

Torah On One Foot

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The Offering

As hard it may be to believe, at one time Leviticus was the first book of the Torah that Jewish children learned. Why? Because children are pure and *Vayikra*, (God called), the third book of Torah and its first weekly reading, is filled with laws about purity. After all of the action in Exodus, Leviticus is noted for its words. The rules and regulations regarding the biblical priests and the sacrificial offerings which served as the primary means of communication with God.

It's a difficult book to read through – a manual detailing the sacrificial system of worship. Leviticus can seem far removed from our daily lives and modern concerns. But it is more than an historical record of ancient practices. The book as a whole speaks to the importance of finding meaning in rituals – whether religious or secular. It is a means to give voice to enduring and timeless values.

While Exodus is all about movement and story – from slavery to freedom, from Mount Sinai to the first leg of the wilderness journey – Leviticus is a stationary text. The Israelites remain in one place throughout the entire book. There is order and arrangement. Throughout its twenty-seven chapters, hundreds of laws are given – all of which help development of the Israelites' Jewish identity and character.

Leviticus describes what it means to come close. To approach the Divine with the offering of our heart. To give a gift to someone we feel a connection with. This is the true meaning of the *korban*, the Hebrew word for “offering.”