

OVERVIEW



VAYIKRA

LEVITICUS 1:1 - 5:26

The Book of Vayikra (Leviticus), also known as Torat Kohanim — the Laws of the Priests — deals largely with the korbanot (offerings) brought in the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting).

The first group of offerings is called korban olah, a burnt offering. The animal is brought to the Mishkan's entrance. For cattle, the one bringing the offering sets his hands on the animal. Afterwards it is slaughtered and the kohen sprinkles its blood on the altar. The animal is skinned and cut into pieces. The pieces are arranged, washed and burned on the altar. A similar process is described involving burnt offerings of other animals and birds.

The various meal offerings are described. Part of the meal offering is burned on the altar, and the remaining part is eaten by the kohanim.

Mixing leaven or honey into the offerings is prohibited.

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

The Torah prohibits eating blood or chelev (certain fats in animals).

The offerings that atone for inadvertent sins committed by the Kohen Gadol, by the entire community, by the prince and by the average citizen are detailed.

Laws of the guilt-offering, which atones for certain verbal transgressions and for transgressing laws of ritual purity, are listed.

The meal offering for those who cannot afford the normal guilt offering, the offering to atone for misusing sanctified property, laws of the “questionable guilt” offering, and offerings for dishonesty are detailed.

SMALL ALEPH AND HUMILITY

According to Ba'al Haturim, In Midrash Tanchuma, and quoted by Ohrnet magazine it is said that, If you look at a Torah Scroll you will see that the first word of the Book of Vayikra (Leviticus) is written in an unusual fashion. The last letter of Vayikra—the aleph—is written much smaller than the rest of the word. Why is the aleph small? When G-d told Moshe to write the word Vayikra “And He called”, Moshe didn't want to write that last aleph. It seemed to Moshe that it gave him too much importance. How could he write that G-d called to him? Who was he, after all? A mere man. Moshe would have preferred to write Vayikar—“And He happened (upon him).” In other words G-d just “came across” Moshe, He didn't “go out of His way” to appear to him.

In spite of Moshe's protestations, G-d told him to write Vayikra—“And He called”. Moshe put the aleph at the end of the word as G-d had commanded him—but he wrote it small (Orthodox Jews believe that the thora has been given word by word to Moshe).

What's in a small aleph?

The aleph is the letter that represents the will, the ego. It is the first letter of the word for “I”—‘Ani’. When a person sees himself as the Big A, the Big Aleph, Number One, he is usurping the crown of He who is One. When a person sees himself as no more than a small aleph, then he makes room for the Divine Presence to dwell in him. His head is not swollen with the cotton candy of self regard.

Moshe was the humblest of all men. Moshe made himself so little that he was barely in this world at all. He didn't even want to be a small aleph. He, as no man before or since, saw that there is only one aleph in all of Creation, only one Number One—G-d.

Moshe made his own aleph—his ego—so small, that he merited that the Torah was given through him. When Moshe had finished writing the Torah, some ink was left in his pen. As he passed the pen across his forehead the drops of ink became beams of light shining from his visage. That extra ink that was left in Moshe's pen was the ink that should have gone to write the Big Aleph; instead it became a corona of shining light to adorn the humblest of men

INTERNALIZING BIBLE VALUES

The torah states, “And if any person will sin, and violate one of the commandments of the Almighty which he should not have done, and he did not know, he is guilty and shall bear his iniquity.” (Leviticus 5:17)

Rabbi Pakouz asks this question: “Why does the Torah prescribe an offering as a punishment for a person who transgresses without intent to transgress?”

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, explains that the Torah wants us to internalize its values and ideals. It is not sufficient for a person to have a superficial knowledge of Torah values. We need, rather, to make them a part of our inner being. The principle is that a person will not forget or make mistakes in regard to matters that are an integral part of his very being.

If you do forget or make mistakes in some matter, it is a sign that those values are not yet really a part of you. By bringing an offering, a person reminds himself to work on internalizing Bible values.

This is our constant task—to integrate Bible values until they become so much a part of our personality that we will always remember them.

TWO TYPES OF PRAYERS

Leviticus opens with the numerous and complex laws concerning the Temple sacrifices. With the destruction of the Temple, prayer - avodah (service) of the heart - replaced the avodah of the sacrifices. Yet in the Talmud (Berachos 32b) we are informed that from the time the Temple was destroyed, the gates of prayer were also locked. But the gates of tears were not locked. Rashi explains that the gates of tears refers to another type of prayer - prayer with tears.

Thus we learn that there are two distinct types of prayer - prayer with tears and prayer without tears..

AMIDAH PRAYERS

At the beginning of the Amidah (standing prayer), which replaced the Temple offerings, the Jew bows his body in total subjugation and submission as he proclaims God’s name. But once he submits himself into God’s hands and calls upon His name—then he can stand erect knowing

that God is his support. This is the prayer of tears, a passive, yet very potent power”

DEPENDENCE AND SUBMISSION

Rabbi Zev Leff says that “all of prayer expresses this idea: “Heal us God and we will be healed” is not only an entreaty but also a statement of dependence and submission. Even when the offerings were still brought and were offered with the intention of affecting the celestial realms and opening the conduits of God’s blessing, this attitude of complete submission was still part of the offering. Both Nachmanides and Sefer HaChinuch explain that one must identify with the animal being slaughtered as an act of self-negation and submission to God.”

THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM WAS GIVEN BY GOD

The sacrifices, pointing forward to the death of the Mashiach, were designed to preserve in the hearts of the people faith in the Redeemer to come; hence it was of the greatest importance that the L-rd’s directions concerning them should be strictly heeded. The peace offerings were especially an expression of thanksgiving to G-d. In these offerings the fat alone was to be burned upon the altar; a certain specified portion was reserved for the priests, but the greater part was returned to the offerer, to be eaten by him and his friends in a sacrificial feast. Thus all hearts were to be directed, in gratitude and faith, to the great Sacrifice that was to take away the sin of the world.

The daily blessings that we receive from the hand of G-d, and above all else the death of Yeshua [for us] should be a theme for constant gratitude.

What compassion, what matchless love, has G-d shown to us, lost sinners, in connecting us with Himself, to be to Him a peculiar treasure! What a sacrifice has been made by our Redeemer, that we may be called children of G-d!

We should praise G-d for the blessed hope held out before us in the great plan of redemption, we should praise Him for the heavenly inheritance and for His rich promises; praise Him that Mashiach lives to intercede for us.

A DISTASTEFUL SOUP

When the Chafetz Chaim dined at the home of a certain rabbi. The maid had salted the soup as she always did, unaware that the hostess had already done so in her effort to personally cook for her honored guest. The Chafetz Chaim drank the entire bowl of soup without batting an eyelash. His host, however, grimaced after the first spoonful. The guest grasped his host's hand and begged him to drink his soup without saying a word. If the hostess discovered the maid's error, he explained, she is likely to scold her and this could lead to a nasty quarrel. The Chafetz Chaim suggested instead that they keep the whole thing quiet and compliment the hostess on a very tasty soup.

READY TO SERVE

In his old age the founder of a yeshiva (rabbinical school), suffered from severe toothaches. When his dentist informed him that all of his teeth would have to be extracted and replaced with dentures he thus explained his reluctance.

"I am a kohen (priest). Mashiach may come any moment and the Beit Hamikdash (temple) will be rebuilt. I will then be called upon to participate in the sacred service and the extraction of my teeth will disqualify me from doing so. I prefer to continue suffering the pain of aching teeth and not miss out on that great opportunity."

REPENT ONE DAY BEFORE YOUR DIE

The Talmud tells that before Rabbi Eliezer passed away, his students gathered around him, seeking his guidance and advice for the future. He said to them, "Repent one day before you die!"

They asked him, "But how can one know the exact day when one will die?"

"This is precisely what I meant," he replied. "Repent each day of your life as if it was your last!"

HE WILL PROTECT US

There is a wonderful story of a poor farmer who lived under the rule of a miserable Poritz in medieval Europe. The evil landowner provided minimal shelter in exchange for a large portion of the farmer's profits. The farmer and his wife toiled under the most severe conditions to support their family with a few chickens that laid eggs and a cow that gave milk.

Ultimately, time took its toll and hardship became the norm. The farmer and his wife had their bitter routine and never hoped for better.

One day the farmer came back from the market quite upset. "What's the matter?" cried his wife, "you look as if the worst calamity has happened."

"It has," sighed the anxious farmer. "They say in the market that the Mashiach is coming. He will take us all to the land of Israel. What will be of our cow and our chickens? Where will we live? Who will provide shelter for us? Oy! What is going to be?"

His wife, who was steeped with faith in the Almighty, answered calmly. "Don't worry my dear husband. The Good L-rd always protects His people. He saved us from Pharaoh in Egypt, He redeemed us from the evil Haman and has protected us from harsh decrees throughout our exile. No doubt he will protect us from this Mashiach too!"

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HAFTARA

Isaiah 43:21 - 44:23

PARASHA: This beginning of the book of Leviticus is about the sacrifices that Israel had to offer to G-d for the forgiveness of her sins, **You shall lay your hand on the head of the offering and slaughter it at the entrance of the tent of meeting; and Aaron's sons the priests shall dash the blood against all sides of the altar (Leviticus 3:2).**

HAFTARA: Israel was not always faithful in her service to the L-rd **'You have not brought me sheep for burnt offerings, nor honored me with your sacrifices. (Isaiah 43:23).**

However the L-rd is a G-d of love not a L-rd of blood, that is why He is always ready to forgive, **"I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more. (Isaiah 43:25)** One of the fundamental value of the Bible is that when G-d has chosen a people He choose him for ever, **This is what the LORD says — he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. (Isaiah 44:2).**

The L-rd wants to bless his people with his spirit, **"I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. (Isaiah. 44:3).**

Israel is the witness of G-d, He is the one who can prove that G-d is G-d and has given true prophecies about his people and about history, **"Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come — yes, let him foretell what will come," ... Do not tremble, do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago? You are my witnesses. (Isaiah 44:7-8).**

G-d is always calling back his people to him, **"I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you." (Isaiah. 44:22).**

The return of Israel to her G-d will produce joy in Heaven, **"Sing for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done this; shout aloud, O earth beneath. Burst into song, you mountains, you forests and all your trees, for the LORD has redeemed Jacob, he displays his glory in Israel. (Isaiah 43:23)**

BESORAT YESHUA

Romans 12:1-3

PARASHA: The beginning of the book of Leviticus is about the sacrifices Israel had to offer to G-d to obtain forgiveness for her sins. However a sacrifice without repentance and confession is not valid, **When you realize your guilt in any of these, you shall confess the sin that you have committed (Leviticus 5:5).**

BESORAH: In Romans 12, written by Rabbi Shaul, it is clear that sacrifices take another meaning, and lead to deeper relationships with G-d. **I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. (Romans 12:1)**

It is our body that has to be offered to G-d, that means G-d wants all our being offered to Him. Not sacrificed like the lambs or the sheeps of the Leviticus who were put to death, but as living sacrifices. The great difference is holiness, when we offer our body, we dedicate our life to G-d. It is the best worship we can offer to our G-d.

Living sacrifice means to live a life in conformity with G-d's will. **"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:2).** Through the renewing of our mind by the Spirit of G-d we will discover how G-d's will is good, pleasing and perfect.

The next verse is about humility, (see "Aleph and Self") Moses gives us a perfect example of humility, as it is written in the next verse of our text, **"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you" (Romans 12:3).** Faith comes from G-d, that is why we have to pray for the gift of faith.

