

## Potomac Torah Study Center

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Next Shabbat is Shabbat HaGadol; Pesach starts Motzi Shabbat next week

**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 more than 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his untimely death.**

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

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**May Hashem protect Israel and Jews everywhere during 5785. May Hashem's protection shine on all of Israel, the IDF, and Jews throughout the world. May the remaining hostages soon come home, hostilities cease, and a new era bring security and rebuilding for both Israel and all others who genuinely seek peace.**

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This week we start reading Sefer Vayikra – and we also rush to complete our preparations for Pesach so we may start the holy days immediately at Havdalah time next Shabbat. What is the essence of Sefer Vayikra, and how does it connect to Pesach?

Sefer Vayikra differs from most of the rest of the Torah by consisting almost exclusively of laws. There are only two short narrative sections in Vayikra, while most of the Torah until late in Sefer Shemot is narrative. While the individuals upon whom the Torah focuses move geographically in other parts of the Torah, from the time B'Nai Yisrael arrive at the base of Har Sinai (Shemot 19) until chapter 10 of Bemidbar, our ancestors remain in the same location. During most of the Torah, Moshe leads the Jews – first out of Egypt, then in the desert, and finally to "Israel Heights" – a high ground overlooking the land that Hashem had promised to our ancestors. Once God brings His presence into the camp (end of Sefer Shemot), the main theme becomes how B'Nai Yisrael can live in the presence of Hashem (at ground level in the camp) and survive. Much of Sefer Vayikra focuses on how B'Nai Yisrael can attain and maintain the ritual purity required for a human to survive in close proximity to Hashem.

As usual, the parsha connects with other parts of the Torah. In Breishis, Adam walks in Gan Eden and speaks directly with God. After Adam and Chava sin, they must leave Gan Eden, and a recurring theme is man's search for a way to return to the garden and to connect closely with God. We see Hashem's presence in a cloud that guides B'Nai Yisrael in the Midbar, and this cloud comes down on the Mishkan and the Ohel Moed in Sefer Vayikra. The only way that any human other than Moshe may come close to Hashem is Aharon, Kohen Gadol, when he brings his korban and spices into the Aron Kodosh on Yom Kippur afternoon. The Kohen Gadol's smoke from his korban rises and mixes with Hashem's cloud. The contact of the Kohen Gadol with Hashem affects every person in the camp with an experience that we today cannot fully comprehend – and the contact has the side effect of wiping away the sins of those who perform teshuvah on Yom Kippur.

Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander connects the theme of closeness with Hashem to the haftarah. Isaiah denounces the people for using their korbanot as rituals, where they bring and sacrifice domesticated animals and then return to worshipping foreign (false) gods. Rabbi Brander warns us that rote davening without observing the mitzvot – especially our obligations to others – does not fulfill our religious obligations. As we clean our homes of chametz, we must also clear out the chametz of mechanical davening and sloppy performance of our religious obligations. We must embrace the

spiritual obligations of our religion and become priests of tikkun olam, showing the world how to be shining lights to all people.

At the time of the Exodus, all Jews had to obtain a kosher animal for a Korban Pesach, keep it in the bedroom for several days, and prepare it for the Pesach night. Since that day, more than 3300 years ago, the vast majority of Jews have participated in at least one Seder per year. We take seriously our obligation to teach our children and grandchildren how Hashem took each of us out of Egypt, out of slavery, and brought us to Israel, the land of our heritage. May we all prepare seriously for Pesach and make our Seders memorable experiences for everyone who attends.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah and Alan

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**Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at [www.alephbeta.org](http://www.alephbeta.org). Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during and since the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.**

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**Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Moshe Aaron ben Leah Beilah (badly wounded in battle in Gaza but slowly recovering), Daniel Yitzchak Meir HaLevy ben Ruth; Ariah Ben Sarah, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Reuven ben Basha Chaya Zlata Lana, Avraham ben Gavriela, Mordechai ben Chaya, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Miriam Bat Leah; Yehudit Leah bas Hannah Feiga; Miriam bat Esha, Chana bat Sarah; Raizel bat Rut; Rena bat Ilsa, Riva Golda bat Leah, Sharon bat Sarah, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, and all our fellow Jews in danger in and near Israel. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.**

Shabbat Shalom

Hannah & Alan

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### **Haftarat Parshat Vayikra: Living as a Holy Nation**

By Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander \* 5785 (2025)

President and Rosh HaYeshiva, Ohr Torah Stone

*Dedicated in memory of Israel's murdered and fallen, for the refuah shlayma of the wounded, the return of those being held hostage in Gaza, and the safety of our brave IDF soldiers.*

This coming Shabbat, we find ourselves beginning the book of Vayikra, or, as Chazal referred to it, “*Torat Kohanim*,” “*the law of the priests*.” At first glance, this is a fitting title for Vayikra, whose opening parshiyot focus almost exclusively on the rules governing the sacrificial rites performed in the Mishkan, under the auspices of the Kohanim. The Torah first presents the guidelines for offering the various types of sacrifices, then relates the story of the consecration of the Mishkan, and, finally, lays out the rules governing ritual purity, a criterion for entering the Temple premises.

But as we move further through Vayikra, we begin to see a broader range of rules that affect the entire Jewish people. These include laws governing the norms and mores of interacting with other members of society, the laws for holiday observance, Shmita, and more. Even the book’s later Temple-focused portions are not directed exclusively to the

Kohanim; the Torah offers instructions regarding sacrificial and purification norms governing non-priestly Jews as well. Why, then, is the book nonetheless referred to as 'Torat Kohanim'?

Perhaps the answer lies in a broader understanding of the term '*kohanim*.' While the Torah generally reserves the term for the priestly caste descended from Aharon, in truth the entire Jewish people is a '*mamlechet kohanim*,' '*a kingdom of priests*.' (Shemot 19:6) The book of Vayikra, with its focus on law rather than on narrative, offers a blueprint of what it means for the Jewish people to function as a sacred society, as a community of priests.

All the elements of Sefer Vayikra – from the Temple offerings to the prohibitions of incest, from holiday observance to loving our neighbor — contribute to the tapestry of sacred living the Torah demands of the Jewish people. Yet it is so easy to mistake the trees for the forest. Our capacity to be a kingdom of priests, to live out the vision of Torat Kohanim, is predicated not just on following a long list of rules, but on maintaining deep faith, ensuring that the many rules and regulations serve as a pathway towards, not away from, closeness with God.

This idea is emphasized in the haftarah that accompanies the opening parsha of Vayikra. Like so many passages in the books of the prophets, this week's haftarah warns against the sacrificial rite becoming a pathway towards idolatry, with the offerings directed towards foreign deities. Yeshayahu rails against the Jews' idolatry, offering worship and gifts to the work of their own hands. For the prophet, this behavior is not merely treasonous; it's downright foolish. "*Who would fashion a god or cast a statue that can do no good?*" (Isaiah 44:10). In fact, to do so seems so ludicrous that it's hard to imagine how so many ancient Israelites could have fallen prey to idolatry.

Yet, with more reflection, it is possible to understand how they veered so far off the path. It is not so different from the challenges we face today, including the temptation to fall into the habits of following mitzvot as a rote process rather than living out their true spiritual nature empowering our journey with God. When mitzvot are just performed through habitual repetition or a desire to please others with the strictness of our observance, they become disconnected from the divine and we also become disconnected from the divine. This undermines the very purpose of the Torah's commandments set out in the Torah, and can lead us astray on our spiritual paths.

As we prepare for Pesach, a time of national renewal and redemption, we should reflect on what it means to be a '*mamlechet kohanim*.' **Just as we rid our homes of chametz, we must also clear our hearts of mechanical mitzvah observance and embrace the deeper spiritual essence of our divine service.** ]emphasis added[

We should remember that each of us has the ability, both in the private and all the more so in the public sphere, to sanctify God's name through meaningful Torah observance. If we succeed, we will truly merit to fulfill our calling as a *mamlechet kohanim v'goy kadosh*, a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.

\* President and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone, a modern Orthodox group of 32 institutions and programs. Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin is the Founding Director, and Rabbi Dr. Brander is President and Rosh HaYeshiva. For more information or to support Ohr Torah Stone, contact [ohrtorahstone@otsyny.org](mailto:ohrtorahstone@otsyny.org) or 212-935-8672. **Ohr Torah Stone is in the midst of its spring fund-raising drive. Please support this effort with Donations to 49 West 45<sup>th</sup> Street #701, New York, NY 10036.**

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## Vayikra: Eliminate All the Bugs in the Pesach Program!

By Rabbi Label Lam © 2007

*For seven days you shall eat unleavened cakes, but on the preceding day you shall clear away all leaven from your houses, for whoever eats leaven from the first day until the seventh day that soul shall be cut off from Israel.* (Shemos 12:15)

These words strike fear in the heart Jewish Mothers and entire families for the last 3327 years. It propels the entire household into a frenetic search for that stuff called Chametz whether it's liquid or solid, whether visible or even

microscopic. It's a good thing! We are looking to arrest and destroy that which represents negativity in our lives so we can be free.

However, this is no mere morality play with symbolic figures playing metaphoric roles. It's as real as real can be. The Torah warns those who dare to violate the prohibition of eating Chametz on Pesach with a "*punishment*" of "*Kores*" – being cut off. It sounds to the untutored ear too serious for such a seemingly slight misstep. Why would the Merciful One throttle His people with fearful warnings? Why are we so responsive?

A group of students this week were involved in a special pre-Pesach project that involved checking lettuce )that qualifies for Marror at the Pesach Seder( for bugs. Besides my offering a bounty of ten cents for every bug discovered, I was asked by the Rebbe to give a brief pre-activity introduction. It was a gruesome experience, and in the end it cost me megabucks. In the beginning, I shared the following scenario:

*Imagine, please, there is a father who owns a gas station but not just a regular gas station. It's one of those places that serves coffee and donuts too. One day the son joins his father at work. The father entrusts his son with the task of pumping gas while the father manages the coffee sales. When people enter the store for their coffee the father asks, "How do you like it? )the coffee( One lump of two?" The father dutifully makes the coffee with milk or not according to the customer's specifications and with one or two or more cubes of sugar.*

The son wants to emulate his father's style of customer service and so every customer who wants gas is asked, "*One lump or two?*" It usually gains a smile from the customer and afterward they drive away. By the end of the day, though, the phone is ringing off the hook with complaints and eventually police cars are crowding the otherwise sleepy gas station. What has happened?

Every car that left the station that day broke down. The boy was not just joking when he inquired about the lumps of sugar. He wrongly reasoned that that if sugar sweetens coffee it can sweeten an engine. Just the opposite is true. The quickest and easiest way to destroy a car is to put sugar into the tank of a car. That's what happened. Imagine now the horror of the father and fright of the son who realizes he just brought grief and financial ruin upon his dear father.

The gas tank does not care if the boy had sweet intentions. I recently saw a cartoon. A man is staring curiously at a sign, "*Law of gravity strictly enforced!*" Neither the physical nor the spiritual laws of the universe need our enforcement. They work continuously and are reliably indiscriminant.

The Torah, therefore, in its abundant mercy forewarns us of the gravity of eating Chametz on Pesach or bugs in Romaine lettuce. It clogs the spiritual arteries of the consumer like sugar ruins the engine of the car. It desensitizes and blocks the Jewish soul from perceiving the panoramic sweep of history from the origin of this species, the Jewish People, to the end of times, a scene that's available at the Pesach Seder He thereby by default "*opts out*" of the picture – an aspect of being cut off!

We are warned, not as a cruel dictatorial threat but as a benevolent doctor warns a diabetic patient to curb their consumption of sweets. "*I am HASHEM your doctor!*" You know what the results, the cause and effect will likely be! I'm looking out for your good! I want you to be healthy and successful. Therefore rid yourself of Chametz like a poison and **eliminate all the bugs in the Pesach program!**

Good Shabbos!

<https://torah.org/torah-portion/dvartorah-5775-vayikra/>

## A Thought on the Parsha (Vayikra): Smelling Good

By Rabbi Dov Linzer \* © 2015

**“The priest shall bring it all, and burn it upon the altar: it is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet savor unto the Lord”** (Vayikra, 1:13). We are told eight times in this week’s parasha that the sacrifices are a “sweet savor” to God. This graphic anthropomorphism of God is challenging to modern ears, but we can understand the power that it held for people in the past. It communicates the idea that our sacrifices rise up to God: the smoke rises to heaven, bringing with it the smell of the burning meat, and God is pleased by our offering. The message is clear: God desires our sacrifices.

Rambam believed otherwise. He was bothered by the institution of sacrifice and claimed that God only commanded it as a concession to human weakness. In his *Guide to the Perplexed*, Rambam suggests that God used sacrifices as a way of weaning the people off idolatry (III:32). As the method of worship for all the pagan gods, sacrifice was the only form of worship the people of the time could conceive of; they would not have been able to worship God solely through prayer. Thus, God moved them away from idolatry and commanded that they redirect their worship – with sacrifices – to God. God may have desired sacrifices as a temporary concession, but God certainly does not desire the practice as an ideal form of religious worship.

Ramban rejects Rambam’s position, pointing out that sacrifices were used to worship God even in situations free from a context of idolatry. Indeed, Kayin and Hevel offered sacrifices that were acceptable and pleasing to God, as did Noah. Furthermore, Ramban states that it is religiously offensive to suggest that the entire institution of sacrifice was not God’s true will:

*His [Rambam’s] statements are preposterous. They “heal the great hurt superficially” and render “the table of the Lord disgusting” by limiting its use to placate the wicked and the foolish. But the Torah states that they are “...a sweet savor” (commentary on Vayikra, 1:9).*

This debate – and the significance of sacrifices as a “sweet savor” – becomes central in the context of Pesach: Should we still bring a korban Pesach today? Starting with the Hatam Sofer (19th century, Hungary), there have been those who have argued for continuing the practice, even in the absence of a Temple. Putting aside questions of politics and practicality, is such a thing even halakhically possible?

On the one hand, one could argue that we are all considered *temei met*, impure due to contact with a corpse. We recently read Parshat Parah, named after the special maftir from Bamidbar 19 detailing the laws of impurity of corpses and the purification ritual involving the ashes of a red heifer. This reading reminds us how the people had to purify themselves in order to bring the Pesach sacrifice. But this is not an obstacle today. Given that we are all impure, we could bring the sacrifice regardless, based on the principle of *tumah hutra bi’tzibbur*, communal impurity is set aside for communal sacrifices.

But what about the absence of the Temple? This also need not be a halakhic barrier. The Gemara in Megilah (10a) states that the original *kedusha*, the sanctity, of Jerusalem and the Temple from the time of Joshua remains today. Rambam rules this way, explaining that the *kedusha* of the Temple and Jerusalem never departed, for once God’s Presence rests in a place it remains there for all eternity (*Laws of the Temple*, 6:14-16). One might argue that this does not sufficiently address the lack of a physical Temple, but the Gemara Megilah (10a) also says “*makrivim af al pi she’eyn bayit*,” “one can offer sacrifices even without a Temple.” Rambam also rules in accordance with this.

So, even though we are ritually impure and without a Temple, it would seem that we could still offer sacrifices. (And the priestly garments could be easily manufactured – there is an institute in Israel that has already done so!) This position was argued by Hatam Sofer in a responsum, but for him the discussion was merely theoretical (YD 2:236). In the following generation, his student, Rav Tzvi Hirsch Kalisher, tried to make the theory a reality.

Rav Kalisher wrote an entire book, *Drishat Zion*, arguing for the obligation to bring the korban Pesach. In writing the book, he hoped to put the bringing of the korban Pesach at the top of the communal agenda. Rav Kalisher's initiative and his motivation for it can be better understood in a larger historical context. He began it when the Reform movement was just starting. The rejection of both the significance of the Land of Israel and the concept of *shivat Tziyon*, the return to the Land of Israel, was high on the agenda of the budding Reform movement, and the repudiation of the whole institution of sacrifices went hand-in-hand with this. It was thus important for Rav Kalisher to reassert the centrality of the Land of Israel, the Temple, and the sacrifices.

In hopes of getting other rabbis to sign on to his initiative, Rav Kalisher sent his book to Rav Yaakov Ettlinger, a staunch opponent of the Reform movement in Altona, Germany, for approval. Rav Ettlinger did not sign on. Instead, he offered a surprising counter-text to the passage in the Talmud allowing one to bring sacrifices without a Temple, and his response brings us back to the phrase, *"a pleasing smell"* (*Teshuvot Binyan Zion* 1).

Rav Ettlinger quotes a Biblical verse at the end of Vayikra that prophesizes the destruction of the Temple. That verse states: *"And I will lay waste to your Sanctuaries, and I will not smell the sweet savor of the sacrifices"* (Vayikra, 26:31). According to Rav Ettlinger, this verse is telling us that, although the Sanctuary retains its sanctity even after its destruction, and one can technically still bring sacrifices, God declares that God no longer desires such sacrifices, that they will not be considered *li'rayach nichoach*, as a sweet savor. And it is a halakhic principle that a sacrifice that is not considered to be for a sweet savor is invalid. In an astounding move in the context of a halakhic, Torah she'b'al Peh argument, Rav Ettlinger states that, *"although the Talmud says that one can still bring sacrifices, God states: 'I will not smell their sweet savor.'"* God trumps the Talmud!

But what about the statement that sacrifices can still be brought? This, answers Rav Ettlinger, is only when God is no longer *"laying waste to the Sanctuary."* At any time in which the Temple is being actively rebuilt but has not yet been completed – such as the beginning of the Second Commonwealth or as will be in Messianic times – one can bring sacrifices without a Temple. But as long as the Temple is laid waste, then God is telling us that God does not want our sacrifices.

Rav Ettlinger's approach is of great importance. It speaks to how we deal – theologically and practically – not only with the destruction of the Temple, but with other historical developments that the Jewish people have had to face. He argues that **God sends us messages through historical events**, and in our responses, we should not try to recreate previous realities in today's world. Rather, we should respond in a manner appropriate to the context of contemporary realities. [emphasis added]

The question of how to respond to the destruction of the Temple, and along with it the corresponding transition to a Judaism in which prayer and Torah learning are the central forms of worship, is actually debated in Hazal. There are those that see our contemporary forms of worship as mere substitutes for a more ideal, sacrificial order – *"nishalma parim si'fateinu," "let our lips be a substitute for oxen"* (Hoshea, 14:3) – and there are those who state that prayer and Torah are greater than sacrifice. The latter approach can be seen in a verse from Tehillim, a verse that follows the opening of the Shemoneh Esrei itself: *"God, open up my lips, and let my mouth speak of Your praise. For You do not desire a sacrifice, that I should give it. A burnt offering you do not want"* (Tehilim, 51:16-17).

As we approach Pesach and prepare to celebrate the seder with all its rituals, we can reflect on the meaning of the seder night and how it has transformed from the time when we had a Temple and the entire people gathered together to sacrifice and eat the Paschal lamb. While our sederim are certainly less bloody, and while we may believe as Rav Ettlinger did that such sacrifices are no longer desired, we can still be saddened by the loss of the sweet savor that came from a truly communal, nationwide celebration of the chag of Pesach. Without sacrifices, it is up to us to identify how our worship, on the seder night and throughout the year, can bring us together as a people and connect us to God, so that it may rise up and be received by God as a sweet savor.

Shabbat Shalom!

\* Rosh Yeshiva and President, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah.

From my archives.

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## **Spiritual Entryways: Thoughts for Parashat Vayikra**

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel \*

My friend, Rabbi Nathan Lopes Cardozo, has come out with a new book *Cardozo on the Parashah: The Book of Leviticus* (Kasva Press, 2025) in which he presents his thoughts on the weekly Torah portions. As in his many previous writings, he draws on a variety of sources — rabbinic and general — but he is also known for his original thinking.

The book of Leviticus, Vayikra, devotes much text to laws relating to the Mishkan, animal sacrifices, and the duties of the priestly class. For moderns, these passages are remote from our personal experience.

Rabbi Cardozo ponders the ultimate significance of the ancient Mishkan and Temple services. Without going into whether these things will be re-established in Messianic times, we still need to think about why they are part of our tradition altogether.

Rabbi Cardozo offers his insight:

*“The Temple service is not the ultimate form of worship, it is only the beginning, a foretaste of what is to come. Its purpose is to function, through metaphoric rites, as a medium through which people are stimulated to take their first steps toward an inner transformation. When Jews pray that God grant them the opportunity to bring fire offerings, this does not mean to actually bring animal sacrifices, but to be able to make ever greater spiritual contributions, of which the sacrifices were merely a foretaste.”* (p. 15)

The Mishkan/Temples were not meant to be ends in themselves but were intended to be entryways into spiritual growth. Similarly, the many mitzvot of the Torah are not the goals of religious life but are vehicles to bring us closer to the Divine.

When religion prods us to higher levels of faith, love and righteousness, it is of vital importance to us as individuals and to humanity as a whole. When religion is abused by fostering hatred, violence, and cult-like behavior, it is destructive to individuals and to society. Religion can be — and should be — the most elevating element of human civilization. But, as we unfortunately know, it can also be the root cause of extremism, terrorism, and war.

Perhaps the ancient Temple services serve to remind us of the need for religious humility. We come before the Lord with sacrifices as a symbolic way of demonstrating our subservience to the ultimate Divine and our need to strive daily for spiritual growth. Today, our synagogues should be serving this purpose — to remind us to come before the Lord humbly, with pure hearts, with sincere desire to strive for righteous and wise lives.

Our biblical prophets inveighed against sacrifices that were brought in a cult-like pattern without the proper intellectual and spiritual framework. If Temple services — and prayer services — are performed mechanically and without proper intent, they become a mockery rather than expressions of religiosity.

The Hebrew word for the Temple sacrifice is “*korban*.” The root letters of the word mean “*drawing near*.” Sacrifices — and prayer — are intended to draw us into a closer, more intense relationship with the Almighty. They are not ends in themselves but are entryways to a more spiritual life.

\* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals and rabbi emeritus of the historic Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of New York City.

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## **Wise, Naïve, Foolish and Dumbfounded: Thoughts for Pessah**

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel \*

The Haggada features the “*four children*” to whom parents are to explain the message of redemption from slavery. They are presented as four different individuals, each of whom requires a distinctive approach. The wise child is given full explanations; the naïve is given a simple story; the wicked is chastised; the dumbfounded is fed answers to questions never asked.

But what if we see these four children not as different people — but as aspects of just one person, ourself?

The grand message of Pessah is redemption from servitude. While the focus is on the national liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian oppression, the theme also relates to the life of individuals. We each have experienced moments when we’ve felt oppressed, unappreciated, abused, spiritually exiled. We’ve also experienced moments of validation, exultant victory, love and joy. Life is a series of ups and downs, oppressive moments and moments of liberation.

Sometimes the world perplexes us. We feel helpless in the face of challenges confronting humanity as a whole and Jews in particular. The problems seem so vast: warfare, climate change, crime, economic downturns etc. Is disaster inevitable? We can’t even verbalize all our concerns and anxieties.

Sometimes we feel so mentally overloaded that we look for simple answers to complex problems. We want to feel good, peaceful. We try to shut out the bad news, we look for amusements and entertainments. We don’t want to hear all the details, just simple headlines.

Sometimes we feel frustrated and angry about the way things are going. It seems that the whole system is corrupt, leaders are hypocritical, violence and hatred are rampant, the future is bleak. We rebel against the status quo in whatever ways we can.

Sometimes we are calm and reasonable. We want to know as much as we can about the problems that face us, and we seek intelligent answers to our dilemmas. We don’t want glib soundbites or superficial analyses. We think carefully, we speak carefully and we act responsibly.

The “*four children*” struggle within each of us. Each has legitimate claims; but how are we to address all the children within us?

The Haggada provides a framework for dealing with the internal struggles we all face.

When we feel perplexed by the challenges, the Haggada reminds us: We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and the Lord redeemed us from Egypt with a strong hand and outstretched arm. What could have been bleaker than the situation of the ancient Israelite slaves? What could have seemed more hopeless than generations of demeaning servitude? But the seemingly hopeless and overwhelming situation was overcome. God redeemed the slaves. They left Egypt in high spirits. They found words in the beautiful Song of Moses sung after the Israelites crossed the Sea. They were silent no more.



When we are mentally overloaded and only want simple answers to our questions, we need to remind ourselves: Yes, there are short answers available, and these are important for calming us temporarily. But avoidance is ultimately self-defeating. The problems don't disappear on their own. When the Israelite slaves heard Moses speak of freedom, they initially did not take heed due to their crushed spirits and hard labor. They wanted to go from day to day without contemplating long-term solutions to their dilemma. The Haggada teaches us to deal patiently with ourselves and with the desire for simple answers. Be patient, but get over the impasse! We have a Promised Land ahead of us.

When we feel angry and disappointed, it's easy enough to blame the "*leaders*," the "*system*," and God. We allow negativity to overcome us and we want to lash out however we can. The Haggada reminds us that these feelings are part of who we are, and actually are healthy in some ways. We should be angry and frustrated by evil, foolishness, and immorality. But the Haggada tells us that we must not let negative emotions dominate us. It reminds us that negativity is essentially a dead end; it does not lead to redemption. When we feel the negative emotions arising within us, we need to direct them constructively.

When we feel wise and reasonable, that's a good feeling. We can analyze, think, dream, plan for the future. We feel competent and confident. But beware: unless we listen to the other three children within us we can become complacent and self-righteous.

The story of Pessah is a realistic/optimistic story. It tells candidly about slavery, hatred, cruelty, loss of human dignity. But it also tells of redemption, freedom, God's providence, human development. As it relates to the national history of the people of Israel, it also relates to each one of us.

Our individual stories — our lives — are composed of a variety of experiences and emotions — some negative and painful, some positive and redemptive. The ultimate message of Pessah is that optimism and redemption will ultimately prevail.

We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and the Lord redeemed us with strong hand and outstretched arm. The four children within us crave for redemption...and the redemption will surely come through our personal efforts and with the help of God.

\* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals and rabbi emeritus of the historic Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of New York City.

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<https://www.jewishideas.org/article/wise-na%C3%AFve-foolish-and-dumbfounded-thoughts-pessah>

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## Relationship Resolution

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine \*

There are many reasons that a person can feel hurt in a relationship. One of the most common is when someone we love criticizes us. Especially in a marriage, when one spouse says that they think the other is underperforming the insult is usually felt deeply. Often it results in a cycle of insults and defensiveness.

In this week's Parsha we read of the sinner who brings a Korban offering. The goal of the sinner is to admit his shortcoming, atone for it, and resolve the relationship. Essentially, the system called Torah has criticized the sinner. Yet, instead of excuses, blame-shifting, insults, or defensiveness, the sinner owns up and expresses his heartfelt apology; the

sinner comes with a Korban to say he is sorry. What enables the sinner to rise to the occasion to acknowledge and apologize for his wrongdoing?

One of the significant factors that enables the sinner to apologize, is the way Hashem accepts the apology with sensitivity. The Torah requires that the sinner's offering should be brought in the same place as the Korban Olah (Vayikra 4: 29,33). The Korban Olah was brought either voluntarily as a personal devotion, or when a person wanted to atone for improper thoughts. By instructing us to group these Korbanos together the Torah protected the dignity of the sinner. He was on-line together with holy people who were atoning for even their thoughts, and those bringing Korbanos voluntarily (Rashi Sota 32). Instead of putting sinners on a line of their own where they would be stigmatized and shamed with a sense of "Gotcha," or "Proved you wrong," Hashem greets sinners with sensitivity by putting them on-line with holy people. This facilitates apology and gets the relationship back on track.

Similarly, when we do need to deliver criticism, our goal should be to get the relationship back on track. It helps, that when we state the problem, we carefully use an accurate word to describe it. When I teach communications to high school students, I like to emphasize the importance of word choice. For example, if we are offended by something someone did or did not do, it is important for us to identify the word that appropriately describes the offense we experienced. Words like, betrayal, offended, insulted, lonely, marginalized, ignored, and minimized, are all words that can be used in communication. But they have very different meanings. When we choose the appropriate word to describe a relationship disconnect or violation there is a better chance that we will be heard, understood, and be able to get the relationship back on track.

Also, when we communicate criticism, it is best to sandwich the criticism between two compliments. This allows the listener to realize that we are not viewing the problem as the final judgment on their worthiness. They are great in so many ways. But there is something that needs to be addressed. Similarly, it is best to describe the problem as it seemed to us, as in, "I felt like..." or "It seemed to me..." allowing for dialogue and conversation, rather than just creating an emotional dumping ground.

The Torah's process of atonement is designed for relationship resolution. Hashem is not looking to corner the sinner and prove him wrong. Hashem made the atonement process in a way that protects the sinner's dignity. The sinner is grouped with great people who yearn to increase their relationship with Him. On one level this is exactly where he belongs. Because one who has done wrong and is looking to rectify the wrong is engaged in one of the loftiest pursuits possible: Relationship Resolution.

With heartfelt blessings for a wonderful Shabbas.

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## **Vayikra - A Call to Be Loved**

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer \* (2023)

Sefer Vayikra opens with a seemingly superfluous phrase. The first verse tells us that Hashem spoke to Moshe, but prefaces this with the words, "*And He called to Moshe.*" Rash"i notes this and explains based on a Medrash that this is intended to teach us how Hashem always dealt with Moshe:

*"All speeches, and all statements and all commands were preceded by "calling," a language of love, language which the Ministering Angels use, 'and they call one to the other' )Yeshaya 6:3( but to the prophets of the nations of the world, He appeared to them with a language of happenstance and impurity as it says, 'and G-d happened upon Bilaam' )Bamidbar 23:4(" )Rash"i Vayikra 1:1(*

While the message Rash"i is presenting is beautiful and encouraging, the concept is difficult to understand. We generally think of expressing love through a sense of connection and closeness. We conduct ourselves more openly with those we are close with, to the point where formality is almost seen as cold and distant. In fact, we find that Rash"i uses this very concept of closeness to express Moshe's greatness. When Miriam speaks lashon hora to Aharon about Moshe, Hashem calls to Moshe, Aharon and Miriam suddenly. Rash"i tells us that Moshe was ready for the prophecy, but Aharon and Miriam were unprepared and rushed in a panic to prepare themselves. Hashem was showing them Moshe's uniqueness, that he would speak with G-d any time of day or night and was always ready and prepared for prophecy. Why then is it a sign of love to always call Moshe before speaking to him?

The Ramba"n quotes the same Medrash and adds another word, which seems even more difficult. He says that calling is an expression of love and of "ziruz" – a charge to prepare and take action. Charging a person to focus in and prepare does not appear to be an act of love. How do these two concepts go together?

Perhaps we can understand this Medrash based on a second question. Rash"i notes that this language of love is the same language used by the Ministering Angels. The verse in Yeshaya is one we say in the Kedusha, that the Ministering Angels call to each other prior to declaring G-d's Holiness. What is the connection between the Ministering Angels calling each other to declare G-d's Holiness, and G-d's love of Moshe?

Rash"i in Yeshaya explains that there is a very specific purpose in the Ministering Angels calling to each other. When they declare G-d's Holiness, they are required to do so together as one. If any individual angel should precede the others and begin to focus on G-d's Holiness, that angel would be burnt from G-d's Holiness. They, therefore, call out to each other and ask permission to begin, ensuring that they can all proceed in unison.

When Hashem is calling Moshe, G-d is in effect calling Moshe's attention and ensuring Moshe is focused before beginning. Unlike Bilaam's prophecies, when Hashem spoke with Moshe it was always intentional and purposeful. While it is true that Moshe was always ready to receive prophecy, Hashem still called to him first. This was sending the message that Moshe's prophecy was not simply a matter of convenience, as though he was simply a prophet who happened to be available. Rather, these were intended for Moshe himself. Hashem wanted to speak with Moshe and called his attention before beginning.

This is what the Ramba"n is saying, as well. Hashem was calling to Moshe and charging Moshe to be attentive. Hashem wanted to enter into a conversation with Moshe, and not simply to impart information. Hashem was calling Moshe's attention, because Hashem loved Moshe and valued Moshe being with Him.

In today's world of electronics and multi-tasking, this message cannot be overstressed. When we want to show our love for someone close, we should stop and focus on them. We should let them know that we want to spend time with them, and even ask them for their attention in return. Simply being together is all it takes.

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## Vayikra – How Was Your Sacrifice Today?

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia \*

*Did you bring a sacrifice today, Sir? Yes, of course you did!*

*Were you happy with it? What? You didn't really have time to think about your feelings, I see...How long did it take you to prepare your sacrifice? No time? Oh, I see, it's kind of a routine for you...So please tell me, how often do you bring such a sacrifice? One second, let me write it down. 3 times on a weekday, 4 times on Shabbat and Holidays and 5 on Kippur, wow, that comes to more than 1,200 a year. That's quite impressive.*

*Why do you do it? Tradition? I see, you say it's a little bit of tradition, fear of not doing the right thing and getting to see the boys.*

*Is God happy with your sacrifice? What do you mean you don't know? Does He ever answer back? Send a signal, smoke pillar or Divine messages or something? No? Well I hope you have a good reason for offering all these sacrifices, because the way I hear it, I don't think they please God.*

This interview maybe never took place in the modern cities of Jerusalem, Brussels, New York or Lakewood, where tens of thousands of Jews offer their sacrifices to the Master of the Universe on a daily basis, but they for sure were very common in the ancient land of Israel, when the great prophets were active and brought the Divine message, the answer to the sacrifices, to the people.

We can find their words, condemning those who bring vacuous sacrifices to God, thinking that they are appeasing Him or that those sacrifices give them a mandate to sin again, all over the Tanakh, in Samuel I )15:22-23(, Isaiah )1:10-21; 58:1-14(, Jeremiah )7:1-28; 14:1-14(, Amos )5:21-27( and Psalms )50(.

We all feel complacent nowadays, what with new synagogues springing everywhere, hundreds of thousands attending services, prayers at schools and kindergartens and siddurim available not only in print but on any handheld device, anywhere in the world. )This is not an endorsement of internet-enabled devices, and a God-fearing Jew must remember that he has to adhere to the guidelines of the great Torah scholars, who allow the use of internet only for business purposes and only when strictly filtered(, but we shouldn't.

We should remember that we had The Beit HaMikdash once, and twice, and we have lost it. Our rabbis explain that the First was destroyed because of cardinal sins the Jewish people committed, while the Second was lost due to baseless hatred, but in both cases, if those who attended the temples and brought sacrifices had thought of what they were doing and why, if they would have used the opportunity and the process of sacrifices to do Teshuva, we would still have a Temple.

After the destruction, the rabbis substituted the sacrifices with Tefilot, prayers, but many Jews, unfortunately, treat the latter as our ancestors did the former. The prayer is offered as a lip service, literally. There is no preparation time before and no thoughtfulness during the prayer. It is done as a routine, because of tradition and sometimes, yes, just to meet friends at the synagogue. Worst of all, though, is that many remain unchanged by prayer. If I come out of the synagogue in the morning, after confessing my sins and repenting for them more than 20 times, and I am still losing my temper while driving, cutting off people, not totally honest in business or not polite to those around me, then my Tefila was in vain.

This concept is clearly demonstrated in this week's Parasha, as the Torah wraps up the codex of sacrifices with a list of those sacrifices which come to atone for corruption, theft, embezzlement etc. The Torah says that one must first pay back the damages plus a fine, and only then can bring a sacrifice. In other words, God will not accept a sacrifice, or in its modern day form, a prayer, from one whose hands are unclean.

So let us all follow the words of Isaiah )1:16(

*"Wash and purify your soul! Do away with your evil deeds! Stop harming others! Learn well and seek justice, rectify the law and tend to the orphan and the widow!"*

Shabbat Shalom.

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<https://www.sefaria.org/profile/haim-ovadia?tab=sheets> . The Sefaria articles usually include Hebrew text, which I must delete because of issues changing software formats.

**Many Devrei Torah from Rabbi Ovadia this year come from an unpublished draft of his forthcoming book on Tanach, which Rabbi Ovadia has generously shared with our readers. Rabbi Ovadia reserves all copyright protections for this material.**

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## Feeling a Calling

By Rabbi Moshe Rube \* (5722)

If I said, "I feel a calling to go have dinner," you would laugh.

Dinner does not have the gravitas for us to consider it a calling. To call something a calling or to say you feel called to do something means this something represents a great stimulus to our imagination, or a mission overflowing with divinity.

The first word of the book of Leviticus is *Vayikra*, which means "*calling*." God is calling to Moses to receive the statutes, procedures and inspiring pathways for the Jews to travel on. Indeed the book of Leviticus is the most didactic and instructive book in the whole Torah, with topics ranging from sacrificial rules, to agriculture, to personal relationships. Moses did not have just a feeling of purpose. He felt a calling from God.

So maybe dinner you don't need a calling for. But a Seder dinner would be different. A person can feel a calling for a Seder dinner, because a Seder dinner constitutes the arena for passing on our most sacred traditions and stories to our families and friends. It is a meeting of all who came before us and all who will come after as well as all who exist now. I feel a calling for the Seder, and I would say many of us do as well.

May we feel our calling and all be blessed with a beautiful Passover Seder together with our families and friends.

Shabbat Shalom.

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## Rav Kook Torah Vayikra: Sacrifices vs. Fasting

When the fourth-century scholar Rav Sheshet fasted, he would add the following request to his Amidah )Standing( prayer:

*"Master of the Universe! You know that when the Temple stood, a person who sinned would bring a sacrifice. Although only the fats and blood would be offered on the altar, the person would be granted atonement.*

*Now I have fasted, and my fat and my blood have diminished. May it be Your Will that the decrease in my fat and my blood should be considered as if I offered them on the altar, and my offering was accepted.” )Berachot 17a(*

Rav Sheshet's prayer is inspiring, but it makes one wonder: Why should one go to the trouble of bringing a sacrifice if the same atonement may be achieved through fasting?

His prayer draws our attention to a second issue. Why were only the fats and blood of sin sacrifices )chatat and asham( offered on the altar?

## **Two Types of Sin**

Regarding the offering of fats and blood, Rav Kook explained that there are two major inducements to sin. Some sins are the result of overindulgence in sensual pleasures and excessive luxuries. These wrongdoings are appropriately atoned by offering the fats.

The second category of transgressions is motivated by actual need: hunger and poverty. Great pressures can tempt one to lie, steal, even murder. The corresponding atonement for these sins is through the blood of the offering.

## **The Disadvantage of Fasting**

By fasting, we can attain atonement in a way similar to the sacrifice of fats and blood in the Temple service. However, there is an important distinction between fasts and sacrifices. Offering a sacrifice in the holy Temple instilled the powerful message that it should really be the offender's blood spilled and body burned, were it not for God's kindness in accepting a substitute and a ransom. This visceral experience was a humbling encounter, subduing one's negative traits and desires.

Fasting, on the other hand, weakens all forces of the body. Just as chemotherapy treatment poisons other parts of the body as it fights the cancer, so too, fasting saps both our positive and negative energies. Fasting has the unwanted side effect of weakening our strength and energy to help others, perform mitzvot, and study Torah.

Therefore, Rav Sheshet added a special prayer when he fasted. He prayed that his fasting would achieve the same atonement as an offering in the Temple, without the undesirable effect of sapping positive energies.

*)Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 177-178. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 82.(*

<https://ravkooktorah.org/VAYIKRA59.htm>

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## **The Prophetic View of Sacrifice (Vayikra 5778)**

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z”l, Former Chief Rabbi of the U.K.\*

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. ]Boldface added[

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.** ]Boldface added[

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.

### **Around the Shabbat Table"**

1. What is the rationale behind sacrificial worship of God?
2. What are the dangers of this form of worship )as highlighted by the Prophets(?
3. What should the focus of our worship of God be )according to this week's Covenant & Conversation(? Do you agree?

<https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/vayikra/the-prophetic-view-of-sacrifice/> Footnotes, other than citations in the text, are not available for this Devar Torah. Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar.



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## Why Lean on a Sacrifice Before Offering It?

By Mordechai Rubin \* © Chabad 2025

### Why Lean on a Sacrifice Before Offering It?

In the book of Leviticus, the Torah describes ritual semichah – the laying or leaning of hands on the head of a sacrificial animal. This is accomplished by the offerer placing both hands with full weight on the head of the animal, immediately before slaughter, in the Temple courtyard. This act is introduced in the verse:

*And he shall lay his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.*<sup>1</sup>

The verse seems to suggest that the purpose of this semichah was to achieve atonement. How did that work? Didn't the sacrifice itself bring atonement? What role, then, does semichah play in the process?

#### 1. It Serves As a Base for the Verbal Confession

The Talmud<sup>2</sup> codified by Maimonides<sup>3</sup> teaches that semichah is accompanied by a verbal confession of sins. The offerer confesses the wrongdoing that necessitated the sacrifice, while pressing his hands on the animal. This admission of guilt is an integral part of the atonement process. For a sin-offering or guilt-offering, the specific transgression is articulated. In the case of a burnt-offering — which is generally not brought for a specific transgression — confession may still be recited if it was brought to atone for a missed mitzvah opportunity or any other sin where an offering is not mandated.<sup>4</sup>

#### 2. It's Part of the Repentance

Nachmanides takes this idea a step further. Not only does one verbally confess while leaning on the animal, but semichah itself becomes a central component of the repentance process, representing one of the essential faculties involved in repentance. Nachmanides explains that true repentance must engage all three dimensions of a person: action, speech, and thought. Each part of the korban ritual corresponds to one of these faculties:

He shall lean his hands upon it as a counterpart to action, confess with his mouth as a counterpart to speech, and the burning of the innards and kidneys represents the instruments of thought and desire.<sup>5</sup>

#### 3. It Symbolically Transfers the Sin Over to the Animal

Sforno and Ralbag<sup>6</sup> explain that leaning on the animal is a physical manifestation of the transfer of a person's sin or guilt onto the animal. The sinner *"places his hands on his offering as if praying that his sin be on the head of the sacrifice – like the scapegoat – thereby enacting a physical form of his inner repentance."*<sup>7</sup>

#### 4. The Animal Takes the Sinner's Place

Abarbanel offers a similar, though slightly different, perspective. While Sforno emphasizes the symbolic transfer of sin onto the animal through a physical act, Abarbanel focuses on the idea that the animal ascends to G d in the offerer's place.

*"And he shall lean his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering"* — this act expresses that the offerer identifies himself with the offering. Just as the animal, once slaughtered, is placed on G d's altar by the priests who serve Him, and is consumed by the Divine fire — becoming a fire-offering, a pleasing aroma to G d — so too, the person bringing the offering is, in essence, offering himself. The altar represents spiritual ascent, hinting at the delight of the World to Come,

where the soul cleaves to the Divine, for G d is a consuming fire. The offering becomes a pleasing fragrance before Him.<sup>8</sup>

## **5. It's A Preparation for Offering the Sacrifice**

Chizkuni understands semichah to simply be a common human practice: when someone is about to engage in a significant task, they often signal their intention and readiness by placing their hand on the object involved. <sup>9</sup>

## **6. Semichah as Ascent**

In the reading of the fourth Rebbe of Chabad, Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn, semichah represents the symbolic ascent of the soul.

When a person brought an olah offering, it represented far more than the offering of an animal — it was an expression of offering one's very soul to G d. The act of semichah, leaning one's hand on the head of the animal, symbolized the individual's inner yearning to ascend — using the sacrifice as a means to rise higher and higher, ultimately cleaving to G d Himself.

Through fulfilling the Divine command and desiring with all his heart to draw near, the offerer's soul was spiritually uplifted. Just as the sacrifice causes all heavenly forces to be drawn upward due to the intense revelation, so the soul of the one bringing it is drawn to attach itself to the Infinite.

Today, in the absence of sacrifices, our sages instituted prayer in their place, including the recitation of the korbanot passages, so that our souls can still ascend through spiritual service.

By reciting the laws of the korbanot, we awaken the same spiritual process, for our sages taught: "*One who studies the laws of the olah — it is as if he brought it.*"<sup>10</sup> In doing so, the soul is uplifted until it breaks into praise and thanksgiving, declaring: "*Give thanks to G d, call upon His Name...*"<sup>11</sup>)The opening lines of the Shacharit prayer service.(<sup>11</sup>

## **FOOTNOTES:**

1. Leviticus 1:4.
2. Yoma 36a .
3. *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Maaseh Hakorbanot*, 3:14-15.
4. Rashi, Leviticus 1:4.
5. Nachmanides, Leviticus 1:9.
6. Leviticus 1:4.
7. Sforno, Leviticus 1:4.
8. Abarbanel, Leviticus 1:4.
9. Chizkuni, Leviticus 1:4.
10. Talmud, Menachot 110a.
11. *Likkutei Torah – Torat Shmuel*, 5640 vol 2 p 614.

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[https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/6837434/jewish/Why-Lean-on-a-Sacrifice-Before-Offering-It.htm](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/6837434/jewish/Why-Lean-on-a-Sacrifice-Before-Offering-It.htm)

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**Vayikra: "Feeding" G-d**  
by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky \* )5777(

*G-d told Moses, "The priest must burn the sacrifice on the Altar, as food for the fire, to G-d."*  
Leviticus 3:11

Throughout the Torah, G-d refers to the sacrifices repeatedly and figuratively as His "*bread*." Just as consuming bread, and food in general, keeps our souls connected to our bodies, the "*bread*" of G-d -- the sacrificial service -- keeps G-d, the soul and life-force of the world, bound together with the world. In this way, through the sacrificial rituals, Divine energy is drawn into the world.

The same is true of our personal "*sacrificial service*": Our study of the Torah, our prayers, our charitable deeds, and our ongoing refinement and elevation of the physical world in general, are G-d's "*bread*," connecting the world with G-d.

--From Kehot's Daily Wisdom

\* An insight by **the Lubavitcher Rebbe** on parshat Va'eira from our *Daily Wisdom* by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky. Because the latest Daily Wisdom did not arrive this week before my posting deadline, I used an earlier posting from my archives.

May G-d grant strength and peace in the Holy Land.

Gut Shabbos,

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman  
Kehot Publication Society

]from my archives -- posting early because of Tanis Esther and Purim[

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# Likutei Divrei Torah

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5785 B"H

## Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

### The Dimensions of Sin

Our parsha, which deals with a variety of sacrifices, devotes an extended section to the chattat, the sin offering, as brought by different individuals: first the High Priest (Lev. 4:3-12), then the community as a whole (Lev. 4:13-21), then a leader (Lev. 4:22-26) and finally an ordinary individual (Lev. 4:27-35).

The whole passage sounds strange to modern ears, not only because sacrifices have not been offered for almost two millennia since the destruction of the Second Temple, but also because it is hard for us to understand the very concepts of sin and atonement as they are dealt with in the Torah.

The puzzle is that the sins for which an offering had to be brought were those committed inadvertently, be-shogeg. Either the sinner had forgotten the law, or some relevant fact. To give a contemporary example: suppose the phone rings on Shabbat and you answer it. You would only be liable for a sin offering if either you forgot the law that you may not answer a phone on Shabbat, or you forgot the fact that the day was Shabbat. If, for a moment, you thought it was Friday or Sunday. So your sin was inadvertent.

This is the kind of act that we don't tend to see as a sin at all. It was a mistake. You forgot. You did not mean to do anything wrong. And when you realise that inadvertently you have broken Shabbat, you are more likely to feel regret than remorse. You feel sorry but not guilty.

We think of a sin as something we did intentionally, yielding to temptation perhaps, or in a moment of rebellion. That is what Jewish law calls be-zadon in biblical Hebrew or be-mezid in rabbinic Hebrew. That is the kind of act we would have thought calls for a sin offering. But actually, such an act cannot be atoned for by an offering at all. So how are we to make sense of the sin offering?

The answer is that there are three dimensions of wrongdoing between us and God. The first is guilt and shame. When we sin deliberately and intentionally, we know inwardly that we have done wrong. Our conscience – the voice of God within the human heart – tells us that we have done wrong. That is what happened to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden after they had sinned. They felt shame. They tried to

hide. For that kind of deliberate, conscious, intentional sin, the only adequate moral response is teshuvah, repentance. This involves (a) remorse, charatah, (b) confession, vidui, and (c) kabbalat he-atid, a resolution never to commit the sin again. The result is selichah umechilah, God forgives us. A mere sacrifice is not enough.

However, there is a second dimension. Regardless of guilt and responsibility, if we commit a sin we have objectively transgressed a boundary. The word chet means to miss the mark, to stray, to deviate from the proper path. We have committed an act that somehow disturbs the moral balance of the world. To take another secular example, imagine that your car has a faulty speedometer. You are caught driving at 50 miles per hour in a 30 mile an hour zone. You tell the policeman who stops you that you didn't know. Your speedometer was only showing 30 miles per hour. He may sympathise, but you have still broken the law. You have transgressed the speed limit, albeit unknowingly, and you will have to pay the penalty.

That is what a sin offering is. According to Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch it is a penalty for carelessness. According to the Sefer Ha-Chinuch it is an educational and preventive measure. Deeds, in Judaism, are the way we train the mind. The fact that you have had to pay the price by bringing a sacrifice will make you take greater care in future.

Rabbi Isaac Arama (who lived in Spain in the 15th century) says that the difference between an intentional and an unintentional sin is that in the former case, both the body and the soul were at fault. In the case of an unintentional sin only the body was at fault, not the soul. Therefore a physical sacrifice helps, since it was only the physical act of the body that was in the wrong. A physical sacrifice cannot atone for a deliberate sin, because it cannot rectify a wrong in the soul.

What the sacrifice achieves is kapparah, not forgiveness as such but a "covering over" or obliteration of the sin. Noah was told to "cover" (ve-chapharta) the surface of the Ark with pitch (Gen. 6:14). The cover of the Ark in the Tabernacle was called kapporet (Lev. 25:17). Once a sin has been symbolically covered over, it is forgiven, but as the Malbim points out, in such cases the verb for forgiveness, s-l-ch, is always in the passive (venislach: Lev. 4:20, Lev. 4:26, Lev. 4:31).

The forgiveness is not direct, as it is in the case of repentance, but indirect, a consequence of the sacrifice.

The third dimension of sin is that it defiles. It leaves a stain on your character. Isaiah, in the presence of God, feels that he has "unclean lips" (Is. 6:5). King David says to God, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" – "me-chatati tahareni" (Ps. 51:4).

About Yom Kippur the Torah says: "On that day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you [letaher etchem]. Then, before the Lord, you will be clean from all your sins." Lev. 16:30

Ramban says that this is the logic of the sin offering. All sins, even those committed inadvertently, have consequences. They each "leave a stain on the soul and constitute a blemish on it, and the soul is only fit to meet its Maker when it has been cleansed from all sin" (Ramban to Lev. 4:2).

The result of the sin offering is tehora, cleansing, purification. So the sin offering is not about guilt but about other dimensions of transgression. It is one of the stranger features of Western civilisation, due in part to Pauline Christianity, and partly to the influence of the philosopher Immanuel Kant, that we tend to think about morality and spirituality as matters almost exclusively to do with the mind and its motives. But our acts leave traces in the world. And even unintentional sins can leave us feeling defiled.

The law of the sin offering reminds us that we can do harm unintentionally, and this can have psychological consequences. The best way of putting things right is to make a sacrifice: to do something that costs us something.

In ancient times, that took the form of a sacrifice offered on the altar at the Temple. Nowadays the best way of doing so is to give money to charity (tzedakah) or perform an act of kindness to others (chessed). The Prophet said so long ago, in God's name: "For I desire loving-kindness, not sacrifice." Hosea 6:6

Charity and kindness are our substitutes for

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sacrifice and, like the sin offering of old, they help mend what is broken in the world and in our soul.

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### **Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin**

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#### **On Taking Responsibility and Making**

**Amends** - And the Lord called to Moses and He spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting saying..." (Leviticus 1:1) What may cause the countenance of a particular individual to glow with a special charismatic radiance which sets him apart from all others? Let us explore the origin of Moses' 'rays of splendor' (Exodus 34:29), sometimes inaccurately rendered as "horns" because the Hebrew word *keren* can mean either ray or horn. As a result of this mistaken translation, Michelangelo's Moses is depicted with two horns protruding from his forehead and the typical anti-Semitic canard is to portray every Jew with horns. I believe that a deep understanding of this phrase – in correct Hebrew translation – will shed interesting light on radiant appearances in general and on Moses' unique personality, in particular.

The book of Leviticus opens with the verse, "And the Lord called to Moses," the first word being the Hebrew "Vayikra," which means "and He summoned" or "called out to." It is fascinating that a small "aleph" is the Masoretic, traditional way of writing the Hebrew VYKRA, so that the text actually states "Vayiker, and He chanced upon," as if by accident. Rashi comments: "The word VaYiKRA precedes all (divine) commandments and statements, which is a term of endearment used by God when He speaks to the heavenly angels; however, God appeared to the prophets of the idolatrous nations of the world with a temporary and impure expression, as it is written, 'And He chanced upon (VaYiker) Balaam.'"

The picture portrayed by Rashi's Midrashic commentary suggests that as Moses was writing the Torah dictated by God, he was too humble to accept for himself the more exalted and even angelic-suggesting divine charge of VaYiKRA; therefore, he wrote the less complimentary VaYiker relating to himself, while retaining his faithfulness to God's actual word VaYiKRA ("and He summoned") by appending a small aleph to the word VaYiKRa.

The Midrash goes one step further. It poignantly, if albeit naively, continues this picture by suggesting that Moses, having completed his writing of the Five Books, was then left with a small portion of unused divine ink; after all, the Almighty had dictated VaYiKRA and Moses had only written VYiKRA, rendering the ink which should have been used for the regular size aleph as surplus. The Midrash concludes that the Almighty Himself, as it were, took that extra ink and

lovingly placed it on Moses' forehead; that is what gave rise to Moses' 'rays of splendor.'

Behind this seemingly simplistic but beautiful description lies a world of profound thought. The Midrash is teaching that because Moses did not transfer all of the divine ink to the Torah parchment – obviously not, if we understand the ink to symbolize the divine will – there must have been many layers of ideas deeply embedded within the actual letters of Torah which Moses understood, but which was too profound for him to successfully communicate to others. As Maimonides explains in Section iii of his Guide for the Perplexed, Moses was on the highest level of the ladder of prophecy; only he – and none other of his contemporaries – was able to fully comprehend the divine will. Moses wrote down and explained as much as he felt could at least be understood by Joshua and the elders; the rest, he retained within his mind and within his soul. The aspects of Torah which Moses retained within himself but did not write or speak are graphically expressed by the midrash as the extra ink placed upon his forehead.

Most people are less than they appear to be – or, at least, are less than what they would like us to think they are. They immediately try to impress us with what and whom they know, dropping names and terms which imply that they are far more learned and knowledgeable than they actually are.

As another Midrash describes it, they are like the pig who extends his cloven hoof as if to advertise, "You see how kosher I am, you see how kosher I am." If we look more deeply at the pig, however, we will readily discern that it is not kosher all, because it lacks the second necessary condition for kashrut: a double digestive tract. Based upon this Midrashic image, Yiddish folklore refers to any individual who tries to impress others at a first meeting with how much he knows (when in actuality he knows very little), as "chazir fissel kosher," (the pig's cloven hoof gives an external appearance of being kosher).

Most people are less than they appear to be – and wear artificial masks as cover-ups in order to make a false impression; indeed persona, the base word for personality, is the Greek word for mask. There are, however, those rare individuals who are more than they appear to be, who have much more knowledge, insight and sensitivity than they would ever wish to – or feel that they are able to – communicate to others. It is that inner wisdom, hidden from the outside world of externals, which causes a charismatic glow of radiance to emanate from the countenance of such people. In the case of Moses, the concealed depths of his spiritual and intellectual understanding were of such a highly charged nature that they emanated rays

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of splendor which necessitated him to wear a mask – not to exaggerate who he was, but rather to minimize the divine sparks which his inner self naturally and automatically projected (Ex. 34:33).

Once we understand that the Torah which Moses received from God contained much more, eternally more, than he ever communicated in either written or oral formulations, we may begin to understand the powerful source for an unending and constantly regenerating Oral Tradition. Indeed, "Whatever creative interpretation a learned and devoted scholar-student may expound was originally given to Moses at Sinai" (Vayikra Raba 22:1). And at the same time, we now understand the real source of charismatic rays of splendor.

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### **Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand**

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#### **Appending a Pasuk from Parshas Vayikra onto Parshas HaTamid Invokes Akeidas Yitzchak**

Parshas HaTamid, which is contained in the "Korbonos" section of Shachris (the morning daily prayers) is from Parshas Pinchas. The Parshas HaTamid as it is written in Parshas Pinchas (Bamidbar 28:1-8), concludes with the pasuk: "and the other lamb shall you present at dusk; as the meal-offering of the morning, and as the drink-offering thereof, you shall present it, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto Hashem." (Bamidbar 28:8). However, after quoting the eight pesukim from Parshas Pinchas, the Parshas HaTamid that we recite daily, concludes with one additional pasuk from Parshas Vayikra: "He is to slaughter it on the north side of the Mizbayach before Hashem, and Aharon's sons, the Kohanim, are to dash its blood upon the Mizbayach all around." (Vayikra 1:11).

This last pasuk, from this week's parsha, is not even referring to the Korban HaTamid! It therefore seems very strange that it is appended to our daily recital of Parshas HaTamid. It is true that the Korban Tamid, as well as other "Kodshei Kodashim" offerings, are all slaughtered on the north side of the Mizbayach. But why do we append this pasuk to Parshas HaTamid?

The Mishna Berurah explains that this pasuk is appended to our daily recital of the Parshas HaTamid based on the teaching of a Medrash. The Medrash states that the Ribono shel Olam invokes Heaven and Earth as His witnesses that "Whenever this particular pasuk is recited—whether by Jew or Gentile, man or woman, freeman or slave—I will remember Akeidas Yitzchak." In other words, mention of this pasuk is our way of sneaking in, so to speak, another remembrance of Akeidas Yitzchak. This also seems strange because this pasuk seems to have nothing to do with

Akeidas Yitzchak! What is the connection between this pasuk and Akeidas Yitzchak?

The Maharal Diskin makes a very interesting point: In Biblical times, when they slaughtered an animal for a korban, it was slaughtered on top of the Mizbayach, rather than the later-prevalent practice to slaughter the animal on the side of the Mizbayach. Why?

Avraham put his son Yitzchak on top of the Mizbayach, as was common practice, in order to offer him as a korban. Yitzchak wanted to be bound on the Mizbayach because he was afraid that he would jerk and invalidate himself as a korban. That is why it is called Akeidas Yitzchak (the Binding of Yitzchak). Avraham Avinu bound Yitzchak to the Mizbayach, and was about to slaughter him when the malach came forth and said, "Do not send forth your hand against the lad, do not do anything to him..." (Bereshis 22:12). We might think that at that point Avraham would say to his son, "Okay, Yitzchak, let's untie the ropes. Let's get out of here." But no, Avraham Avinu leaves him bound. Why does Avraham leave him bound? The Maharal Diskin explains: Avraham traveled all the way to Har Hamoria. He had to offer some kind of korban. So he looked up and saw that a ram was caught by its horns in the thicket. Okay, so now Avraham had his ram – so why was Yitzchak STILL bound on the Mizbayach? It was because Avraham was not yet sure that this animal was kosher for a korban. "Maybe it has a mum (blemish). Maybe it is a ba'al mum," he feared. After all, it was caught up in the thorns! Avraham Avinu was afraid to unbind Yitzchak because he was not sure that the ram would be an acceptable substitute offering. Therefore, what does he do? He slaughters the ram ON THE NORTH SIDE of the Mizbayach.

That is why from that day forward, all the major korbonos – the Olah, the Chatas, and the Asham – are slaughtered on the north side of the Mizbayach. This reenacts what Avraham Avinu did. He was the first person to slaughter an animal on the north side of the Mizbayach rather than on the Mizbayach itself. Therefore, when we recite the pasuk "He slaughtered it on the northern side of the Mizbayach..." we are once again invoking the merit and the memory of Akeidas Yitzchak. This is why we say it as part of the daily Parshas HaTamid, as the Mishna Berura indicates.

**The Roptshitzer Rebbe on Doing Mitzvos Correctly** – Rav Naftali Tzvi Horowitz, known as the Roptshitzer Rebbe, gives a chassidishe insight into a pasuk in this week's parsha. The Torah uses the following pasuk to introduce the halacha of the bull brought as a sin offering by the Sanhedrin as an atonement for an erroneous ruling: "And if the whole

congregation of Israel shall err, the thing being hidden from the eyes of the assembly, and do any of the things which the L-rd has commanded not to be done, and are guilty." (Vayikra 4:13)

The wording of this pasuk seems strange: "...and do any of the things which the L-rd has commanded not to be done..." does not refer to doing an aveira (sin). It says they did something which Hashem commanded not to be done. The Roptshitzer Rebbe says that the pasuk is not referring to doing aveiros. It is referring to not doing mitzvos correctly. "One of the mitzvos of Hashem ... asher lo sei'asena" – that you are not doing it the way you are supposed to be doing it! That in itself is sinful.

We are now on the threshold of Pesach. Leil haSeder is a night full of mitzvos. There is no other night like it throughout the year. There are so many mitzvos, both D'Oraisa (Biblical) and D'Rabanan (Rabbinic). Matzah and Sipur Yetzias Mitzraim are D'Oraisa; Maror and Arba Kosos are D'Rabanan. A person needs to be careful not only to perform the mitzvos, but to perform the mitzvos correctly – with the proper intentions, meticulousness, and enthusiasm that this once-a-year situation merits.

The Roptshitzer Rebbe quotes a story involving two chassidim of the Baal Shem Tov. They were talking with each other: One chossid said, "Oy, what will be with me? After 120 years, I will approach the Kisei haKavod and I will need to give an accounting on all the aveiros that I did during my lifetime." The other chossid answered back: "I am not worried about my aveiros. When the Ribono shel Olam will call me on the carpet and ask me why I did this and that aveira, I will explain that I had this lust and that lust and I could not control myself. However, I am really worried about the mitzvos that I did. I am worried that perhaps I did not do them properly. What is my excuse for that?"

We may have lapses and fall down spiritually by transgressing certain prohibitions. That may be understandable. But once we are already doing a mitzvah – do it correctly! That was his worry: "hamitzvos asher lo sei'asena" – the mitzvos that he was not performing correctly.

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### **Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah**

#### **On Taking Responsibility and Making Amends - Rabbanit Attorney Ravit Kalech**

With great anticipation, we will begin reading the Book of Vayikra this Shabbat, entering the world of korbanot (sacrificial offerings). Today, while it may be difficult to relate to the practical aspect of bringing korbanot, it is much easier to connect with the personal

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process that an individual undergoes when offering a sacrifice.

The sin offering (korban chatat) appears in Chapter 4 of our parsha, a sacrifice brought for a sin which was committed unintentionally. The Torah details four categories of people who must bring a korban chatat: the anointed priest (Kohen Gadol), the congregation of Israel (Sanhedrin), the leader (Nassi), and an individual (the common man).

There is a notable variation in how the Torah phrases each case:

Verse 3: "If the anointed priest sins"

Verse 13: "If the entire congregation of Israel errs"

Verse 22: "When a leader sins"

Verse 27: "If an individual sins"

Nechama Leibowitz, whose yearzeit falls this week on the 5th of Nissan, highlights these differences and explains:

"Our Sages taught us to be highly attuned to any stylistic deviations in the text. Verses that, by their content, should follow a parallel structure must also be parallel in their linguistic form."

She cites the Talmud in Horayot 10a: "When a leader sins"—Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai said: Fortunate is the generation whose leader brings a sacrifice for his unintentional sin! If its leader brings a sacrifice, how much more so must an ordinary person! And if he atones for an unintentional sin, how much more so for a deliberate one!"

Rashi instructs us to read this statement as an exclamation of wonder: "If the king, whose heart is not naturally submissive, acknowledges his mistake and brings a sacrifice for his unintentional sin, how much more so will ordinary people, whose hearts are more naturally humble! And if he is mindful of his unintentional sins, how much more so of his intentional ones, ensuring that he repents for them as well."

Nechama Leibowitz explains that a leader—be it a king or ruler—sets a personal example for his people. When a person in his position acknowledges his mistake and participates in the process of atonement before the kohen, he serves as a role model for the rest of the nation, the masses.

In contrast, the Sforno interprets the phrase "when a leader sins" as an expectation rather than a possibility: "This is a common occurrence, as it is written in Devarim 32:15: 'And Yeshurun grew fat and rebelled.'"

Nechama Leibowitz elaborates: "It is as if the text says ka'asher [the text uses the word asher] because such errors are inevitable for

someone in a position of great authority, and he must therefore bring a sin offering as commanded.”

According to this interpretation, those who wield power are bound to stumble and err; for governance, by its very nature, carries the risk of corruption, and mistakes are unavoidable.

Rabi Yochanan ben Zakkai’s statement implies that a leader who atones for an unintentional sin will, in all probability, be especially careful regarding deliberate transgressions. But why should this be the case?

The Ben Ish Chai of Baghdad provides a profound explanation: “A king’s honor is immense, and bringing a sacrifice requires him to humble himself—to appear before the Kohen like an ordinary person, with his sacrifice in hand, seeking atonement. Since repentance for an unintentional sin necessitates bringing a korban, the king cannot simply atone in private. If he is willing to undergo this public process, which diminishes his royal dignity, it follows all the more so that he will repent for intentional sins, which require only private introspection.”

According to the Ben Ish Chai, bringing an offering for an unintentional sin is a process in which the leader is required to humble himself as one of the people and come before the kohen to offer the sacrifice and receive atonement. This entails a diminution of his royal dignity, and therefore, if he undergoes this process, we can be certain that for any deliberate transgressions he has committed, he will be capable of repenting privately, taking full responsibility for them as well.

Bringing a korban chatat initiates a process where the leader assumes responsibility for his mistake, culminating in atonement: “The Kohen shall make atonement for him concerning his sin, and he shall be forgiven” (Vayikra 4:26). This applies to all of us.

The anthropologist Ruth Benedict, in her book *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, cited by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, distinguishes between two cultural paradigms: shame culture (such as ancient Greece and Japan) and guilt culture (Judaism and its derivative cultures). She states: “In shame cultures the highest value is honor. In guilt cultures it is righteousness. Shame is feeling bad that we have failed to live up to the expectations others have of us. Guilt is what we feel when we fail to live up to what our own conscience demands of us. Shame is other-directed. Guilt is inner-directed.”

Rabbi Sacks explains that today’s “cancel culture”—a culture of public shaming—resembles a shame culture. It aims to shame

individuals without offering a path to redemption. In contrast, a guilt culture distinguishes between a person and his actions. The individual is not inherently bad; however, his actions may be. This distinction enables forgiveness, as it allows a person to distance himself from his wrongdoing: to acknowledge that he acted improperly, express remorse, make amends, and most importantly, refrain from repeating the act when faced with a similar opportunity. To paraphrase Rabbi Sacks’ words, in Jewish ethics, a morality of guilt within a culture of listening, the external appearance is secondary to the inner voice. When we sin—and we all do—there is a path forward: recognizing our transgression, confessing, repenting, making amends, and—like Yehuda—changing. To know that even if our actions were flawed, ‘the soul You have given me is pure,’ and that through self-improvement we can attain forgiveness—this is a life-changing concept.

From what we have seen so far, I believe it is important to take two key lessons from this week’s portion: First, the Torah views every individual—regardless of his place on the social ladder—whether he be the anointed Kohen Gadol, the leader, the prime minister, or a public representative—as subject to the law. It expects him to acknowledge even his unintentional sins and undergo a process of atonement.

Second, we all bear the responsibility to act differently, fostering a culture of forgiveness rather than participating in a culture of public shaming and inflammatory rhetoric which only cause harm. Instead, we must create space for introspection, for reflecting on our missteps, and for enabling a genuine process of forgiveness. We must work toward healing divisions within our people, engaging in sincere dialogue—each of us finding our own ways to contribute to these goals.

May we succeed in bringing our society and our country to a better place as we approach Israel’s 77th anniversary. The power to do so is in our hands, and with God’s help, we will act and succeed.

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

#### **Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg**

#### **Connecting To Hashem with Humility**

“When a person (nefesh) will bring a korban mincha, his offering shall be of fine flour” (Vayikra 2:1). Rashi comments that the Torah uses the term nefesh to describe one who brings a korban mincha because typically only a poor person offers such a cheap korban. The Torah is hinting to the fact that the monetary value of the korban is irrelevant. Even if the animal that a wealthy man offers is more expensive than the flour of the poor person, nevertheless the poor man’s korban is just as

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beloved. Hashem considers it as if he sacrificed his nefesh - his soul.

But if the Torah wanted to highlight the value of the poor man’s korban, then it should have used the term nefesh in the context of a bird offering. After all, the bird offering is even less expensive than the korban mincha. Even the smallest bird is sufficient to be brought as a sacrifice, while a korban mincha must contain at least forty eggs worth of flour as well as a measure of oil and spices. The flour offering might not be worth as much as an animal, but it certainly is worth more than a small bird. Why then does the Torah make a point of using the term nefesh specifically in the context of the flour offering?

The Panim Yafos (the author of the *Sefer Hafla’ah*) answers that what is special about the sacrifice of the poor man is not the material that he offers but his lowly spirit - his ruach she’falah. The poor man’s humility is symbolized by flour, which comes from plant life (tzomei’ach), as opposed to animals and birds which are living creatures (chai). The Torah identifies the poor man with a korban mincha to highlight that it is the lowly spirit of the poor man that makes his korban so beloved to Hashem.

Chazal comment (Sotah 5b) that one who has a humble spirit is considered to have brought all types of korbanos, as is hinted to in the posuk, “Zivchei Elokim ruach nishbara - a broken spirit is equal to multiple korbanos. (Tehillim 51:19)” What’s more, Chazal add, his tefillah is readily accepted, as the possuk continues, “Hashem will not despise a broken and humble heart.”

Why does a humble person deserve such special treatment? Chazal say (Sotah 5a) that the Torah was given on Har Sinai because of its modesty. All the other mountains felt that since they were tall and prominent, they were worthy to be the site of kabbolas haTorah. But Har Sinai was quiet. (see Midrash Tehillim, Shochar Tov, 68:15) And precisely for that very reason, because Har Sinai was reserved and humble, it was chosen as the place upon which the Torah was given.

The Shechina always seeks out a lowly place. Hashem connects with someone or something that is humble. Chazal comment that one who walks with an erect stance - one who is arrogant - pushes away the Shechina (Kiddushin 31a). Hakadosh Boruch Hu says about one who is haughty, “I cannot live together with him in this world (Sotah 5a).” But one who is humble in spirit draws the Shechina closer. “I live in exalted heights and holiness,” says Hashem, “but I am with the despondent and the lowly of spirit” (Yeshaya 57:15).

This is why one who is humble is considered to have brought all types of korbanos. The word l'hakriv means both to sacrifice and to draw close, because bringing a korban is a way to come closer to Hashem. The more humble a person is, the more Hashem is drawn to him. The intimate connection that a humble person enjoys with the Shechina is similar to the closeness felt by one who has brought all kinds of korbanos.

Nowadays, when the Beis Hamikdash is no longer standing, tefillah is in place of korbanos. Tefillah is a vehicle through which we connect with Hakadosh Boruch Hu, who is the mekor ha'bracha - the source of all blessing. By acting with humility, we cause the Shechina to draw closer to us, and we make ourselves worthy recipients of Hashem's blessings.

**A Humble Man With a (Potentially) Not So Humble Childhood** – The Medrash Rabbah, on the opening words of Sefer Vayikra (“Vayikra Hashem el Moshe...”), mentions that Moshe Rabbeinu actually had ten different names. However, Hashem made it a point to call Moshe only by the name he was given by Basya, Paroh's daughter. The Torah says that she called him Moshe “Ki min hamayim mishe-seyhu” (Shemos 2:10). The simple reading of this Medrash is that the reason HaKadosh Baruch Hu chose to use that name was to give everlasting honor to Paroh's daughter. She, in effect, saved the life of Moshe, going against her father's decree and the “law of the land” that all Hebrew boys were to be drowned. Thus, even though he had a name Tuvya and a name Avigdor among many other names, Hashem addressed him by the name Moshe, given to him by the woman who risked her life and saved him from death by drowning.

The Kesav Sofer, however, gives an interesting alternative interpretation of why Hashem specifically called Moshe by the name Moshe. The Gemara in Maseches Nedarim (38a) says, “The Holy One Blessed be He does not cause prophecy and Ruach haKodesh (the power of His Divine Presence) to rest on anyone who is not mighty, wealthy, wise, and humble. This is all learned out from Moshe (who was all of the above).”

We can understand that modesty and humility are prerequisites for being a recipient of prophecy and Ruach haKodesh. But where do we find in Yiddishkeit that a person's strength or wisdom should be a factor in his ability to receive Divine prophecy? We normally do not give special consideration to gevurah. Chochma, perhaps yes, but gevurah, no. The Kesav Sofer explains that if a person is a 90-pound weakling and is not very bright and is

not very successful, and as a result he is also not very wealthy, the fact that such a person is modest is no ‘kuntz’. It does not demonstrate a major accomplishment. What, after all, does he possess that would justify his strutting around proudly? It is only right that a person who does not have anything going for himself should be modest!

The Gemara (Pesachim 113b) states that one of the four categories of people who are intolerable is the poor braggart (dal gayeh). He is impoverished, and nevertheless he thinks of himself in haughty terms.

On the other hand, a person who has all these attributes: He is a “gibor”. He is a “chochom”. He is an “ashir”. And yet, he remains an “anav” – that, according to the Kesav Sofer, is real humility. This person has what to be proud of and even what to be arrogant about, and yet he maintains his modest bearing – that is a real anav. It is not “gevurah” or “chochma” or “ashirus” per se that is required. Humility qualifies a person for nevuah and Ruach haKodesh. Nevertheless, true anivus is tested when a person has what to be arrogant about and nevertheless maintains his humility.

When a person is Rav Moshe Feinstein, zecher tzadik l'vracha, and knows kol haTorah kulah and has reviewed Shulchan Aruch 150 times and knows every comment of the Pri Megadim and nevertheless, when he is walking on the street on the Lower East Side and someone calls out “Hey, Moshe!” (calling out to somebody else with the name Moshe) this Gadol HaDor turns around and thinks the fellow is calling out to him—that demonstrates humility! Rav Moshe, zt”l, was a humble person despite the fact that he had so much going for him. The same is true of virtually all the Gedolim. They are men with tremendous intellect and nevertheless they are humble. That is true anivus.

Rav Yosef Salant (the Be'er Yosef) comments on the Chazal that the Matriarch Sora was a beautiful woman. The Gemara says (Megilla 14a) that Yiska daughter of Charan (mentioned in Bereshis 11:29) was really Sora and two explanations are given for this derivation. The first explanation is she'sachsa b'Ruach haKodesh (that she spoke with Divine Inspiration). The second explanation is that she is called Yiska because everyone talked about her beauty (she'haKol sochin b'yofya). There cannot be two more diametrically opposed praises than these two interpretations. One is “She possesses Ruach haKodesh”; the other one is “She was a knockout beauty!” We don't usually put those two accolades in the same sentence.

The Be'er Yosef explains: No, because she was the talk of the town as the most beautiful of

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women and nevertheless, she did not let those praises go to her head, that is why she merited to speak with Ruach HaKodesh.

That brings us full circle to where we began: Moshe Rabbeinu grew up in the palace of Paroh. He was a prince. He had the world on a platter and had everything going for him. Nevertheless, he was an anav. That is why Hashem chose to address him with no other name than the name he was given by Paroh's daughter. Basya bas Paroh put him in the palace and gave him every excuse in the world to think of himself proudly as the Prince of Egypt. Nevertheless, Moshe retained his humility. To highlight this personality accomplishment, Hashem chose to always address him by the name he was given by the Princess of Egypt, Basya bas Paroh!

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### Mizrachi Dvar Torah

#### Rav Doron Perez - Giving It Everything

One of the most inspiring lines in all of biblical literature was uttered by King Solomon when he says that: “Anything that comes your way to do in life, give it with all your might.”

If you want to succeed in anything in life, you have to give it 110%. You have to be all in, give it everything you've got – heart, body and soul.

That's what Vayikra is about – korbanot, of building our relationship with G-d.

The first korban – olah – is the burnt offering which is entirely burnt for Hashem. The basis of our relationship with Hashem is being fully and completely committed.

To succeed in any relationship and anything in life, we need to commit our heart, body and soul. May we always give it everything we have got for those endeavors we believe to be important in life.

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### Yeshivat Har Etzion: Virtual Bet Midrash

#### by Menachem Leibtag

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.]

#### THE KORBAN YACHID

#### 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)

'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 l-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."]

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 l-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.

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##### 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 **mizbeich** - 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 Parshat 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 ve-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,

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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-doroteichem 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'shogeig" 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 mizbeiach, 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.

**Erev Pesach on Shabbos Guide**  
**By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff**

This year, the first day of Pesach falls on Sunday, which means that Erev Pesach falls on Shabbos. This causes changes to many Pesach observances. Below is a simplified guide to the practices of Erev Pesach that falls on Shabbos.

**THURSDAY**

Since Erev Pesach is Shabbos, the fast of Taanis Bechoros is pushed forward to Thursday. A bechor, or the father of a minor bechor, is obligated to fast on Thursday, but he can discharge his obligation by making or attending a siyum.

Thursday night - Bedikas Chometz.

Regular bedikas chometz is performed with a beracha. After completing the bedikah, one recites the first bitul.

**FRIDAY**

Friday morning davening is regular, without tachanun because it is the month of Nissan. Although on Erev Pesach Ashkenazim do not say the prayers of mizmor lisodah and lamenezach in davening, they do say these parts in the Friday davening since it is not Erev Pesach.

Make sure to have sold your chometz by now.

Burning the Chometz.

We burn chometz on Friday morning even though one may own chometz until Shabbos morning. Place the chometz that is to be eaten on Shabbos in a secure place and make a mental note where that chometz is located. We do not recite the second bitul after burning the chometz, but instead we recite it on Shabbos morning when we finish eating the chometz.

Doing Melacha on Erev Shabbos.

There is no limitation on doing melacha-work on this Friday because it is not Erev Pesach.

Eruvei Chatzeiros.

The minhag is to renew an eruv chatzeiros with neighbors on Erev Pesach. This year it should be renewed on Erev Shabbos.

Seder Preparations.

Ideally, all of the seder preparations should be performed on Friday, including roasting the zroa and the egg, preparing the saltwater, making the charoses, checking and washing the marror, grinding the horseradish. Make sure to open the boxes of matzos and bottles of wine as one would before every Shabbos. Although this is unusual in today's world, if you need to separate challah from your matzah, remember to do it before Shabbos.

Shabbos Food Preparations.

If you are preparing chometz-dik food for your Shabbos meals, do not make sticky chometz-dik food that will stick to your pots or plates. (Presumably, most people will prepare Pesach-dik food for all meals.)

Shabbos Candles.

Be careful not to place the Shabbos candelabra on the tablecloth on which one is serving chometz since one will be unable to remove the candles in order to remove the cloth.

One should kindle the Shabbos lights near where one intends to eat the Friday night meal.

**SHABBOS**

Friday Night Meal.

One is required to recite hamotzi at the first two Shabbos meals using two "breads" (lechem mishneh). One may use matzah for lechem mishneh, but many poskim consider the matzah that one intends to use for the seder as muktzah. Many, however, refrain from eating Pesach-dik matzah so close to the seder.

If one wants to make motzi on chometz in one part of the house and eat the Pesach-dik meal in another, one may, since his intent when washing and making hamotzi was to eat his meal in this way. He should return to the original place for bensching. Each person should eat at least one kebeitzah of bread (egg size) to fulfill the mitzvah of seudas Shabbos and to justify his making netilas yadayim with a beracha. (Since one

may not weigh on Shabbos, one who wishes to weigh his chometz should do so before Shabbos.)

If eating egg matzah, grape matzah or matzah cookies (matzah ashirah) for the meals, Ashkenazim should eat as much matzah ashirah as one would eat with this type of a meal (i.e., certainly more than the egg size mentioned above). Sephardim should eat four egg sizes of the matzah ashirah. (Note that someone who has the custom not to eat matzah after Purim or Rosh Chodesh may still eat matzah ashirah.)

According to most poskim, one may eat regular (non-Pesach-dik) matzah for the Friday evening meal. Thus, this is an option for someone who does not want chometz in their house and cannot eat the amount of matzah ashirah mentioned above.

If one is serving on chometz plates a hot meal that was cooked in a Pesach-dik pot, one should pour the hot food into a Pesach-dik plate or platter before pouring it into the chometz-dik plates. (Presumably, however, most people will be serving the meals on disposable dishes.)

Shabbos Morning.

Daven early. One is required to eat one meal in the morning. There is a recommendation (hidur) to eat two meals on the morning of Erev Pesach, separated briefly.

For those who wish to eat two meals in the morning, I suggest:

Immediately after davening, make kiddush, hamotzi, eat a piece of fish, and bensch.

Take a break, and begin the next meal with enough time to finish eating the main course (at least) before the latest time to eat chometz. Some poskim prefer eating the meat also with the first morning meal before breaking. One who follows this approach should not eat so much that he cannot eat the next meal.

Bitul chometz.

When one has completed the eating of the chometz, recite the second bitul chometz. Dispose of the remaining chometz into the toilet (taking care to crumble it into small pieces and only flush a small amount at one time -- it will take a bit of time) or in a public garbage (if it is within the eruv), but do not place it in your own garbage can. One may continue eating the meal without new brachos, notwithstanding that he may no longer eat chometz.

Shabbos Afternoon.

Since most people follow the opinion of davening mincha before seudah shelishis, one should daven mincha early.

Seudah Shelishis.

In the early afternoon, one may serve a heavy Pesach-dik meal (meat, potatoes, fruits, vegetables, etc.) without any hamotzi at all. If you eat "gebrokzt," it is recommended to eat kneidlich at this meal. It is permitted to eat kneidlich even if you have a minhag not to eat matzah from Purim or from Rosh Chodesh. Sephardim may serve matzah ashirah at seudah shelishis.

Some people, usually Sephardim, have a custom of cooking whole matzos and serving them for seudah shelishis. These matzos require netilas yadayim. The beracha before eating these matzos is hamotzi and they require bensching afterward. An Ashkenazi may follow this approach, as well as someone who customarily does not eat matzah for a month before Pesach. This is because one cannot fulfill the mitzvah at the seder with cooked matzah. An Ashkenazi has no requirement to have cooked matzah available, while some Sephardim follow the approach that they are required.

If one eats kneidlich or matzah ashirah for seudah shelishis, one should complete eating seudah shelishis before the "tenth hour," which is a half hour before "mincha ketana," or three quarters of the day. Some authorities contend that even those who eat only fruit and vegetables for this seudah shelishis should eat before the tenth hour. All agree that one may eat a small quantity of fruit or vegetables after this point.

It is advisable to take a nap Shabbos afternoon, but one should not mention that he is taking a nap in order to be awake for the seder. Some poskim consider this preparing on Shabbos for after Shabbos.

Most poskim contend that one should not move one's seder matzos before Shabbos is over. Since many people who are eating at someone else's house take their own matzah to the seder, they should not carry these matzos until Shabbos is over. Also remember not to begin preparations for the seder until Shabbos is over and one says, "Baruch HaMavdil bein Kodesh l'kodesh."

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## Home Weekly Parsha VAYIKRA

### Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

God calls out to Moshe from the inner sanctuary of the Mishkan. Yet, as Rashi points out to us, the sound of God's voice, so to speak, was loud and strong, however it was limited to the area within the Mishkan. Those who were outside of that sanctuary heard nothing. The message imparted here is a clear and simple one. Not everyone hears God's voice, nor can it be heard everywhere.

There was a long period of time in English and American society that those who entered the clergy were said to have responded to a "calling." In our jaded, materialistic, dysfunctional world of today a "calling" is something to be mocked at as being naïve and impractical. Yet the Torah emphasizes here that Moshe responded to such a "calling" and that in fact this became the name and title of one of the five books of Moshe.

Leading and teaching the Jewish people can certainly be viewed as a profession and a career. But if that is all it is then it is deficient in its spiritual potential and its ultimate chance of success. Unless one hears, so to speak, the voice of God calling one to public service and Torah teaching, the soul of the matter will always be compromised.

Moshe is able to be the incomparable Moshe that he is because he hears the Lord calling out to him even if no one else apparently does so as well. All his life he responds to that call and remains faithful to the task and challenge that leading the Jewish people poses for him.

Midrash teaches us that Moshe first heard the voice of God, so to speak, at the encounter at the burning bush. There the Lord called out to him in the voice and tone of his father Amram and Moshe was able to hear it without being overwhelmed. Much later in Jewish history, the Lord told the prophet Eliyahu that he could hear His call in the still small voice that reverberates within our consciences.

God is heard, so to speak, in the voice of our ancestors, of Jewish tradition and family bonds. Many Jews today are completely unaware of their own family heritage and certainly of the greater heritage of Israel as a whole. And very few of us are strong enough psychologically and spiritually to hearken to our inner voice, still and small as it is.

So we wander through life seeking direction and guidance and turn to others to help us find ourselves. First, we should look inward for the Godly GPS implanted within us. That is our Mishkan, the place where God's voice can be heard. Searching for it elsewhere, in the voices of strangers, outside of our Mishkan will be frustrating and fruitless. Since the voice of God, no matter how powerful and strong it may be, is still described as being a small voice, it is obvious that one pay attention and strain to hear it. This effort always characterized Moshe's life, the loyal servant of God, who was attuned to hear the calling that guided him, and through him, all of Israel and humankind as well.

Shabat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

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## Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

### Why Do We Sacrifice?

#### Essays on Ethics • Vayikra •

The laws of sacrifices that dominate the early chapters of the Book of Leviticus are among the hardest in the Torah to relate to in the present. It has been almost two thousand years since the Temple was destroyed and the sacrificial system came to an end. But Jewish thinkers, especially the more mystical among them, strove to understand the inner significance of the sacrifices and the statement they made about the relationship between humanity and God. They were thus able to rescue their spirit even if their physical enactment was no longer possible. Among the simplest yet most profound was the comment made by Rabbi Shneur

Zalman of Liadi, the first Rebbe of Lubavitch. He noticed a grammatical oddity about the second line of this Parsha:

Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: "When one of you offers a sacrifice to the Lord, the sacrifice must be taken from the cattle, sheep, or goats."

Lev. 1:2

Or so the verse would read if it were constructed according to the normal rules of grammar. However, the word order of the sentence in Hebrew is strange and unexpected. We would expect to read: adam mikem ki yakriv, "when one of you offers a sacrifice." Instead, what it says is adam ki yakriv mikem, "when one offers a sacrifice of you."

The essence of sacrifice, said Rabbi Shneur Zalman, is that we offer ourselves. We bring to God our faculties, our energies, our thoughts and emotions. The physical form of sacrifice – an animal offered on the altar – is only an external manifestation of an inner act. The real sacrifice is mikem, "of you." We give God something of ourselves.[1]

What exactly is it that we give God when we offer a sacrifice? The Jewish mystics, among them Rabbi Shneur Zalman, spoke about two souls that each of us has within us – the animal soul (nefesh habeheimit) and the Godly soul. On the one hand we are physical beings. We are part of nature. We have physical needs: food, drink, shelter. We are born, we live, we die. As Ecclesiastes puts it:

Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: as one dies, so dies the other. Both have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is a mere fleeting breath.

Eccl. 3:19

Yet we are not simply animals. We have within us immortal longings. We can think, speak, and communicate. We can, by acts of speaking and listening, reach out to others. We are the one life-form known to us in the universe that can ask the question "why?" We can formulate ideas and be moved by high ideals. We are not governed by biological drives alone. Psalm 8 is a hymn of wonder on this theme:

When I consider Your heavens,  
the work of Your fingers,  
the moon and the stars,  
which You have set in place,  
what is man that You are mindful of him,  
the son of man that You care for him?  
Yet You made him a little lower than the angels  
and crowned him with glory and honour.  
You made him ruler over the works of Your hands;  
You put everything under his feet.

Ps. 8:4–7

Physically, we are almost nothing; spiritually, we are brushed by the wings of eternity. We have a Godly soul. The nature of sacrifice, understood psychologically, is thus clear. What we offer God is (not just an animal but) the nefesh habeheimit, the animal soul within us.

How does this work out in detail? A hint is given by the three types of animal mentioned in the verse in the second line of Parshat Vayikra (see Lev. 1:2): beheimah (animal), bakar (cattle), and tzon (flock). Each represents a separate animal-like feature of the human personality.

Beheimah represents the animal instinct itself. The word refers to domesticated animals. It does not imply the savage instincts of the predator. What it means is something more tame. Animals spend their time searching for food. Their lives are bounded by the struggle to survive. To sacrifice the animal within us is to be moved by something more than mere survival.

Wittgenstein, when asked what was the task of philosophy, answered, "To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle." [2] The fly, trapped in the bottle, bangs its head against the glass, trying to find a way out. The one thing it fails to do is to look up. The Godly soul within us is the force that makes us look up, beyond the physical world, beyond mere survival, in search of meaning, purpose, goal.

The Hebrew word bakar, cattle, reminds us of the word boker, dawn, literally to "break through," as the first rays of sunlight break through the darkness of night. Cattle, stampeding, break through barriers. Unless constrained by fences, cattle are no respecters of boundaries. To

sacrifice the bakar is to learn to recognise and respect boundaries – between holy and profane, pure and impure, permitted and forbidden. Barriers of the mind can sometimes be stronger than walls.

Finally, the word tzon, flocks, represents the herd instinct – the powerful drive to move in a given direction because others are doing likewise.[3] The great figures of Judaism – Abraham, Moses, the Prophets – were distinguished precisely by their ability to stand apart from the herd; to be different, to challenge the idols of the age, to refuse to capitulate to the intellectual fashions of the moment. That, ultimately, is the meaning of holiness in Judaism. Kadosh, the holy, is something set apart, different, separate, distinctive. Jews were the only minority in history consistently to refuse to assimilate to the dominant culture or convert to the dominant faith.

The noun korban, “sacrifice,” and the verb lehakriv, “to offer something as a sacrifice,” actually mean “that which is brought close” and “the act of bringing close.” The key element is not so much giving something up (the usual meaning of sacrifice), but rather bringing something close to God. Lehakriv is to bring the animal element within us to be transformed through the Divine fire that once burned on the altar, and still burns at the heart of prayer if we truly seek closeness to God.

By one of the ironies of history, this ancient idea has become suddenly contemporary. Darwinism, the decoding of the human genome, and scientific materialism (the idea that the material is all there is) have led to the widespread conclusion that we are all animals, nothing more, nothing less. We share 98 per cent of our genes with the primates. We are, as Desmond Morris used to put it, “the naked ape.”[4] On this view, Homo sapiens exist by mere accident. We are the result of a random series of genetic mutations and just happen to be more adapted to survival than other species. The nefesh habeheim, the animal soul, is all there is.

The refutation of this idea – and it is surely among the most reductive ever to be held by intelligent minds – lies in the very act of sacrifice itself as the mystics understood it. We can redirect our animal instincts. We can rise above mere survival. We are capable of honouring boundaries. We can step outside our environment. As Harvard neuroscientist Steven Pinker put it: “Nature does not dictate what we should accept or how we should live,” adding, “and if my genes don’t like it they can go jump in the lake.”[5] Or, as Katharine Hepburn majestically said to Humphrey Bogart in *The African Queen*, “Nature, Mr Allnut, is what we were put on earth to rise above.”

We can transcend the beheimah, the bakar, and the tzon. No animal is capable of self-transformation, but we are. Poetry, music, love, wonder – the things that have no survival value but which speak to our deepest sense of being – all tell us that we are not mere animals, assemblages of selfish genes. By bringing that which is animal within us close to God, we allow the material to be suffused with the spiritual and we become something else: no longer slaves of nature but servants of the living God.

[1] Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, *Likkutei Torah* (Brooklyn, NY: Kehot, 1984), Vayikra 2aff.

[2] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (New York: Macmillan, 1953), p. 309.

[3] The classic works on crowd behaviour and the herd instinct are Charles Mackay, *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* (London: Richard Bentley, 1841); Gustave le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1897); Wilfred Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1916); and Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* (New York: Viking Press, 1962).

[4] Desmond Morris, *The Naked Ape* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1984).

[5] Steven Pinker, *How the Mind Works* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), p. 54.

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**Parshat Vayikra: On Taking Responsibility and Making Amends**  
**Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin is the Founder and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone**

“And the Lord called to Moses and He spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting saying...” (Leviticus 1:1)

What may cause the countenance of a particular individual to glow with a special charismatic radiance which sets him apart from all others? Let us explore the origin of Moses’ “rays of splendor” (Exodus 34:29), sometimes inaccurately rendered as “horns” because the Hebrew word keren can mean either ray or horn. As a result of this mistaken translation, Michelangelo’s Moses is depicted with two horns protruding from his forehead and the typical anti-Semitic canard is to portray every Jew with horns. I believe that a deep understanding of this phrase – in correct Hebrew translation – will shed interesting light on radiant appearances in general and on Moses’ unique personality, in particular.

The book of Leviticus opens with the verse, “And the Lord called to Moses,” the first word being the Hebrew “Vayikra,” which means “and He summoned” or “called out to.” It is fascinating that a small “aleph” is the Masoretic, traditional way of writing the Hebrew VYKRA, so that the text actually states “Vayiker, and He chanced upon,” as if by accident. Rashi comments: “The word VaYiKRA precedes all (divine) commandments and statements, which is a term of endearment used by God when He speaks to the heavenly angels; however, God appeared to the prophets of the idolatrous nations of the world with a temporary and impure expression, as it is written, ‘And He chanced upon (VaYiker) Balaam.’”

The picture portrayed by Rashi’s Midrashic commentary suggests that as Moses was writing the Torah dictated by God, he was too humble to accept for himself the more exalted and even angelic-suggesting divine charge of VaYiKRA; therefore, he wrote the less complimentary VaYiker relating to himself, while retaining his faithfulness to God’s actual word VaYiKRA (“and He summoned”) by appending a small aleph to the word VaYiKRA.

The Midrash goes one step further. It poignantly, if albeit naively, continues this picture by suggesting that Moses, having completed his writing of the Five Books, was then left with a small portion of unused divine ink; after all, the Almighty had dictated VaYiKRA and Moses had only written VYiKRa, rendering the ink which should have been used for the regular size aleph as surplus. The Midrash concludes that the Almighty Himself, as it were, took that extra ink and lovingly placed it on Moses’ forehead; that is what gave rise to Moses’ “rays of splendor.”

Behind this seemingly simplistic but beautiful description lies a world of profound thought. The Midrash is teaching that because Moses did not transfer all of the divine ink to the Torah parchment – obviously not, if we understand the ink to symbolize the divine will – there must have been many layers of ideas deeply embedded within the actual letters of Torah which Moses understood, but which was too profound for him to successfully communicate to others. As Maimonides explains in Section iii of his *Guide for the Perplexed*, Moses was on the highest level of the ladder of prophecy; only he – and none other of his contemporaries – was able to fully comprehend the divine will. Moses wrote down and explained as much as he felt could at least be understood by Joshua and the elders; the rest, he retained within his mind and within his soul. The aspects of Torah which Moses retained within himself but did not write or speak are graphically expressed by the midrash as the extra ink placed upon his forehead.

Most people are less than they appear to be – or, at least, are less than what they would like us to think they are. They immediately try to impress us with what and whom they know, dropping names and terms which imply that they are far more learned and knowledgeable than they actually are.

As another Midrash describes it, they are like the pig who extends his cloven hoof as if to advertise, “You see how kosher I am, you see how kosher I am.” If we look more deeply at the pig, however, we will readily discern that it is not kosher at all, because it lacks the second necessary condition for kashrut: a double digestive tract. Based upon this Midrashic image, Yiddish folklore refers to any individual who tries to impress others at a first meeting with how much he knows (when in

actuality he knows very little), as “chazir fissel kosher,” (the pig’s cloven hoof gives an external appearance of being kosher).

Most people are less than they appear to be – and wear artificial masks as cover-ups in order to make a false impression; indeed persona, the base word for personality, is the Greek word for mask. There are, however, those rare individuals who are more than they appear to be, who have much more knowledge, insight and sensitivity than they would ever wish to – or feel that they are able to – communicate to others. It is that inner wisdom, hidden from the outside world of externals, which causes a charismatic glow of radiance to emanate from the countenance of such people. In the case of Moses, the concealed depths of his spiritual and intellectual understanding were of such a highly charged nature that they emanated rays of splendor which necessitated him to wear a mask – not to exaggerate who he was, but rather to minimize the divine sparks which his inner self naturally and automatically projected (Ex. 34:33).

Once we understand that the Torah which Moses received from God contained much more, eternally more, than he ever communicated in either written or oral formulations, we may begin to understand the powerful source for an unending and constantly regenerating Oral Tradition. Indeed, “Whatever creative interpretation a learned and devoted scholar-student may expound was originally given to Moses at Sinai” (Vayikra Raba 22:1). And at the same time, we now understand the real source of charismatic rays of splendor.

Shabbat Shalom

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[CS – Adding late breaking post:

from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand [ryfrand@torah.org](mailto:ryfrand@torah.org) to: ravfrand@torah.org

date: Apr 3, 2025, 8:13 PM subject: Rav Frand - Charoses - Hashem

Does Not Abandon Us

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Vayikra

Charoses - Hashem Does Not Abandon Us

This dvar Torah was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: Pekudai Pesach 2025 – Here We Go Again: Erev Pesach on Shabbos. Good Shabbos & Chag Kosher V’somayach!

Rather than speaking about the parsha, I want to share with you a beautiful ha’ara (insight) on the Haggada from the sefer Yerech Lamoadim by Rav Yerucham Olshin Shlita, one of the Lakewood Roshei Yeshiva.

Most people’s sederim start with the obvious question about ha lachma anya being written in Aramaic, and then discuss the ma nishtana, and then the arba bonim – the chochom, the rasha, etc. Then it kind of peters out. Here is a very beautiful ha’ara on charoses.

According to the Mishna in Mesechta Psachim, Rav Eliezer bar Rebbi Tzadok says that charoses is a mitzva. The Chachomin argue and say that charoses is just to counteract the kappa in the marar. But Rav Eliezer bar Rebbi Tzadok says that it is a mitzva. You need to use charoses. The Gemara asks, what is the mitzva? Rav Levi says that charoses is zecheh l’tapuach (in remembrance of the apple). Rav Yochanan says that charoses is zecheh l’tit (in remembrance of the mortar).

Abaye says that in order to fulfill both opinions, charoses must contain apple to give it a certain tang, commemorating the apple trees, and it must be thick like cement, commemorating the tit. The charoses is a double symbol – of the tapuach (apple) and of the tit (mortar).

The zecheh of the tit is a remembrance for the terrible shibud (slavery) that they experienced in Mitzrayim. As the Maharal writes, there is nothing more difficult than working with tit – making the mortar and even needing to find the straw. The charoses is a zecheh for the shibud Mitzrayim.

What is the tapuach? Chazal describe the wondrous births of Jewish children in Mitzrayim: “In reward for the nashim tzidkonios (righteous women) in that generation, the Jews were redeemed from Mitzrayim” (Sotah 11b). What did these nashim tzidkonios do? They carried hot water for washing as well as fresh cooked fish to their husbands who

were working in the fields, to revive them from their heavy work, and through this they brought more children into the world, despite the shibud and harsh decrees.

The women subsequently gave birth painlessly under the apple trees, far from the Mitzrim. That is what the pasuk means in Shir Hashirim, tachas hatapuach orarticha (I roused you under the tapuach). Hashem then sent malachay hashorays (angels) down from shomayim (heaven) to act as midwives and care for the babies. That is what Chazal mean by zecheh l’tapuach.

Rav Yerucham Olshin’s question is, how can something be a symbol of two opposite things? On the one hand, charoses needs to be thick, zecheh l’tit like mortar, which is a symbol of the shibud. On the other hand, zecheh l’tapuach commemorates the open miracle that they gave birth to the babies without labor pain and with malachay hashorays from shomayim caring for the babies. How can something simultaneously be zecheh l’tit and zecheh l’tapuach?

Rav Yerucham Olshin answers using a vort that we have said in the past. By mechiras (the sale of) Yosef, the pasuk says that Yosef was taken down to Mitzrayim by Yishmaelim. The Torah publicizes that these Yishmaelim were transporting spices to sell in Mitzrayim. Why were these Arabs that bought Yosef carrying spices? It was in order to teach us the reward of the righteous. Rashi quotes Chazal that the typical practice of Arabs is to sell foul smelling oil. Some things never change. So why were they selling spices? They should have been selling oil.

Rashi explains that that the Ribono Shel Olam is precise in His execution of punishment. Yosef needed to be sold and transported to Mitzrayim. However, Hashem did not want Yosef to suffer from foul smelling oil during the trip down to Mitzrayim. Therefore, Hashem arranged through hashgacha pratis (Divine providence) that this caravan would be loaded with the pleasant aroma of spices instead of oil.

Rav Mordechai Pogromansky (whom Rav Gifter always used to quote as being the illuy (prodigy) from Telshe) asks, do you really think Yosef was thinking that even though he was being taken to Mitzrayim as a slave, at least the caravan smelled of good spices? Did he really care? Imagine if a person is put in prison but is given a great pillow. Wonderful! He is behind bars and he has lost his freedom but at least he has a nice pillow. When a person is being taken to jail, what difference does it make to him if he is being transported in the back of a Lincoln Town Car or the back of a paddy wagon? It is unlikely that Yosef, who had to psychologically deal with his separation from his parents, his family, his homeland, to say nothing of his freedom, would be very consoled by the fact that he had the “luck” of being in a pleasant-smelling caravan! What is this Rashi teaching us?

Rav Mordechai Pogromansky explains that herein lies a very fundamental lesson. The smell was not the point. Rather, Yosef must have felt abandoned. However, the ability to see the yad (hand of) Hashem within ‘tzoros’ (trials and tribulations) mitigates the sense of abandonment. People throw up their hands in despair when there seems to be no hope. If a person can see the silver lining in the cloud – but more importantly – if a person can see the yad Hashem in the cloud, then he will have the attitude: “I am going to get out of this! I have not been forsaken by the Ribono Shel Olam.” True, the situation remained very bad but when Yosef saw the strange phenomenon of an Arab caravan transporting spices, he realized that the Ribono Shel Olam was still with him and watching over him, regardless of the gravity of the situation. The nature of such a sign may be insignificant but the presence of the sign that Hashem still cares is of tremendous importance. Yosef had hope because he saw that the Ribono Shel Olam was watching over him.

Rav Yerucham Olshin is saying that it was the same thing in Mitzrayim. The shibud Mitzrayim was terrible. Their children were killed, etc., etc. It may have seemed as if Hashem abandoned them. It went on for generation after generation for over two hundred years. They must have felt, “Keili, Keili, lama azavtani” (My G-d, my G-d, why have you forsaken me)?

Therefore, Hashem did things during the shibud Mitzrayim that demonstrated that He still cared about them. The Ribono Shel Olam



performed nissim (miracles) for them. The women had babies without tzar leida (labor pain). Malachay hashorays came to act as midwives and care for the babies. These were nissim geluyim (open miracles) occurring in Mitzrayim during the shibud, while experiencing a truly horrible existence.

So, is there a contradiction between zecheh l'tit and zecheh l'tapuach? Rav Yerucham explains that there is not a contradiction because in fact charoses is a zecheh for both. During the tit experience, they also experienced the tapuach, when Hashem demonstrated that He has not forgotten them.

That is something that we have also seen in our time, during the last sixteen months. As we all know, October 7 was a horrible, horrible day. And it has not ended. There are still 59 hostages in Gaza. The number of people killed and wounded and the soldiers that have been killed then and since then is horrible.

At the same time, we all should remember that Hashem has performed nissim geluyim for us during this terrible period. So many missiles were shot at Eretz Yisroel that caused almost no damage. The exploding paggers. How many karbanos (sacrifices) would there have been from the attempted simultaneous bus bombings that blew up prematurely in empty parking lots (and then even more were discovered) instead of blowing up during rush hour? The entire strategic situation in the Middle East has changed. Hamas is half dead. Hezbollah is a shadow of its former self, seemingly unable to continue to fight. Syria collapsed. Iran is on its heels.

So, during this terrible tzara, while we are very much experiencing the tit, we are also experiencing tachas hatapuach orraticha. We need to keep this in mind. Hashem made nissim. We need to be makir (recognize) that.

On a personal level also, even if a person experiences a difficult situation, every once in a while, he may see the yad Hashem demonstrating that Hashem is still taking care of him. That is why Rav Eliezer bar Rebbi Tzadok holds that charoses is a mitzva, zecheh l'tit and zecheh l'tapuach – a zecheh for the terrible shibud but also a zecheh for the yad Hashem that the Ribono Shel Olam showed us even during the shibud Mitzrayim.

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[CS – Adding this

Are There "Dark Forces" ?

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

How we confront our guilt in the aftermath of sin or moral failure is a defining pillar of avodat Hashem and of religious identity. Accepting responsibility and atoning for aveirot should be a cathartic moment and should foster profound spiritual growth. By contrast, denying responsibility and evading ownership of sin, often leads to recidivism and a deepening moral decline.

The modern world has waged an unrelenting campaign to erase guilt from our emotional landscape, discouraging feelings of personal responsibility while urging us to externalize blame by shifting it to others. Yet guilt is indispensable for moral growth and self-improvement. It serves as the quiet but insistent voice of a healthy conscience, guiding us toward accountability, teshuva, and transformation. Without it, the path to ethical refinement is obstructed, leaving us adrift in a world devoid of moral clarity.

For this reason, the Torah's description of the korban chatat, or sin offerings, is profoundly symbolic. It captures a delicate "guilty" moment in the spiritual life of a religious soul. The words the Torah uses to describe this moment, and this sacrifice are iconic, imparting lessons about moral accountability and the process of recovery from sin.

Sins of the 'Nefesh

Surprisingly, the Torah introduces the section discussing sin offerings with the Hebrew word nefesh, typically referring to our souls. One

might assume that the section describing sin would begin with ishor adam, terms that reflect our physical and material bodies which are responsible for our desires and our sins.

Evidently, as the Midrash comments, sin is not merely a product of our physical bodies and fleshly desires. Every sin carries a psychological undercurrent, rooted in our psyche and souls. That underlying psychological need manifests itself through a physical sin.

Sin is born from the fusion of body and soul, shaped both by physical desires and the deeper currents of emotional insecurity. It is not merely a lapse of the flesh but a reflection of the psyche, a struggle that unfolds within the entirety of the human experience. To underscore the integrated nature of sin, the Torah attributes transgression not only to the body but also to the soul "nefesh".

Moral improvement and recovery from chet requires that we understand the root of our shortcomings. If we continue to compartmentalize and assign blame solely to our physical desires, we only address the symptoms of sin, not the root cause. Moral and religious growth demands that we dig deeper, unearthing the psychological foundations of our behavior. Why do we act this way? Why do we find ourselves trapped in cycles of behavior that ultimately leave us frustrated, ashamed, and diminished? What unseen forces within our souls draw us back to the toxic behavior we seek to escape

Life Whole

Just as we do not separate body from soul when examining the roots of sin, we likewise avoid such divisions when reflecting on our broader religious experience. Life unfolds as a seamless whole—our moments of spiritual inspiration and our struggles are woven into a single, unified existence. Hashem fused our immortal neshamot with our fleeting, physical bodies, desiring that we experience life as a whole, rather than fragmenting it into separate spheres of the spiritual and the material. We strive to stand before Hashem in wholeness, in every moment, with every facet of our being. The tone of our experiences may shift—tefillah, Talmud torah and other mitzvot carry a different resonance than the mundane rhythms of daily life—but we are always standing before Him, always striving to live in accordance with His will. We do not divide life into compartments—one for sacred moments, another for spiritual recess. Instead, we embrace a continuous, unbroken journey of devotion. We must be the same person in shulas we are in the workplace, the same person who studies Torah as the one who strives to be a devoted family member. Though the expressions of our service may vary, each remains an integral part of a unified, holistic devotion to Hashem's will. There are no pauses in this mission, no intermissions from religious life. Our commitment is unwavering, weaving through every

role we embrace and every moment we live, where body and soul unite as one.

Dueling Forces

Judaism adamantly rejects dividing life into separate realms. The notion of splitting existence between body and soul or distinguishing between religious and non-religious moments is known as dualism—a philosophy foreign to Jewish thought. Instead, Judaism embraces a holistic vision, in which every aspect of life is intertwined with faith, and every moment is an opportunity for divine connection.

Dualistic cultures not only divide human experience into separate realms but also interpret history through a dualistic lens. The most popular expression of dualism divides existence into forces of good and evil, or light and darkness. This doctrine offers a simplistic answer to the perennial challenge of evil: how could an all-powerful and compassionate Hashem permit its existence? Dualism resolves this dilemma by proposing that evil is an autonomous force, inherently embedded within creation, locked in an unending struggle against the forces of good.

Scapegoating Jews

Tragically, throughout history, this stark division between forces of good and evil has fueled the demonization of Jews and unleashed relentless violence against us. Branded as the embodiment of darkness, we became convenient scapegoats for humanity's suffering. After all, if



pain and misfortune exist, there must be a hidden culprit—and our distinct customs and cultural separateness made us an easy target. This demonization served as a gruesome justification for the most barbaric acts against our people. By eradicating Jews—the so-called source of evil, our enemies convinced themselves they were serving a higher moral cause. No cruelty was too extreme, no atrocity too heinous.

Even today, a modern version of this ancient slander persists. Once again, we are cast as the ultimate villains, blamed for the alleged sins of Western civilization—from colonialism to genocide. The script has changed, but the underlying doctrine of demonization and hatred remains the same.

Free Will, Not "Forces"

We completely and utterly reject any notion of hidden forces of evil and darkness. Everything in this world was created by Hashem, and every human being was fashioned in His image. People possess free will—the divine gift of moral choice. Hashem entrusted humanity with this freedom, allowing each individual to choose between right and wrong, between light and dark. With this personal agency, some bring goodness and light into the world, while others unleash cruelty and suffering. Individuals or societies, however wicked, do not embody some mythical force of darkness.

There is no larger or cosmic force fueling their assault upon humanity and virtue. They are simply evil people and immoral cultures—nothing more. They may speak in the name of religion or ideology, but in truth, they represent only barbarity and cruelty. They have abused the gift of free will and moral conscience to vandalize Hashem's world and strike humanity. It is both our moral duty and historical calling to stand against evil and to defeat it. Hashem desires the triumph of justice, and ultimately, He will ensure that wickedness is vanquished from the world. There is no grand narrative of battling forces of light and darkness, of good versus evil. There is only one force—Hashem's will—and in the end, it will prevail, triumphant and eternal. We live life as a unified whole, indivisible in our essence. One G-d created all things, and He desires that we live our lives as one. When people, cultures, or religions undermine the world He created, He expects us to rise up and defeat them.

The writer, a rabbi at the hesder Yeshivat Har Etzion/Gush, was ordained by YU and has an English literature MA from CUNY. His most recent book, "To be Holy but Human: Reflections upon my Rebbe, Rav Yehuda Amital (Kodesh) is available in bookstores and at [www.mtaraginbooks.com](http://www.mtaraginbooks.com). ]

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Passover Will Forever Remain the Spring of Civilization - Essay by Rabbi YY

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Passover Will Forever Remain the Spring of Civilization

Moses Didn't Only Free Slaves; He Changed the Vocabulary of Humanity

By: Rabbi YY Jacobson

It's the Mentality

An old Jerusalem Jew spent his life as a collector for a Yeshiva. He would walk around the city of Jerusalem every day asking for money. He would wake up every morning at the crack of dawn, immerse himself in the mikvah, and pray. He would then start his daily rounds of collecting. From building to building, he would drag his weary feet, trudge up and down the winding staircases of the old city's archaic buildings. "If only," he would sometimes think to himself, "there were no buildings in Jerusalem, just single-story homes. How much easier my life would be!"

One day, one of his steady customers asked him, "Reb Meilach, what would you do if you won the Mega Million Lottery?"

Meilach thought for a moment and replied: "I would install elevators in all the buildings, that way I would not have to climb the steps anymore."

What If?

"If the Holy One, blessed be He, had not taken our fathers out of Egypt, then we, our children and our children's children would have remained enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt." -- The Haggadah

Really? We would still be slaves in Egypt? It seems far-fetched to declare that if G-d had not taken us out of Egypt 3337 years ago, we would still have been enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt.

The Pharaonic Egyptian dynasty has long been a relic of history. Between 1313 BCE and 2011 CE, some water came under the bridge. David killed Goliath; Plato wrote the Republic; Julius Caesar was stabbed on the steps of the Roman senate; Constantine embraced Christianity; Mohammad decided he was the last prophet; Shakespeare wrote Hamlet; George Washington declared independence; the Wright brothers flew an airplane; Sergey Brin built Google; Trump won the election. A few other things happened as well during the last four millennia.

Yet, we sit down at the Seder and in complete seriousness state that if not for the Exodus we would still be slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt?

The Soul of Slavery

As much as we commemorate the physical suffering of our Jewish nation at the hands of their tyrannical Egyptian oppressors at the Seder, the true bondage the Jewish people were subjected to was not only of a physical nature. To be sure, the physical suffering was tremendous. Jewish children were slaughtered. The Egyptian taskmasters would mercilessly beat down on their subjects who were tasked with impossible and useless jobs.

Yet, the slavery ran much deeper. The physical slavery was a byproduct of the human spirit lying dormant, concealed under the natural notion of man at the time that all of history is cyclical. Egypt was the superpower of the time, Pharaoh was the demigod; the concept of a human spark, which dreams and aspires for a better tomorrow, did not exist. People did not know that freedom is enshrined in the genome of their soul, that they are crafted in the Divine image, the source of all love and bliss.

"No slave was able to escape from Egypt," says the Midrash (Mechilta Exodus 18:11). It was not only that the slave was unsuccessful in staging a rebellion; rather, it was much more tragic: No slave possessed the ambition to break out of the shackles. The very walls that retained the slaves were also the walls that stunted the human soul. No man could even entertain the idea of rising against injustice and exploitation. There existed no such concept as the inner wisdom of the soul reflecting the frequency of infinite oneness, the greatness of each heart that soars aloft and pushes us to discover new horizons. The noble idea that the human person, carved in the image of a free G-d, was destined to truly be free, lay dormant in the psyche of men. Despair and surrender filled the human core.

Symbol of Pyramids

Every country has a symbol which captures its soul. Egypt was represented by the Pyramids. They still remain the longstanding hallmarks of Pharaonic Egypt—and are the only one of the seven wonders of the ancient world to survive in modern times. In the pyramid, there is only one stone that stands alone on top, while all the rest are just rows that serve the row on top of it. Each row of stones serves the row above it. All but the stone at the peak.

The image of pyramids graphically depicts the prevailing mentality in Egypt and the rest of civilization: Egyptians saw themselves as rows of stones subservient to the stones on top of them. Every person saw himself as a stone serving the one on top of him, while the higher stones were merely serving those on top of them. There was only one stone on top, the Pharaoh, who legally had no one above him. He was the god.

This view of life was a given. Wherever fate placed you in the hierarchy of the pyramid, that is where your eternal destiny lay. No person even dared to dream otherwise. The soul of humanity was stagnant.

Even nature conceded—the Egyptian Nile irrigated the land's entire vegetation without any dependence on the annual precipitation. Nothing was dependent on human investment and creativity. Human labor would not make it or break it. All was fixed in its preordained role.

The Language of Freedom

Moses did not only free slaves; he introduced a new vocabulary: the vocabulary of freedom.

Moses breathed new life into a shackled world. A new belief that spirit can dominate matter, that every person is intrinsically a free spirit with endless horizons, and can never be completely dominated. That each person is an end in and of himself; that his or her existence has infinite value; that each of us is a temple for the Divine infinite light.

Moses was the first man to ever stand up to the tyrant Pharaoh and make demands. It was not even what he said; it was that he said something. Demands of a Pharaoh on behalf of slaves? Unheard of. When Moses declared "Let my people go!" a new consciousness was introduced into humanity: that man can aspire to change, to transcend, to go beyond, to transform, to be free, physically, psychologically, and spiritually.

If not for the Exodus from Egypt, human history would have been different. It is not only that the Jews would have remained there for the time; rather, all of civilization would remain in a standstill, with no development and no progress. We would still be enslaved descendants of the ancient Egyptians because the concept of change would have been nonexistent. Like a person living under a rock his entire life, that is how humans experience themselves.

A new language had to be invented. Exodus was not only a national liberation; it was a cosmic event that shaped the future of all humans. It is not only a chapter in Jewish history but rather the very script of the free world. It is the redemption of the human spirit from the shackles of paralysis, emotional death, despair, and hopelessness.

With the exodus of Israel out of Egypt, the whole world woke up from a long winter that was deep and cold. Spring, at last, has arrived.

Awaking from slumber

This is why the Torah instructs us to observe Passover always in springtime. This is no easy task. Our months are lunar, so naturally Passover would fall out at various seasons of the year. We have to go to great lengths in order to ensure that Passover coincides with spring. Why was that so necessary?

The answer is because the season of spring embodies the essence of Passover. Passover will forever remain the spring of civilization. After a frigid winter of hibernation and deadness, the trees barren, and the leaves lifeless, the climate dreary and depressing, spring comes with a new song on its lips. Nature awakens from its slumber.

The Fuel behind Revolutions

The story of the Exodus, then, was not a single event occurring millennia ago. It is an ongoing story. Throughout the ages, millions of people, downtrodden and dejected, draw inspiration from the Exodus story to at least dream of a better tomorrow and to actively work for it. Exodus has planted in the human psyche the seed of liberty, the mentality of freedom, the vocabulary of emancipation. Wherever you observe a revolution or a voice yearning for change to the better, for justice and truth, for kindness and integrity, for liberation from anxiety, for an end to exploitation and abuse, you will see the imprint of the Exodus story in it.

Do you ever wake up in the morning and say to yourself (not in words, but energetically in your heart and nervous system), I will not be a victim anymore? My trauma will not define me any longer. Do you ever hear an inner voice: I will confront my darkness and utilize it to grow? My insane trauma has hijacked all of me, but no longer? That is the Exodus playing itself out again in your life. It is the voice of Exodus whispering: you were created to be free.

Nowhere is this truth more evident than in the story of this country, the United States of America. From the Pilgrims to the Founding Fathers, from the Civil War to the Civil Rights movement, Americans have turned to one biblical prophet, and his name was Moses, because his narrative offers a roadmap of promise in a world of peril.

Most of the pilgrims who settled the "New England" of America in the early 17th century were Puritan refugees escaping religious persecutions in Europe. These Puritans viewed their emigration from England as a virtual re-enactment of the Exodus. To them, England was Egypt, the king was the Pharaoh, the Atlantic Ocean was the Red Sea, America was the Land of Israel, and the Indians were the ancient Canaanites. The

Puritans were the new Israelites, entering into a new covenant with G-d in a new Promised Land.

The Pilgrims described their fight for freedom as being like that of Moses. George Washington attributed the success of the Revolution to the same deity who freed the Israelites. American slaves made "Go Down, Moses" their national anthem.

Immediately after passing the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress asked Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams to propose a seal for the United States. Their recommendation (though it never materialized): Moses, leading the Israelites across the Red Sea, while the pharaoh drowns.

The pharaoh has long represented the intransigence of power. The Pilgrims called King James of England the pharaoh; Thomas Paine called King George the same; Civil Rights marchers branded Jim Crow the pharaoh.

At the time of the American Revolution, the interest in the knowledge of Hebrew was so widespread as to allow the circulation of the story that "certain members of Congress proposed that the use of English be formally prohibited in the United States, and Hebrew substituted for it."

And when the Pennsylvania Assembly ordered a bell of liberty in 1751, it chose an inscription from Leviticus: "Proclaim Liberty thro' all the Land to all the Inhabitants Thereof."

Lady Moses

Harriet Tubman (1822–1913), that remarkable lady, the African-American abolitionist, humanitarian, and Union spy during the American Civil War, was famously nick named Moses. Why? Because during the horrific era of slavery in the US—triggering the Civil War -- this woman liberated thousands of slaves.

One day, the then adolescent slave girl Tubman was sent to a dry-goods store for some supplies. There, she encountered a slave owned by a different family, who had left the fields without permission. His overseer, furious, demanded that Tubman help restrain the young man. She refused, and as the slave ran away. The overseer threw a two-pound weight at him, but struck Tubman instead, which she said "broke my skull."

Bleeding and unconscious, Tubman was returned to her master's house and laid on the seat of a loom, where she remained without medical care for two days. She was sent back into the fields, "with blood and sweat rolling down my face until I couldn't see." Her master said she was "not worth a sixpence" and returned her to her original owner, who tried unsuccessfully to sell her.

Tubman took all her pain and turned it into one of the greatest human acts of courage, setting free slave after slave after slave.

For this she received the name "Moses!"

Where Would We Be?

Every time your heart moves you to transcend fear, to identify a paralyzing coping mechanism, to be a cycle breaker, to move beyond a barrier, to battle injustice, to respect your spiritual integrity, to react differently to a trigger, to transform your life for the better, to subdue an addiction, to confront a bad habit or attribute, remember that it is all because the Lord has sent Moses to stand up to Pharaoh and take us out of Egypt.

"If the Holy One, blessed be He, had not taken our fathers out of Egypt, then we, our children and our children's children would have remained enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt."

Every time you stand in front of a mirror and declare: I will not settle for mediocrity any longer, I will not be a victim any longer to instinct, to lies, to abuse—that has been triggered the moment Moses stood before the stone atop the pyramid, the Pharaoh, and declared: "Thus said the Lord! Let My people go and they will serve Me!"

Pesach gave us the vocabulary of freedom. Where would we and humanity be without it? What can your future look like with it?

We remember the Exodus daily. Because each day I get to choose between living as a "corpse," as a tortured, miserable soul, a shell of myself; or as a living, breathing, blissful embodiment of a living, infinite and undefined G-d.

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## **Chag Kosher vesomayach!!**

### **Contemporary Pesach**

**By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff**

Many years ago, there existed a land in which man worked to dominate both nature and other men. His labor met with a great degree of success. To this day, certain achievements of this nation have baffled modern scientists. The sages of this nation could explain the phenomena of the cosmos and understood, in a most comprehensive way, extremely sophisticated concepts of construction, irrigation and marketing. Modern science looks with amazement at their undertakings, and to this day does not understand how this supposedly “primitive” nation accomplished much of their technology.

This nation allowed all decisions relative to the agricultural wellbeing of its inhabitants to be made by professionals. These professionals were not dependent on the wind or the clouds, on weather factors that, to this day, evade accurate forecasting. These professionals figured out how to fertilize and water their land despite the vagaries of unpredictable weather. When their river rose, they harnessed its resources and watered and fertilized their fields. The river provided fresh, nourishing soil that guaranteed that their own soil produced when there was no rain and did not deplete its own nutrients. The government authorities controlled the river's blessings as they wished, using reservoirs and ditches built in an exceptional manner.

However, “order” in this country was not only the first duty of a citizen: it was his only duty. The citizens of the state were organized according to a very specific plan. The resulting system completely destroyed the individual's right to self-development, self-reliance, and self-determination. “Normal” humans were no longer born. Everyone was assigned a role from birth, and they were to become “farmers,” “soldiers,” “priests,” or “laborers,” dependent not on their own inclinations but upon “society’s needs” as perceived by the “experts.”

This society was dependent on an agricultural system that required its members to remain on their lands. Therefore, they despised shepherds, who represent a profession independent of any specific land, as they wander nomadically from one pastureland to the next. Not only did the leaders of this people despise shepherds, they exercised mind control, training their society so that everyone despised shepherds. This they did because they could not control the actions or the minds of the shepherds. Free thought, different from what the intellectuals believed, was anathema to this society.

By now I presume that you have figured out that this ancient land was Egypt -- perhaps the oldest culture known to history. Science and the knowledge of heaven and earth was the wisdom of the sages of Egypt. They were able to build pyramids, embalm mummies, and had many other skills that have baffled modern science!

At the same time, and perhaps this was the source of their “success,” Egyptian society utilized highly subtle and highly effective means of mind control. No one interested in their own professional success could consider thinking independently of what was accepted. That would lead to professional ostracism, and, after all, everyone’s goal is professional and financial success.

A friend of mine decided against pursuing a doctorate in an academic area in which he is highly qualified, because of the realization that his independent (and Torah-dik) ideas would probably result in him being unable to ever land a paying academic position. He can easily refute what is accepted in his area of academia as being scientifically inaccurate. He has written a book on the subject, but he cannot find a publisher because his approach is not accepted by those who rule the academic world.

Note that this control of ideas runs completely against the “bible” we were all taught regarding the objectivity and importance of applying the “scientific method” in an impartial manner. This problem exists in a wide range of academic disciplines.

If we apply our minds to learn and use Torah as our means of growth, we will indeed be able to grow as human beings, as Torah Jews, and also as honest scientists.

Let us use the pedagogy of Pesach to grow and to influence others to grow in Torah!

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## **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” (rei’ach nichoach), while those of Israel are referred to as “My bread” (lachmi). What is the difference between a fragrance and a 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.

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## **This March Coach Bruce Pearl is Speaking Out Against the Madness**

**By Rabbi Efrem Goldberg**

The Auburn Tigers are going to the Final Four, the coveted final rounds of the annual March Madness, NCAA College Championship

Basketball. For the first time, three of the final four teams have Jewish head coaches, a statistical unlikelihood. But for Auburn's Coach, Bruce Pearl, being in the spotlight as a Jew is much more than interesting trivia, it is an opportunity he refuses to squander.

Earlier in the tournament, after his Auburn Tigers defeated Creighton, sitting in front of countless reporters in a postgame press conference that would be seen by millions, Coach Pearl opened not by talking about the game or about basketball at all, but rather—with the permission of his players—by invoking the name of Edan Alexander, the 19-year-old Israeli-American held hostage in Gaza:

I get asked a lot how this basketball program has become so competitive over the last eight years. But for me, I believe it was God's plan to give us this success – success beyond what we deserve. To give us this platform. To give me an opportunity to start this conference really briefly and remind the world that Edan Alexander is still held hostage in Gaza right now... Bring the hostages home.

Coach Pearl invited Edan's parents and family to the next game and continued to highlight the plight of the American held hostage in Gaza and all the other hostages as well. He challenged all of America to know Edan's name and fight until he is released. Later in that same press conference, he came back to the topic of Israel and what it means to be an American Jew:

This Jewish American loves his country more than anything else. At the same time, Israel is our ancestral homeland and it's under attack. It's under siege. All it wants to do is live in peace with its neighbors. And, you know what, there are some Arab countries that are actually wanting peace with Israel right now, but there is a segment of the population there in the Middle East who have been doing nothing but attacking Israel for 85 years. October 7 was the worst day since the Holocaust for the Jewish people, and they [Hamas] say they want to do it again and again and again. We have Americans that are held hostage in Gaza right now. It's unacceptable.

Some were first introduced to Coach Pearl's advocacy at this year's tournament, but if you have been following him for the last several years, you know it is nothing new. He tweets almost daily to his 165,000 followers about Israel, antisemitism, and good versus evil. He isn't afraid to risk turning off fans, criticism from his university or its supporters, or even his job, to stand up as a proud Jew and to speak about what he believes in.

A few years ago, he even brought his Auburn team to Israel, a trip coordinated by the amazing organization Athletes for Israel. In recognition of his devotion and dedication to Israel and the Jewish people, I had the privilege to join Athletes for Israel and NCSY in giving him and his team an award on the Auburn court before the opening game of their season a couple years ago.

Where does Coach Pearl's courage and conviction come from? How does he have the strength to speak out when too many others are silent?

Three years ago, during this same time of year, at a March Madness press conference, Coach Pearl used the opportunity to talk about the war in Ukraine and the threat of Iran to Israel and the story of Purim. He spoke about how his parents named him Mordechai and he feels a responsibility like his ancestor to speak up for and fight for the Jewish people.

Soon after, we hosted him on Behind the Bima to better understand his background and what motivated him to use that moment and platform for our cause. Here are some highlights from that conversation:

BTB: How do your Judaism and faith impact your coaching?

CBP: When I was a little younger I thought it was me, the great coach and the great motivator, and as I got as I've gotten older I realized, no, it's simply God using me in the position and to affect others and affect young people and it's all about Him and my service to Him. And so, the secret sauce for Auburn basketball and our run to the Final Four and winning championships throughout the last five years if I could get my guys to simply do the things that God would have them do what is He going to at least put yourself in position and be blessed.

BTB: Do you pray during games?

CBP: What I do after player introductions—and I've done this my entire career when they introduce me after they introduce the players—I am always crouched over a chair and I'm talking to God...and people are seeing me pray and I am not praying about the game, I am not going to tell you what I'm praying about because that's between me and God but it has nothing to do with victory, it has nothing to do with the basketball team, but I want when my name is called I want them to see me praying.

BTB: What gave you the courage to speak up?

CBP: When I was 15 years old and I was a freshman in high school I was the best athlete in town. I was the first kid picked on the playground the first kid picked for everything and then I had a career-ending injury. When I say "career-ending," I had a really bad knee injury and I was never the same athlete and I honestly believe that God said, "There's way more to you Mordechai than just being the best athlete." I wasn't kind to people, I was very limited in my friend population. I thought a lot of myself. I dominated you. I embarrassed you. Because I could. Because I was stronger than you and I wasn't as nice.

And now all of a sudden when I could no longer be that athlete it was painful, there were a lot of friends that were happy that the king got knocked off the hill but I didn't quit and I got in the school musical and I became the class president and I'm like God, these other kids that aren't very good athletes but they're awesome, they're so much fun, they're so cool, they're so talented. And then I became a champion for the underdog all of a sudden. Now I was still tough and like "You ain't gonna, you're not, you're not messing with these kids that aren't athletes that are just the bandies that are acting diminished, you got to go through me right now." I could still put my hands up and fight, I was going to be their champion, and so it just exposed me to more: there was more to life than just my ability to beat you on the basketball court or hit a home run. You know I believe these things happen for a reason and I want to be at my best when things are at the worst and I want to prepare my teams to also be at their best when things are at their worst.

BTB: How did you first connect to Israel?

CBP: I'm seven years old, it's 1967. My grandfather would go to bed after supper, he was up very early to work, he was always out the door working before the sun came up, but he would come home and he'd have supper and of course we prayed before all of our meals but after supper he would be pretty quick to go to bed. He'd sit in his chair and he'd fall asleep or he'd go to bed pretty early but this one night Papa was up he was watching tv and he was crying. I said what are you crying about? He put me on his lap we talked about Israel. He was afraid to go to bed during the Six Day War because he wasn't sure when he woke up Israel would still be there. So I learned about Israel. I learned about a safe place for the Jewish people and that was that was the beginning of my love.

BTB: Do you pay a price for standing up for Israel?

CBP: When I'm out there like this does it hurt me in recruiting sometimes? Absolutely. You know not every great basketball player that grows up in the inner city dreams of playing for a Jewish basketball coach. It does hurt me in some households. But that's a choice I made it and I'm sure we've lost some kids. My coaches have got to realize this is who you work for. This is who I am.

I've become more and more outspoken as I've gotten older because I can see I'm playing the back nine right now. They're not going to fire me right now. I won 28 games this year, we won the SEC, and I'm in a stronger position now. By saying these things are there people that are out there that aren't liking them at all and wish I would just shut up and are waiting for me to have a bad season or two and fire me? Maybe there are. But I'll tell you this, I'm blessed to be a place like Auburn in Alabama and one of the things I don't mind telling you is the Jews all over the world should be grateful in some way to the Evangelical Christian community who is standing with Israel in many ways in prayer and financial support and they provide us a lot of political cover here in this country.

Coach Mordechai's faith and very real and ongoing relationship with God is inspiring. How powerful that he looked into the cameras and said, our team's success is from God so that I could use this moment to

fight for hostages held in Gaza to come home. What an example that he can look back at his life and see a career-ending injury as a blessing and not a curse. Coach Pearl obligates us all to use our platforms and our relationships, not only in private, but also in public, to talk about things that matter, to practice our Judaism with pride, and to do so without fear of being cancelled or fired.

Mordechai is introduced in the Megillah as: “Ish Yehudi haya b’Shushan Habira – There was a Jewish man in Shushan the capital.” What do you mean “a” Jewish man; there was only one? There was a large Jewish population in Shushan! The Megillah is telling us that true, there were many Jews, but most were failing to stand up for their Judaism or practice it. The Jewish community was asleep; there was only one Ish Yehudi, an unashamed, unembarrassed, unapologetic Jew.

As we have entered the month of Nissan, a month of redemption, salvation and freedom, let’s follow the example of Mordechai Pearl, be an Ish Yehudi, and in that merit, may we welcome all the hostages home.

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## Drasha

### By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parshas Vayikra

Soulful Offerings

Parshas Vayikra opens with the laws of the Korban Olah, a volunteered offering with a variety of options, depending on one’s financial status. The wealthier individual could bring cattle, a less wealthy person, sheep, an even poorer individual could bring a turtledove. For the most destitute individual who would like to offer something but has no money for even a turtledove, the Torah commands: “When a nefesh, a soul, offers a meal-offering to Hashem, his offering shall be of fine flour; he shall pour oil upon it and place frankincense upon it” (Leviticus 2:1). Rashi adds a comment: “Nowhere is the word nefesh used in connection with free-will offerings except in connection with the meal-offering. For who is it that usually brings a meal-offering? The poor man! The Holy One, blessed be He, says, as it were, I will regard it for him as though he brought his very soul as an offering” (Menachos, 104b).

The Chasam Sofer asks both a poignant and practical question. The price of fine flour is more expensive than that of a turtledove! So why is the fine flour offering the option meted for the poorest person, and why isn’t the one who brings the turtledove considered as if he gave his soul?

It was only a few days before Passover when a man entered the home of Rabbi Yosef Dov HaLevi Soleveitchik of Brisk, known as the Bais Halevi. The man had a look of constant nation on his face.

“Rabbi he pleaded. I have a very difficult question. Is one allowed to fulfill his obligation of the four cups of wine with and other liquid? Would one would be able to fulfill his obligation with four cups of milk?” The Bais Halevi looked up at the man and began to think.

“My son,” he said, “that is a very difficult question. I will look into the matter. But until then I have an idea. I would like to give you some money in order for you to purchase four cups of wine for you and your family.”

The Bais Halevi, then took out a large sum of money, far more than necessary for a few bottles of wine, and handed it to the man who took it with extreme gratitude and relief.

One of the attendants who helped Rabbi Soleveitchik with his chores was quite shocked at the exorbitant amount of money that his rebbe gave the man.

He gathered the nerve to ask. “I, too, understood from the man’s question that he needed to buy wine for the seder and could not afford more than the milk he was able to get from his cow. But why did you give him so much money? You gave him not only enough for wine, but four an entire meal with meat!”

Rabbi Soleveitchik smiled. “That, my dear student is exactly the point! If a man asks if he can fulfill his obligation of the four cups of wine with milk, then obviously he cannot have meat at the seder. That in turn means that not only can he not afford wine, he cannot afford meat or fowl! So not only did I gave him money for wine, I gave him money for a meat as well!”

The Chasam Sofer tells us that we have to ponder the circumstances and put the episode in perspective. The poorest man he who cannot even afford a lowly bird — has a form of Torah welfare. It is called leket, shikcha and peah — the poorest and most destitute are entitled to grain left behind in field. And from that grain, which was not even bought, the man can make fine flour. When that individual decides to remove the grain from his very own table and offer that grain to the Almighty, he is considered giving his soul. True, a bird may cost less, but to the poorest man, even the bird costs more than the grain he received gratis. However, when he takes those kernels and gives from them, he is offering his very soul!

Often we try to assess contributions and commitments based on monetary value. It is an inaccurate evaluation, for a wealthy man may give time which is harder for him to give than his money. A musician may give of his skill, despite aching fingers or a splitting headache. The Torah tells us that when we assess the needs of a poor man, or anyone who gives, don’t look at the wallet. Look at the whole person. And the way to do that is to look at the soul person.

Refuah Shlaima to Yehuda Boruch ben Sora Menucha

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## Parshas Vayikra

### Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

This week’s Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Rochel bas Yosef.

You Know Who

And he called to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him [...] (1:1).

There is an enigmatic Midrash Rabbah on this possuk: “From this verse we see that any talmid chacham that doesn’t have da’as (knowledge) is worse than a dead animal carcass. We learn this from Moshe, who was the paradigm of wisdom and prophecy, took Bnei Yisroel out of Egypt, performed many miracles in Egypt and Yam Suf, ascended to heaven and brought down the Torah, and constructed the Mishkan. [Even with all these impressive accomplishments] Moshe refrained from entering the holy Mishkan until Hashem called to him” (Vayikra Rabbah 1:15).

What does Moshe’s modesty have to do with a talmid chacham who doesn’t have da’as? In fact, the listing of Moshe Rabbenu’s accomplishments may actually serve to disprove the Midrash’s point. After all, perhaps Moshe’s vaunted resume required him to have a level of da’as that a “normal” talmid chacham would not routinely require. So, why do we compare an ordinary talmidchacham to Moshe? It seems rather unfair.

In order to understand this difficult Midrash we must first properly define the term da’as. We first find the word da’as used in the Torah by the Eitz Hada’as (Tree of Knowledge), about which Hashem explains to Adam that its fruits are forbidden to him (Bereishis 2:17). Fascinatingly, the Torah says regarding the creation of man and woman, that although they were both naked they were not ashamed (2:25). Yet, once Adam and Chava sinned by eating from the Tree of Knowledge, the Torah says, “Their eyes were opened and they ‘knew’ they were naked” (3:7). We see from here that da’as refers to an understanding of oneself, a self-knowledge as it were. As Rashi (ad loc) explains, they became intellectually aware. True da’as is a real understanding of yourself and who you are. Once a person achieves this self-knowledge he can then relate to others in an objective manner. That is, a person no longer defines himself by how others see him; he has a healthy self-definition. Therefore, all his interactions with others will be pure and impartial because he isn’t concerned about his image and what others think of him.

This objectivity allows him to connect with others in a very pure form that is not clouded by the superficiality of image consciousness and the related complications of emotional insecurity. In other words, his interactions with the world around him aren’t about him. This actually is what the snake said to Chava, “Your eyes will open and you will become God-like [...]” (3:5). The snake was explaining that self-knowledge gives one an understanding of their potential. Man has the potential to create, and in this way man is God-like.

The Midrash is telling us that Moshe Rabbeinu, with the most incredible accomplishments ever achieved, never lost sight of who he was. His modesty was a reflection of his internal self-knowledge that his accomplishments were a fulfillment of his enormous potential, not that it conferred upon him any special privileges. This is why he was chosen as the transmitter of Hashem's Torah – he was able to act as a crystal clear lens for what Hashem wished to convey. Thus, the Jewish people were able to receive the Torah in its purest form, as Moshe never made it about himself.

Often, even accomplished talmideichachamim become delusional that their achievements somehow make them better than others. In fact, many religious people see themselves as having a higher standing than others, and this sometimes causes them to create their own morality of what is right and wrong. The Midrash is teaching us that we must have the self-knowledge of who we are and not take liberties. As the Midrash points out, even Moshe did not enter the Mishkan until Hashem called to him.

#### Wholly Peace

If his offering is a sacrifice of a peace offering, if he offers it from the cattle – whether male or female – unblemished shall he offer it before Hashem (3:1).

Parshas Vayikra introduces the topic of korbanos (sacrifices), which is discussed throughout much of the book of Vayikra. One of the types of sacrifices that we learn about in this week's parsha is the korban shelamim, known as a peace offering. Rashi (ad loc) explains that this sacrifice is known as a peace offering because it brings shalom to the world. Whereas some sacrifices are wholly burnt on the altar, and others are both burnt on the altar and shared with the Kohanim, the peace offerings are shared by all: the altar, the Kohanim, and the owners all receive their share of the sacrifice.

Fascinatingly, both the Targum Onkelos and Targum Yonasan Ben Uziel translate the words korban shelamim as "holy sacrifice." On the surface this is understandable, as sacrifices are referred to as kodshim and this is a prevailing theme throughout book of Vayikra. Yet, one must wonder why specifically the korban shelamim is called a "holy sacrifice." What is the relationship between this type of korban and the concept of holiness?

There is a common misconception that being kadosh means being connected to Hashem and that we judge holiness by how close a

relationship someone has with Hashem. However, we know this cannot be the precise definition of the word kedushah because we are enjoined to be "kadosh like Hashem is kadosh" (19:1-3). Obviously, Hashem being kadosh isn't judged by His connection to Himself.

Rather the more correct definition of kadosh is to set aside. This is why a woman who gets married is referred to as "mekudeshes." She hasn't suddenly become holy; she is set aside for her husband.

Hashem is kadosh because in essence He has separated Himself from creation; He has acted not in His self-interest, but for the sake of man. Hashem in His perfection has no need for anything. All His actions are for our sake. We are enjoined to be kadosh like Hashem is kadosh: to separate from our own self-interest and self-centered desires, and focus on interests outside our own.

The korban shelamim is the only sacrifice in which all the parties have a share. This korban in particular, as Rashi explains, is different than the other sacrifices in that everyone's interest is being served and it brings peace to the world. This is why both the Targumim translate korbanshelamim as the kadosh sacrifice.

The Talmud (Zevachim 99b) derives from the verse above that prior to the burial of an immediate family member a person may not bring a korban shelamim (this halachic status is known as Aninus). The Gemara explains that this is because the word shelamim originates from the word shalem (whole).

In other words, these sacrifices are only brought when a person is "whole" (i.e. when one's mind is calm and clear). A person who is in anguish over his loss, and is therefore ineligible to bring the korban shelamim. The state of Aninus is when one must focus on his own personal loss and begin the process of recovering from that loss. In fact, the word for self is "ani." Thus he is ineligible to bring a korban shelamim – which is the antithesis of self-interest.

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## **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 Avimelech
- 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 zevachim 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 7! 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 Misshkan/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.]

Shabbat Shalom

# **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 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'lamim). 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 shte 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'reshet 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 ZEVAHIM 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 (Berakhot 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'lamim, 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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**SEFER VAYIKRA - INTRODUCTION**

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

In our series on Sefer Vayikra we attempt to make the study of this book a bit more exciting, not only by analyzing its specific laws, but also by paying careful attention to its structure and theme.

**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 "milui'm" 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"n, 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.

## 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

#### 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."]

=====

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 - "ishch reiach nichoach I-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-riach nichoach isheh I-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-**riach nichoach** isheh I-Hashem... **olat tamid** le-doroteichem 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 **Shechina** 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 Rabbeinu 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'shogeig" 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 mizbeiach, 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

## 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!]