



ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

RABBI REUVEN TRADBURKS
RCA ISRAEL REGION

PARSHAT VAYIKRA

Our parsha begins the description of the sacrifices. It outlines the procedures for the: Olah, a fully burned offering, Shlamim, an offering consumed by the kohanim and by the owner, the Mincha flour offerings, Chatat, a sin offering, and Asham, a guilt offering.

However, with these laws the flow of the narrative has been interrupted.

In the parshiot of the Mishkan, Moshe received commands concerning 3 things: the building, the kohanim's garments, and the inauguration ceremony of the kohanim. And then in Vayakel and Pekudei, those instructions were followed; the parts for the building were made, the kohanim's garments were fashioned and then finally, the building of the Mishkan was successfully assembled.

But the kohanim were not inaugurated. That was left hanging. They are only inaugurated in the second half of next week's parsha. They need to be inaugurated to get the activity of the Mishkan started. So, while the Mishkan has been built, it will sit empty of activity until

the kohanim are authorized to begin work.

However, the inauguration of the kohanim involves many offerings. The inauguration can't be done until we know how to do those offerings. Hence, this parsha and the beginning of the next are required to describe how to do the offerings needed in the inauguration ceremony.

So, while the Mishkan was completed, its action will only begin after the procedure of the offerings of the inauguration are explained and the kohanim's inauguration occurs.



1ST ALIYA (VAYIKRA 1:1-13)

And He called to Moshe, and G-d spoke to him. When a person brings an **Olah**, it may be brought from cattle or sheep. If from **cattle**, the procedure is: the owner places his hands on the animal, it is slaughtered before G-d, the blood is sprinkled about the altar, the fats are burned and the entire offering is burned. If either **sheep** or goat, the same is done: slaughter same place, sprinkle blood, offer fats, and completely burned.

The first words of the parsha baffle the commentaries. No English teacher would allow a student to start a book "And He called to Moshe." Who is the He? Nothing has happened in the book yet that we can refer the He to. Why begin with "And He called"?

Clearly, the Torah is deliberately referring back to the previous story. And continuing it.

At the end of Shmot the Mishkan was completed. The thick cloud descended, indicating G-d's presence. Moshe could not enter the area of the Mishkan due to the cloud. That is how the book of Shemot ends.

The next verse is ours: He, meaning G-d,

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now beckons Moshe to enter, to teach the laws of offerings.

This interaction frames the book of Vayikra. In Shmot, G-d descended to us. He commanded the Mishkan as a place to meet with us. He descended and filled the place. *He approached us.* And now? Our turn. Now we approach *Him*.

The offerings are the way to approach Him. This book then is a seamless continuation of the last; there He approached us, here He calls us to approach Him.



2ND ALIYA (1:14-2:5)

If the Olah is from **birds**, the procedure is similar: blood sprinkled, organs burned, and completely burned. If a **nefesh** shall bring a **flour** offering, the procedure is: the flour is mixed with oil and frankincense. The kohen takes a finger full, burns it on the altar. The remainder is eaten by the kohanim. The flour offering may also be **baked** or **fried** as a thin matza with oil.

The Olah offering is a sliding scale. Cattle, sheep, goat, birds, flour. While the heart may stir one to approach G-d, the pocket may demur. Rashi points out that when describing the one who is bringing a flour offering, the least expensive one, the Torah uses the word **nefesh**, as if to say it is the soul that is bringing this inexpensive flour offering. For some, the flour offering is as big a sacrifice as the bull is to another.

But the inverse is also true; if one *can* afford a bull, then don't wiggle out of the expensive one. Give what your nefesh can give. Don't be a minimalist when you can be a maximalist.



3RD ALIYA (2:6-16)

Or one may bring a fried **soft** flour offering. In each of these, the kohen brings the mincha offering to the altar, offering a finger full. The remainder is eaten

by the kohanim, treated as holy of holies. No offering of this sort may be chametz or with honey. Only the **first fruits** offering contain chametz and honey. The **Omer** offering is from new barley of parched ground kernels with oil and frankincense.

Finding meaning in sacrifices is hard work. But the hard work is often directed at finding meaning in the details. Of equal importance is to step back and look more globally at the entire institution of sacrifices to assess their meaning.

The offerings are vehicles of approach to G-d. Though a simple statement, that notion, that we approach Him is central.

Human experience is varied. We have moments of joy and exhilaration. And moments when we disappoint ourselves through sin. We have birth and death. Illness. Personal experiences. And national ones.

All these varied human experiences impact our walk through life with our Creator. Moments of joy drive us to want to share that, express that with our Creator. Confrontation with our mortality through contact with death or with certain illness dampens our connection with our Creator, the offerings then reorienting us.

The sacrifices, putting their details aside, are the expression of the desire we have in life of reaching beyond, connecting to our Creator, seeing our life as oscillating nearer and more distant from Him. And using the offerings as a way to express our desire to be closer, motivated by the panoply of experiences of our lives.

In our parsha we are describing the how of offerings. When we encounter when to bring the offerings, in which circumstances, we shall attempt to describe the dynamic of the oscillation of distance and approach that the offerings are addressing.



4TH ALIYA (3:1-17)

The **Shlamim** offering may be brought from cattle. The owner places his hands on the head, the kohanim take the blood after slaughter and sprinkle it on the altar, and the fats are burned. If it is brought from sheep, the same procedure is followed. Or if brought from goats. An eternal law is that no blood or fats may be eaten.

The Shlamim is eaten by the owner along with the kohen; not totally burned as is the Olah. As such, it expresses a partnership between man and G-d. It has a mood of celebration. Perhaps the joy that at a certain level, while submissive to G-d we also partner with Him. Submission to, while partnering with is an expression of the complexity in the man-G-d experience.



5TH ALIYA (4:1-26)

When a **nefesh sins**: if the **kohen** sins in his official capacity, he brings a **Sin offering** of a bull. The kohen places his hands on the head, the kohen sprinkles the blood toward the curtain of the Holy of Holies and on the incense altar. The fats are burned. The bull is burned outside of the holy area, where other ashes are deposited. If the **entire people** err in committing a **sin**, a bull is brought as a sin offering. The elders rest their hands on the head of the animal, the kohanim sprinkle the blood in front of the

Holy of Holies and on the incense altar. Its fats are burned and the bull is burned outside of the holy area as was the kohen's sin offering. When the **Ruler** inadvertently commits a **sin**, he brings a goat. He places his hands on its head, the kohanim place the blood on the altar corners and its fats are burned.

This aliya describes 3 sin offerings brought by leaders: the kohen, the Sanhedrin when it makes a ruling that all the people follow and that they realize was in error, and the King. True leaders must recognize that though they hold higher office than the rest of the people, they remain subservient to G-d. Papal infallibility is not a Jewish notion; here we assume that the Cohen (the religious leader), the Sanhedrin, (the judiciary) and the King, (the executive) will all sin. And admit their sins.



6TH ALIYA (4:27-5:10)

If a **person sins** inadvertently, he brings a goat as a sin offering. He places his hands on the head, the blood is placed on the corners of the altar, the fats are burned. He may bring a sheep; the procedure is similar. If one withholds testimony resulting in an unnecessary oath, unknowingly violates the laws after becoming impure, or takes any oath unnecessarily, a confession is made and an offering brought. The offering may be brought from sheep or goats. If the **owner cannot afford** these, then he may bring **2 birds**, one an olah and one a sin offering.

It is crucial to note that the sin offering is not the first sacrifice in the descriptions of offerings. It is the 4th, following the Olah, Shlamim and Mincha. Sacrifices are not brought only to atone for sins. And not all sins can be expiated through sacrifices. Some do not rise to the need for a sacrifice. And for some, a sacrifice does not suffice for atonement. The offerings rather span the gamut of

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human experience and more accurately express a desire to engage G-d in all sorts of experiences, not just when needing atonement.



7TH ALIYA (5:11-25)

And if **he cannot afford** these, then he may bring a **flour** offering, though without oil or frankincense, as this is a sin offering. A finger's full is brought on the altar; the kohanim consume the rest. If a person uses **sanctified property**, he need bring a ram to atone as an **Asham**. And to compensate the holy fund with a 1/5 additional penalty. If a person is **unsure of a sin**, he need bring a ram to atone as an Asham. If a person **denies** a financial obligation and swears falsely, he must make restitution with an additional 1/5 and to bring a ram to atone.

Perhaps the emphasis on the details of offerings is a gift. How to fully express, let's say in words, what we feel when we have erred and hence insulted as it were G-d, well, that is complicated. What do we feel, what do we say? It is far easier to follow a ritual, to have the comfort of a set structure to help us express what would otherwise be difficult to do.

HAFTARAH: YESHAYAHU 43:21- 44:23

This week's parsha focuses exclusively on the sacrifices brought in the Mishkan. Related to this theme, this week's haftorah starts with a rebuke to the people of Israel for abandoning the service in the Beit Hamikdash

The message which is conveyed from the prophet Yeshayahu are words of rebuke related to the Israelites turning away from dedicating their lives to God and turning to idolatry instead. The Almighty calls to his people to do *teshuvah* and He promises that their transgressions will be forgiven.

Yeshayahu exhorts the people by mentioning to them that serving idols is merely serving an object crafted by an artisan and has no power - "neither see nor hear nor do they know..."

The conclusion of the haftorah states God's overwhelming desire that His beloved people remember Him and return to Him. ■

רפואה שלמה מהרה
לליאם יעקב ניסן בן אורה

A SHORT VORT

BY RABBI CHANUCH YERES
RAV, BEIT KNESSET BEIT YISRAEL, YEMIN MOSHE

"If the leader will sin...." (4:22) - אשר נשיא יחטא (ד:כב)

Why does the Pasuk use the phrase "Asher" and not "Ki"?

Rashi explains the use of the word "Asher" to hint at a message. The word "Asher" can refer to "Ashrei" – "Fortunate". Fortunate for the generation whose leader is sensitive to his actions and is willing to admit fault and ask for atonement on unintentional mistakes.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986, Belarus-New York) asks in his Sefer Drash Moshe, why is it "fortunate" to have at all a leader who makes mistakes? Perhaps it would be better for us not to have a king at all?

He answers that it is far better to have a leader, though susceptible to making mistakes, but intent on judging his people judiciously than lacking a leader at all. Fortunate is the generation who bestowed on themselves a leader in the first place. Even a leader who, due to his ego, refuses to admit sin, still, his leadership can bring tremendous positive influence on the people. From here we realize that for all men, leaders and laymen alike, we are faced with two choices, even if both have some negative consequences. It is professed to choose the path with the least errors possible.

Shabbat Shalom