



ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

RABBI REUVEN TRADBURKS
RCA ISRAEL REGION

PARSHAT TZAV

The first half of Parshat Tzav focuses on the role and benefits to the kohanim in offerings. The second half is the inauguration of the kohanim.



1ST ALIYA (VAYIKRA 6:1-11)

Instructions are given to the kohanim: The **Olah** fats and limbs are burnt all night. In the morning the kohen shall take some of the ashes from the altar and place them at the side. The ashes are removed from the Mikdash. A fire for the offerings is to burn constantly. When a **Mincha** flour offering is brought, part is burned on the altar, the remainder eaten by the kohanim. It may not be chametz.

While we described the process of the various offerings in Parshat Vayikra, here we repeat those offerings but with a different emphasis; the portions eaten by the kohanim. In other words, the benefits to the kohen.

Ironically, we begin with the Olah which is completely burned, with almost no benefit for the kohen, save the leather skin. Well, except that he gets to take out the trash. His benefit is to remove the ashes, first in a ritual fashion, placing ashes next to the altar. And then removing the rest of the ashes out of the Mikdash.

The deliberate division of describing the offerings in Vayikra and then repeating them but with a focus on the kohen's benefits conveys a crucial principle of our Torah.

The Torah view of man is radically egalitarian. All people are created in the image of G-d. There is no privileged class. No caste system. We, in our western world, are so imbued with the notion that all human beings are equal that we forget that this equality is an aberration in the history of man. While we think of equality as a basic ethical principle, it is such because of the powerful impact of the Torah on our western ethos.

When the Torah introduces the kohanim are we introducing a privileged class? Are they holier? Do they have unique access to G-d and unique privilege? Is this not contrary to the egalitarian notion that all are equal?

No, no. The kohanim are not holier, do not have unique privilege. They certainly do have unique and privileged functions, what we call Kedushat Kehuna, the holiness of the kohanim. But that is different than the caste system or the unique stature of the religious class that we saw in Egypt at the end of Breishit. Here the Torah deliberately dampens the station of the kohanim, conveyed by the delay in the Torah of the benefits of their station.

In Vayikra we described the offerings. "When an Adam shall bring an offering." Adam is a curious description. And deliberate. Who is the holy class? Who can approach G-d? Anyone. Any Adam.

In approach to G-d, all are invited. Now, there is a very detailed manner of service.

This service needs expertise to perform. You need “expert servers” to perform this service. These are the kohanim.

But their role in Parshat Vayikra is exactly that: servers. They are not the only ones able to approach G-d, a kind of elite, holy group to the exclusion of others. No. They are facilitators, helpers. But who may approach G-d? Everyone.

Now, it is only fair that since they dedicate their lives to facilitating our service that they ought to receive benefits. Ok. That is our parsha. But even here, when describing their benefits, the first offering described is the Olah, where they receive minimal benefit. Again. To emphasize that the kohanim are not the wildly privileged, massively wealthy class as they were in Egypt. No, they receive benefits. But minimal benefits.

The book of Vayikra should not be called Leviticus, the book of kohanim. It should be called Seder Kedusha. Though the kohanim have unique responsibilities in aiding in offerings and other holy functions and so much of the book is about their work, they are enablers, facilitators. Enabling the people to be holy. The book is really the story of the accessibility of *all* people to a life of holiness.



2ND ALIYA (6:12-7:10)

An **inauguration Mincha** flour offering is brought by a kohen on the first day of his service, by a kohen Gadol on the first day of his service and daily by the kohen gadol. It is boiled, then baked and completely burned. When a **Chatat**, a sin offering, is brought, it is consumed by the kohanim in the Temple. The utensils used to cook it must be kashered; while a metal utensil can be put in water,

an earthenware one must be broken. An **Asham** guilt offering is also consumed by the kohanim in the Temple. For an **Olah**, the Cohen receives the leather. The kohen consumes baked **Mincha** offerings.

The kohen consumes some offerings and some not. The Olah: completely burned with nothing for the kohen to consume. The Mincha flour offerings, baked breads baked of different sorts: a small piece is burned, the rest eaten by the kohanim in the Mikdash. The Chatat and Asham sin offerings: all eaten by the kohen. When a kohen himself brings his special offerings, all is burned and none eaten by him.

When the kohen receives portions to eat, they are eaten in the Mikdash.



3RD ALIYA (7:11-38)

When a **Shlamim**, a peace offering is brought to express thanks, 10 breads each of 4 different types of mincha breads are brought. One of each of these 4 types is given to the kohen. The owner consumes the offering over 2 days. He may not be Tameh, impure. Blood and the offered fats may never be eaten. The kohen is given the breast and thigh of the shlamim offering.

The Shlamim is eaten partly by the kohanim but mostly by the owner. The owner is not restricted to the Temple; he may consume the Shlamim anywhere in Yerushalayim (or before Yerushalayim within eyesight of the Mikdash). And, the owner has 2 days to consume it.

The offerings have many details. But hovering above the details is the fundamental world view of man engaging his G-d. Some offerings are voluntary. Some for sin. Some for celebration, for thanks. With just these

few, we see man living the variety of life. Voluntary desire for closeness. Disappointment of sin. Joy in life.

But more crucially, man does not experience these moments in isolation; he experiences them through offerings. Offerings are a desire to live my life with my G-d. See my experiences and want to express them through drawing close, korban.

Setting aside the details, that is what sacrifices convey. That in the variety of life, we want to share those moments, draw close to our Creator, engage with Him. For that is the story of the Torah; G-d drawing close to us and we in turn wanting to draw close to Him.



4TH ALIYA (8:1-13)

Moshe is instructed to inaugurate the kohanim. Moshe gathered the people and the kohanim, pronouncing that the following has been commanded by G-d. Moshe dresses Aharon in the garments of the kohen gadol. With the anointing oil he anointed the Mishkan, the altar, and Aharon. He dressed the kohanim in the kohen garments, as commanded by G-d.

The instructions for inaugurating the kohanim were given in Parshat Tetzaveh; the inauguration occurs here.

The last 4 aliyot of this parsha all end with the same phrase: as G-d commanded. Perhaps this is to avoid accusations of nepotism. Moshe is not appointing his brother Aharon as kohen gadol in the way politicians hand out jobs to family and supporters. Moshe was commanded.

This phrase is also foreshadowing. Next parsha Nadav and Avihu will do something they were not commanded, a noteworthy departure from all the “doing what they were commanded” of Moshe and Aharon.



5TH ALIYA (8:14-21)

Moshe brings the inauguration offerings. The kohanim place their hands on the Chatat, the sin offering. Moshe offers it; the blood is placed on the altar, the fats burned, the animal burned outside the camp. The ram as an Olah is offered; the kohanim place their hands on the head, Moshe does all of the procedures for its offering.

Moshe acts as the kohen for the entire inauguration ceremony. He does the slaughter, the sprinkling of the blood, and the offering of the fats. Moshe himself acts as the kohen gadol. But he is charged to transfer that role to Aharon, the kohen gadol by Divine fiat.



6TH ALIYA (8:22-29)

The second ram, the Inauguration Ram is brought. Moshe places its blood on Aharon's right ear, right thumb and right big toe. And does the same for all the kohanim. He offers the ram, sprinkling its blood and burning its fats. After Aharon and the kohanim wave the matzot, one of each kind is offered on the altar. Moshe waved the breast, his portion in the offering.

Placing blood on the ear, thumb and toe is quite an image. You can't avoid thinking – you are being invested as a servant of the people – from head to toe. You are all in.

The elaborate ceremony is as any inauguration ceremony. To impress on the newly invested leader the meaning of his position. The kohanim are servants of the people, enabling them to serve their G-d.



7TH ALIYA (8:30-36)

Moshe instructs Aharon to cook the meat of the offering and to

consume it and the matza. The kohanim are not to leave the Mikdash for 7 days. This same procedure is to be done when gaining atonement. Aharon and the kohanim did all that G-d commanded.

Our Parsha outlined some of the benefits to the kohen, due to his holy service. Support of clergy, or spiritual workers, or ritual leaders is a universal notion, crossing cultures and religions. Our kohanim are no different in receiving such benefits. However, far more important is not what they receive, but what they do not.

Back in the Yosef story we are told how the kohanim in Egypt, the Egyptian clergy were treated. They received public support of food. They had land. All of the land of Egypt was taken by Paro in payment for the food during the famine; save the land of the priests. The wealthiest people in Egypt were the priests. In our time, the wealth of the Vatican is vast.

Our kohanim, in contrast, have no land. They receive support, albeit modest. This is another instance of the Torah's moderation; supporting the kohanim, though modestly. The King will receive similar instructions; benefits but with limits. Leadership is serving G-d and His people, not self serving.

When reading the Torah, we need to notice not only what is said but what is not said; what rights are given, but more importantly what rights are not given. The kohanim receive; but modestly.

HAFTORAH TZAV/SHABBAT HAGADOL MALACHI 3:4-24

The Shabbat before Pesach is referred to as *Shabbat Hagadol*, or The Great Shabbat. Though it is not absolutely certain why

Shabbat HaGadol was given this name, some suggest that it is based on a *pasuk* at the end of the haftorah of this Shabbat. A day will come in the future, says that prophet, that will be '*gadol*', or awesome. "Lo, I will send the prophet Eliyahu to you before the coming of the awesome, fearful day of the Lord." (3:23)

The message of Malachi is clear: The people have been committing various sins. He warns the people that there will be a day of reckoning. Every act, every word, we engage in is judged by God. Now is the time to return.

There is a subtle hint in the haftorah to our celebration of the Seder with the reference to the coming of Eliyahu Hanavi. The haftorah ends with a reference to Eliyahu who will come at the end of days to herald the coming of the Mashiach. An uplifting message tops off the haftorah. In the final *pesukim* the powerful notion is conveyed that just as the people of Israel were redeemed from Egypt after generations of slavery, so too will the people be redeemed with the coming of the Mashiach in the time to come.

May that day come soon be"H! ■



STATS

Sources say that TZAV has TZAV (96) p'sukim. Our Chumashim have 97. Either one-off is acceptable for Gimatriya purposes, or there was a slightly different p'sukim-division way back.



MITZVOT

18 mitzvot; 9 pos. and 9 prohibitions