

QUESTIONS ON PARASHAT VAYIKRA

Q-1. (a) What was the goal of *korbanot* (sacrificial offerings) (7 views)? (b) (1) Why did *Hashem* call (*vayikra*) to *Moshe*, before speaking (*va-yedabeir*) to him? (2) Why does “*vayikra*” have a small *alef* (2 views)? (c) (1) Why does 1:2 say, “*adam ki yakriv*” (a man who offers – singular), and end “*takrivu*” (shall offer – plural) (2 views)? (2) Why “*adam*”, and not the more usual “*ish*”? (d) (1) What 3 mammals were acceptable *korbanot*? (2) How do they recall the *avot’s* merits? (e) Why were domesticated animals used for *korbanot*, not wild animals? (*Vayikra* 1:1-2)

A-1. (a) (1) To wean *Bnei Yisrael* from idol worship (*Rambam – Moreh Nevuchim*). (2) To unite *Bnei Yisrael* with *Hashem*, by bringing Divine radiance to the world (*Meshech Chochma*, based on *Ramban*). (3) Sins result from (i) thought, (ii) speech and (iii) action – for atonement, a sinner had to (i) put his hands on the *korban* – an action, (ii) confess his sin – by speech, and (iii) burn the entrails and kidneys – organs of thought and desire – and the legs that do the action (*Ramban*). (4) The animal’s organs are similar to one’s own organs – by forsaking his intelligence through sin, his body is like an animal’s – burning the animal’s body erases the sin from his mind (*Sefer haChinuch – Mitzvah* 95). (5) *Korbanot* are an inexplicable formula to bring *Hashem* closer to people (*Kuzari*). (6) By offering our possessions – animals and grains – we recognize we exist only by His Will (*Maharal*). (7) Like grain and meat nurture one’s body, *korbanot* nourish one’s soul (*Akeidat Yitzchak*). (b) (1) *Hashem* called him to join Him in the *Mishkan*, showing His affection for him (*Rashi*). (2) (i) Humble *Moshe* wanted *Hashem* to say “*vayiker*” (He chanced upon) *Moshe*, without an *alef*, like when He met *Bilam* (*Bamidbar* 23:16) – *Hashem* told him to write “*vayikra*” but agreed to a small *alef*, to show his humility (*Ba’al haTurim*). (ii) The small *alef* indicates that the *Shechina’s* goal of permanent residence had not been reached when He called *Moshe* – His permanent Place is *Yerushalayim’s Har haBayit* (*Zohar*). (c) (1) (i) While an individual pays for his personal *korban*, the community pays for the fire’s wood and the *korban’s* salt (*Toldot Yitzchak*). (ii) It tells us that one (singular) bringing a *korban* or doing a *mitzvah* can bring all of *Bnei Yisrael* (plural) closer to *Hashem*; (2) It refers to *Adam*, who could not offer a stolen *korban* since the whole world was his – one may not offer a dishonestly-gotten *korban* (*Rashi*). (d) (1) (i) Cows/oxen; (ii) sheep/rams; (iii) goats; (2) (i) oxen recall *Avraham’s* merit in feeding his guests oxen; (ii) sheep recall the *akeida*, where a ram substituted for *Yitzchak*; (iii) goats recall *Ya’akov’s* listening to *Rivka* to bring 2 goats to his father (*Bava Kama* 63a). (e) It shows *Hashem’s* concern for *Bnei Yisrael*, who did not have to trap wild animals (*Da’at Zekeinim*).

Q-2. (a) (1) Why is the *korban olah* described before the *chatat* (2 views)? (2) Which *olah* meat was not burned on the *mizbei’ach*? (b) Since an *olah* had to be “*li-retzono*” (voluntary), how was *beit din* allowed to coerce someone, when necessary, to offer the *korban*? (c) (1) What was a *korban’s* “*rei’ach nicho’ach*” (pleasant fragrance) for *Hashem*? (2) Which *korbanot* had a *rei’ach nicho’ach* and which did not? (3) Since a bird *korban* was burnt with its feathers, producing a horrible smell, why does the *Torah* describe it as a *rei’ach nicho’ach*? (*Vayikra* 1:3-9,17)

A-2. (a) (1) The *olah* (i) is spiritually higher, “rising” entirely to *Hashem* – other *korbanot* were eaten by *kohanim* and/or the offerer (*Medrash Tanchuma – Tzav* 1). (ii) atones for improper thoughts, while the *chatat* atones for improper acts – improper thoughts precede and lead to improper acts (*Kli Yakar*). (2) The *gid ha-nasheh* (*Sefer haChinuch – Mitzvah* 115). (b) One’s soul wants to do what is right, but external temptations cloud his judgment – *beit din’s* coercion allows the soul’s goodness to come through (*Rambam Hil Gerushin* 2:20). (c) (1) It was the result of the offerer’s bringing the *korban* according to *Hashem’s* Will (*Rashi*). (2) *Korbanot* in the *Mishkan* or *Beit haMikdash* had a *rei’ach nicho’ach*, but those on *bamot* (private altars) did not (*Meshech Chochma*). (3) Birds were offered by the very poor – the feathers made the *korban* look bigger – if the offerer’s intent was to serve *Hashem*, the *korban* had a *rei’ach nicho’ach*, regardless of its actual odor (*Rashi*).

Q-3. (a) Why is the word “*nefesh*” (soul) used for one offering a *korban mincha* (meal offering)? (b) What were the 5 voluntary *menachot*? (c) Why could a *mincha* not have (i) *chametz* (leaven)? (ii) *devash* (honey)? (d) Why was salt added to every *korban* (3 reasons)? (*Vayikra* 2:1-13)

A-3. (a) Bringing a *mincha* was a great monetary loss for a very poor person, as if he brought his very soul (*Rashi*). (b) *Minchat* (1) *solet* – offered as raw flour; (2) *machavat* – griddle-fried; (3) *marcheshet* – pan-fried; (4) *ma’afei tanur shel rekikin* – oven-baked wafers; (5) *ma’afei shel chalot* – oven-baked thick *matzot* (*Menachot* 63a,75a). (c) (1) (i) *Chametz* represents both (i) a lack of *zerizut* (alertness) in doing *mitzvot*, like slow-rising dough, and (ii) yearning for “puffed-up” honor; (2) *devash* represents spending one’s life seeking comfort and pleasure – to serve *Hashem* wholeheartedly, one must curtail these inclinations (*Mitzvah* 117). (d) (1) During Creation’s 2nd day, *Hashem* separated the heavenly and earthly waters – when the lower waters “protested” their separation from *Hashem*, salt, from the sea, was added to all *korbanot* (*Rashi*). (2) Food-preserving salt signifies permanence – *Hashem’s* covenant with *Bnei Yisrael* is permanent (*Hirsch*). (3) Salt destructively prevents plant growth but preserves food – neglecting *korbanot* brings destructive exile, but proper offerings preserve *Bnei Yisrael* (*Ramban*).

Q-4. (a) Why were *korbanot shelamim* given that name (4 views)? (b) Why could a *korban olah* be only a male animal, while a *shelamim* could be male or female? (c) What 4 *halachot* of *korbanot shelamim* made them *kodshim kalim* (*korbanot* of lesser holiness)? (*Vayikra* 3:1)

A-4. (a) (1) *Shelamim* stand for “peace” (*shalom*) – they increase peace in the world; (2) a *korban shelamim* is divided in 3 parts among (i) *Hashem* on the altar; (ii) the *kohanim*; and (iii) the offerers, resulting in peace among the 3 of them (*Rashi*). (3) *Shelamim* stands for “wholeness” (*sheleimut*), since they are motivated by one’s desire for perfection by elevating one’s spirituality (*Ramban*). (4) The *shelamim* provide harmony by uniting the spiritual and materialistic worlds (*Korban Aharon*). (b) One who feels strong and independent, represented by the male, may bring a *korban* to express gratitude to *Hashem*, while someone in a state of dependence, symbolized by the female, may be equally content and grateful – the *shelamim* represent happiness that is not dependent on domination, since power is not the best indication of success in life (*Hirsch*). (c) They (1) could be slaughtered anywhere in the *azara* (courtyard); (2) could be eaten by non-*kohanim*; (3) could be eaten anywhere in *Yerushalayim*; (4) were not subject to *me’ila* (penalty for personal use) until the blood was thrown on the *mizbei’ach* (*Me’ila* 7b).

Q-5. (a) Why does 4:2 begin, “a soul that sins (*teh-cheta* [– feminine])”, but concludes “and he will do (*ve’asa* [– masculine]) one of them [sins]”? (b) (1) For what kind of sin is a *chatat* (sin offering) effective for atonement, and (2) for what 2 kinds of sin is it ineffective? (c) What 2 characteristics must the sin have to warrant a *chatat*? (d) Which 3 sins (i) carry a *karet* penalty if done *be-meizid*, but a *chatat* is not brought *be-shogeg*? (ii) why? (e) Why does the *Torah* require a *korban* for a sin done *be-shogeg*, since it was not the person’s fault (4 views)? (*Vayikra* 4:2)

A-5. (a) It teaches that a sin can be done only with the combined effort of one’s *nefesh* (soul – feminine word) and *guf* (body – masculine) (*R. Bechaya*). (b) (1) It effectively atones for an inadvertent (*be-shogeg*) sin – done through carelessness; (2) it is ineffective (i) for an intentional (*be-meizid*) sin, or (ii) a sin with no intent to do it (*Ramban*). (c) It must be a sin in which (1) the person takes an action, and (2) the penalty for doing it *be-meizid* is *karet* (*Rashi*). (d) (1) (i) Saying blasphemy, (ii) since no action is taken; (2) (i) not being circumcised, or (3) (i) not bringing a *korban Pesach*, (ii) since they are failures to do positive *mitzvot*, not violations of negative *mitzvot*; (e) (1) it atones for the lack of care and failure to take precautions, resulting in the sin; (2) the sin creates *tuma* in the person’s soul – the *korban* cleanses it; (3) an unintentional sin is a bad omen for a person since *Hashem* protects righteous people from sin – the *korban* brings him under His protection; (4) requiring a person to bring a *korban* for an unintentional sin shows how terrible *Hashem* considers a deliberate sin (*Sefer haChinuch – Mitzvah* 121).

Q-6. (a) How does the duty to testify in (1) civil cases differ from the duty to testify in (2) criminal cases? (b) For which 3 sins does the *Torah* specify a *korban oleh ve-yored* (variable offering)? (c) Why did the *Torah* allow the poor to bring a lesser value *korban* for these 3 sins? (d) How can a witness avoid saying *lashon hara* if his testimony about another person describes that person negatively? (*Vayikra* 5:1-13)

A-6. (a) (1) Civil cases – one must testify only when summoned by a litigant; (2) criminal cases – a witness must, of his own accord, go to *beit din* (*Mitzvah* 122). (b) (1) Falsely denying that one has testimony for *beit din*; (2) entering the *Beit haMikdash* or eating *korbanot* while *tamei*; (3) unintentionally saying a false oath; (c) these sins were so common that by bringing expensive *korbanot*, poor people would lose all their money (*Mitzvah* 123). (d) If one’s testimony is truthful and will avoid harm being inflicted on a second person, the testimony is not *lashon hara* – he is required to testify negatively about the first person (*Chafetz Chaim*).

Q-7. In the *haftarah*, why does *Hashem* complain about *Bnei Yisrael*’s failure to offer Him *korbanot* – does He really need their *korbanot* (2 explanations)? (*Yeshayahu* 43:22-24)

A-7. (a) *Hashem*’s complaint is that *Bnei Yisrael* offered *korbanot* to idols instead of to Him (*Rashi*). (b) The *Navi* refers to King *Achaz*’ time, when *avoda* in the *Beit haMikdash* was reduced and *bamot* to other gods were used (*Radak*).