



Parshas Vayikra

For the week ending 3 Nissan 5759
19 -20 March 1999

Overview

The Book of Vayikra (Leviticus) which we start reading this week, is also known as *Toras Kohanim* — the Laws of the Priests. It deals largely with the *korbanos* (offerings) that are 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 entrance of the *Mishkan*. Regarding cattle, the one who brought 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 is eaten, can be either from cattle, sheep or goats. The Torah prohibits eating blood or *chelev* (certain fats in animals). The offerings that atone for inadvertent sins committed by the *kohen gadol*, by the entire community, by the prince and by the average citizen are detailed. Laws of the guilt-offering, which atones for certain verbal transgressions and for transgressing laws of ritual purity are listed. The meal offering for those who cannot afford the normal guilt offering, the offering to atone for misusing sanctified property, laws of the “questionable guilt” offering, and offerings for dishonesty are detailed.

Insights

LOOSE ENDS

“And when a soul will offer...” (2:1)

The world is a very precise place. It seems that there are no loose ends in Creation. If you stand on the edge of a cliff, a couple of inches is all that separates you from instant death. The tiniest embolism in a vein can end the function of the entire body. This world is built to very fine tolerances.

Which is why the Torah too is built to very fine tolerances. When all the letters in your tefillin are written within the correct halachic norms, wearing them connects you to the Source. With one letter incorrectly formed, you’re wearing nothing more than funny-looking boxes. Turn on a light two minutes before Shabbos and you lit up the room. Turn it on two minutes and one second later and you plunged the world and yourself into spiritual darkness.

The Torah is as precise as a scientific formula. Which makes it difficult to understand why there should be a whole area where the Torah is seemingly vague: In the times of the Holy Temple, when a person brought a *korban nedava* — a voluntary gift-offering — the Torah makes no stipulation as to how large or small it should be. It was left entirely up to the person who brought the offering.

Go into a hospital and watch people working. The ones who are running around the most and working the hardest are probably the volunteers. When we give what we want to give, we give it with a full heart. When our gift is mandated, it detracts from our enthusiasm. The essence of the voluntary offering was not the offering itself, but the love that was wrapped inside it. To the extent that we are able to express ourselves in the giving, to that extent will be our feeling of giving.

The *tzitzis* (fringes on a four-cornered garment) can be seen as symbols of this symbiotic relationship between the Torah and Man. Part of the *tzitzis* are tied. Part of the Torah is as immovable as any law of the physical world; gravity, thermodynamics, calculus. Part

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of the *tzitzis* are untied: The Torah mandates that we use every last ounce of our individuality to serve the Creator. I am not you. You are not me. G-d made us all, and He wants us to serve Him as ourselves, not as each other. Interestingly, if you look at the *tzitzis*, you will see that the correct proportion of the tied part to the untied part is one third to two thirds. The majority of this world consists of the loose ends of Creation which each one of us is invited to tie in our own unique way.

A FORTIORI

“A satisfying aroma to Hashem” (1:9)

When a person brings an elevation offering to G-d, he may bring either cattle, sheep, birds or fine flour. After each of these categories, the Torah uses the phrase “a satisfying aroma to Hashem.”

Obviously, cattle are more expensive than sheep, which are more expensive than fowl, which are more expensive than fine flour. If the Torah wanted to tell us that G-d views all these offerings equally, wouldn't it have been enough to say that fine flour is “a satisfying aroma to Hashem,” and we would have made the logical inference that fowl, sheep and cattle were certainly “a satisfying aroma to Hashem?”

The answer is that had the Torah left this lesson to a *fortiori* logic, we might have made the mistaken assumption that fine flour was “a satisfying aroma to Hashem,” and *all the more so* fowl; that sheep were yet *more* acceptable and cattle — most of all. For this reason, the Torah writes after each category “a satisfying aroma to Hashem” to teach us that whether an offering is large or small, G-d looks at them absolutely equally, provided our intentions are for the sake of our Father in Heaven.

A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME

“And He called to Moshe...” (1:1)

Moshe had ten names. Moshe, Yered, Chaver, Yekusiel, Avigdor, Avi Socho, Avi Zanuach, Tuvia, Shemaya, Halevi.

Of all his names, the only one that G-d used was Moshe, the name that Basya, Pharaoh's daughter, called him. If G-d Himself used the name “Moshe,” it must be that this name defines Moshe more than any of his other names. Why?

When G-d created Adam, the ministering angels asked, “This man, what is his nature?” G-d replied, “His wisdom is greater than yours.”

G-d then brought various animals before the angels and asked, “What are their names?” The angels didn't know. G-d then showed the animals to Man. “What are their names?” He asked. Man replied “This

one's name is ox, and this one, donkey. This is a horse, and this a camel.”

“And you,” said G-d, “What is your name?”

“I should be called Adam because I have been created from the earth (Hebrew — *adamah*).”

“And I,” said G-d “what should I be called?”

“You should be called Adon-oy; for you are the Lord (Hebrew — *Adon*) of all.”

The Holy One, blessed be He, said “I am Adon-oy. That is My Name. For that is what Adam has called me.”

A name is more than a way of attracting someone's attention, more than a conventional method of reference. The wisdom of being able to name something is higher than that of the angels, for a name defines and describes the very essence.

For this reason one name was not sufficient for Moshe. In order to define him, to bound his greatness in words, ten names were required.

However, G-d said to Moshe that of all his names, He would only call him by the name Pharaoh's daughter, Basya, named him. What was so special about this name?

The name Moshe comes from the word meaning “to be drawn,” for Moshe was drawn from the water by Basya.

When Basya took Moshe out of the river, she was flouting her father's will. Pharaoh wanted to kill all the Jewish baby boys. By saving Moshe, she put her life on the line.

Because Basya risked her life to save Moshe, that quality was embedded in Moshe's personality and in his soul. It was this quality of self-sacrifice that epitomized Moshe more than all his other qualities, and for this reason Moshe was the only name that G-d would call him.

This was the characteristic that made Moshe the quintessential leader of the Jewish People. For more than any other trait, a leader of the Jewish People needs self-sacrifice to care and worry over each one of his flock.

Sources:

Loose Ends - The Steipler, Rabbi Dovid Kaplan

A Fortiori - Ohr HaChaim, Rabbi Mordechai Perlman

A Rose By Any Other Name - Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz

Parshas **Vayikra**

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Haftarah: Yishayahu 43:21-44:23

This prophecy chastises the Jewish People for their sins. The repeated motto being that it is better to adhere to the words of G-d than to sin and offer sacrifices. This is related to the weekly Parsha that deals with the laws of the sacrifices. We also find in this haftarah sarcastic ridicule towards the senseless practice of pagan worship: The prophet tells of a man who sawed a piece of timber in two, half of which he used to cook his meal, while from the other half he created an idol before which he prostrates himself, fervently begging for mercy and salvation.

AN HONOR, NOT A BURDEN

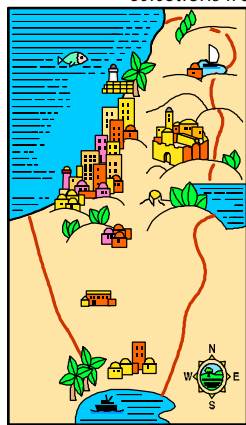
“Jacob did not proclaim Me, as you felt wearied by Me, O Israel.” (43:22).

A true servant of G-d, one who acts for to sanctify the Name of the Almighty, finds enjoyment and satisfaction in the worship of G-d. He does not consider the strict and numerous prohibitions of the Torah encumbering, nor the many obligations a burden. To him they are a privilege he is proud of, just like a king who isn't bothered by the weight of his heavily jeweled crown.

G-d does not need our service; He is omnipotent and complete. The commandments are solely for *our* benefit. The prophet proclaims that if one feels encumbered by his duties as a Jew, then he does not understand the concept of the worship of G-d, and therefore is not serving the Almighty truthfully.

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael



BEERSHEBA

The name of this city, which played such an important role in the lives of Patriarchs, comes from the covenant which Avraham made with the Philistine ruler Avimelech. They sealed this pact with an oath near the site where Avraham discovered a spring of water (“*Be'er*” — spring, “*Sheva*” — oath) and then established there his “*eishel*” as the base for his legendary hospitality. The well built upon this spring was eventually stuffed up by the Philistines until Avraham’s son Yitzchak restored it to use. He called it by the same name to mark the covenant he made with the very same Philistines. It was from Beersheba that Yaakov set out on his journey from *Eretz Yisrael*.

Modern Beersheba is Israel’s largest development town and is known as the “Capital of the Negev.” During the War of Independence it was initially captured by the Egyptians but later conquered by Israeli forces in “Operation Ten Plagues.”