verses, which focus on the history of Am Yisra'el:

"My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down to Egypt and sojourned there, few in number. He became there a great mighty, and populous nation. The Egyptians dealt ill with us and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard labor. And we cried out to Hashem, the God of our fathers, and God heard our voice and saw our affliction and our toil and our oppression. And God took us out of Egypt with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm, and with great terror and with wonders." (Devarim 26:5-8).

The last verses, which contain the expressions of thanks: "And He brought us to this place, and He gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the first fruit of the land which You, God, have given me" (ibid., 9-10) are not recited on the night of the Seder. The selection of this section of the Torah for maggid is a reminder of the nature of the Seder night and of Pesach in general. Pesach commemorates the beginning of the process of redemption whose conclusion is symbolized by the bikkurim. On Pesach we remember that the exodus was only a beginning, and to do this we eat Matzah. Similarly, we recite only those verses within mikra bikkurim which pertain to the process of redemption. We leave out the verses pertaining to the final arrival in Eretz Yisra'el as a reminder that on Pesach, at least, the process has just begun.

## VI. ANOTHER APPROACH TO HAMETZ

I would like to propose another understanding of Hametz and the rationale behind the prohibition of Hametz both on Pesach and in Menachot. This will also explain the other text anomalies pointed out above.

Along with Rav Bin-Nun's take on Hametz, positing it as representative of the completion of a process, there is another, more basic reality about Hametz and about what it may represent.

Although on a molecular level there is certainly change which takes place in flour and water - that change is not visible (in a short time period) to the naked eye. Hametz, on the other hand, is the very soul of radical change. Flour and water, baked without leaven, can remain in that flat state (Matzah) for a long time and nothing much would change in the makeup of that bread. Once leaven is introduced, rapid change takes place - change which also introduces rapid entropy and mutation. Take a piece of Hametz and look at it several weeks later - the same leaven which caused it to rise and become glorious and airy - has introduced the mold which makes it inedible. Hametz represents immediate and radical change.

This explains why the Torah places such stringent prohibitions on the use of Hametz on Pesach. Although we might consider that Pesach is a time of change (from slavery to nobility, from darkness to a great light etc.), a quick look at the text of the Torah will give us a very different picture.

Throughout the Exodus narrative, we are reminded that the merit by which we were redeemed was an ancient covenant - going back to B'resheet 15 and the B'rit Bein haB'tarim (Covenant between the pieces). The very essence of Pesach is timelessness - that the B'rit was only dormant, not dead and that its time had come to be fulfilled. There is no room for Hametz on Pesach, because the celebration and commemoration of Pesach is the historical bond which we share with our ancestors going all the way back to the Exodus - and several hundred years before that. Indeed, Pesach can act as the model for the future Redemption because the absence of Hametz allows the experience to remain unchanged and alive.

We can explain the Sh'tei haLechem on Shavu'ot in this light. Although we are accustomed to thinking of Shavu'ot as the commemoration of the Giving of the Torah, this association is not made anywhere in the T'nakh (the earliest source is the Book of Jubilees, an apocryphal work from the first two centuries BCE). Within the context of the Torah, Shavu'ot is purely an agricultural festival, commemorating the beginning of the wheat harvest.

Unlike Pesach, which represents the timeless nature of Jewish (meta-)history, the harvest season is a time which, by definition, we wish to see pass. It would be counterproductive (and, by definition, impossible) to have every day be the beginning of the harvest - it is specifically the change from growth, to harvest, to plowing etc. which causes the greatest blessings to be realized in the field. Hence, the offering brought on Shavu'ot is specifically Hametz - we are celebrating this particular time and its passage.

## VII. BETWEEN ZEVACHIM AND MENACHOT

We can now revisit our earlier questions about the prohibition of Hametz in Menachot and the textual anomalies in Parashat Menachot.

The thesis here is that unlike Zevachim which (following Ramban) represent Man's desire to have a one-time "altar experience", a Minchah represents Man's yearning to stand in God's presence at all times. This is the sentiment expressed by David:

One thing I asked of Hashem , that will I seek after: to live in the house of Hashem all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Hashem , and to inquire in His Temple" (T'hilim 27:4).

It is not just the "Adam" (person) who brings a Minchah - it is the "Nefesh", the essence of the person, that brings this offering in his attempt to come - and stay - close to God; to appease Him and enjoy His Presence. However, since the individual cannot practically stay in the Mikdash, in front of the altar and he must (sadly) depart - he leaves a piece of this offering behind, to commemorate not only his visit, but his yearning to stay. That is why the Kometz (fistful) is called an Azkarah - it commemorates his visit (almost, if you will, like signing a guest book).

Although it has been a number of years since I nestled in the safety of the Beit Midrash in Har Etzion, that experience is something which has a timeless component. I return there in my mind often and maintain those years as a series of unyellowed, fresh snapshots. I share this perception - which we all have in our souls with regards to some place or person in our past - to illustrate the ideology of the Minchah and the hopes of the person offering it. The endeavor of the Minchah is an experience which the Makriv (person bringing the offering) would like to have bronzed in time. His brief stand in the holiest of places, in front of the altar, in God's Presence, is a moment out of time which (hopefully) lasts forever. As such, there is absolutely no room for Hametz in the composition of a Minchah - it represents the fleeting, the temporary, the passing event.

Salt, on the other hand, plays the exact opposite role. Where Hametz mutates, salt preserves. Salt is called the Melach B'rit (salt of the covenant) because just as salt preserves meat for a long time, the B'rit is preserved (and preserves us) forever. The Minchah, which represents Man's desire to ever and always be standing "there", is salted in order to represent that timelessness.

We now come to the one other exception to our Hametz-rule: Lachmei Todah - the loaves which accompany the Korban Todah.

The Korban Todah is not brought by someone who just feels gratitude; it is brought by someone who was in some sort of danger and was saved. The Gemara (Berachot 54b) states: There are four [circumstances in which a person] must give thanks. [They are:] those who travel by sea, those who travel through a desert, someone who was imprisoned [or taken captive] and freed - and a sick person who was healed. (The B'rakhah known as "Birkat haGomel" is recited today in lieu of that Korban).

Unlike a conventional Korban Sh'lammim, which might be brought as a demonstration of goodwill (see above), the Korban Todah is brought in direct response to a potentially tragic situation which was averted by the grace of God. There is every reason to introduce Hametz here - because this is a situation which the person bringing it would not want to see repeated - it is not a "snapshot in time" which is cherished, rather a horrible possibility which we would never want to experience again.

[Note that only 10 of the loaves are Hametz, whereas the other 30 are not. Perhaps the idea is that the person bringing it was in one

of the four dangers mentioned (sea, desert, prison, illness) - so that 1/4 of the loaves are Hametz.]

Compare the Lachmei Todah with its "sister-Minchah" - the \*Lachmei Eil Nazir\*. When a Nazir completes a successful term of N'zirut (see Bamidbar 6), he brings an offering which includes a ram - and the ram is accompanied by 40 loaves. Here, however, all 40 are Matzah - no Hametz at all. According to our thesis, this is easy to understand. Much as the Nazir is returning to the "real world", he likely sees the term (30 days or more) of N'zirut as an idyllic period of spiritual cleansing and sanctity - which he would like to preserve. Again, there is no room for Hametz here.

#### **VIII. V'ARVAH L'Hashem ...**

In Malakhi (3:4), we read a vision of the Messianic future which begins with this oft-quoted verse:

And the Minchah of Yehudah and Yerushalayim will be sweet to God, just as in days of old and like years past.

We can now approach this verse with a new understanding - the Minchah is the Korban which lasts forever and which, when God redeems us, will represent more than any other offering, the eternal link which we have with God and with the worship at His altar. Is it any wonder that Rav Kook zt"l was of the opinion that when the third Beit haMikdash is built, that all Korbanot will take on the spiritual flavor of the Minchah? The B'rit which God maintains, keeping us alive and restoring us to our Land, is symbolized by the eternal Korban Minchah.

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